

Spiritually-Assisted Emotional Healing

by
C. Riven Wood

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For Beth

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Introduction

I dreaded the evening and stretched out the dinner dishes as long as I could. I had a task to do by 9:30—after that it was too late. I thought about it. Oops, stop thinking! I picked up the phone, dialed five digits and hung up. I agonized some more. It was 9 o'clock. I *had* to do it soon. 9:20. 9:25. I wiped the sweat off my palm and picked up the phone. I dialed six digits. My mind went dark as I dialed the seventh. I heard it ring and hoped no one would answer. "Oh. Hi. This is Riven. I'm calling to remind you of your commitment tomorrow at noon. Okay, thanks." Two hours of misery to make a simple phone call. As a young adult, I was crippled by fear. Now I speak in public, banter with strangers, and don't let fear stop me from leading exactly the life I want.

This book describes the process of emotional healing that allowed such a transformation. Psychology was not enough; I'd been working on my head for years before the fear started to lift. But spirituality, by itself, was not enough either. Had I lacked psychology when I put my life on a spiritual basis, I might be reciting affirmations to suppress the fear and making calls in a black-out, instead of reaching for the phone with joy. Not only did I need both psychology and spirituality, I needed them working together in one process.

I view emotional healing as the resumption of a normal learning process that was interrupted at some time in the past. For example, a boy who gets into an ugly exchange on the playground might learn from it. He might decide to be more circumspect next time he doesn't like what others do. But suppose the exchange gets so ugly the boy is knocked senseless. When he recovers, he might turn attention away from what happened, rather than decide what strategy to use next time. Next time, he is more fearful but no more skilled at playground exchange. He aborted the learning process when he withdrew attention from the memory. Learning happens when a person pays attention; where ever attention dwells, new mental connections grow. A new experience naturally captures one's attention until it is fully integrated—fully

connected—with what one already knows. That is normal learning. When the process has been aborted, one might later need to resume it, and that is healing.

Spiritually-assisted healing is the integration of the old memory with one's most inspired vision. I call this vision "spiritual" because it prizes non-material qualities all people value, such as harmony, love, truth, justice, beauty and health. This use of the word "spiritual" is in keeping with its original meaning of non-material. It does not refer, here, to celestial beings or disembodied intelligence. It just refers to intangibles that all people value.

This additional integration into inspired vision produces the most heartening outcomes. It can turn a bewildering conflict into a greater understanding and stronger bond between those involved. Instead of bringing a person's weak areas up to par with the rest of her functioning, it can bring them up to her highest vision. The reason better-than-normal outcomes are possible is that the work restores to her the humanity that has been locked away with the unresolved issue. For example, suppose the boy on the playground above is now grown and needs to improve his handling of disagreements. By reliving the childhood incident, he recovers the memory of how the others responded to his behavior, when they became violent, why he did what he did, and where his heart had been. As an adult, he can see where things went wrong and how they still tend to go wrong the same way. When he asks himself, "What would my spiritual hero have done in my place?" he might picture himself reaching out to those boys, letting them know he viewed them as friends. He isn't learning a recipe for handling conflict; he is recovering the wisdom from which he withdrew attention so long ago. Perhaps he'll reach out to those who disagree with him now, expressing the hope of friendship that went underground but is now accessible.

The difference is one of transformation. I could no more transform myself by self-propulsion than a horseshoe can pound itself into shape. All the processes I controlled were too superficial to change me fundamentally. The forces that pounded me into a new shape were bigger than I. They included much help from others, human goodness in general, and a drive within me toward

wholeness. When I say drive, I mean that I didn't decide I wanted wholeness, I simply wanted it so badly I would go through hell to get it and afterward be glad I went. These are spiritual forces. By contrast, the material or individual forces I had previously relied on brought only frustration—changed thinking but not changed feeling. Recipes for more effective behavior did not tap the wisdom or creativity that is my birthright. My hope of greater happiness would not take me into the greater pain that lay between me and a happier future. Ideas that seemed like solutions when I read them seemed like dust when suffering came upon me and would not leave no matter what I thought. Insights were helpful, but not sustaining enough. In the end, it was that spiritual drive toward wholeness, the one I could neither choose nor deny, that sustained and guided the work.

My case is nothing special in this sense. Where lesser means are enough for a person to learn or heal, he usually will. We get stuck where these means fail, and at those points all the power of spirituality is needed. The usual reason for withdrawing attention from a memory is that the feelings were overwhelming. Healing requires the sufferer to fully embrace these once-overwhelming feelings. He'll feel overwhelmed, because that's part of the memory, but now he brings to it resources that help him through. This is surrender to a transformative process, and it isn't always calm or convenient. It often involves tears, groans, laughter (a release of fear), body movement, or some other release. Usually, it means sobbing, as opposed to a few quiet tears.

In order for the discipline of psychology to fully embrace the power of this larger healing, it needs a clear recognition of the inspired world view that holds universal human values, a recognition that does not confuse the universal with any religion nor rely on religious symbols for access. Clinical psychologists need an understanding clear enough to translate into any symbols the client cares to use.

In order for spiritual disciplines to fully embrace emotional healing, they need a clear recognition that a person following old patterns of thought, feeling and behavior is not being guided by her highest light. It is when I'm caught in patterned behavior that I

betray my ethics, never realizing it until too late. No amount of stress on morals can free me from this fact. I need to reclaim the wholeness that allows me to think fresh and remember my values in each new situation. Spirituality needs to not only inform me what to do, it needs to help me dissolve the obstacles that prevent me from doing it. This is sound spiritual practice, but more, I believe it is the work we are called to do. We are called by a world that needs us to be loving, creative and potent in addressing the problems for which we have no easy answers.

In order for someone in emotional pain to fully embrace emotional healing, she needs a clear recognition that avoiding the work prolongs the pain. The only way out is through, and she does herself a favor to use her suffering for healing rather than simply endure it until it goes back underground. In fact, this is the greatest mercy one can offer oneself.

The early chapters of this book explain spiritually-assisted emotional healing. Later chapters give exercises for doing the work.

Please note that the process described here is a normal one, the healing of "hang-ups" in people Freud called "normally neurotic." It does not address chemical imbalance, or injury, disease or disorder. It is not meant as a substitute for treatment of these physiologically-based issues. Rather, it is a way to understand how emotion-packed experiences can give rise to inappropriate patterns of thought, feeling and behavior, and how that situation can be corrected so that old trauma becomes valuable experience instead. Since I model the process as the resumption of interrupted normal learning, any disorder that affects normal learning could affect healing as well.

FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS

A word to those of you who might wonder whether reading an author who lacks your education might not be a waste of time. Certainly it would be if I tried to talk about mental disorder or disease, but I don't. Nor do I offer theories on the organization of the psyche. Brains are beyond me. But I have mastered the very normal process of integrating painful experience. In particular, I have worked for 35 years in the area of emotional healing deep enough to change a person forever. As both helper and helped, I have come to understand the process as a whole and the place of various techniques within it.

As the person being healed, I have gotten some help from psychotherapists, but not at the level of transformation. *That* help has been given for love rather than money.

And this is the great advantage that we have, we with no license to lose. The friend who held me while I thrashed and screamed out my deepest pain was trained as a lay helper. We traded roles, not money, with each taking a turn as listener and speaker. Being peers and friends, we were free to touch and to help in whatever way worked.

We amateurs have other advantages as well. We are free to talk about spirituality with no fear of elevating one religion over another. We simply offer our own views for what they are worth. Professionals can do the same, of course, but many of those I have met avoid it.

And because I work for free, I work only with highly motivated people.

The result is a deep, narrow understanding. I hope you find it as useful as I have.

Chapter 1

A Model of Healing

*See how the children
do the great work as they play.
From wonder into wonder,
see how they grow so much every day.*

—*Stephen Longfellow Fiske*

Have you ever told yourself, "There is no reason to be scared on Friday when I meet So-and-so", and then been scared on Friday?

Have you ever yelled at the kids and then remembered that you had decided not to yell at the kids anymore?

Have you ever tried to enjoy an outing and noticed that trying is not very enjoyable?

If you've done any of these things, you may wonder about the process by which feelings change. Feelings do change. This chapter describes the process, and shows how to foster it, what resources it needs, what one can do to help oneself. I came up with this view of change to accurately describe my own transformation and the change I've helped others make. It's not the only possible description of emotional change, but it's one that shows what helps and what gets in the way.

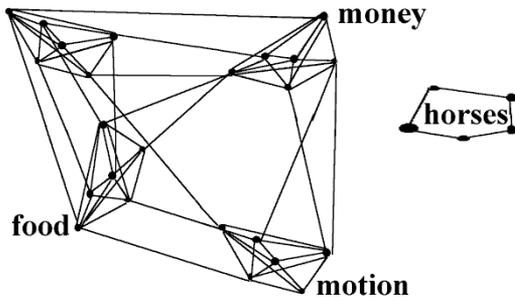
It's natural for feelings to change: The shy two-year-old grows into Mighty Kid. The divorcé feels hopeless the first month and next time you see her, she's ready to party. It's a natural process. That doesn't mean we can command it.

Growing sunflowers is a natural process. Did you ever set a sunflower seed on the counter and command it, "Grow!?" But many of us approach our feelings almost that way: "Guilt, be gone!" When I got a bit more sophisticated, I stopped shouting and started informing it in a civilized voice that it was irrational and expected to leave. I don't know about your guilt, but mine stares at me with beady little eyes.

No, I don't command growth. But I can nurture it. I can plant the seeds and water them, so long as I know what fertilizes them and what poisons them. A particular seed might or might not grow, but the more I nurture the process, the more growth I get, the more harmony and peace—and sunflowers.

I'll start this model of healing by describing the process of change when everything goes well, then compare that to the case where something goes wrong. The smooth-sailing case is just normal learning, much of it in the social realm. This is the growing up that children do.

Normal learning is a process of mental integration. Below I've drawn two mental networks (*not* neural networks—this is just a model, not a physical description), the one on the left well-integrated and the one on the right, isolated. The nodes represent perceptions, thoughts, feelings and memories. The lines are connections, such as associating tortillas with that nummy taste.



Well- and poorly-integrated networks

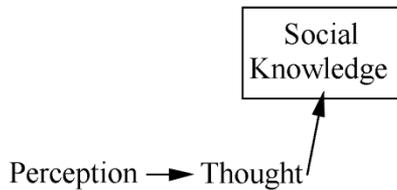
You can get from anywhere to anywhere in the well-integrated network. When I'm balancing my checkbook, my attention might rove around the sub-net labeled "money," but I can consider food if I need to. I can consider whether my expenditures for food could be reduced, because the two sub-nets are well connected. By contrast, the suggestion of the isolated network is that, while my attention is occupied with horses, I can't think about anything else. Maybe I'm so scared of horses that when I see one I can't even move.

I'll draw a network to describe a hypothetical experience. It starts with little Tommy saying, "Mom, let me help. I'm big enough to get the groceries for you." Mom gives him the list, drops him at the store, and says, "I'll pick you up in an hour."

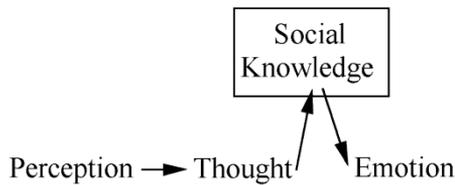
Now Tommy is standing in line with a cart full of groceries and a heart full of pride. What he will later call an "experience" begins with a perception: someone steps in line in front of him.

Perception

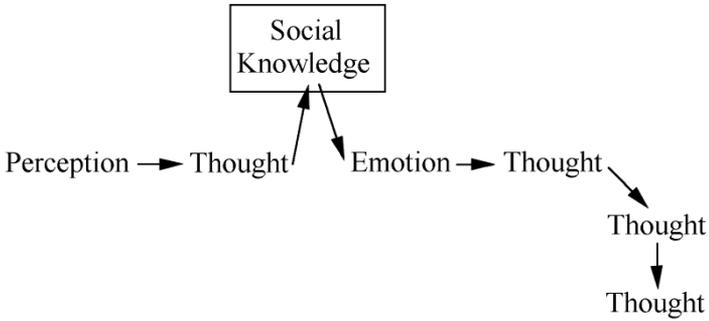
Tommy needs to understand the social meaning of his perception: what does it mean for the shopper to step in front of him? So the next event in this chain is a thought. Tommy consults his store of social knowledge and decodes the message.



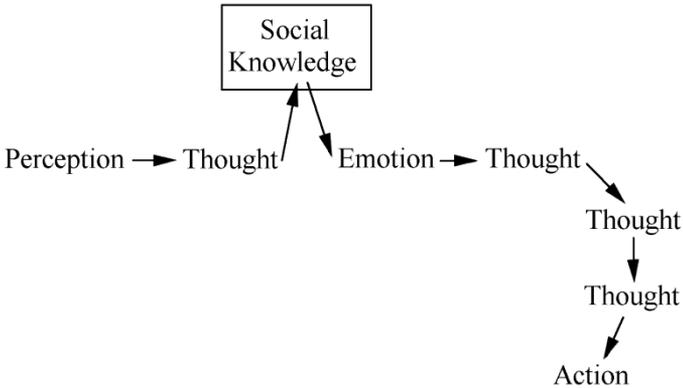
The answer he gets triggers some emotions, the next event in this experience. He might feel surprised, angry or alarmed.



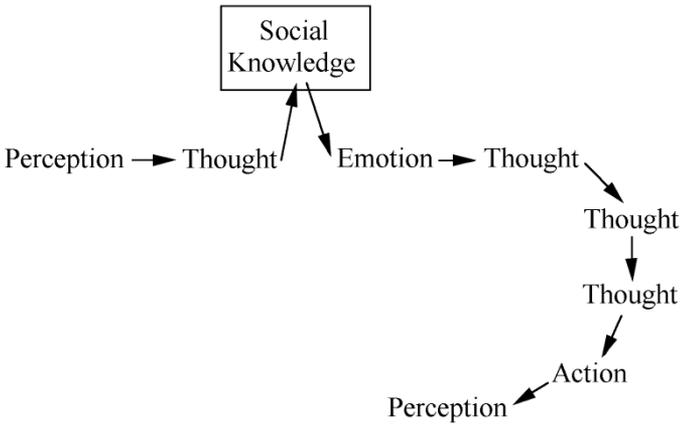
He thinks about what to do.



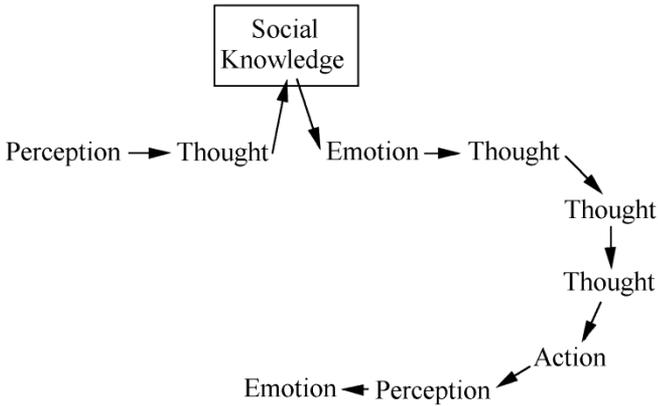
He decides to take action: he says, "Excuse me, I'm in line here."



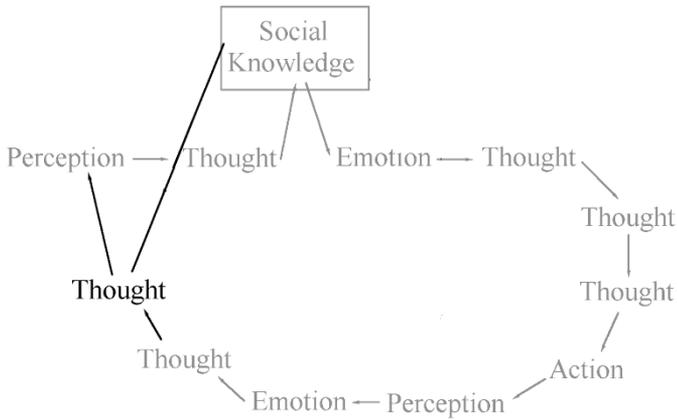
Now he'll watch for the response. His perception is of the person who has stepped in front of him saying, "Oh, sorry," and stepping behind.



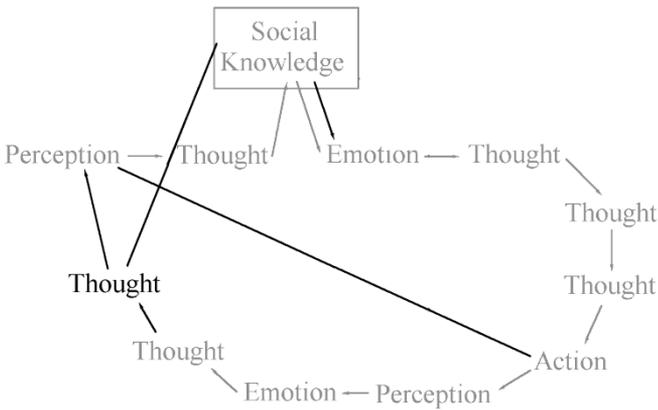
After decoding this message he has some more feelings, perhaps of elation, relief, or even pride.



