

Emotional Regulation in the Bhagavad Gita and Modern Psychological Frameworks

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Abstract

This research explores the concept of emotional regulation through a comparative analysis of the ancient spiritual philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita and contemporary psychological theories. Emotional regulation, the ability to best manage and deal with emotional states, in an adaptive way, is a critical part of contemporary cognitive-behavioral therapies as well as the spiritual wisdom shared by Lord Krishna with Arjuna in the Gita. With the primary texts of the Bhagavad Gita and seminal psychological theories formulated by James J. Gross and others, this paper puts the equivalence of concepts like mindfulness, detachment, cognitive restructuring, and mastery of self at the center of both systems. The Gita recommends self-restraint (Atma-samyam), karma yoga, and detachment, whereas psychology uses therapeutic tools like CBT, DBT, ACT, and MBCT to impart emotional resilience. This research finds striking similarity of means and ends, in spite of differences in language and context, evidence that emotional regulation is a cross-cultural human necessity. It also shows how ancient wisdom can be used to supplement contemporary therapeutic modalities towards the development of integrated mental well-being.

Keywords

Bhagavad Gita, Emotional Regulation, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Mindfulness, Atma-Samyam, Karma Yoga, Detachment, Vairagya, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, James Gross, Mental Health, Indian Philosophy, Psychology and Spirituality, Arjuna and Krishna Dialogue

Introduction

"Emotional regulation refers to shaping which emotion one has, when one has them, and how one experiences or expresses these emotions" (James J. Gross, 2014)

This means that people can control their emotions to some extent. We always do not respond how we feel over it, we choose how we should respond. For example, instead of immediately reacting with anger when someone says something hurtful, we can decide to stay calm and respond later. That is regulating which emotion we choose. Emotional regulation also includes the decision when to show your true emotions. For instance, if you're nervous before a speech, you might try to calm yourself down so that nervousness doesn't ruin your performance. Lastly, it means changing how strongly we feel an emotion and whether or not we express it. You might feel sad but choose not to cry in public, or you may try to think more positively to feel better. These small choices shape our emotional life every day.

In modern psychology, emotional regulation is considered a key part of mental health and well-being. It helps individuals manage how they feel, when they feel it, and how they express those emotions. Interestingly, the Bhagavad Gita, a spiritual-philosophical text written over two thousand years ago, also teaches us how to manage our emotions in times of stress, confusion, and conflict. Psychology and philosophy find common ground when Krishna guides Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra—showing him how to stay calm, balanced, and focused despite overwhelming fear and sorrow. This shows that both ancient wisdom and modern science deeply care about how we respond to emotional challenges, even if they use different languages to explain it. What we call "emotional regulation" today can be seen in the Gita as (Atma-Samyam) the inner discipline and self-mastery Krishna encourages. The teachings of Krishna are essentially teachings of emotional regulation. While the term itself is modern, the practice has its roots in the ancient wisdom of the Gita, marking the beginning of a lifelong inner journey.

Emotional regulation is crucial for a person's overall well-being and is essential for adaptive functioning in daily life. It involves managing emotional responses in ways that are appropriate to the situation and to the individual's self-image. The way a person chooses to express emotions depends not only on internal control but also on the social context, such as who they are interacting with and how they want to be perceived. In the Indian philosophical system, the idea of niyantran (self-control) is considered a core virtue, emphasizing the importance of mastering one's inner impulses before acting. Emotional regulation also plays a significant role in how people respond to stressful or threatening situations, often described in psychology as the fight-or-flight response. In such moments, regulating emotions can prevent impulsive or destructive behavior and instead allow for thoughtful, constructive action. Within social settings, emotional regulation shapes our relationships and helps us express feelings in a way that maintains harmony. For example, experiencing regret can be healthy if it leads to reflection and change, but when poorly regulated, it can negatively affect one's psychological health and self-esteem. Thus, emotional regulation is not just about suppressing emotions but understanding and guiding them for healthier psychological functioning.

