

Heart of Darkness, Emotion and Your Career

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Everything is about emotion. The ability of someone to arouse our emotions and heart is what really drives us. Without emotion, you have nothing. We all have emotions deep within us. Many of us don't even understand these deep emotions. Your ability to use emotion to connect with others is something that will have a profound impact on your career.

One of my favorite movies in all respects is *Apocalypse Now*, loosely based on Joseph Conrad's 1899 novel, *Heart of Darkness*. The novel is less than 100 pages long; however, it has incredibly significant psychological messages that deal with our connection with both ourselves and the world.

The book deals with the flashback of a man named Marlow working for a Belgian trading company known only as "the Company." Marlow is sent on a steamboat up, what the reader is led to believe, the Congo river to the Company's remote Inner Station. As Marlow goes up the river into territory that's increasingly remote, the journey takes on a psychological dimension and becomes, in effect, a quest by Marlow to understand himself and elements of his unconscious. He says "Droll thing life is--that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself--that comes too late--a crop of indistinguishable regrets."

Marlow begins to see himself as traveling into the unknown and primal reaches of the mind. The more one reads the book, the more evident it becomes that the story is about a journey into the subconscious and a confrontation with one's self.

The Inner Station is run by a man named Kurtz who trades ivory. Once he arrives at the Inner Station, Marlow is struck by the decaying facilities and the incredible and racist exploitation of the native Africans by the Europeans. Virtually every character in the novel remains nameless and is referred to simply as The Manager, The [Accountant](#) and so forth. These characters are all people who have almost completely lost their individuality in the face of the dark of the jungle.

The novel is important because it shows there is, within each of us, a subconscious emotional self. The characters of the Accountant, Manager, and others that Marlow meets are like many of us who lose our individuality and emotional selves once we get out in the business world. Our emotional selves are among the most important components of who we are and what makes us tick. They are something that we all need to discover and use. They are latent and deep within us, waiting to be found.

One of the most unusual experiences I had in my life was with a girl I scarcely knew several years ago. She and I had spent some time together simply talking and lived on opposite sides of the country. We spoke late into the evening one night in a small café. Neither of us, as far as we knew, had any interest in being involved with one another at all. We were discussing, for the most part, a business-related matter.

However, I personally felt a strong affinity with her as we spoke and I could tell she did as well. The bond was not sexual--it was more of a shared understanding between our hearts and what lied within us. As we were saying goodbye, the two of us hugged and all of a sudden we both started crying and sobbing almost uncontrollably. In fact, the emotional outpouring that occurred was incredibly strong. We sat there on a corner of a busy city street hugging for at least a few minutes. Neither of us understood what was going on. What was so remarkable about this particular episode is that we both started crying without any prompting. There was simply an emotional outpouring that seemed to come out of nowhere. It was something I didn't know I even had within me, and it's something I will never forget. In that moment, I discovered something within my heart I didn't even know existed. This emotion and ability to connect with someone else like this is incredible. The bond with her at that point I think was so powerful that were I to ask her to run off with me to a deserted island and leave everything behind, I'm confident she would have followed.

Stanley Kubrick's movie *Eyes Wide Shut* is a compelling psychological drama that follows Dr. Bill Hartford (played by Tom Cruise) on his sex adventures after his wife Alice (played by Nicole Kidman) reveals that she contemplated giving up everything for a quick affair with a naval officer a year earlier. The entire movie is based around the shock that Dr. Hartford experiences after learning of this. The idea that there is something dark and emotional like this within each of us is stunning on many levels. Deep down, there are parts of ourselves and our psyches we simply don't understand, but which are very emotional in their nature.

In contemplating this particular episode years later, it occurred to me that there was an emotional part of myself and herself that had connected on a deep and important level. We both knew this connection was there, despite the fact that we scarcely knew one another. It was an experience I will never forget because it's a person that I scarcely knew at the time. Nevertheless, there was a deep emotional bond there that really meant something.

I'm sure you have experienced these sorts of emotional connections with others in your life as well. Powerful emotional connections and attachments are rare; however, we all experience strong emotional attachments to people, ideas, places, and things. I'm sure your eyes may have started watering at seeing something beautiful, when you heard a wonderful story, or when you saw something wonderful happen. We are primarily emotional people and much of our decision-making ability is based on emotions. People are seeking connection and connection is one of the most important things we can have.

The emotional bond between people isn't something I would necessarily call sexual. In fact, the sorts of emotional bonds that exist between people are something else. I remember my best friend growing up was one of the toughest guys you can imagine; he was always getting in one fight after another. In addition, he had tons of girlfriends and was very well liked. When I was around 16 years old I came home from winter break from Thailand where I was going to school, and spent a few weeks with all of my friends. The night before I was going to say goodbye to my friend before returning to Thailand, he broke down crying and I remember hugging him. It was the most emotional I'd ever seen him, and it still makes me uncomfortable to this day. However, he is also someone I will stay in touch with and be friends with as long as I live.

One of the biggest mistakes most of us make in our [job search](#), careers, and lives is expecting that being professional is enough. What all of us seek in the world is an emotional connection and we want to feel connected with others. Beneath each of our exteriors and inside of us is an emotional person and someone who has a profound ability to be connected to others. This is where the power lies, and it's in this emotional person that our true power lies. Your career and life will often revolve around your ability to use this emotional person effectively. When we are able to connect with one another, incredible bonds of trust can develop. The emotional person inside of us wants to feel connected to the people around us. We are, at heart, emotional people and seek emotional connections.

If someone is unable to connect with others emotionally, they will typically be alone and isolated. They may be unemployed, or if they are employed, they will typically not go very far in whatever they are doing. Having an emotional connection with others is something that can make a huge difference in your career. The stronger you are able to connect with others, the more of a bond there's going to be. The more of a bond there is, the more you are likely to get hired and the more you are likely to keep your job. If people feel an emotional connection to you, they are likely to want to be around you.

The thing about this emotional bond is that it's not something you need to work with. It's already a part of you. I would go so far as to say that some of your ability to connect with others is already part of your DNA.

Connectivity is what every relationship is built upon. It's nothing more than getting in touch, feeling what the people you are working with feel, seeing life the way they see life, and looking at the situation from their point of view, on their side of the desk. It's looking at their life, understanding their hopes, their dreams, their fears. It's a very powerful shift in the way you conduct yourself, but one that will put so much more enjoyment, excitement, and effectiveness into everything you do and everyone who does it with you.

You need a real connection with everyone you deal with in your professional or personal life. For example, when you're out at a restaurant and a business and an overworked server comes up to you, it's important to connect with him or her. It's about conveying to them that you appreciate what they're doing and that they're adding pleasure to your dining.

You know it's hard and you know it's difficult, and you're thankful. And smiling from the depth of your heart because you know that gives them acknowledgment, makes it worthwhile, and thanks them for their effort. It's carrying that same sense of purpose and passion everywhere you go, and in everything you do. It's realizing it's all about them. It's never about you.

Your job search, career, and life will take off when you learn to connect to the real needs and desires of the people you are servicing, and stop trying to assume you know what they want. Because issues that are very exciting and important to you may be totally erroneous and unimportant or uninteresting to your employer or potential employer, you have the obligation to yourself and to them to identify and understand what issues, needs, desires, and wants they are really motivated by and connect with them on that basis. If you do that and only that, your career will improve because you'll be totally in sync with where people are coming from.

THE LESSON

Use emotion to connect with others. Establishing a strong connection with others forges a bond that can profoundly impact your career. Connect with everyone around you in your business and personal lives rather than assuming that you know what they want, and you will see both your life and career take off.