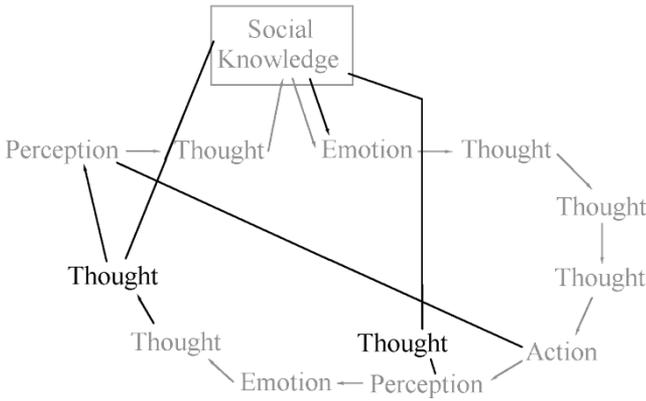
His thought that everything is now as it should be ends the chain of events he calls an experience.



He thinks back over the events and realizes that he could skip the upset next time and go straight to the action.



And he notes that his original decoding of the shopper's action may have been inaccurate.



When Tommy tells the story to his mother, he will make even more connections. This is normal learning, the integration of new experience with everything he already knows. Attention can get in and out of the memory or any part of it. Tommy need not remember the whole incident in order to remember what action to take next time. What he learned will be accessible in the future, and he can use it in a flexible way because new mental paths, such as the one from "Perception" to "Action," can be made.

Now let's take the case when things don't go so smoothly. What happens when the integration process gets stuck or aborted? Suppose someone steps in front of me while I'm waiting in line at the grocery.

Perception

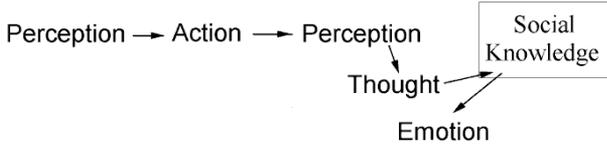
I know what to do, so I say, "Excuse me, I'm in line here."

Perception → Action

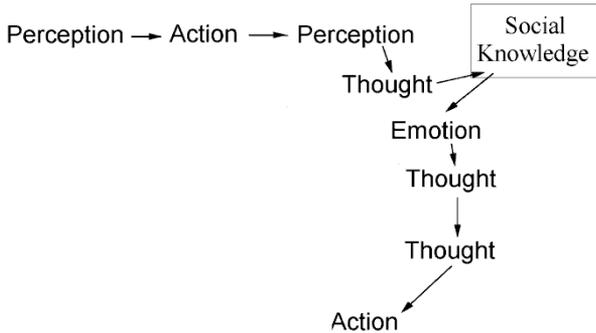
But instead of the expected reaction, I perceive the elder in front of me say, "You blithering idiot! Can't you see I'm old and crippled? I can't stand here in pain while you get all those groceries!"

Perception → Action → Perception

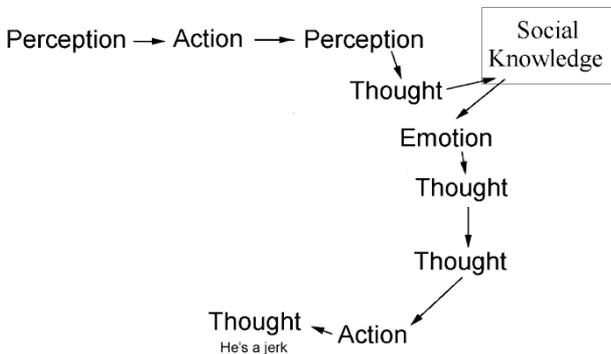
After consulting my social knowledge, I have lots of feelings!



I think what to do, and decide on the action of saying nothing.

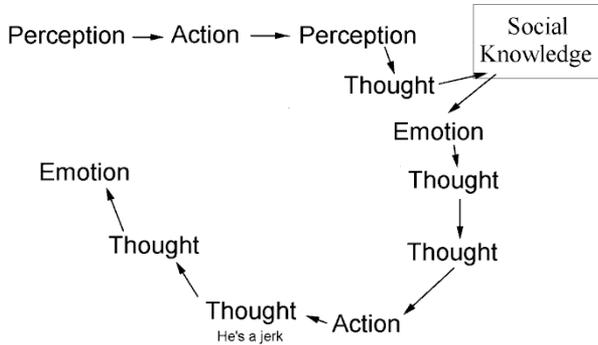


But I continue thinking, while standing in line, and mostly I think, "What a jerk! If he'd asked politely I'd have been happy to let him in..."

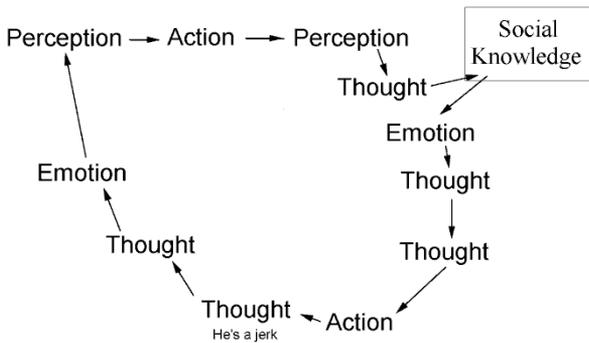


I wonder if there isn't something I could say to make a more graceful shopper out of him, but conclude that there is not. That

gives rise to a feeling of frustration.



It also sends me thinking back over the events, looking for what went wrong or what I could have done differently. I come to the same conclusion as the first time, resulting in the



same frustration, and another trip around the memory loop. In fact, I'm caught in this loop: my attention continues to go over the events, even though I get more angry and frustrated each time I hit those "Emotion" nodes. By the time I get to the checker, steam is coming out my ears.

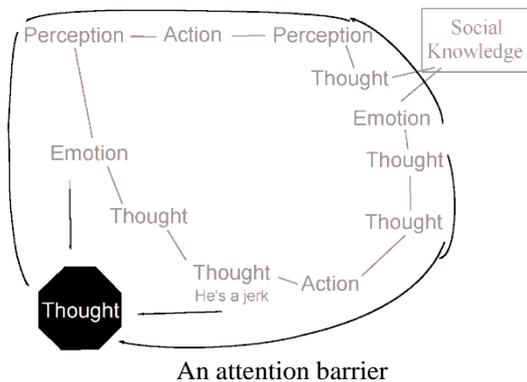
I'm not learning. I'm engraving the same set of mental connections deeper and deeper, but I'm not making new ones. When I get home and my family sees me going around and around, they might think I'm indulging—indulging the anger and

frustration. Indulging is where you do, feel, and think the same thing each time attention runs the network, because there is only one pathway through it. It is not integrated with everything else you know.

I've drawn this network as a loop, but isolated networks don't have to be loops. A straight path would mean that I did not obsess about the incident, but if it is an isolated network, I won't have flexible behavior. Nor will I have easy access to the information in the memory because it is hard to get to—not connected to other things I know—and because I'll have to run the whole network to get any piece of it.

Suppose my spouse watches me run this raceway a few times and then says, "Riven, you've been obsessing about this for two hours. That shopper is home enjoying his pizza, and you're subjecting yourself to his unkind remarks over and over again. Why don't you just stop?"

What an idea! I could stop:

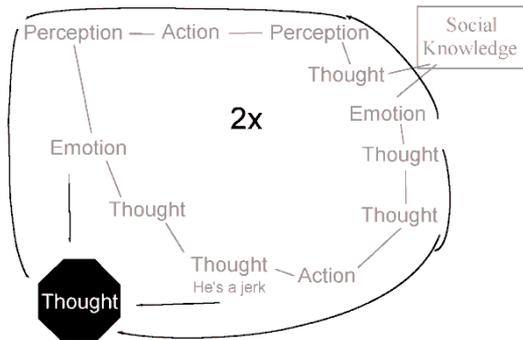


I use the idea of stopping to withdraw attention from the memory. Every time I find myself rehashing, I build a mental connection to the idea of stopping. Eventually, I've built a barrier that keeps attention out. This is a relief from indulging, and I might call it "coping." But learning is now impossible; the network will remain isolated.

Suppose I'm shopping the next Saturday morning, when—would you believe it?—some guy steps in line in front of me! I

wasn't going to let my attention back into that memory, but this trigger is too strong. Once inside, there is only one path, and I run it at the speed of thought. Before I'm even conscious of what has happened, I've hit the anger and frustration nodes and concluded that he's a jerk. I yell, "You can't do that! Don't tell me you're in pain. I can see you have no excuse so just get to the back of the line!"

Shoppers behind me are wondering what this lady's problem is. They think I have a problem. I don't think I have a problem; I just think he's a jerk. And I won't think I have a problem even if this becomes a pattern for me: every act that can be construed as rude triggers the anger and the frustration that I can't do anything about all these jerks. The pattern is behind that attention barrier, and so is the fact that I've now played out the same pattern. Even though it felt like coping, I'm going to call this situation "denial."



The fact of repetition is occluded

Denial comes from an isolated mental network. Attention is usually outside the barrier and can't easily get in to retrieve information. So, in the future, I don't just remember that shoppers in pain can seem rude; I would have to traverse the entire network to fetch that one fact, and in the process I would hit the emotion nodes again. To avoid that, I simply leave the fact behind its barrier and fail to learn.

Denial produces thoughts, feelings and behavior on a pattern, a pattern often inappropriate to the new situation. The fact that response follows a pattern is, itself, occluded. When attention does

get inside the memory, getting it out again might be difficult, as though it were caught in a loop.

I've drawn this barrier to look impervious, as though I completely forgot the first shopping trip. But networks can be partially isolated (or poorly integrated). Perhaps I remember that something unpleasant happened but never think about what or why. This was the case for me with many childhood memories. I lived for decades with the childhood conclusion that I was naughty, but when I reviewed the events in my thirties, I saw that it was my parents being angry, rather than me being naughty, that had caused trouble. The attention barrier had kept me from reassessing, even though I had not completely blocked access to the memories.

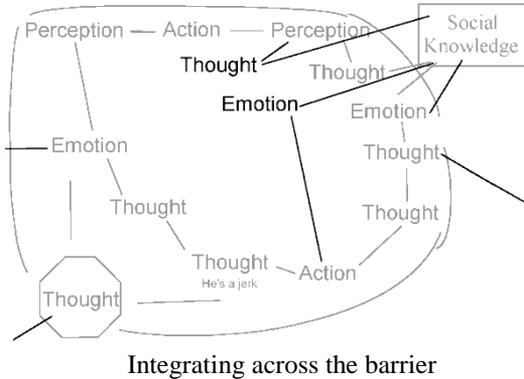
To return to hypothetical shopping: Although my conscious mind avoids the original memory, my unconscious runs the loop when the new incident occurs. Even if no thoughts or images come to conscious mind, my body is affected by the emotion nodes: adrenalin and vasodilators flood my blood stream. I'm cranked, but don't understand why. I'm just sure this new guy is a jerk.

You might know people who seem to have such patterned responses. "There he goes again." Or, "She always does this." We can see these emotional cysts pretty easily in others, but our own hide behind attention barriers; we just know there are a lot of jerks in the world.

So, in the store, I don't think I have a problem, and it will take something impressive to convince me. Suppose the man who stepped in front is the store manager, and all he was doing was speaking briefly to the checker. But my wild outburst makes him turn to me and say, "You have a problem. I can't have you exploding at my customers. Why don't you get your groceries somewhere else for awhile?"

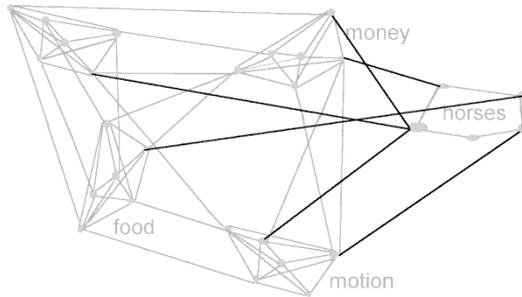
Whoa! Now I have a problem. I go to a therapist. The therapist has me debrief the original grocery-store experience. She helps me break through that barrier—my decision to withdraw attention—but once inside, she doesn't allow me to run the loop at the speed of thought. Instead, I run it at the speed of telling her the

story, which is quite slow to a mind. As I elaborate each event (including the thoughts and feelings, because the therapist asks me about them), my attention dwells at that node long enough to make new mental connections. This is just how our minds work: wherever attention dwells, we make new connections. Most of my new connections cross the barrier into the rest of my thinking. A few build new pathways within the network:



This is called healing: the resumption of normal learning. Normal learning can now proceed because the barrier is broken down: I'm no longer afraid to think about the event, because I have more than one path to think along. I might think, *Ok, he was a jerk, but there are lots of those around. I better not worry about it.* Or perhaps I think, *I needed to say something just for my self-esteem. Maybe I should have said, 'You're welcome to go in front, but I deserve the courtesy of your asking.'* With these paths available to my attention, I don't need to run in circles getting more and more upset.

If we pull back a bit from this picture, we can compare it to the earlier drawing of integrated versus isolated networks. My shopping experience was isolated, as was the network labeled horses. Healing is the process of making new connections to integrate it:



Isolated network now integrated

My reaction becomes flexible, no longer patterned, because I can make new connections as needed. And information inside the network is now accessible from outside. This is especially important if I've left some essential piece of my humanity behind that barrier and lost access to it. For example, suppose that Mom doesn't give me some attention that I need when I'm three years old. I feel betrayed. I'm afraid to tell her so, and without her help, I'm not able to resolve the issue. I withdraw attention from it. In doing so, I lose access to some of my ability to trust. Later, life will keep pushing me to recover my full ability to trust. Every intimate relationship will rub the old wound. I need to heal this one. Coping would be adequate for memories that don't contain any essential part of my humanity, but only healing will reclaim it from those that do.

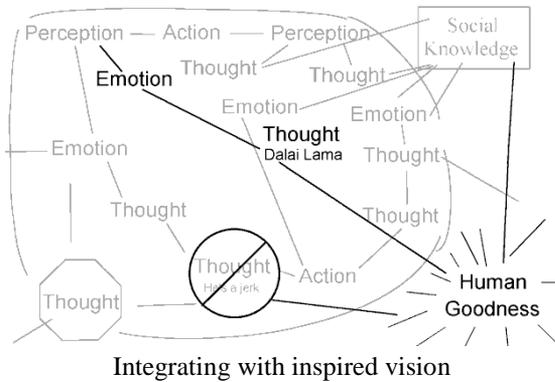
Indulgence and healing share the characteristic that both cause us to feel the feelings. The person feeling them recognizes a profound difference in the two: indulgence is characterized by frustration, while healing produces new insight, understanding and harmony. But to an on-looker, the two processes might look alike. I believe that is one reason friends will often discourage us from the healing we need to do: they mistake it for indulgence.

And the fear of indulgence is well-founded. But for the therapist slowing me down, I would likely indulge (run the raceway too fast to integrate) in the example above. So, an important point to note about healing is that it requires new

resources. A therapist is one example of a resource, but friends, ideas, new experiences, new understanding, increased tolerance for feelings, better emotional support, and new tools such as a journal, can all be resources.

Suppose that I'm now able to shop with civility and tell the therapist I'm done, but she thinks otherwise. Perhaps I admire the Dalai Lama, so she asks, "Now what would you have done that first day if His Holiness had been in line behind you?"

She is using the Dalai Lama as a symbol to access my vision of human goodness. And she has now directed me to make mental connections between that vision and the memory of the incident. I find it hard to think about, but finally I realize I wouldn't call the elder a jerk, even silently. I wouldn't want to think such a thing in the presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who doesn't believe there are any jerks. And in my exalted world view, neither do I. Ok. What would I do? You know, if His Holiness was in line behind me, I'd be glad to stand there longer and chat with him. The more people who cut in front of me the better!



This is spiritually-assisted emotional healing, the integration of the experience with a spiritual perspective. It produces the best outcomes because it opens the door to that inspired vision. When I have that vision conscious, I bring out the best in myself, and I tend to bring out the best in the others as well (because we draw each other into whatever perspective we are keeping conscious).

This is where the win-win outcomes and the transcendent feats come from. It's the well of human genius from which Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. drew. It is not a recipe for handling conflict, but a restoration of our full, potent humanity. With robust access to inspired vision, we can create new solutions and choose optimum strategies. We can use all the experience we have, because it is not hidden behind attention barriers. When we take our healing to this level, we end up better off than if the problem had never happened in the first place.

You might be wondering whether Tommy will make the connections into his spiritual understanding that I made into mine. Children have an intuitive understanding of human goodness and naturally integrate their experiences with that understanding. Adults bring more of that understanding into consciousness, putting more of it into words. And that richer cognitive structure makes for more connections when meeting challenges. Therefore, integration that was aborted and later resumed makes us "strong at the broken places," as the saying goes. The adult connections to articulated spiritual principles are more robust and versatile than the natural connections to intuition of those principles. The childhood learning might make for a happy, well-adjusted adult, but the adult learning might make for a powerful spiritual leader.

To be more general about the process of spiritually-assisted emotional healing, the steps involved are to locate the mental network in need of integration, to make the inspired view of human goodness salient, and to traverse the isolated network slowly while making mental connections to the inspired view.

I said that the model would show how to foster healing. One does that by building up the resources that healing needs. A well-articulated spiritual view is a resource because the more one keeps values in (conscious) mind, the more available they are to connect to emotional challenges. The more one thinks about spirituality—the things all humans care about and how those things operate in our lives and our relationships—the more accessible the vision is during integration of old memories.

A second resource is skill in traversing a mental network

slowly, not racing to the next node at the speed of thought. Meditation develops this skill more than any other practice, even practice at emotional healing. This is one of many ways that spiritual practice and emotional work support each other.