The Bhagavad Gita, a respected part of the Indian epic Mahabharata, is a conversation between Lord Krishna and the warrior Arjuna, set on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. In this dialogue, Krishna shares deep wisdom about life, emotions, and doing one's duty. One of the key ideas in the Gita is the concept of the atman, or true self, which is eternal and different from the body or mind. This idea is similar to what modern psychology calls identity or self-awareness. The Gita also talks about different levels of awareness, like being awake, dreaming, and reaching a peaceful, meditative state called samadhi. These ideas are like today's studies on mindfulness and consciousness. Krishna also teaches Arjuna how to handle emotions like anger, fear, and desire, encouraging him to stay calm and balanced. This connects well with modern methods like cognitive-behavioral therapy, which also focuses on managing emotions. The Gita also explores moral decision-making. Arjuna's struggle between doing his duty and avoiding conflict reflects psychological ideas about ethics and responsibility. Overall, the Gita offers a deep understanding of the human mind, emotions, and behavior - lessons that are still useful and meaningful today, even in modern psychology.

Emotional Regulation in the Bhagavad Gita

Bhagavad Gita is where all the emotions are expressed by Arjun, and Krishna gives answers to these situations. That's why it is always said that when a person reads the Gita, they should start reading with a daily life question, and when they read the Gita, they will get an answer to their question. Gita is the biggest example of emotional regulation. Now let's go into depth and see how Gita connects to modern psychological concepts and frameworks.

Arjuna faces an emotional crisis. Seeing all those relations present there, Arjuna was filled with deep compassion and uttered these words in sadness. Arjuna said: "Kṛṣṇa, at the sight of these kinsmen arrayed for battle, my limbs give way, and my mouth is parching; nay, a shiver runs through my body and hair stand upright" (Gita 1.27–30). These lines show a loss of emotional control and lead to emotional dysregulation. Arjuna shows anxiety symptoms as he prepares to fight with his family members on both sides. This moment becomes the foundation for Krishna's psychological and spiritual intervention, making it a key moment of transformation from emotional chaos to inner mastery. In this chapter, Arjuna shows his confusion. He also states: "We hear that men who have lost their family traditions dwell in hell for an indefinite period of time." He is truly in a dilemma, how can he attack his own relatives? What does throne and luxury matter if he has to fight against his kinsmen? It will be better for him if Dhṛtarāṣṭra kills him. These all show a confused state for Arjuna and his emotional dysregulation, that he is backing off with anxiety before the war.

When Krishna asks him, "Why do you have these thoughts? Leave them and get ready to fight," Arjuna says how can he attack Bhīṣma and Droṇa. Śrī Bhagavān again said: "Arjuna, you grieve over those who should not be grieved for, and yet speak like the learned; wise men do not sorrow over the dead or the living." He explains to him that the soul cannot be killed. He says, "Arjuna, this soul dwelling in the bodies of all can never be slain; therefore, you should not mourn for anyone" (Gita 2.30). Also, he says that the warrior-chiefs who thought highly of you will now despise you, thinking that it was fear which drove you from battle. He says either die and you will have heaven, or win and you will have sovereignty on earth. Here Krishna gives a motivational speech and uses the technique of reinforcement and confidence boost-up. We can also connect this to modern behavioral psychology, where positive framing and perspective shift are used to regulate fear.

"Your right is to work only, but never to the fruit thereof. Be not instrumental in making your actions bear fruit, nor let your attachment be to inaction." (Gita 2.47). Here Śrī Krishna teaches Arjuna selfless action (niṣkāma karma yoga) and also detached engagement, which is key to emotional control. Emotional dysregulation led to fear of failure, confusion, and anxiety in Arjuna. Krishna asks Arjuna to focus on the process and do his karma, not on the outcome or fruit. Krishna encourages Arjuna to shift focus from result-based thinking to process-based action, which reduces emotional reactivity. In modern psychological frameworks, this aligns with cognitive reappraisal where a situation is reframed to reduce its emotional impact, and CBT, where it is asked to emphasize the things which can be controlled like the process rather than outcomes, which cannot be controlled.

