

CHEER

By Ed Allen

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing." (Psalm 100:1,2)¹

Holidays especially are times for practicing cheer. Celebrations are sharing cheer with others. Cheer desires to bring joy and comfort to others, it reflects willingness and occurs when the left brain is most active. Cheerfulness is selfless. Cheerfulness in crisis can help us land back on our feet, and restore rational order. A smile, thank-you, humor, and empathy are forms of the cheer that comes from the good heart. Cheer involves emotion but its foundation is rational thought from the understanding.

Cheer involves both emotion and logic. Right brain activities are from the will, whereas left brain activities are from the understanding. (EFA - "Learning")². Self-will opposes cheer. During the expression of cheer the left brain is the most active, and during expressions of melancholy the right brain is most active. Some activities of the right and left brain relating to cheer and its opposites are summarized below (Goleman, p. 220)³:

Left Brain	Right Brain
Cheerful	Melancholy
Delight in People and Life	Easily Fazed by Life's Difficulties
Enjoyment	Depression
Satisfied Baby	Crying Baby
Conscious Control	Anger

Cheer, even though it involves emotion, is dominated by the understanding. Here, emotions, which arise subjectively rather than through conscious effort (Dictionary)⁴, are tempered by rational thought.

How the left-brain logic can control the right brain emotions is exemplified in the account of a very depressed Alfred ready to jump off of a California canyon ledge. A psychiatrist received an emergency telephone call from the police: "Your patient Alfred is standing at the edge of a cliff on skyline Drive and Aronda Road, and he is threatening to jump off. Can you get out here and help?" Upon arrival at the scene the doctor tried to convince Alfred to come down by trying to redirect his emotions: He asked Alfred if he knew what this would do to his mother? How hurt she would be? Think how this will affect your kids - it will hurt them for their whole lives. What about your company, which is just about to make a breakthrough? Alfred knew. Nothing the doctor said worked. Another police officer, on patrol, pulled his car up to the site, unaware of the drama. He took out his power bullhorn and blared sharply to the bunch of people on the cliff: "Who's the jerk who left that Pontiac station wagon double-parked in the middle of the road? I almost hit it. Move it now whoever your are." Alfred heard the message and got down at once from his perch, dutifully shuffled out to his car, parked it precisely on the side and then went off without a word in the policeman's car to the Stanford hospital. (Ornstein p. 79)⁵ The right brain emotions when controlled by the intelligence of the left brain are brought to order. Cheer is an affirmative mind striving for order.

The smile can be a most effective communicator of cheer; it starts the process of cheer within your own body, it triggers the less serious memories in your mind (Klein p. 98)⁶. Without

a word a smile can immediately dissolve a personal encounter. I encountered a fierce looking man on the escalator in the Albuquerque airport during the day-before-Thanksgiving travel rush. I had blocked his path on the escalator with my baggage. His facial expression caused me to ask myself whether to avoid or engage? I engaged with a smile, and he surprised me by saying: "At least someone around here is happy!"

The genuine thank you stops and thinks about others, it is the selflessness in us (King)⁷.

Sincere humor especially in a crisis can cheer the mind and restore rational order (EFA - Laughter)⁸. In his book, *Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl speaks of his humor to survive his imprisonment during World War II. He and another inmate would invent at least one amusing story daily to help them cope with their horrors. Frankl tells the story of one of the capos (favored prisoners who acted as guards) who became as arrogant as the SS men), Frankl explained: Imagine, I knew him when he was only the president of the bank." (Klein, p. XXII)

Empathy is sharing in another person's thoughts; it projects one's own personality into another person (Dictionary). Empathy comforts those who are experiencing sorrow. Empathy gets involved with others in crisis to understand and help. It builds on self awareness (Goleman p. 96). "The order of man should be for one to love another as himself." (AC 637:2)⁹ Acts of empathy unfold in infants just months after birth. Initially this is derived from mimicry of a caring parent; however, mimicry fades between two and two-and-one-half year. Then, this caring seems to come directly from the child. Babies who have been loved attempt to comfort other babies who are crying (Goleman p. 98). May this be an example of childhood remains? Hardened criminals aren't very empathetic; they have an inability to feel the victim's pain.

Cheer seeks and applies the affirmative in each situation, hypocrisy and self involvement are done away with. Cheer destroys complaint, its enemy; it exposes the immaturity of a situation, it is contagious. It heals in times of crisis, allowing us to return to objectivity. Cheerfulness of heart is the mark of unselfishness; it does away with hypocrisy and a sense self of involvement. (Pieper p. 185)¹⁰

"These things I have spoken to you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).

Bibliography and Notes (Cheer):

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4. *American Heritage Dictionary*, Third Edition, Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1992. Empathy can involve both joy and sorrow.
5. Robert Ornstein, *Evolution of Consciousness*, Prentice Hall Press, New York, 1991.
6. Allen Klein, *Healing Power of Humor*, Putnam's Sons, New York, 1989.
7. Rt. Reverend Louis King, "Thanksgiving" Sermon, Phoenix, November 1995.
8. Ed Allen, Jr., "Laughter", *Phoenix Newsletter*, September, 1992. Sincere laughter wishes well and is without ridicule.
9. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia*, The Swedenborg Society, London, 1976 (First published 1749-1756).
10. Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1966. Thomas Aquinas is often cited.