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The Importance of Becoming Conscious:
Why Feeling Bad is Good for You

Our society is in a state of moral crisis. We live on the surface, guided by the dehumanizing materialistic values of consumerism and Big Science, out of touch with the inner life of the soul. Psychoanalysis allows us to reclaim our inner life and heal the soul through a process of paying attention to disturbing emotions.

Dr. Frattaroli will discuss the importance of painful and disturbing emotions as adaptive response to problems in ourselves and in our culture. Anxiety and depression are not meaningless chemical imbalances to be medicated away. They are emotional warning signals to be understood and learned from, messages from the unconscious that point to what is out of balance in our lives. They are not diseases but -- like fever and many other genetically-based symptoms -- part of a natural healing process that has survival value for the human species. So there is nothing more important for any of us to be doing than to listen to what our disturbing emotions are trying to tell us. But there are two powerful influences working against this need for inner listening. There is the external influence of our quick-fix culture, promoting action and distraction to get rid of disturbing emotions rather than allowing ourselves to feel them. And there is the internal influence of our own personality defenses, operating on the same quick-fix principle. As Freud described in his earliest psychoanalytic writings, we experience the intensity of disturbing emotions as traumatic, and our instinctive tendency is to try to discharge through action what we cannot tolerate feeling.

Dr. Frattaroli will discuss some ramifications of these ideas, for adolescents and for Everyman, using as an example the world's most timeless adolescent-Shakespeare's Hamlet. He will also relate them to the traumatic experience we all shared on September 11, 2001.

Elio Frattaroli is a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. He is on the faculty of the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia, where he teaches both psychoanalytic candidates and psychotherapy students. He has a full-time private practice of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy with adults, adolescents and couples in Bala Cynwyd, PA. Among other honors, he has been selected as one of Philadelphia Magazine's "Top Docs" in psychiatry. Dr. Frattaroli studied Shakespeare at Harvard and trained with Bruno Bettelheim at the University of Chicago before turning to medicine. He has written and lectured widely on topics including Shakespeare, Bettelheim, Buddhism, Freud and Jung, neuroscience and psychoanalysis, the mind-body problem and free will, and American culture before and after 9/11. His book, *Healing the Soul in the Age of the Brain: Becoming Conscious in an Unconscious World*, was first published on September 10, 2001.