Arjuna, perform your duties established in Yoga, renouncing attachment, and be even-tempered in success and failure; evenness of temper is called Yoga (Gita 2.48). Here Krishna tells Arjuna to be mature and detach from both fear of failure and greed for success. This verse is foundational for karma yoga: do your work and accept the situation. It is related to emotional resilience, which is the ability to adapt well to stress, adversity, trauma, or significant sources of stress. Here three frameworks of psychology can be seen: first, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), which makes one aware of the situation and ups and downs and not get affected by them; second, Emotional Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT), accepting emotions and emotional distancing; third, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), framing our judgment and being equal on both sides. Śrī Krishna also says that a wise person leaves behind both good and bad actions and focuses only on doing karma with skill and balance. He teaches that yoga means doing actions with understanding, without emotional attachment. This helps in regulating emotions like guilt, fear, and pride. It connects with CBT and DBT where actions are done mindfully and with a balanced state of mind, not under emotional pressure. CBT helps change negative thoughts by focusing on logic, like Krishna asking Arjuna to think beyond fear. DBT teaches balance between emotion and reason, just like Krishna's guidance to act with awareness and inner control. Krishna says that a person who gives up all desires of the mind and finds satisfaction within the self is called stable in wisdom. This teaches emotional control by being self-sufficient and not dependent on outer situations. It reflects mindfulness and inner peace, where joy comes from within. Krishna explains the chain reaction of emotional downfall: anger leads to attachment, which clouds memory, destroys reasoning, and ultimately brings ruin. This is a powerful psychological insight into how unregulated emotions escalate. "As the waters of different rivers enter the ocean, which though full on all sides remains undisturbed, likewise he is whom all enjoyments merge themselves attains peace; not he who hankers after such enjoyments" (Gita 2.70).

In Shloka 4.39, Krishna beautifully shows that emotional peace is not something that just happens, it is earned through faith, control, and dedication. He tells Arjuna that if a person truly believes, has discipline over their senses, and is committed, then knowledge will come to them naturally. And once they have that knowledge, they will gain deep inner peace. This is not just a spiritual idea but also a guide for emotional regulation. When Arjuna was lost in fear and confusion, Krishna didn't just throw facts, he told him to first have faith. That's the first step in healing emotionally. In modern psychology too, it's said that belief in oneself and in the process matters. Whether it is through cognitive therapies or mindfulness, without trust and self-discipline, emotional calm cannot be achieved. Krishna connects faith with emotional clarity, showing that sometimes, we need to quiet the noise of doubt with belief and patience.

In Shloka 6.5, Krishna reminds Arjuna that the real battle is within, only we can uplift or destroy ourselves, making self-mastery the first step in emotional regulation. This reflects modern psychology's focus on self-agency, where healing begins by taking responsibility. In 6.6, Krishna deepens this by saying the mind can be either our best friend or worst enemy, depending on whether we've trained it. Just like in therapy today, especially CBT, our thoughts shape our emotions and actions. Krishna teaches that emotional strength doesn't come from avoiding the storm but mastering it. In 6.35, he acknowledges how hard it is to control the mind but offers a

way - abhyāsa (practice) and vairāgya (detachment). This echoes modern mindfulness and self-discipline approaches: steady effort and reduced emotional clinging slowly lead to inner stability. Krishna's guidance mirrors today's psychological tools for emotional balance - practical, honest, and deeply human.

In Shloka 9.22, Krishna explains the importance of faith in psychology. He says if one surrenders fully and stays devoted with focus, He Himself takes care of their needs and protections, which means don't carry burden if your intentions are pure and you are focused. This trust reduces emotional overload. Krishna's words here are not just spiritual, they're deeply therapeutic. "I am the Self, O Arjuna, seated in the hearts of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle, and also the end of all beings." (Gita 10.20). Krishna says He is not far away, He is within us. This idea echoes modern psychological ideas of mindfulness and self-awareness, where healing starts when we connect inward. Recognizing that something divine or whole exists within calms emotional storms.

In Shloka 11.36, Arjuna's fear transforms as he witnesses Krishna's divine form, showing a shift from emotional turmoil to clarity. He realizes that surrender is not weakness but emotional maturity. This aligns with psychological concepts of emotional acceptance and spiritual anchoring. In Shloka 12.13–14, Krishna describes one who has no hatred, is friendly and compassionate, free from ego, patient, and forgiving. Such a person remains calm in both joy and sorrow, showing stable emotional resilience. This perfectly reflects traits encouraged in modern psychology like emotional balance, empathy, and self-regulation.