Even without the training of meditation, a person can slow down enough for healing if he has friends to help, or devices such as writing. Friends can also help him to tolerate the feelings he encounters in the memories. Any pain is easier to take in the arms of someone you love. Letting himself cry or laugh also lets him dwell at the emotion nodes, not having to jump to the next node because he can't stand the feeling without crying or laughing. So a support network is another resource.

MORE ABOUT WELL- VS. POORLY-INTEGRATED NETWORKS

Let me make this idea of networks more concrete by contrasting well- with poorly-integrated networks. For most of us, vocabulary is a well-integrated network. We can get to exactly the word we want without going through the dictionary to find it. We can name fruits, think of rhymes, choose words that begin with "D", etc. Many connections, many entries and exits in this spider web of words.

By contrast, few of us can recite the third line of our favorite poem without going through the first two (at least silently) to get there. Singing the middle of a song or naming the letter before K in the alphabet can be similarly difficult. When I learn a song, I want the mental representation of it to be a necklace, not a web. I want to always go to the next word, not some other word that isn't in the song. The lyrics form a single pathway and any divergence is a mistake. I don't want that pathway integrated, and I'm willing to hum the entire first half of the song every time I need to get to the second half. That's the price I pay for keeping it free of mistakes.

Imagine the difficulty I would have if my whole vocabulary were structured like the alphabet song. I could not speak at the speed we converse. I'd have trouble understanding what others say. I would be seriously handicapped. If you've ever known someone with severe dyslexia or a brain injury that impairs access

to their vocabulary, you may have seen what a hardship it can be. This is the hardship many of us unknowingly harbor in some realm or another. Some of us just can't seem to be truthful and others have lost access to their natural respect. We forget our love of family and attack our spouses until they, too, forget their love. When faced with problems that need careful consideration, we eat. These handicaps are just as great as brain injury, but they are curable by integrating the memory where honesty or respect are trapped.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE MODEL

The model has some important implications. Some of them may ring true to you, others you might want to verify for yourself.

- We help each other heal by listening. Freud emphasized the role of the therapist in finding the memory on which current problems are patterned, but I seem more importance in the therapist helping the client integrate that memory by revisiting it at the speed of speech. Finding the original memory is best, but that is neither sufficient nor essential. Knowing the cause without integrating can bring more frustration than change. And where the memory remains occluded, help can still be had by integrating thoughts and feelings it produced.

- In the example above, the original memory was easy to find. When faced with inappropriate feelings, the source might not be obvious. In fact, much of what therapists do is look for the source.

Patterned response springs from existing mental nodes; therefore, a connection must exist in the mind. The source can be found by working backward. If the conscious mind cannot accomplish this, the unconscious can (since it produced the response by going from source to result).

- The other important task of a therapist is to help the client surmount the barrier to getting attention into a protected network. To the client, this feels like reliving the event, with feelings as intense as during the event.

Friends don't usually help us relive trauma. Unless we

have explicitly discussed healing and understand each other to want such help, it feels "unsupportive." We want others to give us sympathy for our suffering, which we use to keep the network isolated. We indulge or cope yet again and thank these "supportive" friends for their help.

- Coping is an easier response to indulgence than is healing, when the feelings involved are too big for one's resources. And coping is adequate when the memory does not contain anything we need to live a good life. When it does, we lose access—partly or wholly—to what's inside, e.g., the ability to trust. Healing then becomes the best choice, at which time coping works against us. And all our friends who want to see us cope better, inadvertently work against us. All the self-help books that urge better coping on us work against us. Even the therapist we hoped would help might be working against us (in which case, you might want to recommend this book).

- While professionals need to be careful not to push their religious beliefs, the power in universal spiritual values is too great, in my opinion, to leave out of psychotherapy. When clients are encouraged to develop their own understanding, using their own symbols and beliefs, that spiritual growth is a resource that fosters change of the deepest issues.

- What we sometimes call "resistance" is actually a lack of resources for healing. When resources become available, a mentally-normal person will spontaneously resume the work that was aborted in past.

- Emotional healing is currently more hit-and-miss than it needs to be. Theories like the Oedipus Complex can distract from the basic work of integrating past experience. Such ideas can be helpful to some people some times but do not substitute for a focus on the mechanics of healing. Conversely, when a sufferer sees that her gentlest option is to embrace feelings without indulging them, she can put her pain to good use. Her effort can go toward permanent liberation rather than managing pain.

- Lay people and professionals, alike, mistake coping with a memory for healing it. Some also mistake healing it for

indulging it. With clear distinctions, we can keep ourselves, and those we help, on track. And we can stop discouraging others from the healing work they need to do.

Chapter 2

How Therapy Works

Because the model described in Chapter 1 is broad, high-level, and robust, it provides a structure for understanding the otherwise-disjointed array of therapeutic techniques. For example, debriefing helps a client integrate an accessible memory; body work can give access to an occluded memory; and free-association can help locate the memory that gives rise to current feelings. The resulting organization of techniques can help in choosing the best tool for the job at hand.

The model describes a normal process in mentally-normal people. It does not attempt to handle psychosis or any organic disorder. It is limited to what Freud called the "normally neurotic." Below is an accounting of techniques that can help the normally neurotic accomplish one or more of the tasks called out in the model, that is,

- identify problems,
- locate the mental network in need of integration,
- get access to the network,
- make the inspired view of human goodness salient,
- traverse the isolated network slowly while making mental connections to the inspired view,
- develop infrastructure to support connections,
- develop resources, such as spiritual ideas or control of the attention.

TECHNIQUES

Debriefing

Debriefing is used for recent trauma. The network is known and available; all the person needs is help with controlling the attention and tolerating the feelings. Integration occurs spontaneously when the listener provides enough of this help.

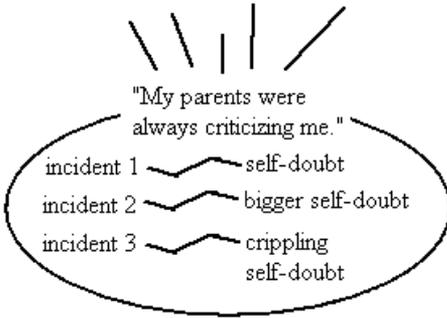
For example, rape victims who report their assault are sent to the ER, where a police officer takes down the details of what

happened. When I was there as an advocate, I would help in this process, often gently guiding the victim into the most painful part, the part she would skip over if left to her own devices. Telling me, remembering, she would cry in this environment where I cared about her and had come in the middle of the night for the purpose of putting power into her choices—the opposite of the powerlessness she has just experienced. By the time we parted, several hours later, the woman who had looked devastated when I arrived usually gave me a shaky smile.

Talking

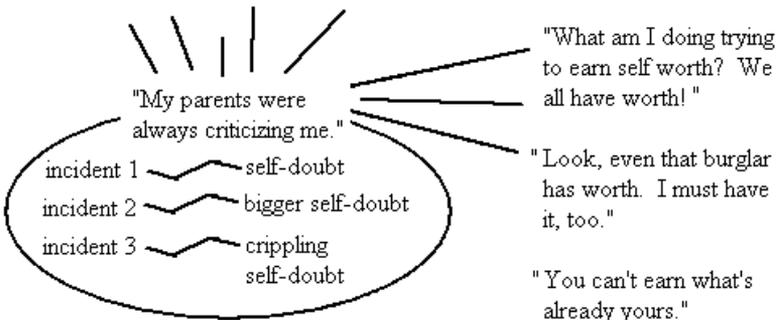
If debriefing is the heart of therapy, talking is the body. Talking to find the memory in need of debriefing, talking to help surmount the barrier (and then face the feelings inside), talking to slow network traversal and make connections, talking to build cognitive infrastructure. Any helper, professional or otherwise, has a perspective outside the sufferer's denial. Therapists also have knowledge about other people with the same type of problem, they have the commitment needed to surmount attention barriers, and they use talking to distinguish the normally neurotic from those suffering some other problem, such as chemical imbalance.

Let me give a simplistic example to show what I mean by talking to "building cognitive infrastructure." Suppose I need to heal some self-doubt acquired when my parents told me I wasn't good enough. I've drawn it below in abbreviated form, with three memories enclosed behind a barrier tied to the thought, "My parents were always criticizing me." This thought is available for daily use, but the memories that led to it are not. In particular, the catastrophic self-doubt is kept safely behind the barrier:



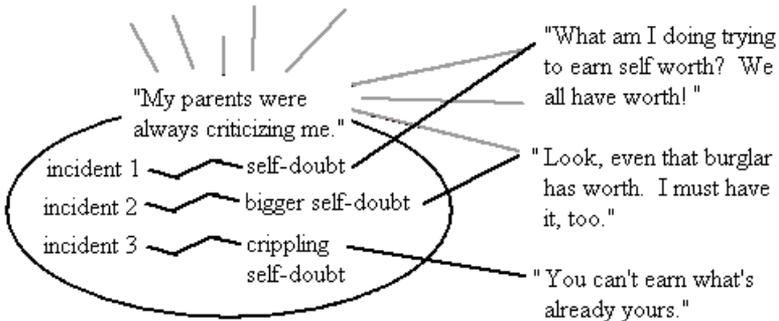
Memories represented by an idea

Facing that doubt is a big job. Before I'm ready to tackle it, I can help myself by asking what I really believe about worth. Is it earned? Or are we all already worthy?



Building infrastructure

When I'm ready to face the old memories, this thinking will be available for considering the issues that I didn't master in childhood.



Tying in to new infrastructure

The caveat is that I can mistake the thinking—the building of infrastructure—for healing. The thinking does not recover the natural self-confidence that was occluded with the memory. In fact, it can reinforce the attention barrier if I think I'm done with the issue and need never return.

Books on specific problems

While therapists use debriefing to get to the heart of a problem, they often use books to build understanding around a problem. Books on specific problems can help the reader identify patterns in his own feelings, thoughts and behavior. That is, they can expose denial. The patterns then provide a focus for healing work. In my hypothetical example of Chapter 1, this would be the step in which the store manager tells me I have a problem and I recognize the need to pay attention to this issue.

The specific problem detailed in a book might flag an idea that the reader used to organize an attention barrier, much as I used the idea "I could stop" in the previous chapter. My example assumed the decision was conscious and pretty straightforward. But children might unconsciously adopt beliefs that can be very troublesome later on. For example, "My feelings harm others," might provide the organization for an attention barrier enclosing any expression of emotion. When a person grows up and wonders why life seems so gray and flat, reading a book that specifically addresses the belief that feelings do harm could provide what

seems like a magic key. With the barrier identified, the reader can then set about crossing it.

Books might also help the reader look for the original incident by citing the sorts of conditions that commonly give rise to this particular pattern, something therapists also do. It is even possible the reader will get access to the network because the book has pointed out the drawbacks of the pattern under discussion. Seeing these, the reader might be motivated to take on the feelings contained in the original memory. And ideas presented, such as, "It isn't your fault you have this pattern," may become resources that make the old feelings easier to tolerate.

If the reader still lacks sufficient resources to fully integrate, then he might build infrastructure without actually reliving the incident. He'll have more mental connections *around* the memory without having them *into* the memory. These additional connections can give him more choice about how to respond when the feelings are triggered, but do not release anything that might be bound up inside the memory.

Books are not the only triggers that can cause an adult to revisit childhood experiences that she now has the resources to heal. Friends, family and life experiences can also trigger the work. And books on more generalized psychological theories, rather than specific problems, might also trigger some work by providing new cognitive structure and inviting the reader to explore what issues it helps them integrate.

For example Transactional Analysis is a generalized theory that describes three aspects of one's personality: parent, child, and adult. The discussion might cause the reader to reflect on ways she betrays her values (adult) with thoughts (parent) or feelings (child) that need attention. Notice that such a theory does not need to be correct in order to be helpful. The mind is very skilled at using ideas, models, analogies and symbols. So ideas like Transactional Analysis can be helpful models without being true theories.

Venting

Venting is a familiar tool both in therapy and elsewhere. It's the release of strong emotion that is natural to children but which we learn to control for social reasons. When we control it by

withdrawing attention from the feelings, we abort our learning/integration. As children stop venting, they lose tolerance for the feelings, so resuming this therapeutic process restores tolerance. Healing can then proceed more easily. The term "venting" implies that one does one's yelling, crying or whatever where it won't have unfortunate social impacts.

Catharsis

Venting is a form of catharsis, the relief of strong emotions. Catharsis helps because strong emotion is usually what interfered with learning (integrating) originally, either because it overwhelmed the person or because they had to stop the display of emotion at the insistence of onlookers. By bringing attention to the emotion and allowing it to dwell there, catharsis dispenses with the biggest challenge inside the network. Once the emotion is tolerable (connected to a sense of compassion, comfort, or love), the attention can traverse the rest of the network freely. I know of only one hazard in this approach: too narrow a focus. If the attention is held on the emotion and not allowed to wander the paths around it, a person can stay stuck on that feeling without much progress. I have seen this happen to a few people who viewed painful emotion as reservoirs that needed to be drained. Having seen their results, I doubt the reservoir theory.

Free association

When the client tells the psychiatrist every thought that comes to mind, they call it free association. It makes mental connections conscious by saying aloud the thoughts that normally remain in the background. When the connection from the presenting problem to the memory that caused it is unconscious, free association might help locate it. As connections are made conscious, they can be integrated.

Dreams

The unconscious supplies answers to the questions the conscious mind poses, often as intuition or inspiration. But answers can also come in dreams. If you follow the thread of a dream that seems important, it sometimes takes you to a memory that needs integration or an insight that shows you where to look.

For spiritually assisted healing, dreams are a great source of symbols that already mean something to you. You can use them to enter exactly the paths you need to traverse.

Alternating bilateral stimulation

EMDR is the most familiar form of alternating bilateral stimulation, a technique in which sensory stimulus is provided to alternating sides of the body for about 1 second at a time. Various protocols exist for what the client says or does during this treatment, with the aim of opening access to feelings or memories that are causing problems, and then reducing the emotional pain once the material is engaged.

The mechanism by which this trick works is not understood, so all I can do is guess. My guess is that the stimulation interrupts too-fast traversal of a network, opening a window for connections to be made at the point of interruption. If the network was unconscious, a new connection might simply bring the interruption point into consciousness. If it was too well guarded, perhaps the physical stimulus can enter where a therapist's words cannot. I'm postulating that attention is forced to jump the barrier that protects the network by being drawn to some other part of the mind.

Body work

Some people report that body work brings to consciousness memories that have been causing problems. This could result from the triggering of a little used—and therefore unguarded—entry point into the memory. If the person is ready to embrace the emotions there, especially if he is already working to heal the effects of experiences he "knows about" but does not specifically remember, this access can be a great boon to the process.

Desensitization

A phobia might be a very simple network: the sight of a spider leads straight to fear. Even the thought of a spider leads straight to fear; there are no other connections in the network, or none that are accessible. The sufferer goes for desensitizing treatment. This treatment builds a scaffolding of connections around the network; perhaps the word "spider" can sustain attention without triggering panic. Perhaps a place where spiders sometimes visit, but is

spider-free today. This mental scaffolding provides many connection points when the person is ready to turn attention to the idea of a spider. Resources are arranged to pull attention away from fear as soon as the network is triggered. Little by little, connections are made.

Art

Since most of the injunctions given to children by adults come in the form of words, access to a memory by verbal paths might be well guarded. Art therapy can give access by non-verbal paths. In my own work on childhood trauma, I found that an internal censor forbade me from telling certain stories and would punish me if I did. Yet I could draw, write or act out the same stories, or drop enough hints to let another person guess, all without backlash. Art is also an easy medium for introducing new elements to a network: just draw in a fairy godmother or other symbol of spiritual power.

Journal

Writing in a journal serves some of the functions of a listener: it slows network traversal and tends to interrupt repetitive, unproductive talking. It can help the writer get a bigger perspective on her patterns of thought, feeling and behavior: she traverses the usual paths when writing, but reads from a third person perspective in which the repeated problems are more obvious.

Writing can also force connections between thoughts the writer otherwise keeps compartmentalized. For example, I once made an appointment with someone to discuss what boundaries I wanted her to observe in our relationship. I wrote out my requests beforehand and brought the list with me to our discussion. Once there, I came under the sway of her perspective, which was that my requests were completely unreasonable. Only the fact that they stared up at me from the paper kept me from abandoning the discussion altogether.

This review of psychotherapeutic methods is meant to be diverse rather than exhaustive. You may not see your favorite technique here, but that doesn't mean you can't fit it to the model.

If you're a psychotherapist, you probably already have a palette of techniques that complement each other and an intuitive clarity about which to use in a given situation. Nevertheless, the notion that healing is a natural process is useful to psychology for the same reasons it is useful to medicine. In both cases, the helper's job is to assist the process, removing obstacles and boosting needed resources, then step aside and let nature do her work.

CONCEPTS

If the model can make sense of disparate approaches in psychotherapy, what can it do with disparate concepts? For me personally, I find ways to understand phenomena such as multiple personality disorder without having to debate whether or not a person can have more than one personality. Starting with this example, here are some concepts that follow naturally from the model:

Multiple "personalities" are simply isolated networks. Instead of being small networks like the ones discussed so far, these are extensive networks that provide all the knowledge to function in the world and yet do not connect with each other.

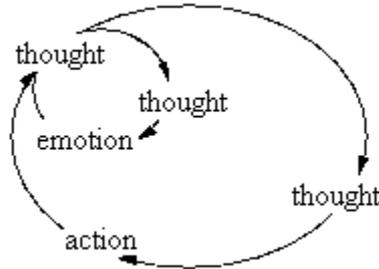
Repression simply describes an isolated network: a repressed memory has not been accessed since the event happened.

Dissociation, or "spacing out," can be accounted for when the attention gets inside a network with few or no exits. It is trapped inside until some strong stimulus—probably sensory—pulls the attention elsewhere. The connotation here is that the network itself is not conscious or not very conscious—the person's recollection of where his attention was might be vague or missing.

By contrast, *obsession* corresponds to attention trapped on a loop that is conscious. I suspect that some elements can be conscious while others are not, easy enough to believe when you consider the speed of thought and how many networks might be visited in the simple conscious act of catching a ball.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder would result from a loop with some behavior in it. You might think that having to act would slow down traversal of the network. But perhaps attention cycles in a small loop containing anxiety or something of the sort, and

when the bodily state is too aroused for the person to tolerate, he reduces the anxiety with the behavior:



Network that could produce OCD. The inner circle (obsession) is traversed many times, building tension, before the outer loop (compulsion) is executed to relieve the tension.

Here is a scenario that could go with this explanation: A child decides that the way to forestall the wrath of the gods is meticulous attention to detail. The activity distracts attention from the anxiety of living with unpredictable gods, even though it does nothing to reduce their wrath. Later, the habit of attending to detail is rewarded with success, praise from bosses, and promotions. When the gods are angry, the behavior can get extreme, but it isn't until the divorce that it really gets out of hand. Now, instead of working through the anxiety of losing his wife, this man distracts himself by checking that he locked the door, checking that he turned on the porch light, checking that he shut off the garden hose...over and over. In his unconscious, the old memories keep getting triggered and offering their old conclusion to his conscious mind: that meticulous checking is necessary or bad things will happen. In his conscious mind, he simply asks whether he has turned everything on or off as it needs to be. Since the anxiety remains, he's never sure he's done everything he should have, so periodically he does it all again.

Transference is wiring in a new trigger to old feelings. When the new trigger is a therapist, she can use her relationship to the client to get access to the network that trips him up in daily life. Integration of that network can make a big difference in someone's

life, even if the details of the pattern's origin remain obscure. The reason is that the pattern is doing so much harm that it is a bigger issue than whatever remains occluded in the original memories.

This fitting of psychological ideas and practices with the model suggests ways to use the methods, by reviewing the overall process of healing and considering where it needs a boost. The model also says something about a typical frustration with psychotherapy: finding what appears to be the source of a problem without relieving the problem. Clients will sometimes say that they see the connection with their heads but don't feel it in their hearts. The model suggests, to me, two explanations for this phenomenon. One possibility is that attention does not traverse the original network. The client does not relive the event, embracing the emotions in it while supported by the therapist. Perhaps resources are still too limited for that, especially with feelings so big that physical contact is needed for adequate support.

Another reason I've encountered for feelings not changing even when I "know" where the problem comes from, is that I'm wrong. My identified source might seem sufficient to the intellect without being the direct cause of the feelings. When I have set aside my thoughts and embraced my feelings, I have often discovered that some other incident or some other aspect of the known incident actually provides a way out of my dead-end analysis.

Freud discovered that integrating the original memory that serves as a template for current behavior brought permanent relief, where integrating thoughts regarding current behavior did not. Unfortunately, he focused on locating the memory rather than on integrating it. My view is that locating is very helpful but not essential, while integrating is essential—if not the original memory, then whatever associations are available.

You may be wondering whether the model applies to sociopaths or cynics, people who don't believe in human goodness and so can't tie in to such a view. Humans are built on a pattern: five fingers, bilateral symmetry, survival instinct. That pattern is clear despite variations, such as people born with six fingers. Tiny

babies focus attention on human faces, and that universal tendency shows what I'm calling a value. The child values seeing that face. Regardless of why people are built this way, we act as if we value some things more than others. We act to produce social harmony, health, and beauty. Feelings motivate these actions, which is a way of saying that our valuing presents itself through emotions. I feel delight when I give a gift that someone really enjoys. I value joy, so I delight in their joy.

In my definition of spirituality, I'm claiming that goodness is one of these universal human values. I think we could say that we define goodness as that which humans value. By definition, then, human goodness is part of the human pattern. It's part of our structure whether you believe in or not. The con man who violates people's trust—who does not seem to value trust—still shows an accurate understanding of trust, as demonstrated by his ability to manipulate it in others. Does he actually lack the value for trust, or does he act in violation of it?

I am told that some people are born different, some with no hands and some with no conscience. I haven't known such people myself, but I'm not a psychologist and can't speak to this claim. The destructive people I have known have had the same basic love of harmony and respect that the rest of us have, but they also have some ideas that cause their basic human motives to take a twisted path en route to behavior. For example, one such person I know acted in belligerent, even violent ways. His motive seemed to be fear and his actions counterproductive. But when you learn that he thought in terms of hierarchy and viewed it as his social responsibility to dominate others, his behavior makes more sense. I'm sure he had good reason for viewing the world as a hostile place, one in which the pre-emptive strike was his best protection. Perhaps he once lived in some small world where that was true.

This man is not interested in healing, so the question how to help him contact his native goodness doesn't arise. But his goodness is always there, giving rise to normal motives even if they manifest in destructive behavior.

We really don't know the limits of healing. It seems to me that

even people who need drug treatment would do well to unravel as much of their acquired difficulties as possible. Who knows how far it will take them toward happiness?

Psychotherapy, then, has accumulated many techniques to aid emotional healing. The next chapter discusses the contribution of spiritual practice, the other half of the marriage that is so much more powerful than either psychology or spirituality alone.

Chapter 3

Spiritual Practice and Healing

The primary interaction between spiritual perspective and emotional healing is that the more heartening perspective gives us something new to integrate old experience with. What's the point of resurrecting past issues if we can only come to the same cynical conclusions? To get the most from healing, we need an optimistic, heartfelt, and robust way of making sense of life.

For example, a friend of mine wants to heal his low self-esteem. Currently, he tries to do everything perfectly so as to assuage fears that he's not good enough. But the result is paralysis, not healing: he won't declare a fine water-color finished until it's perfect, but it never gets there. So he has lots of unfinished paintings and low self-esteem. He's not yet ready to tackle the old experiences that got him into this mess, because he doesn't yet have a spiritual view in which worth is inherent rather than earned. He'll probably need to adopt such a view and then tell all his friends that *their* worth is inherent rather than earned—that is, exercise the concept—before his new view will be robust enough to integrate old experiences into. If he tried to force his attention into the memories now, he might just decide that he really isn't good enough.

As the spiritual view gets stronger and we live in it more of the time, it becomes a more and more potent resource for healing. Old issues will come up because of this new resource and the potential healing it creates.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

In addition to this overall effect, various spiritual practices have their own specific effects. In particular, the effort to live according to one's values (possibly expressed as commandments or precepts) drives healing by demanding behavior change.

Other supportive practices include meditation, which trains the attention so that it can traverse a memory slowly enough for

integration; mindfulness, which exercises conscious action, breaking down the habitual behavior that springs from partially-isolated memories; prayer, which keeps the spiritual perspective salient, making connection into it easier and more likely. And any discipline that directs attention to a particular behavior will foster integration of that behavior (for example, giving as a spiritual practice).

Thus, spiritual practice both facilitates the work by providing resources, and demands that the work be done, for ethical reasons.

Ethical behavior

Obeying one's conscience, keeping the precepts, or following the commandments are all attempts to make one's behavior do justice to one's values. The injunctions of various religions—the precepts or commandments or guiding principles—try to put values into words. These statements of ethical values help show where behavior violates ethics, and therefore, what work needs to be done. I'm not following my guidance when I'm mindlessly re-enacting some old pattern. So cleaning up my behavior requires that I integrate those patterns.

There is really no way around this. I can beat myself up when I violate my ethics, exhort myself to do better, cover myself with shame, and still do the same old thing the next time because I simply don't think outside the mental raceway laid down so long ago. My bad deed is done before I realize it's bad.

Of course, I could deny that it is bad and keep it in a separate compartment of my mind—easy enough since that's where it tends to stay naturally. But if I'm serious about my spiritual growth, I'll foil that denial with critical self-examination, appeals to my guidance for correction, and input from other people. That's when I find out I have healing work to do.

An example is when a friend needed to discuss with me how I had spoken to a third party. This would have been appropriate and holy. But I couldn't listen because I wanted her to support what I had done; I had reached for new behavior and was too tentative to hear her doubts. If my fears hadn't drowned out my guidance, I would have recognized the need to hear her. Instead, all I recognized was threat.

I told myself it was okay, but it wasn't. And when I had to look at the resulting problem in our relationship, I told myself that it didn't come from that incident. She told me that it did, but every time I thought of the incident, all I remembered was why I cut her off. I had no attention to spare for her: what options that left her, what a bind I had put her in.

It wasn't until I developed more tolerance for my fears that I was able to go back over that incident without coming to the same conclusion. It's painful to recognize when I've hurt someone even though I did the best I could at the time. But the truth of my impact on her was worth the pain, because I could finally understand her perspective. I could finally apologize, even though I *had* done my best at the time. And I could see how important it was to keep the lines of communication open and to do the emotional work that would let them stay open. My values demanded it.

In addition to the occlusion of patterned responses, this self-deception owes something to perspective: we don't see ourselves as others see us until we make a deliberate effort to do so. When I started performing music, I was surprised at how many mistakes I made. I didn't notice them when I was just playing for myself, but when I listened to what the audience was hearing, I was more critical. I practiced doing this in order to be a better musician, and I take a third-person look at my social behavior in order to be a better human being. But, of course, I have to do this lovingly, or I'll stay in denial to avoid self-condemnation.

Meditation makes more healing possible

Meditation makes more healing possible by training the attention. Ordinarily, my attention is drawn to the loudest noise, the strongest feeling, brightest light—the high-volume event in the stream of experience. I don't decide ahead of time where it will go. The subconscious might make such decisions, but I don't consciously decide. When I first started meditating, my untrained attention ran along the tracks in my mind with enormous momentum. I could hardly stop myself from pursuing a thought. And when big feelings got triggered, I might stay trapped in them for hours.

Over time, meditation has given me more choice, more chance to pause and consider, more ability to drop a line of thinking when I decide to or step out of a self-perpetuating cycle of feelings and thoughts.

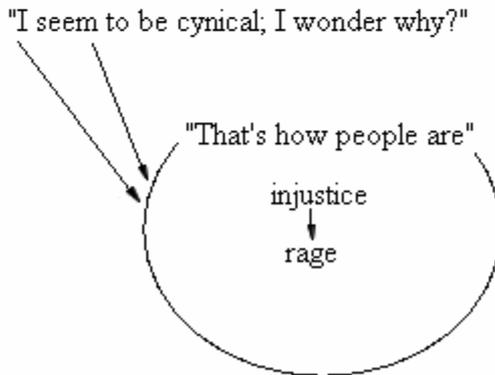
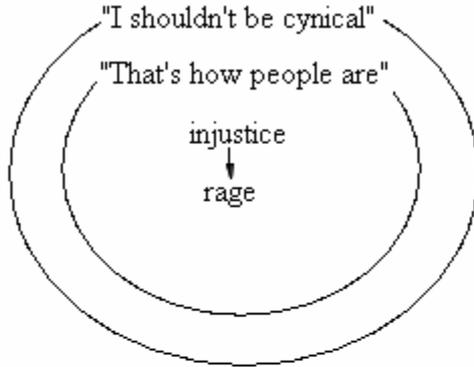
Here's how it works: Suppose you meditate by counting breaths. Every time you notice that your thoughts have wandered away, you return them to the breath. You don't take the next step in the chain of thoughts you had wandered into. Over and over, you practice not taking the next step in whatever mental track you're on.

This skill then carries over when you need to integrate an old memory: you are better able to not take the next step in the network of the memory. Instead of racing through, you can stop where you are, let your attention dwell, and integrate. When you're ready, you take the next step consciously, without losing control of the attention because you've developed some skill at this in your meditation practice.

That benefit comes regardless of what object you use for meditation, whether it's breath or something else. But another benefit that can come from some meditations is a perspective on your habitual mental processes. Suppose I meditate on the contents of mind, noting each thought, feeling or perception, without pursuing it, then noting the next. I get a panoramic picture of how often I feel slighted or how many different feelings get converted into anger. This perspective might come in handy next time I get angry off the cushion, because I suspect there might be more to the story than my usual assumption that the other guy is at fault. If I decide to investigate the origin of my anger, I'm helped by the overview I've gotten during meditation.

What I bring into consciousness this way is probably not the original cause of my troubles, but later mental habits. Maybe the original incident was one in which I felt angry but needed to repress that feeling. Later, I made a habit of avoiding anger, always taking a cynical detour around real rage. In meditation, I might notice the network of cynicism and realize that more investigation is called for. It's important, at that point, to go looking for the original cause and not make my new awareness

into another barrier surrounding cynicism:



In this example, the idea, "I shouldn't be cynical," becomes another barricade beyond the first one, whereas, the thought, "I wonder why I'm cynical," leads toward crossing the barricade and therefore toward healing.

I would just be adding to my work that way. If I'm too anxious to change myself, I can miss the opportunity in this way. Noticing patterned behavior is only the first step in healing it. In order to be helpful, the noting practice must be understood as an adjunct to healing, not healing itself. Meditation in general is not an elegant tool for emotional healing because it is too gentle to cross the barrier protecting the network. For healing, attention needs to get in and out of the network, and that requires a deliberate effort. So

the skills developed in meditation aid healing, but meditation is not enough by itself.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of noticing what you're doing, thinking, feeling, and observing throughout the day. It helps break down automatic network traversal, bring unconscious habits to consciousness, and create pauses in which to consider the wisdom of what one is about to do. If a person has habits that betray his values, it can give him time to notice the danger before the deed is done. In this way, it exposes the healing work needed and brings attention right to the impulse that needs healing. It also tends to integrate daily habit with spiritual perspective, making the resource that much more available.

For example, I learned to take poor care of myself as a child and often neglect my well-being while working on a project. Who wants to get down off the roof to eat, when you can keep hammering instead? This leads to low blood sugar, fatigue, sore muscles and failure to enjoy the growing roof. If I decide before getting out the ladder that today I will pay attention, I notice when my body needs food, the disappointment of stopping work, the delicious taste of the tea I carry back up, the breeze while I sip it, and the fact that I won't accomplish as much as I had hoped before I'm too tired. And usually I remember that stopping early means I won't strain my back and have to take tomorrow off.

Prayer and other devices

Prayer can be used to keep one's values salient. For example, when I'm having trouble with a co-worker, I might pray, "Divine Love, I would have this conversation be a blessing to us both." When I've just said that prayer, I've brought my spiritual perspective into consciousness, where it will tend to tie in with our conversation. I'll be looking for ways to take the discussion in harmonious directions. Doing a lot of this tends to keep my values and other spiritual thinking close to hand so that I make more connections to it, have more entry points into it, and am more guided by it. It is more available for healing.

The resulting life is also a resource for healing because the

more one's behavior reflects her values, the less incentive she has to keep old patterns that betray them. For example, an old pattern of mine is trying to impress people. At some point I realized that was dishonest and confessed to my friends that I wasn't the impressive person I tried to portray. Having gone through that embarrassing process, I wanted to keep the slate clean, keep that relaxed feeling of not having to be someone I'm not, keep that respect that lets others have whatever opinion of me they have. I had destroyed the incentive to do more impressing.

Of course, prayer can also be used in ways that are not helpful, some of them not even holy. It can become a tool of the old pattern, reinforcing cynical conclusions and justifying bad behavior. But then, every powerful tool can be abused.

What would Jesus do?

This slogan became quite a fad at one point, and for good reason: for a Christian, it's a very direct way to connect the spiritual view with the problem at hand. It's a version of the trick I used in the opening chapter, with a therapist asking what I would do if His Holiness the Dalai Lama were watching. It's a good technique if you have some symbol of wisdom that you can use: Mohammed or Gandhi or Yoda. But it's only one tool in the box. Spiritually-assisted healing is a goal toward which any technique can be applied; it is not a technique.

Embracing each experience

Psychotherapy and spiritual practice become one in the effort to face life squarely, to give full attention to whatever is happening right now, to embrace emotion whether pleasant or painful.

If you meet life head on, you will probably crash into painful feelings from the past. Embracing them means entering the mental network without losing control of your attention. You can go in with eyes wide open and walk the old path slowly, noticing what's there, making connections to your spiritual understanding and your love, feeling old pain but not running from it, welcoming it all into the warm embrace of a compassionate acceptance.

And then you can go back to enjoying whatever you were doing before. Voilá, real-time healing that lets you drink life to the

last drop. Therapy and mindfulness, healing and appreciation, as seamlessly united as they were at birth.

Faith healing

Faith healing makes the spiritual view salient before calling attention to the mental network in need of integration. By making it salient first and keeping it salient, the healer facilitates new connections into the spiritual view. The trick here is to get access to the two networks through appropriate symbols. For example, a friend kicked her nicotine habit by changing her identity to that of a non-smoker. I seem to have gotten rid of a mole by asserting that divine will didn't support it. And another friend says his warts went away when he threatened them with liquid nitrogen, a force in which he has real faith.

I don't have a lot of first-hand experience with faith healing, but the little I have seems to address the mental component of a physical condition. We don't understand all the interaction of mind and body, and it appears to me to go well beyond the known connections. If the unconscious mind drives the healing process, then influencing the unconscious could influence physical healing.