Chapter 14 explains the three gunas - Sattva (balance), Rajas (activity), and Tamas (inertia) - which influence our emotions and behaviors. Krishna says Sattva brings clarity and peace, Rajas causes attachment and restlessness, while Tamas leads to confusion and delusion. Emotional regulation depends on increasing Sattva and reducing Rajas and Tamas, much like modern psychology aims to cultivate balanced states over impulsive or depressive tendencies through awareness and disciplined practices. These are also stated in the triguna theory of personality.

In verses 18.33–35, Krishna beautifully explains how our determination reflects the way we manage emotions. When our mind is calm, focused, and balanced (sattvic), we naturally regulate emotions better, even during challenges. But when we're driven by desires (rajasic), or caught in confusion and fear (tamasic), our emotional control weakens. Krishna helps us see that true strength isn't just about willpower - it's about clarity, purpose, and a peaceful mind.

The Bhagavad Gita does not tell us to remove or avoid emotions completely. Instead, it teaches us how to understand our emotions, manage them, and use them in the right way. When Krishna talks to Arjuna, he listens carefully to Arjuna's pain and fear. He does not ignore or reject Arjuna's feelings. He accepts them, and then guides Arjuna to look at the situation differently. This is very similar to what happens in modern psychology, especially in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). In CBT, a person is helped to change how they think about their problems so they can feel and act better. Krishna does the same. He helps Arjuna think clearly, see the bigger picture, and take the right decision with peace of mind.

In the sixth chapter of the Gita, Krishna explains that the mind can be our best friend or our worst enemy (Gita 6.5–6.6). This means if we learn to control and train our mind, we can live a happy and peaceful life. But if we let the mind control us, then we suffer from stress, anger, and sadness. This teaching is very close to modern psychology, which also says that our thoughts shape our feelings and behaviors. If we change how we think, we can improve how we feel. This is the idea behind many therapies that help people with anxiety, depression, or emotional breakdowns.

Another very important lesson in the Gita is about detachment. Detachment does not mean that we stop caring or become cold. It means we stay calm and balanced no matter what happens. For example, when Krishna tells Arjuna to fight, he also tells him to not worry about the results. He should do his duty, but not be attached to success or failure. This is called karma yoga, doing your work without getting too emotional about the results. In today's world, this teaching can help people deal with stress, pressure, and fear of failure. If we only focus on doing our best and stop worrying too much about outcomes, we can reduce a lot of mental tension.

Krishna also teaches self-awareness and knowing one's true self (atman). He says that understanding the self brings peace and stability. This is like the idea of emotional intelligence in psychology. People who understand their feelings and know who they are, handle problems better. They don't panic or act without thinking. They stay calm, just like Krishna asks Arjuna to stay calm and focused in the middle of a great battle.

Another major point in the Gita is about fear and death. Arjuna is afraid of fighting and killing his family members. He is also scared of death and destruction. But Krishna tells him that the soul cannot die. The body may be destroyed, but the real self is eternal (Gita 2.20–2.30). This helps Arjuna understand that he is not doing something wrong by performing his duty. This teaching gives strength and comfort, especially in times of loss or fear. In psychology too, learning to accept death as a part of life helps people cope with grief, sadness, and fear of loss.

The three gunas - sattva (balance), rajas (activity), and tamas (inactivity). These qualities affect how we think, feel, and act. Krishna says that to stay emotionally stable, we should increase sattva and reduce rajas and tamas. This is just like how modern psychology encourages us to build healthy habits, keep a clear mind, and avoid too much stress or laziness.

In the end, Krishna's teachings help us understand that emotions are not bad. But we must learn to guide them. Just like a driver controls a car, we must control our emotions. If we let them take control, we may crash. But if we stay aware and calm, we can reach our goals. This is the heart of emotional regulation whether in the Gita or in psychology today.

Emotional Regulation in Modern Psychological Frameworks.