Role reversal

Role reversal is a spiritual practice based on the assumption of a universal human pattern: because we are built the same way, I can understand why you might do what you do by imagining myself in your position. The insights that come to me this way can be a resource for healing, a new perspective for integrating with old issues. Even if my guess is wrong about why you acted as you did, it helps open my mind to your perspective.

For example, when I was a child, my mother used to say, "What's *wrong* with you? You used to be so sweet," which I took as criticism. I was sad, and Mom was disturbed by that. She wanted me to change, so I went looking for something broken inside, something I could fix so I wouldn't look sad anymore. In other words, I took Mom's disapproval personally.

I was still doing it fifty years later, after telling myself to cut it out and that Mom was unhappy before I was born and none of it was my fault. I told myself all those things but in the back of my

mind, I wondered how to find the broken thing inside.

Then someone taught me a protocol for translating Mom's message into a statement of her needs (needs being universal human needs, nothing peculiar to Mom). The idea is that you refuse to take anything personally and try to understand the other person by putting yourself in her position. When I did this, I guessed that Mom was in pain and needed help. She thought everything should be yipee-skipee and that my sadness meant something was wrong.

That's when I *experienced* the fact that her disapproval had nothing to do with me. She hurt. She needed help. She needed to know that sadness is ok. Poor Mom. I had finally made a connection from that old memory to my the spiritual quality of compassion, and it freed me permanently from looking for something broken inside.

Forgiveness and not taking it personally

The example above shows what can happen when a person stops taking other people's hang-ups personally. He can stop trying to fix others (even by fixing himself) and see them as people with their own path. He can turn his attention to how to live the best life he can, given that there are such people in the world. If a wife views her husband's drinking as a condemnation of her (takes it personally), she'll try to change something she had no control over, his drinking. But if it becomes just a disease he suffers from, she can think about whether to stay married and, if so, how to protect herself from the hazards of living with him.

Pathology is never personal. It might be chemical imbalance or it might be a behavior pattern from the past, but it is not about the person toward whom it's directed in the present. The only emotion that's really about that person is love, because love is what we feel when we see other people clearly. It is our human nature to value other humans. Imagine the most offensive person you can think of going before the saint or spiritual hero of your choice: no matter what the bad guy presents, doesn't the hero call forth the good in him? That's what makes her a hero. (If your spiritual heroes aren't this heroic, I invite you to get some new ones.)

I wasn't taught that love is the only thing that's really about the

other person. I was told that racists hate people of color because of their dark skin. But that doesn't make sense, because there is nothing to hate in dark skin. It just makes a convenient marker for people who want an in-group and an out-group. The desire for in-groups and out-groups originates in the racist.

I was also taught that pathology is some sort of tragic flaw that gives meaning to mindless behavior. Where would Shakespeare be if jealousy were just too dumb for Othello to get sucked into? If it were just a badly wired circuit in his brain rather than a human passion? Dramatizing these mistakes makes more of them than they're worth. It assumes meaning in error. But how many of your own mistakes are meaningful and how many are a simple case of acting-before-thinking? I wouldn't want Shakespeare immortalizing my own mistakes; I'd much rather correct them and leave them behind.

I think of patterned behavior like the "PLAY" circuit in a VCR: push the button and off it goes. Utterly, impersonal. If a parent has a "RAGE" button and her child pushes it, the circuit will fire. It's not that the parent hates the child; it's mechanical.

So next time you inadvertently push Rambo's "RAGE" button, consider not taking it personally and see if any new doors open.

Twelve steps

Alcoholics Anonymous has produced a huge number of personal transformations. I don't mean a huge number of saints, but simply a lot of people who had been governed primarily by fear and desire who are now governed primarily by conscience. Below is a list of the twelve steps used to produce the transformation, cast in the terms I use in this book. Let me introduce one more term, to make it easier to be succinct.

If you pursue your desires without regard to the welfare of others, that is, if you ignore your own values, that way of life could be called "materialism." I don't mean consumerism, but a way of life missing the influence of spiritual qualities, such as harmony, truth, and respect. It is a way of life rooted in the material world *at the expense of* the spiritual. The conscience might speak up when it objects too much, but its voice can become fainter and fainter. By contrast, a way of life that includes considerations of fear and

desire but puts values first, could be call spiritual. Most of us don't separate the two completely, but we are liable to put priority either on ethics or on fulfilling desires and escaping fears.

1) The first step of the 12 is realizing that the material approach to life produces problems it can't solve.

2) Step 2 is the realization that materialism is not the only option. It sounds trivial here, in its abstract statement, but the realization is not trivial to someone caught in a system without answers, someone who feels trapped. For example, imagine you work for a company where the most aggressive people hire and fire the others, where might makes right and you lose your job if you make too many concessions to brotherly love. Then one day a coworker stands up in a business meeting and says, "You know, this cut-throat competitiveness has a down side. Our human values tell us to be honest with each other, but in-house fighting pushes us to lie. We all have families that are supposed to be served by our working here but that are too often hurt by our 70-hour work week. And the fear from seeing co-workers canned for very little reason might provide an adrenalin rush, but it also leads to poor engineering decisions, as we saw last week. What do you all think of establishing a cooperative environment here in the office, the team spirit that takes a baseball team to the World Series?" Hearing that might give you a whole new hope that life could be better than it is. This is step 2—believing that material concerns can take a back seat to the spiritual qualities that make life worth living.

3) Step 3 is the decision to seek another way of life, opening up to possibilities that materialism closed off.

4) Having decided to seek this new way of life, what obstacles does the person face? Obstacles produce problems, so past problems are listed and analyzed. Recurrent themes emerge—thoughts, feelings and behavior that seemed at the time to be appropriate to the situation but that can now be seen as patterns that are often inappropriate. You can tell these are patterned responses by the fact that they are not appropriate to

the situation.

Reviewing past problems in this way pulls into consciousness some of what has been behind attention barriers. It may bring to light only the fact of the pattern, or it may bring memories. The hope generated in step 2 and the thinking developed so far serve as resources to integrate these memories. Other people doing the same work are also resources. In fact, the attention of a room full of such people is a powerful resource for integration. When someone is working on this inventory and brings an old memory to light, one of their options is to tell the story at a meeting of such people. It is a very potent option for healing and helps reassure participants that they can move forward and get help when they need it. This reassurance is important for crossing the attention barrier into painful memories. The barrier includes the memory of overwhelm that caused the person to erect the barrier originally. Most of us mistake that remembered overwhelm for a belief that we cannot face the memory now. So we need reassurance in order to proceed.

5) In the fifth step, the inventory is reviewed with another person. This destroys the isolation that increases overwhelm and allows a second pair of eyes to help put the inventory into perspective. More patterns are liable to be apparent to the observer, and that person can help make connections to the spiritual view with direct statements and by simply accepting the speaker without judgment (acceptance being a spiritual quality). Lots of people say that it was a big relief to share their self-doubts with someone who did not criticize them.

6) The patterns identified are obstacles to the new way of life. They need to be healed so that the person can respond to new situations with fresh thought, keeping values salient, so that new behavior leads to more harmony than past behavior. Putting these patterns into words often suggests their source and stimulates new connections. Standing back from one's own responses is a new view and tends to produce new connections. Writing out the list and its analysis is slow, giving ample time

for new mental connections. The analysis asks the person to think what new response matches his spiritual understanding, and this encourages connections from the pattern to the spiritual view.

7) In the seventh step, the person directly connects her spiritual understanding to each pattern by asking for spiritual power to provide new behavior. (As in, "Divine Will, please take away my pattern of viewing all men as agents for my angry father and let me see them as people instead.") The request forges a connection to spiritual resources much as did my hypothetical therapist when she asked what I would do with Dalai Lama behind me. It is a direct invitation to the mind to do its healing work.

8) By this time, the spiritual way of life has generated enough conscious thought to be a system that can rival the old materialism. In light of this new perspective, past behavior is reviewed for conflict with a conscience now more audible than when fear and desire shouted it down. What harm did I do under the influence of the old responses?

9) Cleaning up the damage done by this old behavior removes incentives to relapse. It extends the new spiritual approach out into the world, so the person's social world will now tend to support and reinforce the new behavior rather than the old (as happened when I corrected the wrong impressions I had worked so hard to create).

10) The work of step seven (asking the values to inspire new behavior) needs to be carried forward in time, even when it's not the main focus of the person's growth. This ensures that less-used entries into old patterns get integrated. So a daily review of behavior against values is used to bring attention to such places.

11) Step 11 is the use of prayer and meditation, discussed previously.

12) The last step is to make yet more mental connections by helping others who want to pursue this same program. This involves a lot of listening, the gold coin of healing assistance. Listening helps the other, thus maintaining

the support network. But it also causes the listener to see old insights in new ways and to articulate what she has learned, making it more accessible in the future.

You can see that this program uses a number of practices discussed above. Presumably, it will work for anyone sufficiently motivated to see it through.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE AS AN OBSTACLE TO HEALING

Spiritual practice is a powerful resource for healing, but power can be misdirected. Several ways that spirituality can be put at odds with healing are detailed here.

Spirituality is not a substitute for healing

In some of the descriptions above, one practice both guides current behavior and exposes old patterns. A hazard of these practices is thinking that the former is all that's needed. After all, if my current behavior is in line with my values, why worry about the past? The answer is: to bring needed ability out of occlusion, to stay alert to denial, to correct perceptual distortions, and to protect the spiritual path from co-optation.

Here is an example: Growing up at the bottom of a totem pole, I didn't learn to recognize my needs, articulate them, ask for what I need, or negotiate for it. I wasn't supposed to need anything I wasn't already given, so I courted punishment even for expressing a need. And insisting on what I needed was out of the question. So I grew to a cynical adult with no idea what she needed or how to get it. The signal that I needed something, and the ability to think how to get it, were in occlusion with the old memories. In fact, I didn't even recognize a responsibility to take care of myself, thinking it was more virtuous to endure and sacrifice.

Imagine if I'd taken up a spiritual practice like asceticism. I would never have seen that self-sacrifice covered up a lot of self-righteous judgment and blaming of others. If they weren't sacrificing themselves like I was, they were lesser beings. When our interactions became unpleasant, they were to blame. I would let them take what I wasn't willing to give and then resent them for

it. I didn't recognize my responsibility to say "No." I was in denial about the fear of breaking old family rules.

So when family members flagrantly ignored my wishes, I didn't say, "Hey! You flagrantly ignored my wishes!" No, I mumbled something that had no impact and imagined that I had been quite bold. This perceptual distortion is inevitable when I work from an isolated network.

But I was pretty saintly, wasn't I? I didn't get mad. I didn't judge or hold a grudge; I forgave and let go. Hmm. If I co-opt forgiveness into serving my fears, what can I use when forgiveness is truly called for?

The situation got worse before it got better. When I actually remembered some of what went into training me as a doormat, I was enraged. I felt humiliated. I cried and yelled (to friends who agreed to listen). And I slowly began to recognize which of my impulses were legitimate needs. I slowly began asking for what I needed and learning at 40 what most people learn at 4. And now I know what true forgiveness is—and what fear of confrontation is, too.

This example shows the futility of trying to behave well without addressing the reasons I behave badly. I have good reasons for behaving as I do—it was adaptive and loving to myself at one time. I won't allow myself to throw that away, even when I consciously want to. Rather, my unconscious will protect the once-adaptive behavior through denial and distortion.

These same dynamics can be seen at a larger scale in racism and sexism. We decide sexism is a bad thing and we won't be sexist. But the training is still in our minds. So it seems normal to us when Dad ignores Mom's pleas to remove muddy shoes before walking on the carpet, but outrageous if Mom were to ignore Dad's plea to keep hands off the wet paint. Perceptual distortion is not corrected good intentions.

I'm too holy to have strong feelings

Because strong emotion can capture the attention and keep us in a mental raceway, those striving to live by their values might view emotion as an enemy or weakness. Western culture offers a lot of support for this view, and in fact it's part of how we get into

this mess: well-meaning adults train children to withdraw attention from strong feelings, thus aborting the normal learning process. As I hope the example above illustrates, giving attention to feelings (without indulging them) is essential for living by one's values.

Co-optation of the spiritual path

The reputation for being free of emotion that some religions have, can seem attractive to people running from emotional pain. I was such a person in my teens, and I admired a TV character who could never be provoked and showed almost no emotion. He looked a bit like a zombie, thinking back.

By the time I joined his religion, I had caught on that pain could not be avoided forever. But I tried anyway. Fortunately, that religion sees a lot of folks like me and tells us to expect disillusionment. My conscious motives clashed with my unconscious ones, and I found the disillusionment that let me accept life as it is.

I feel lucky and hate to think what might have happened had my religion not corrected my hope of escaping pain rather than face it. Now I see it as inevitable that old patterns will masquerade as spiritual truth. I stepped onto a spiritual path out of desperation, so how could desperation *fail* to distort my understanding of the path?

The solution was to take a friendly attitude toward my own avoidance. Its purpose is love. It has the upper hand. It can foil my attempts to be who I want to be. Or it can yield its old truths, temper new theories, teach compassion, and join me as an ally. If it sounds like that takes a trust you don't feel, the next chapter is for you.

Chapter 4

A Real Example

In the opening chapters I made up examples in order to simplify. But let's see how spiritually-assisted healing looks in real life.

Chris had tried everything he knew to stop a compulsive behavior. He could tell the story of the trauma that he knew gave rise to his difficulties, but that didn't help him act normally.

As usual, healing began with new resources. Chris's good friend entered recovery for substance abuse, and Chris watched miraculous changes in his life. This proof that recovery was possible became a powerful resource for Chris.

He tried the path his friend had taken, but it didn't work for him. The people he met didn't show him the miracle he'd seen in his friend. He stayed abstinent for awhile but with great effort of will, what we later dubbed "his white-knuckle abstinence." He wanted more for himself and had seen that more was possible.

He told me some of his story, and it seemed that he wanted a sense of safety he was unable to get in any reliable way, so I suggested he simply notice the times he felt safe. I was trying to build a connection to a spiritual resource, a sense of well-being.¹ He responded by sharing with me some of his frustrations. That sort of non sequitur is quite common. It means my suggestion triggered his frustrations, so I listened to them. My listening then became a resource for him as he sorted through his hopes, fears and frustrations.

For awhile he tried controlling his OCD without help from others, but it got harder and harder. After much soul-searching he decided to commit himself to working with a small group of people, of which I was one. Interestingly, he announced at the same time that he had come to believe he could acquire a spiritual understanding that made sense to him, even though that arena was

¹ See, "Invite a quality," Chapter 12.

still strewn with the corpses of old ideas and his battle with the religion of his parents.

To start, I did not suggest he debrief the trauma he thought caused his OCD, because I already knew he could report that incident without re-living it. Instead, I asked him to focus attention on fresh experience connected with that memory: his urge to act out and the struggle to resist. I suggested he write his thoughts and feelings each time he wanted to act compulsively.² If you think of the mental path from his memory to his current behavior as a stream, I was suggesting he integrate by working upstream from the sea rather than downstream from the source.

Some people like writing and others don't; for Chris, it worked well. He was able to face the emotional pain he had always given in to, and it began to ease up after a few days. I'm always impressed with what a paper tiger fear is. Chris's feelings were big, but it was the fear of them that made him run away. When he turned and faced them squarely, he burst through that paper tiger.

As he got his thoughts down on paper, they stopped racing through his head so uncontrollably. The energy he would have spent struggling with himself to not-indulge went into writing. Themes emerged and he asked me about one: He told himself over and over that it was useless to struggle because he had no worth. I asked what that message had done for him during his childhood trauma.³

His first answer was clearly a guess from the intellect rather than a memory found by following the feeling. So I asked him to follow the thread of the feeling instead. This was not at all easy. His habit was to present to the outside world what his mind guessed his body felt, rather than become conscious of what his body felt. It was one of those over-arching behavior patterns that guarded, not just a memory, but his whole inner world.⁴ We had been picking away at it, with me pointing out examples when I would ask him for a feeling and he'd answer with a thought.

² See, "A journal of feelings," Chapter 12.

³ See, "Find the positive intention in the feelings," Chapter 12.

⁴ See, "Exploring resistance to feelings," Chapter 12.

So, when I asked him to, he was now able to turn his attention inside and come up with the source of his identity as a worthless person: it gave him some power. As a child, he couldn't make adults care for him, but he could protect himself from the disappointment (at least consciously) by expecting the worst. Identifying as worthless also helped him act in a way that won his care-takers' approval. He'd have lost control of the relationships if he had made the adults unhappy; by keeping the unhappiness to himself, he kept the reins in his own hands. Smart kid. Naturally, I asked him to nurture his conscious connection to that self-protective impulse.

The next time we spoke, he announced that OCD was no longer an issue for him.

Although his original goal was now met, that was really only the start of healing. He had tried so hard for so long to control OCD that he hadn't looked past it. But by the time we got there, he was immersed in the adventure of getting to know himself and bringing peace to the inner war zone. And the miracle of achieving his life-long goal was an enormous asset to his healing: now he not only saw others transformed, he had experienced some of it himself. Healing wasn't just possible in the abstract; it was possible *for him*.

Chris's spiritual ideas were bound up in his childhood experiences and took some untangling, so I asked him to articulate his values.⁵ In the meantime, I did not try to use them to access his spiritual understanding. Instead, I used his love for his children. When he directed some of that love toward the child he had been, healing came naturally. I don't mean that it came painlessly, but that he could keep his efforts on a healing path rather than fret about OCD; he could see and correct the distortion in his thinking that had come from trying to survive his trauma without appropriate resources; and his feelings kept changing and becoming more peaceful. For this emotional exploration, I introduced him to two-handed writing.⁶ One hand was a loving

⁵ See, "List your values," Chapter 12.

⁶ See, "Writing with alternate hands," Chapter 12.

father, the other the child he once was. The questions he was asking himself grew more and more searching as he locked in on the ideas that had mediated his experiences, always buffering him from both their harshness and their satisfaction.

A whole cluster of out-dated habits began to unravel: he brought some TLC to his body, had long periods of happiness, took a new look at his relationships, and got through a stressful day that triggered his old compulsion. He was a little surprised to find himself thinking those old thoughts, but the mental network never goes away. Integrating it means there are multiple paths through it and many ways out, so Chris didn't have to indulge. He noticed the thoughts and didn't act on them.

All of this work had made connections between his immediate experience and the ideas and feelings left from childhood. It put him in range to feel—to immediately experience—the big stuff, so he told me the trauma story in detail. We both cried. I don't know why none of the therapists I've been to ever cried when I told them my experiences. Friends do, and it makes me feel thoroughly loved. It counteracts the loneliness that comes with trauma.

Chris's healing moved on to encompass a wider range of emotions, which he embraced with equanimity. He made changes less earth-shattering than putting down OCD, but important to him. I view this period as one of consolidating his gains. He had redrawn his internal map and needed to live with the new one for awhile, just getting used to a basically healthy, peaceful approach to life.

He was already effectively using his spirituality when he settled on a cognitive system for it. I heard the conclusions he had come to and no longer saw a bewildered mortal wondering why the god of his youth had allowed him to be so badly hurt. Instead, I saw a strong man who knew what spirituality could and couldn't do for him.

Chris's story is a good example of the leap-frog progress that emotional healing and spiritual development provide for each other: a little of one enables a little of the other, more of the first, then more of the second, in a spiral of balanced growth.

Chapter 5

Trusting the Process of Emotional Growth

An important difference between psychotherapy and spiritually-assisted emotional healing is that of control. The normal learning process is not under human control. A man can interfere, and he can foster, but he can no more control his own growth than that of the flowers in the garden.

That puts therapists in a difficult position because we pay them to get results. Yet a goal-oriented approach can get in the way of growth and is often a disguised form of the problem for which help is sought. (As in, I'm here because I'm too tense, and my tension now takes the form of a demand that this session relax me.)

What works better is to trust that one's perfect nature is at the heart of every twisted impulse and seek it there. When I embrace the feelings without indulging them and listen to the thoughts without believing them, I usually find the spiritual connection I need right there in the problem for which I need it.

I had to discover that a number of times before I trusted this process, before I could stop trying to control it and surrender to it instead. I expect you will also want more than arguments, so this chapter offers exercises aimed at directly finding the positive intention in perverse responses. But I'll start with arguments.

Embracing feelings requires crossing the attention barrier that surrounds them, and that takes deliberate effort. Without such clarity, the barrier—the decision not to go there—will marshal specious arguments against entry: embracing feelings is just indulgence, it's childish and undisciplined; we'll behave badly in the grip of those feelings; or we'll get caught in feeling bad and be miserable to no purpose. Each of these arguments is answered below.

"EMBRACING FEELINGS IS CHILDISH AND UNDISCIPLINED."

Mistaking healing for indulgence

Indulging feelings is childish and undisciplined, but embracing

them means to feel them without letting them dictate behavior. Indulging feelings means to run the same raceway without changing anything. I tell the same sad story I've told a hundred times or make the same complaints or whatever. I'm not actually giving the feelings my full attention. Rather, I feel them and immediately launch some train of thought to make them go away, such as why the other guy should change. Giving full attention to feelings means you let the thoughts happen without pursuing them. You keep control of the attention instead of letting your thoughts commandeer it. You keep it on the feeling, letting new connections be made. You notice what thoughts occur to you, but you don't get swept off into their argument.

To put the principle more generally: the more you look at the process, the less you're governed by it.

Parents who don't have a clear understanding of the distinction between indulgence and healing are in poor position to assist their children. They can easily assume that all crying is manipulative and miss the distinction between crying that relieves distress and allows healing, versus crying that tries to persuade. And it will be hard for these parents to give their children the compassion that they themselves need but don't have.

So they tell the child to stop crying or displaying other emotion. The child learns that emotion is socially unacceptable. And that child becomes me or you. Darn!

The reverse confusion also occurs: indulgence can be mistaken for healing. This is unusual, and I've noticed it mainly around destructive sexual practices. My guess is that it comes from the frustration of people unable to reclaim their natural sexuality because it is occluded in memories. Regardless of the reason, indulging a destructive pattern in the name of healing lends credence to fears that healing is just indulgence.

Unfortunately, a bid for healing that fails for lack of resources will probably become indulgence. This is very common. In fact, most anti-social behavior can be understood as such a failed bid for healing. So the fear of indulgence is well justified, but it is still an obstacle to healing. What's needed is not a refusal to cross the barrier, but sufficient resources for integration.

"WE'LL BEHAVE BADLY IN THE GRIP OF THOSE FEELINGS. "

People often behave badly when indulging feelings. This argument would be valid if feeling emotion always meant indulging it (doing what it says to do). The person who behaves badly while indulging might behave beautifully when feeling the emotion without obeying it. Feeling it might provide exactly the information needed to bring harmony out of discord.

Coping can seem like a short cut to good behavior: suppress the feelings and do the right thing. But coping can short-circuit understanding and lead to a wooden response without sensitivity to essential elements of the problem. For example, once when I was rough housing with a child, he hit me. I was very angry, but I coped; I suppressed the impulse to hit back and scolded him, making it very clear that hitting was out of bounds. Later, I had misgivings and paid attention to everything that had happened. Hard as it was to imagine, I saw that he was afraid of me and that's why he had hit. My scolding him certainly wouldn't solve that problem! When I apologized and said we needed a solution to his problem as well as mine, we found one that worked beautifully.

Doing the right thing is always right; it was right for me to suppress the urge to hit back. But more was called for, because I had not addressed the root problem. When feelings keep clamoring for attention, then they need attention; coping is not enough. Paying full attention means not-acting on the feelings. Acting on them is usually an attempt to make them go away: I'm angry so I yell and that relieves my anger. Paying full attention to anger means being fully angry, sitting still and noticing the sensations and thoughts going on inside.

So one can address the fear of bad behavior by setting limits on behavior: Next time I'm angry, I'll say, "I need a time out," instead of, "You bad person." Next time I feel overwhelming desire for my lover, I'll write about it in my journal instead of calling for an emergency date. With behavioral limits in place, we're free to feel the emotions fully.

Self-protection

For those with self-destructive tendencies, limits are essential.

There is no point to embracing pain if you jump off a cliff in the process. If you're at risk, the material to start working on first is the self-destructive patterns. Look *at* the death wish; don't entertain it. Set your limits and then look at why you have to restrain yourself from those behaviors. Where did you learn to do yourself harm?

Similarly with desperation, if you are in so much pain that you take on too much in the name of healing, you will make more progress by looking *at* the desperation than in letting it drive you.

Healing self-abuse not only prevents it from sabotaging the work, it is a great way to develop compassion. I suggest getting some loving-mother icons and cuddling up.

Mistaking coping for healing

The idea that coping is the best basis for good behavior mistakes coping for healing. In the last chapter, I gave reasons why coping is inadequate when something important is occluded. Of course, coping *is* adequate most of the time—when you have a bad day or your friend grumps at you for no reason or the car won't start. Because there are so many cases where nothing important gets occluded, we can easily think coping is always the answer. Even if it's the answer 95% of the time, those remaining 5% sure raise havoc!

"HEALING IS PASSIVITY, REFUSING TO FACE PROBLEMS."

Confusion can arise when one faces a problem that needs to be solved at the same time as a patterned response that needs to be healed. It can seem that healing means not-solving the problem. But healing one's patterned response frees one to find the optimum approach to the problem. If the problem remains intractable, healing frees one to accept its intractability and make appropriate choices in light of it. So healing is appropriate when problem solving is blocked, especially for mysterious reasons ("This shouldn't be so hard"). New ideas for solutions may come during or after the healing work.

For example, I got frustrated with a friend who wanted to meet once a week at 6:15 am. Not being a morning person, this was a

big concession for me, but I valued our time together so I agreed. I'd wrench my sleepy body out of bed, get to the meeting place at 6:15, and resent her until she showed up at 6:30. I don't remember whether she was late the first time, but by the second, she was consistently arriving 15 minutes late. I suggested we meet at 6:30 instead, and she agreed. She showed up at 6:45, so I still spent 15 minutes resenting her lateness. I did this for quite awhile before canceling our standing date.

My focus during all this time was on my friend: why was she late? how could I get her to be on time? But the problem wasn't getting solved because I was not accepting the fact that she, not I, determined her punctuality. So healing was in order. For healing, the focus needs to be on oneself: What can I do? Well, I could continue to wait for her and resent it, I could stop waiting, or I could stop resenting. Looking back, I think what I actually did was continue waiting while our time together was worth the wait, then stop when it no longer was. And I probably could have done that more happily had I done it consciously, and that would have taken me into healing the feelings that come up from what I consider callous treatment. I did do some work, after canceling with her, to accept my disappointment. Now I can see many more possible choices: ask her about her lateness, ask for a commitment to be on time; reschedule to later in the day; wait a shorter time, an amount I could do happily, and then leave... All sorts of options occur to me when I'm not reacting to past incidents.

"WE'LL GET CAUGHT IN FEELING BAD AND BE MISERABLE TO NO PURPOSE."

If you've ever gotten caught in a looping mental path, you may have a fear of running endlessly on a squirrel cage of painful emotion. Interrupting such a process is the right thing to do from any perspective. And the natural way to interrupt is to withdraw attention. Another option is to call one of those special friends who know how to listen. If they can divert you with a question or comment, you may be able to turn suffering into healing.

For example, one day I was agonizing over an email to someone who had triggered a lot of anger in me. I didn't want to

send him an anger dump, but I did want to include all the relevant information. When my friend heard the letter, he said it didn't sound angry to him. Voilà, I stopped indulging self-doubt and sent the mail (which got a positive response, by the way). In fact, in the wake of our conversation, I did some integrating of the incidents that installed that self-doubt. Squirrel cages are a waste, and the danger of running one is always there, but we do ourselves a favor if we can give the problem more resources instead of withdrawing attention.

Remembered overwhelm

People naturally withdraw attention from painful experience when resources are inadequate to integrate it, which is to say, when they're overwhelmed. Notice that overwhelm is a function of resources, so the same experience might be overwhelming or not depending on the resources available to meet it. One child waiting for Mom might be overwhelmed by a sense of abandonment while another takes it in stride because of a strong parental bond the first lacks. In fact, children can integrate enormous pain if allowed to and yet be overwhelmed as soon as an adult says, "Stop crying or I'll give you something to cry about." All of a sudden, the situation is unworkable.

Whether challenges were great or resources were small, overwhelm is part of the memory. And it's often the first thing one encounters when returning to the memory for healing. It's as though the memory of being overwhelmed is left guarding the gate to the network. And the natural tendency is to believe that the feeling of overwhelm is current reality. Before I knew to expect it, I'd go in expecting grief or anger or whatever, immediately feel overwhelmed, and believe I couldn't face the feelings. This is one reason it's so helpful to have a friend who'll throw her arms around me and give me the assurance that whatever I'm facing, I'll get through it.

I even suggest starting healing work with the project of investigating overwhelm. Chapter 12 gives an exercise called "Dipping in to overwhelm" that can help you build some tolerance for the feeling and learn to recognize your personal ways of holding it at bay—things like clenching your teeth or converting

anger to resignation. These habits can make it hard to engage feelings, so it's worth spending some time with them: when do you do this (this anger-converting or breath-holding or whatever), what thoughts go with it, how does it feel, what memories do you associate with it, ... This work will help clear the way for working on underlying issues.

WHY TRUST IS NECESSARY AND JUSTIFIED

I once met a woman who was afraid to dig into her problems because she thought she might find that she was "rotten to the core." Crabby Appleton was a cartoon villain in my childhood, too. He was always described as, "rotten to the core." I asked her whether Crabby cared that he was rotten. Her eyebrows rose and she didn't answer. "You care whether or not you're rotten. How could you care if the core of you was corrupt?" She smiled, said thanks and, to my knowledge, never worried about it again.

I've always known I had good intentions, but I didn't expect to find them at the root of every twisted impulse I dismantled. But I have. I don't mean I've never been selfish. I mean that when I examine my motives and find selfishness, I dig deeper. Why is that selfishness there? It has always had some good reason: to protect my safety, sanity, integrity or boundaries. When a homeless drunk asks me for spare change and I don't give, I can call that selfishness, or I can summon the honesty to admit that I don't have what the man really needs.

What feelings don't you trust? Pick some treacherous, misguided passion and let's see what place trust has in relating to it.

For me it was self-hate. Not ok to hate myself! Destructive. Bad. So I tried not to hate myself. I actually tried this for years before admitting that self-hate was there, whether it should be or not.

When I finally got around to embracing self-hate, I engaged it in dialogue. I asked it what its positive intention was and it said something to this effect:

"You idiot! Without me you'd have gotten clobbered. I told you when to duck. I showed you yourself through the eyes of

others, angry others looking for an excuse to strike out. Without me, you'd never have known when someone was working up a rage against you; you'd have gotten hit and never seen it coming. I showed you how to minimize the damage, how to act small and quiet so as not to draw fire."

Ah. I viewed myself through hate-filled eyes as an act of self-protection, an act of self-love. Self-hate was motivated by self-love. How about that.

At the very heart of self-hate was self-love. What a perfect place for it. I didn't have to go somewhere else—out to some spiritual idea remote from the memory of childhood clobberings—to find some love and bring it to this hate; I could find the love that was the source of it all along. I believe that's the best place to find our spiritual connection: at the heart of the problem.

Your turn: what was the positive intention motivating something you now regret? If envy got the better of you, what motivated the envy? If fear distorted your judgment, what was fear trying to do for you? Selfishness?—just self-love in need of guidance. Find the love behind your worst deeds and you find a trustworthy person in need of healing.

The magic here is that, when you connect with that sense of love, it opens the way to appropriate expression of the feelings or motives that went wrong the first time. For example, just now I was beset by a desire for sugar. This is basically greed, because I don't need sugar; I just want it. When I asked myself why I was even considering eating cookies, the answer was, "So I don't feel deprived." Everyone else gets to eat cookies, you know. I felt the hurt child who feels deprived and the older sister who wanted to give it chocolate-covered love, and I let that caring take over. I calmed down and knew that caring could take the form of not messing myself up with sugar. It was that calm that let me take a different path to satisfying a part of me that wanted love, not sugar.

Trust in the process of healing is justified because it reveals this underlying goodness, the love of which we are made. Now why is trust necessary? Because the goodness at the heart of inappropriate behavior doesn't leap out and flag its presence with orange semaphores. No, it waits like the princess in the castle for

someone committed enough to come and liberate it. It waits inside layers of thought, feeling, memory, behind the barrier made long ago. Now who would storm the castle without trust that the prize is there? If this sounds to you like a catch-22, I can only suggest you mount a worthy steed and give it a try.

BUILDING TRUST

If my argument is making sense, this might be a good time to consolidate your understanding. You can try looking for the love imbedded in your own unacceptable feelings. Below are the steps to walk through using a feeling of your choice. Read this whole section before you begin.

What are your unacceptable feelings?

Here are some emotions that many people find unacceptable. Choose one of these or any other that you have trouble embracing.

anger	disgust	loneliness
anxiety	embarrassment	longing
boredom	envy	melancholy
confusion	fear	overwhelm
crankiness	hate	resentment
depression	hopelessness	self-hate
despair	indifference	shame

Write down the emotion you've chosen and your objections to it. What's not ok about this emotion? What price do you pay for feeling this emotion?

Distinguish behavior from feeling

Is there something bad you might do under the influence of this feeling? Decide now what limits you need to put on your behavior so that feeling this emotion will not cause harm to yourself or others.

For example, the behavior that came from my self-hate was self-denigration, criticism or ridicule. The limit I set was that I would not pursue a line of thinking about how messed up I am. Write down the behavioral limit you will observe while investigating this feeling.

When you go to embrace the feeling, if you should find yourself violating your limit, stop the attempt and try again when you have more resources. For example, if I found myself indulging self-criticism, I could stop and then take it up again with a friend who agreed to help me feel self-hate without criticizing myself. I would ask the friend to listen while I talked about my feelings but interrupt every self-criticism.

When you stop because you've wandered off the healing path and onto the indulging path, you'll probably withdraw attention in order to stop. Withdrawing attention may seem bad because it created problems the first time, but there is an important difference this time. This time you can withdraw attention using an idea like, "I'm not ready for this." That idea will not tend to create trouble in the future, but instead remind you of the healing that awaits further resources.

The components of emotion

The next step is to separate the physical sensation from the thoughts. This task uses my observation that what we call emotions are thought-sensation pairs. Fear is the idea that I am threatened coupled with a physical state of arousal that involves adrenaline, vasoconstrictors and tension in certain muscles. Anger might be the idea that I am threatened but believe I can overcome the threat, coupled with adrenaline, *vasodilators* and tension in my jaw muscles.

If this idea of emotion being composed of a thought-sensation pair rings true to you, you can skip the next exercise. If you aren't so sure, give this a try:

Meditation on the nature of emotion

Close your eyes and relax.

Feel the weight of your body on the chair.

Feel your feet on the floor.

Feel your clothes against your skin.

Notice any emotion you feel right now.