In contemporary psychology, emotional regulation is regarded as a vital cognitive and behavioral function, essential for psychological well-being, adaptive behavior, and social functioning. This

regulation involves the conscious and unconscious processes individuals use to influence their emotions, how they experience and express them. Among the foundational contributors to this field is James J. Gross, whose process model of emotion regulation has been widely accepted and applied in both clinical and experimental psychology. The model describes emotional regulation as a multistage process that begins before an emotion is fully generated and continues through its development and expression.

Gross identifies five key stages: situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, cognitive change (reappraisal), and response modulation. These stages represent a timeline where intervention can occur to modify emotional outcomes. For example, in the cognitive change phase, a person might reinterpret a stressful event in a more positive light, which is known as cognitive reappraisal. This strategy is highly effective for long-term emotional health. In contrast, emotional suppression - where a person attempts to hide or inhibit emotional responses may offer short-term social benefits but often results in internal distress and increased physiological arousal. Gross's model is especially important in therapy and behavioral research, as it offers specific points where emotional interventions can be applied.

One of the most influential applications of emotional regulation is found in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). CBT teaches individuals to become aware of their automatic thoughts and how these thoughts influence their emotions and behaviors. Emotional regulation in CBT involves identifying irrational or distorted thinking, challenging it, and replacing it with more constructive and adaptive alternatives. A person dealing with intense anxiety, for instance, might learn to reframe their thoughts about a feared situation from "I will fail and embarrass myself" to "I may feel nervous, but I can handle it." This cognitive restructuring not only changes emotional outcomes but also enhances self-efficacy and resilience. Emotional regulation through CBT emphasizes changing internal dialogue, allowing a person to act thoughtfully rather than impulsively.

Another key framework that integrates emotional regulation is Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), originally developed by Marsha Linehan for individuals with borderline personality disorder. DBT builds on CBT but incorporates elements of mindfulness and emotional acceptance. One of DBT's central components is emotion regulation skills training, which includes identifying emotions, increasing positive emotional experiences, reducing emotional vulnerability, and applying techniques to decrease emotional intensity. DBT recognizes that emotions serve adaptive purposes, but when dysregulated, they can become destructive. Through mindfulness and distress tolerance techniques, clients are encouraged to experience emotions without being overwhelmed by them, a process that echoes the non-attachment and self-awareness promoted in philosophical texts like the Bhagavad Gita.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is another significant therapeutic model that approaches emotional regulation differently. ACT does not aim to change or suppress emotions directly but instead teaches emotional acceptance and psychological flexibility. In ACT, individuals learn to observe their emotions non-judgmentally and to commit to values-based actions regardless of emotional discomfort. This approach recognizes that pain is a natural part of life and

that fighting emotions often worsens the problem. By defusing from unhelpful thoughts and grounding themselves in the present moment, clients build a healthier relationship with their internal experiences. Emotional regulation in ACT is about reducing avoidance, increasing emotional openness, and choosing purposeful behavior even in the face of discomfort.

In recent years, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) has gained prominence, particularly for preventing relapse in depression. MBCT combines traditional CBT techniques with mindfulness practices that cultivate present-moment awareness and non-judgmental acceptance. Emotional regulation here is enhanced through non-reactivity, decentering from negative thoughts, and observing the flow of emotions without clinging to or suppressing them. Research shows that MBCT improves emotional regulation by reducing rumination, increasing awareness of emotional triggers, and enhancing the ability to disengage from automatic emotional patterns. These outcomes mirror the inner steadiness and detached observation taught in the Bhagavad Gita, where Krishna emphasizes equanimity and inner calm.

Another contemporary model includes emotion regulation as a transdiagnostic factor—a process involved across various psychological disorders. Studies have demonstrated that poor emotional regulation skills are linked to depression, anxiety, substance use, eating disorders, and PTSD. For instance, individuals with depression may overuse maladaptive strategies like rumination or withdrawal, while those with anxiety disorders might rely on avoidance or safety behaviors. Aldao et al. (2010) conducted a meta-analysis showing that maladaptive strategies such as suppression and avoidance are positively correlated with psychopathology, whereas adaptive strategies like reappraisal and problem-solving are negatively correlated. This suggests that teaching and reinforcing emotional regulation is critical in both prevention and treatment.