Just let it be there.

Let it float in a sea of compassion.

What sensation in the body goes with this emotion?.

What is the idea that goes with this emotion?
 Let the emotion evolve without intervention.
 If it fades, let it fade; if it grows, let it grow.
 If it turns into some new emotion, let it.
 Feelings coming and going without interference.
 What emotion do you notice now?
 What body sensation does it have?
 What name do you give it?
 What thought helps form this emotion?
 One experience dissolving into the next.
 No right or wrong, just experience rising and falling.
 Watch emotions come and go awhile longer.
 Watch them change names.
 Thoughts changing.
 Sensations changing.
 When you are ready, notice your left hand.
 What do you feel in your face?
 Open your eyes but estimate the room temperature.
 How many green things are there in this room?

Now you're in position to lightly engage your unacceptable emotion. You will have both thoughts and sensations. Notice what the thoughts are, but don't follow up on them. You can write them down if you like. If you find yourself debating the ideas, gently direct your attention to the physical sensations. Feel them as sensations, without reference to the accompanying thoughts. Notice what you feel in your face, neck shoulders, chest, back, belly, etc. Just notice. The purpose is not to change anything, just to visit with the emotion. After a little visit, take your leave. You can come back another day and stay longer, get to know this emotion a bit more. In time, you'll be able to tolerate the feeling without being pushed around by it. You can feel it without letting it, or the fear of it, dictate your actions.

Where is your limit?

If you've held this feeling at bay for a long time, chances are you won't know how much of it you can take without triggering a backlash. To learn this limit, notice your feelings about the above

exercise afterward. Two hours later, are you pleased at having made progress, or are you uncomfortable? Check in again before bed and the next day. If you've pushed too far, the thoughts associated with the feeling are liable to regain influence over you. Notice this. By noticing your reaction afterward, you'll learn how much is enough-for-now. You won't have to wait for afterward but will recognize a sense, during the work, that this is enough for now. Any progress is enough. When you can recognize the fatigue coupled with progress made, that sense will hold for all your work, not just this particular feeling.

Find the positive intention in the strategy

When you can tolerate your unacceptable feeling enough to listen to it, you're ready to find the positive intention in it. What you now consider to be a problem was once a solution, a strategy to get something you needed. Maybe feeling this way kept you from making some mistake or helped you occlude memories you couldn't face.

You can write this dialogue or just have it in your head.

1) Start by listing any benefits you get from feeling this _____ emotion.

If you can't think of any, what effect does this feeling have? Was there a time when that effect would have been of benefit? If so, list the past benefits.

If your list is empty, go to step 3.

2) For each benefit, what is (or was) the need you met this way? For example, if the benefit is "helps me keep depression at bay," then the need might be the ability to function in the world, or emotional stability.

3) Estimate your age when you first started using this strategy.

If you have no clue, use four years old. When you adopt the hypothesis that you were four, you might hear a voice in your mind that says, "No, I think it was more like six." If you hear such a correcting voice, use the age it gives you.

4) How tall were you at this age? Hold your hand at that height above the floor, and picture yourself standing there. Allow yourself to feel any emotions this brings up.

5) Now thank that child-in-the-past for doing what she/he needed to. After all, that child got you through to where you are now. Allow yourself to feel any emotions this brings up.

6) Ask the child what pressures it was responding to when it adopted this strategy. You are asking for what you might have answered back then, had you felt safe enough, with your current ability to articulate and analyze. The current you is the mouth-piece for the past you.

7) What needs were you trying to meet when you adopted this strategy?

8) Of those needs, which still get met by this strategy? Some needs may have changed form or scope, so list them in their current form. For example, you might once have felt desperate to meet your need for food and now feel desperate to meet financial needs.

9) Thank the child for accomplishing these specific acts of self-care. Savor the love that prompted you to adopt this strategy back then.

A better way to meet your needs

You now know the positive intention in this feeling. You know how it benefits you and what it costs you. Now think whether or not you still need it. Is there a better way to get what you need? Do you need it sometimes but not all the times you're using it? Can you mitigate the damage it does?

Write your new outlook. If you no longer need the strategy, write down why you don't need it. If you want to use it but less often, write the distinction between when to use it and when not to. If it's a good way to meet your needs, now that you understand it, write that.

Unless you're leaving it as is, write a reminder, prayer or assertion that you can use to keep your new understanding in mind. For example, you could remind yourself that it's ok to feel this emotion, pray for discernment when to use your old strategy, or assert your openness to new ways of meeting your needs. It's important that this request for the new understanding to permeate your life not become a demand. And avoid making promises you

can't keep (like "I'll never do that again"). The goal is to remember your new understanding and allow it to take form; surrender control.

As you remind yourself with the prayer or assertion, you may notice the old strategy at finer and finer levels of detail. You may discover that you've used it unwittingly, or that you are getting ready to. These insights are further integration of a process that has long been unconscious. Shine the light of consciousness without demanding change, and in time you will act more in accord with your understanding. This is trust. Trust yourself to do the right thing.

Example

I have done the above exercise and recorded the highlights here, in order to illustrate any instructions that might be unclear. I've chosen not to share the detail.

The feeling I hate: self-doubt

Its effect: it keeps me passive

Benefit: passivity was a good idea when I was young. It kept me from drawing fire.

The need: physical safety and social acceptance

Age of onset: one or two years

Pressures I was responding to: physical pain, hunger, boredom

Needs: Food, safety, comfort, social connection

Current needs: None

Do I still need it? No

Prayer: Divine Will, I would do your bidding, even when it feels scary.

TRUST ALLOWS TRANSFORMATION

I didn't start trusting the process of healing the first time I discovered a positive intention at the heart of a twisted impulse. But it has happened so many times now that I see it will always be the case. And I wouldn't want to miss that truth, that understanding. I wouldn't want to make up an answer and impose that on myself, while the child-I-was languishes behind an attention barrier along with the love that propelled her.

This is a way of saying I value transformation. If I (the conscious mind) cover the truth in my unconscious, the result might look better and it might even feel better, but it won't be a transformation. It's just more of what I already have. And any process I control is limited in this way. I have to relinquish control in order to be transformed. For that, I must trust my inherent goodness and the process that uncovers it.

Emotional healing follows its own schedule

With no person at the reins, the process of emotional healing proceeds in much the same way as physical healing: it starts when it starts, proceeds without waiting for better conditions, and ends when it's done. It can't be hurried, although it goes more smoothly when I cooperate with it. Nor can it be delayed. Once launched, the process has a momentum that is extraordinarily hard to stop. Another trauma commensurate with the original can interfere, but anything short of that will probably just make things complicated.

The biggest healing project of my life was a bit like a golf ball sitting on a tee at the top of a mountain. It took effort to get the thing started, but then it rolled by itself. And it started an avalanche that completely altered my landscape. Soon after knocking the ball off the tee, I discovered that I didn't need to help the process, and indeed, needed to concentrate on surviving it!

Control versus surrender

Let me give an example of the difference between controlling a process and surrendering to it.

My best friend was getting married. I hoped this would work for her; she'd been through so much. As I thought about her and her fiancé, a song began to form in my mind. The guitar would jump into my hands and bits of melody would jump off the fret board into my fingers. Sometimes writing is this way: a song demands to be written, and who am I to say "no"?

So the song wrote itself. As the wedding approached, I realized that the song had not written itself for the drawer; it intended to be sung at the wedding. Okay. I asked one of my friend's friends to play guitar so that I could sing this song at the wedding. He said sure, and we practiced it a couple times.

One day at my friend's house, I noticed her fiancé writing out the wedding invitations. I asked, "This date you've picked—isn't Mark out of town that weekend?"

"Yeah," she said, "it's too bad he'll miss the wedding, but you can't get everyone."

"Oh, but you have to have him. He's playing guitar so I can sing this song that wrote itself just for your wedding."

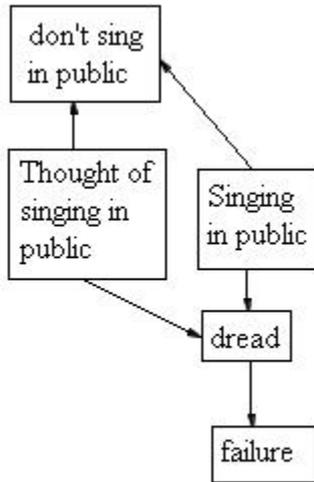
She understood (or pretended to). They moved the wedding date.

Later that night, a horrible thought occurred to me: I couldn't sing at a wedding! Every time I tried to sing in public I got so scared I couldn't breathe. And if you can't breathe, you can't sing. Now the full extent of the disaster hit me: I couldn't possibly *not* sing, now that they had changed the wedding date for me. What was I to do?

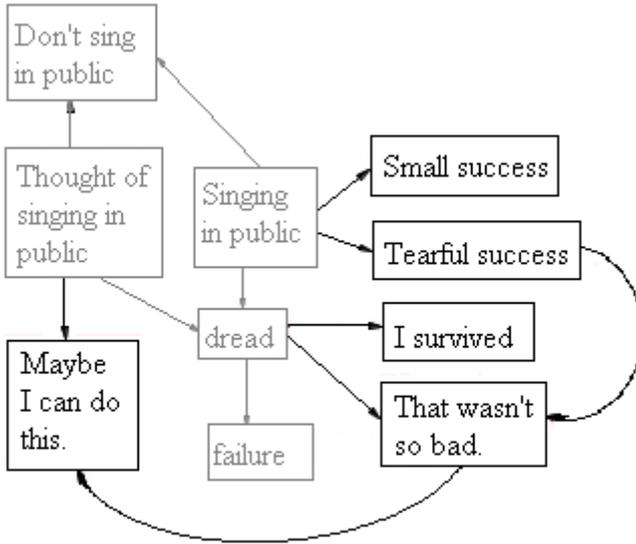
Had I grabbed control, I'd have assured myself I could do it, tried to manufacture confidence, and disallowed any negative thoughts. Then on wedding day, I'd have fainted or dissociated or said I couldn't do it after all. Internally, I'd have been working around the isolated network, reinforcing the attention barrier so no doubts could get out, up until wedding day. On the day, the trigger would have been too strong and my attention would have gotten trapped inside the network I had tried so hard to avoid.

I know this because I had tried that route on previous occasions. This time I entered the network early and often: I practiced. I sang that song for every friend who would listen, terrified and embarrassed. I sang and suffered. I used up all my friends. I did what I could to engage and integrate the feelings before the wedding. On the big day, I could breathe in public. We did the song, I with a wobbly voice, but recognizable as music. That song was my gift to the couple, and later my friend's husband told me how moved he was by the message in it. So I guess that's why I had to go through all that.

Below I've drawn the two approaches to the problem as networks.

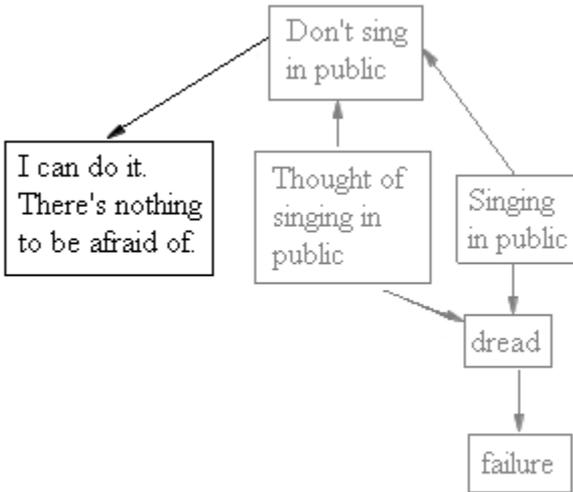


Original network, a set-up for failure.



Spiritually-based healing

By singing semi-publicly and keeping attention on the fear node, I integrated the network to a helpful extent.



Keeping control

Had I tried affirming that there was nothing to be afraid of, the fear would have remained isolated and, therefore, potent.

These pictures don't show the aftermath of the two processes. This event was a watershed for my public persona. I learned that I could put something real and precious to me out in public with no disaster, and I've gotten better at it ever since. What I was terrified might happen had I chosen not to engage and heal the material, was that it would up the ante. It had put me in this very awkward situation (cleverly making me forget I couldn't sing in public until after I was committed to doing so) because it wanted healing. If I refused, what might it do next to force me to pay attention to the dread?

This attitude of trusting my inherent goodness, surrendering to growth, and cooperating with forces bigger than myself has allowed me to become someone new. Not someone denying her fears and bewildered by her limitations, but someone who can tolerate fear and do the scary deed with eyes and heart wide open.

Chapter 6

The Flow of the Work

Healing occurs spontaneously when the needed resources are brought to bear on the problem. New resources make new healing possible, and applying existing resources to trouble spots launches the process.

The three main tasks—developing resources, identifying material in need of integration, and bringing the two together—occur independently and simultaneously. I'll talk about each of the main tasks here, then drill down into the subtasks in subsequent chapters, ending with a chapter full of exercises.

DEVELOPING RESOURCES

The primary resource used in mental integration is attention. A memory that is consciously reviewed at a slow speed will integrate, so resources include things which allow the slow traversal of a mental network: control of the attention (developed through practice and meditation), a listener to keep attention anchored, devices such as writing that help keep it anchored, and tolerance for the feelings encountered so that attention can dwell on them without immediately hopping to the next step on the path.

The additional requirement for spiritually-assisted healing is a rich, optimistic view of people, a view I call "spiritual" to distinguish it from "material." The view needs to be developed, and easy access to it cultivated, through daily practice.

Resources grow through embracing feelings; noticing what one thinks, as in meditation; through articulating one's values and developing spiritual ideas; through prayer or its secular equivalent; helping and being helped to talk about loaded issues without indulging; and maturation generally. The next chapter offers an assessment sheet of your current resources and more detail on developing new ones.

IDENTIFYING MATERIAL IN NEED OF INTEGRATION

This part of the work is so easy to ignore! I routinely start thinking of myself as nearing sainthood, with all important work in hand, until life wakes me out of the dream. But the effort to find patterns without waiting for them to find me has paid enormous dividends in living a happy life. It's like periodically cleaning the whole kitchen, not just the counter top I need right now: so efficient, and I catch spots that otherwise go unnoticed.

The reason it's so easy to overlook this phase is that the fact of a response being patterned and inappropriate tends to be occluded with the isolated mental network that produces the response. The people around us notice, but we tend not to. We can ask those around us if we have the fortitude, but I find it gentler to go looking.

In the example of the first chapter, I made this part of the work trivial: the memory in need of integration was only a week old and was not traumatic. But finding the memories that cause current problems is usually not trivial. In fact, much of clinical psychology is devoted to the task.

You needn't be a psychotherapist to trace the connections. The unconscious mind knows where they are, as evidenced by its ability to produce the old response in the current situation. The trick is to ask it to trace backward, from behavior to memory.

An additional requirement is that the unconscious be willing to divulge the source to the conscious mind. It might have good reason not to, in which case integration must proceed using symbols, abstractions, or fiction. These can produce healing, though not complete recovery.

The unconscious mind can also be uncooperative simply because one lacks sufficient rapport with it, or approaches it heavy-handedly. So developing one's relationship with the subconscious is a subtask here.

When I had pursued spiritually-assisted healing for about three years, I got to wondering when I'd be done. I added up the work I knew was in front of me and how long I expected it to take. The total was 150 years. For some of us, then, it's important to choose our battles. Chapter 9 describes a method of systematically

analyzing the discord in one's life, looking for the patterned behavior, thoughts, and feelings that produce it. With a list in hand, one can apply attention to the most troublesome issues first, using pain efficiently for a better life.

The more someone delves into the past, the more productive such effort becomes. She becomes familiar with the major influences and the patterns they produced. She's no longer surprised to uncover denial. Her intuition gets more accurate and her rapport with the unconscious better. So practice makes power.

BRINGING RESOURCES TO MATERIAL

The last phase of healing is to bring the resources to the memory. In my hypothetical example, I've accomplished this by telling the memory to another person. There are many other approaches: The memory can be written instead of told; Fantasy characters representing current resources can be made witness to the incident or can even intervene for a new outcome; What would I do if my hero were watching? and what would my hero do? can be productive lines of thought, as can writing letters not to send. Chapter 12 contains more suggestions as well as guided meditations. You can keep trying methods until something works.

A common obstacle is identifying some belief that serves as an attention barrier but being unable to surmount the barrier. An example comes from the previous chapter where I described my struggle with self-hate. I had identified as an obstacle the belief that folks just didn't like me. I had known about that belief for years before I figured out how to surmount the barrier to attention surrounding the memories. In those years I could list off endless names of people who liked me, yet I still acted on the conviction of unpopularity.

Arguing with ideas like this just doesn't work. What has worked for me is returning to the decision to erect the barrier—that moment when I adopted some belief that I now view as trouble. If I can remember it, I usually find a way to bring compassion to it. If I don't remember, I embrace the decision, looking for the good it has done me and consciously acting on the belief. This seems to allow my attention to traverse the part of the network that has been

operating unconsciously. The result is probably not full integration, but is usually very helpful.

The three main tasks described here break down into many subtasks, which are detailed in the remaining chapters.

Chapter 7

The Resources that Foster Growth

What are the fertilizers for emotional growth? This chapter describes them and gives you a chance to survey your own potting shed for well- and under-developed resources. The nuts and bolts of adding to your inventory are given in Chapter 12.

Attention is like water: essential but hard to control. Like installing hoses, developing control through practice, meditation and mindfulness can make the garden bloom. Trained attention is less likely to run an old network completely before you even know what happened. It offers more openings in the stream of thought for new ideas. Other people can help also, even when the attention has not been trained. Writing and other devices often work to slow down network traversal.