In addition to therapy-based models, neuroscience has increasingly contributed to understanding the brain's role in emotional regulation. Brain imaging studies have shown that the prefrontal cortex is essential for regulating emotional responses initiated in the amygdala, which is responsible for detecting threats. When individuals apply reappraisal or mindfulness, the prefrontal cortex exerts top-down control, dampening the intensity of emotional responses. This scientific insight confirms what many traditional wisdom systems including the Gita have long suggested: regulation begins with self-awareness and conscious redirection of mental energy.

Beyond clinical applications, emotional regulation is also a growing area of interest in positive psychology, which focuses on strengths, virtues, and well-being. According to this field, emotionally regulated individuals are more likely to experience gratitude, compassion, optimism, and resilience. These traits not only enhance personal well-being but also improve social functioning and interpersonal relationships. Emotional intelligence models, such as those proposed by Daniel Goleman, include emotional regulation as a core component and show its relevance in leadership, education, and workplace performance. In this context, emotional regulation is not just about managing problems but about enhancing potential.

Ultimately, emotional regulation in modern psychology is both a skill and a developmental process. It can be learned, practiced, and improved with time. From cognitive change strategies

in CBT to mindfulness and emotional acceptance in MBCT, DBT, and ACT, the psychological field offers a comprehensive set of tools that echo ancient teachings in contemporary form. These tools emphasize the importance of awareness, detachment, practice, and inner clarity—ideas that resonate deeply with the Bhagavad Gita's call for equanimity and inner mastery.

Comparative Analysis

Emotional regulation, a cornerstone of psychological well-being, has become a vital area of focus in both contemporary mental health studies and ancient philosophical texts. While modern psychology defines emotional regulation as the conscious and unconscious processes by which individuals influence the emotions they experience and express (Gross, 2014), the Bhagavad Gita offers an equally profound but spiritually grounded interpretation of how emotions can be managed, transformed, and transcended. This comparative analysis aims to explore the parallels and divergences between these two knowledge systems, with specific emphasis on key psychological concepts such as mindfulness, self-control, subconscious reprogramming, and purpose-driven behavior.

In Gross's conceptualization, emotional regulation is deeply intertwined with cognitive processes and the workings of the unconscious. He emphasizes that individuals manage their emotions through strategies like attentional deployment, cognitive reappraisal, and suppression each engaging with different stages of emotional response. Similarly, the Bhagavad Gita addresses emotional struggles by rooting them in the subconscious, described through the concept of *samskaras*, or latent impressions that shape human perception and behavior (Pardhe, 2025). Krishna teaches Arjuna that his emotional paralysis is not simply a momentary lapse but a reflection of deep-seated karmic patterns and inner conflicts.

Both frameworks acknowledge that unregulated emotional patterns often stem from subconscious influences. Freud's psychoanalysis and Gross's model share a belief in the significance of past experiences in shaping current emotional responses. The Gita mirrors this through its assertion that our *vasanas* (deep-rooted desires) and *samskaras* cloud our judgment and fuel attachment, fear, and delusion. However, while modern psychology tends to rely on clinical interventions like CBT to restructure thought patterns, the Gita prescribes spiritual practices such as meditation, detachment, and selfless action to purify and align the subconscious.

Meditation is a common ground where the Gita and modern therapeutic approaches converge. In the Gita, Krishna presents meditation as a method of attaining equanimity and discipline over the mind, specifically in verses like 6.10–6.15, which lay out detailed meditative postures and attitudes. This resonates with Gross's research, which points to mindfulness-based strategies as highly effective emotional regulation tools. Programs like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) have been shown to reduce emotional reactivity and improve resilience by fostering a non-judgmental awareness of present experience (Gross, 2014).

The Gita extends the goal of meditation beyond mental calmness to spiritual liberation, emphasizing detachment (*vairagya*) and concentration (*abhyasa*) as dual pillars of mental

discipline. While modern psychology generally views meditation as a therapeutic or performance-enhancing practice, the Gita frames it as a transformative spiritual journey that restructures one's entire inner architecture.

One of the most distinctive contributions of the Gita to emotional regulation is the concept of Karma Yoga - selfless action without attachment to results. This notion directly aligns with psychological principles of intrinsic motivation and goal-oriented behavior. The Gita's teaching in 3.19, "Perform your obligatory duty, because action is indeed better than inaction," emphasizes commitment to duty over emotional turbulence caused by fear or desire for outcomes.

This philosophy mirrors key elements of behavioral activation and goal-setting strategies in modern psychology. For instance, CBT encourages individuals to engage in valued activities regardless of emotional state, gradually improving mood through positive reinforcement. Karma Yoga, similarly, advocates for action driven by purpose and values rather than emotional fluctuations. According to Pardhe (2025), this mode of action cultivates psychological stability and clarity, helping individuals detach from ego-driven motivations and thereby reducing anxiety, guilt, and emotional instability.

Modern psychological theories, particularly CBT, prioritize the role of belief systems in emotional health. Cognitive restructuring involves challenging and reframing negative thoughts to change emotional outcomes. Surprisingly, the Gita too places enormous emphasis on belief — specifically shraddha (faith). In 9.3, Krishna explains that a person lacking faith cannot attain wisdom or peace. Faith, as presented in the Gita, is not blind submission but an intentional alignment of the inner self with higher truths.

Faith-based cognitive strategies, though underutilized in Western therapy, have shown significant promise in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression (Pardhe, 2025). These strategies involve trusting in a higher purpose, reframing adversity as a test or lesson, and integrating meaning-making into emotional regulation. The Bhagavad Gita uses faith as a cognitive anchor to help individuals interpret suffering not as a setback but as a spiritual opportunity, an idea echoed in Viktor Frankl's logotherapy and elements of positive psychology.

A significant philosophical divergence arises in how the two systems treat emotional detachment. In Gross's model, suppression - consciously inhibiting emotional expression, is often seen as a less adaptive strategy, associated with negative psychological outcomes. Conversely, the Gita advocates for detachment, not as emotional suppression, but as transcendence. Detachment in the Gita means recognizing emotions without becoming enslaved by them. It is the ability to act rightly, even in the presence of strong emotional currents.

This spiritual detachment is more akin to psychological acceptance in third-wave therapies like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), where individuals are encouraged to observe their emotions without resistance or avoidance. Therefore, while terminologies differ, the underlying aim in both is emotional resilience — the capacity to navigate emotional storms without losing one's moral or mental equilibrium.

Another point of intersection is the dialogic and therapeutic relationship between Arjuna and Krishna, which mirrors the client-therapist dynamic. Krishna, through compassionate dialogue, validation of Arjuna's emotions, and structured advice, functions in a way similar to a cognitive therapist. He allows Arjuna to articulate his fears, reframes his cognitive distortions, and guides him toward committed action based on his deeper values and dharma.

This framework aligns with the principles of motivational interviewing, where the counselor helps the client resolve ambivalence and strengthen motivation for change. According to Sehwat and Angiras (2020), Krishna's method exemplifies empathy, Socratic questioning, and collaborative goal-setting elements central to effective psychotherapy.

Conclusion

The exploration of emotional regulation through both the lens of modern psychology and the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita reveals a profound and enriching convergence. While contemporary psychological frameworks such as CBT, DBT, ACT, and MBCT offer structured methods for understanding and managing emotions, the Gita provides a timeless spiritual blueprint grounded in self-awareness, detachment, and purposeful action. Both systems emphasize the importance of inner mastery, resilience, and aligning one's thoughts and actions with higher values. The Gita's teachings centered on mindfulness, non-attachment, karma yoga, and faith mirror the therapeutic goals of emotional regulation in Western psychology. Moreover, the therapeutic dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna serves as a powerful model for compassionate guidance and introspective transformation.

This comparative study shows that emotional regulation is not confined to clinical techniques or religious doctrine; it is a universal human need addressed across cultures and epochs. Integrating the philosophical depth of the Gita with evidence-based psychological practices can offer a holistic path for emotional healing, personal growth, and spiritual well-being. As modern society continues to grapple with mental health challenges, drawing wisdom from ancient texts like the Bhagavad Gita alongside psychological science can foster more balanced, integrated approaches to emotional resilience.

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