One reason controlling attention can be hard is because of painful feelings in the network. Attention wants (by default) to jump off those nodes immediately. Tolerance for the feelings allows the attention to dwell long enough to make new mental connections. And tolerance for feelings is a resource that can be developed.

Resources that help a person find the memory that is causing problems include a number of techniques (detailed in Chapter 10), practice, and familiarity with one's own patterns.

Even when the memory is known, access to the feelings can be a challenge. Here, practice is the greatest resource, but other people can help, especially in the beginning. The arguments in the last chapter are meant to provide a resource for surmounting the attention barrier. It also helps to foster a loving attitude toward oneself and a cooperative relationship with the subconscious mind, because the unconscious can keep the memory blocked if the approach is unloving or heavy-handed.

Spiritually-assisted healing requires access to a spiritual perspective, so relevance, richness and robustness of one's spiritual view all foster greater healing. Recall that the spiritual view to

which I refer is not theology, but the understanding of universal human values that each of us has, and our habits of keeping those values salient.

One new resource enters at this point: the ability to give help, as well as receive it. Giving is a resource for three reasons: first, you can develop a rich support network if you can give help; second, giving help consolidates your own understanding of the healing process and broadens it as well; lastly, the ability to help others can be turned on oneself, so that you help yourself with the same skills you've developed to help others. Emotional growth is governed by its own forces (not by a helper), so the person growing is the facilitator and liaison—by necessity. That makes oneself the ultimate ally to the innate urge toward wholeness.

Some of these resources are easily acquired. For example, most people can readily come up with symbols to access their spiritual view, even if they haven't used them in this way before. Below is an assessment sheet you can use to gauge where you currently have strong assets and where you could help yourself by developing assets. It lists the resources that are important and not readily available. Balance among these areas leads to the most efficient emotional work, that is, the most progress for the pain. So working on the weak areas gives the greatest results.

RESOURCE ASSESSMENT SHEET

Rate the following areas according to how well developed you think each is. This will show where your strengths are and where you could focus attention for a more balanced suite of healing resources.

Spiritual Perspective

Is your inspiration detailed or amorphous? Have you thought a lot or a little about human goodness?

<i>under developed</i>	<i>well developed</i>
/	\
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%; border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"> </div>	

Salience

Is your thinking inspired a lot of the time or a little?

under developed

well developed

/		\

Access to feelings

Can you usually name the emotion you are feeling? Can you talk with it?

under developed

well developed

/		\

Tolerance for feelings

If your vision remains clear when you're scared, you have high tolerance for fear. If you do things you regret when you're angry, your tolerance for anger is low.

under developed

well developed

/		\

Control of attention

Can you set your feelings aside when you need to? Can you get them back when you're ready? Do you get caught in obsessive thinking?

under developed

well developed

/		\

Other aides

Do you keep a journal, write your dreams, pray, or have a reliable source of guidance? Do you use other devices to gain access to inner resources?

under developed

well developed

/		\

Giving help

Can you listen without feeling compelled to solve the other person's problems?

*under developed**well developed*

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Getting help

Have you trained your friends to listen without giving advice? Do you have friends with whom you take turns listening and talking? If you don't get the help you need from the first person you ask, can you let that go and try someone else?

*under developed**well developed*

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Bringing the spiritual to the problem

Do you habitually bring light to troubled feelings? Do you ask yourself what a spiritually-grounded person would do in this situation? Do you have other questions or methods that bring your spiritual vision to your emotional work?

*under developed**well developed*

--	--

Cooperation with the subconscious

If you make polite requests of yourself, mark this toward the well-developed end. If you get into power struggles with yourself, mark toward the under-developed end.

*under developed**well developed*

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Respect for yourself

If you take care of yourself and speak to yourself with the respect you would a lover, mark this well-developed. If you treat

yourself in ways you would never treat another, mark this underdeveloped.



HOW TO DEVELOP WEAK AREAS

The exercises in Chapter 12 aim to develop the resources listed above. They are grouped by the titles used in the assessment sheet.

Developing a rich, robust spiritual view

If this area needs attention, you can approach it from several directions: inner peace or harmony; the sense of connection (to the world, nature, other people, whatever...); and beliefs. The only essential task is to clarify your values, because acting in accord with our values is the essential guide to right living. Beyond that, you can try the different directions and continue with the ones that seem helpful.

Articulating values

Two of the exercises, *Articulating Values* and *Investigating Will: What I want guiding me*, prompt you to articulate your values. By "values" I mean those things you value, have always valued, and can't help but value. Truth is a good example. Humans value truth; it's simply part of the human pattern, much as valuing one's children is part of the human pattern. By looking within for what you inherently value, you build access to that part of yourself. Instead of relating to the idea that killing people is wrong, you find the sense inside yourself of how precious life is. With the idea in mind, a person could debate with herself intellectually whether or not to pick up a gun. But with the sense of preciousness in mind, such a debate will involve the whole person, not just the intellect.

Connecting directly with one's values tends to line everything else up with them: emotions reflect values, thoughts work out how to manifest values, and perception is tuned to things that harmonize with values. This inner alignment is a resource for

healing: anything you think about while you're in this state will tend to come into alignment, harmony. Ethical behavior comes naturally, and past mistakes can be corrected and forgiven with comparative ease.

Inner peace or harmony, well-being

Each of us already knows a lot about when we are in harmony and what helps us get there. The exercises ask you to use what you know, practicing daily. This strengthens your connection to the spiritual resource of harmony. If you do it seven times in a week, that's seven new entry paths into your spiritual outlook. When life challenges you, your spiritual perspective is that much more available to meet the challenge.

Even though we already know a lot about how to get in harmony, most of us can learn even more, and a number of exercises are designed to open new paths: cultivating spiritual qualities, guided meditations, contemplations, and the practice of gratitude.

Connection

All living things are interdependent in the material world, each relying on the whole system made up of ourselves. How much greater is our interdependence in the spiritual realm! One man's turmoil can become the world's war. Understanding blesses both the one who understands and the one who is understood. And good will grows when shared. A guided meditation calls attention to our interconnection, an experiment in giving makes it more immediate, and four exercises in seeing through another's eyes help bring it to difficult situations. As social animals, we need the sense of connection in order to feel secure and to behave ethically toward others.

Beliefs

Reading is the most common way of developing spiritual perspective, revising old beliefs, and clarifying one's own thinking. In addition to any outside reading that interests you, Chapter 12 offers eight spiritual principles for your consideration. It also

offers exercises for exploring whether you find divinity inside yourself or outside, for reviewing old ideas and clarifying basic assumptions. Articulating your own beliefs removes any that don't serve you and leaves you with a solid foundation for moving forward. It also makes them easily available for integration.

Salience

Reminding yourself often of your spiritual perspective makes it easily accessible both for guiding daily actions and for integrating with old memories. Techniques described in Chapter 12 include practicing gratitude, prayer or its secular equivalent, mindfulness, a nightly review of the day, and correcting mistakes.

Because the spiritual realm houses the things all people value, it is the common ground for resolving conflicts. Material things can be in short supply, but compassion, harmony and creativity never get used up; they only grow when used. The historical figures who have brought this fact to bear on social discord, people like Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., appear to have locked in on the spiritual perspective, so that they remembered it even when provoked beyond what most of us could endure. By speaking from this perspective, they drew others into the spiritual perspective. Since that is where answers lie, drawing others in opened new doors to harmonious solutions. We can become more like these people by reminding ourselves often of what matters to us.

Access to feelings

Emotions represent values and are meant to help us act in accord with them. If you're surprised to hear that, you may notice emotion more when it seems to diverge from your values. Most frequently, that's because it is being triggered by something reminiscent of a past experience when the feelings were appropriate; it is not coming fresh from the current situation. Whether the good intention behind them is old or new, appropriate or not, feelings need recognition. None of us can afford to ignore them, because we miss the truth in them that way and the chance for healing, not to mention that ignoring them opens the door to acting on them unconsciously.

The exercises given help familiarize you with your feelings by asking you to name them, notice them, write them, write *for* them, listen to the truth they carry, watch them, trace their history, and explore beliefs about them. What fun!

Tolerance for feelings

Tolerance for feelings is freedom. If I can't tolerate fear, I'll have to do something to make it go away whenever it arises. I won't be able to do things, like standing up to the boss, that bring up fear. I call this "being pushed around" by one's feelings. Tolerance lets me obey my conscience rather than my emotions.

It also lets a person heal memories with emotion in them. That's pretty much all the ones that need healing. The usual reason someone did not integrate the experience at the time is because of feelings he had inadequate resources to face. If the emotion overwhelmed him, that feeling of overwhelm will be part of the memory. When it's time to heal, he will encounter the sense of overwhelm and is liable to mistake it for an inability to face the feelings now, when actually it's a memory. It is not unusual for me to hear someone I'm helping say, "I feel like I can't live through this." My typical response is, "You already have."

The important principles to recognize in building tolerance to feelings are:

- ◇ Take small challenges first, pushing the envelope but not triggering a backlash.
- ◇ Don't let either the feeling, or the resistance to it, dictate your actions. Instead, just give these internal states your full attention without trying to change them.

Exercises in Chapter 12 have you dip in to overwhelm, embrace minor pain, explore resistance, vent, look for the gem within painful feelings, get a friend to help, and anchor attention outside the feelings so that you don't get lost in them.

A last caveat: I've said that this work frees you from the dictates of strong emotion. That's true. It does not free you from strong emotion. Fear will be just as scary, but you'll be able to think more clearly when you're scared. It is important not to

expect that if you just feel bad for a few minutes you won't have to feel bad any more. That expectation can grow quite easily at a subconscious level, and it sabotages the work so that you never really engage the feelings.

Control of attention

If A, B, and C are thoughts in a chain, and A *only* leads to B and B *only* leads to C, the mind strongly tends to think "A,B,C." The only way to avoid this automatic response is to pause between thoughts, providing time for the mind to make new connections. For example, suppose A is anger, B is blame and C is criticism. Without the ability to pause between them, the mind will always go from anger to criticism. But if I can pause between anger and blame, I might see some alternatives: maybe I could be angry without doing anything at all, just letting attention dwell on anger.

If I'm thinking about healing, I know tricks to slow down and retain control of attention, the "other aids" listed in the next section. But in daily life, I'm thinking about other things. It is then that the mental habit of pausing can be so valuable. This habit is best acquired in meditation and mindfulness practice. It also comes from practice in emotional healing, and a structured approach designed to retain control is given in the exercises. To some extent, the ability to pause between thoughts comes with maturity—not going off half-cocked, looking before you leap, keeping a cool head. However it is acquired, it is an invaluable resource for healing.

Other aids

Certain devices can also help to anchor attention so that it does not get carried away by the old pattern, so familiarity with them is a resource. Writing, especially with alternate hands, analysis from a third-person perspective, fictionalizing, prayer, and dialogue between internal voices can all be used. Details are provided in Chapter 12.

Giving help

Help that actually helps consists mainly of listening, and listening without interfering is a learned skill. It is a powerful resource in two ways: directly, it lets you listen to yourself;

indirectly, it lets you build a network of allies in healing, which is a potent resource.

Thomas Gordon⁷ has listed a dozen ways we tend to interfere with a speaker who needs our help, things like advising, problem solving, evaluating, giving opinions or telling stories of one's own. The skill of showing interest without doing any of these is a great resource and the exercises step you through acquisition of this skill.

Getting help

Even the untrained mind can traverse a mental network slowly with another person's help. The helper is in no danger of running the path too quickly, since it is not in her mind. All that is needed is a few basic instructions and faith that the speaker is in the hands of the healing power all humans have. Chapter 12 details the instructions you can give friends who agree to listen.

At that point, it's up to you to use the help well. Feelings need to be courageously embraced, with any tears, laughter, groans or other release necessary. This is no time to be reasonable. Beliefs need to be examined, memories told, and hunches followed. If your friend does something unhelpful, simply ask for what you need. Healing is the guide. There is no race to the right answer, no right answer, just shining light in all the nooks and crannies of our foibles. Friends are a resource, but knowing how to use them is also a resource.

Bringing the spiritual to the emotional

Bringing the spiritual perspective to the problem at hand is not difficult. The exercises in this section of Chapter 12 are a resource. They walk you through the process and you'll easily get the hang of it. After that, the trick is remembering to do it. This part of the work is joyous.

It's good to use more than one of the methods supplied in Chapter 12. Suppose for example, that you've found a symbol for the memory rather than the memory itself, but you know this

⁷ Thomas Gordon, *P. E. T. - Parent Effectiveness Training: The Tested New Way to Raise Responsible Children* Penguin, NY (1975).

symbol connects directly to the memory because it was given to you by your subconscious in a dream. The best way to connect with your spiritual vision might then be with a symbol for *it*. Work at the symbolic level because this is what your mind has chosen. So you need a symbol for spiritual power, and it will work best if this is a symbol you've already developed through practice.

On the other hand, symbols are limited and you also want access by more direct means, ideas that satisfy your rational mind. So it's good to have many ways of framing your spiritual understanding.

Cooperation with the subconscious mind

The subconscious mind gives us the answers, insights and inspirations we use every moment, in all areas of our lives. It gives and gives, but the flow can be disrupted when the conscious mind gets heavy-handed. A familiar example is trying to remember someone's name: the harder I try, the less likely that I'll remember. Then when I give up and turn my attention to other things, the name comes to me. While the conscious mind is narrowly focused, it is unreceptive to what the subconscious offers. We can also be unreceptive because of cultural attitudes toward emotion or intuition. Western culture's love of control can put healing out of reach.

Many different approaches can improve this relationship between conscious and unconscious. Instructions are given for direct contact, remembering dreams, noticing what the unconscious offers, deliberately claiming unwanted feelings or behavior, asking for answers, and using devices. The more cooperative your relationship with the unconscious, the more it can help you.

Loving attitude toward oneself

For some of us, compassion for ourselves is the hardest challenge of all. Give us a mountain to climb or a sin to confess and we're all over it, but ask us to extend to ourselves the same mercy we so naturally extend others, and we're suddenly ineffectual. If this is you, spend some time with the meditations on compassion in Chapter 12. Love is magic, and as a resource for

healing, indispensable.

Chapter 8

Embracing Life

Have you ever wanted a precise definition for the "here" in "Be here now"? Does it have to be the world outside my body or can it be my imagination? If I'm visualizing world peace, am I being somewhere else now? This chapter claims that the magic of being here now is not in where you put your attention, but in how much of it you put there. And it argues that the spiritual practice called being here now is the same process as emotional healing; one focuses on the outer world and one on the inner, but in both cases the process is of giving full attention.

I wanted to be here now as soon as I heard about it. It spoke to some vague sense that I was missing what life had to offer. But I got confused when I tried to be here with cooking while an argument with my spouse was hanging fire. So I mulled it over for a couple decades and decided that "here" was where I *decided* it was. If I decide to attend to the potatoes then they are here; if I decide to attend to marital discord, then it is here. What had left me dissatisfied wasn't attending to the wrong thing, but splitting my attention between two things. The split happened when I decided to pay attention to one of them but the other kept kidnapping my thoughts or feelings. Things I could say to the spouse kept intruding while I tried to concentrate on frying spuds.

The reason was that marital discord was more important to me than potatoes. When I learned to attend to the most important thing first, the whole knot unraveled. Anything tugging at my attention needed attention, and when I gave it *full* attention, it was the most meaningful place to be. I often found myself crying or groaning, awash in old pain, then drying out to a greater wholeness than ever before. After half an hour or so of unrestrained release, the feelings would relax their grip and I could turn *full* attention to home fries.

I think of this as polarizing: instead of giving half my attention to two things all the time, I give all my attention to each thing in

turn. And this is much easier to do if I start with the most important thing (otherwise it will tug at me while I try to attend to lesser priorities).

Polarizing might be more familiar in the context of stage fright. If your teenager wants to be a musician but is afraid to perform, would you passively watch him split attention between desire and fear—wanting to but afraid to—in an endless tug-of-war, or would you push him to get on stage a few times and "get it over with"? Intuition might tell you he'll integrate the fear if he meets it head-on.

Here on the page, polarizing probably sounds reasonable, but it can feel counter-intuitive in practice. A friend wanted help getting rid of her pain. When I encouraged her to fully feel it, she said "I don't do anything *but* feel my pain." She meant that she was unable to withdraw attention from it completely. She was in this power struggle because she never gave it a turn. For her to start oscillating between pain and non-pain, she needed to start with pain.

Of course, when she loses a power struggle with her pain, the attention she turns to it is liable to be a tad unloving: "Okay, you win. What do you want?" That's one reason I like the word, "embrace." It implies love and acceptance: "Oh my! I've neglected you. I'm so sorry. Tell me all about it."

Think of pain like a young child and you can tell what's appropriate: you don't shove it in a back closet, you don't get into power struggles, and you don't put it in the driver's seat. That is, you don't obey the dictates of your emotions. If anxiety tells you to check the front door, checking the front door takes attention *off* the anxiety and puts it onto the door. In order to attend to the anxiety, you have to sit still and notice the thoughts without giving them control.

This is the same skill as acting with discretion in the outer world, even when our emotions are inflamed. Instead of putting them in the driver's seat, we go slowly (as in healing), considering what our values direct us to do, letting the feelings be there without having to deny them or indulge them. In right living, this slowness lets us consider all the factors (ethical, material and social) and not

need to skip over any in our urgency to act. In healing, this slowness lets us remember all aspects of a troubling incident and not need to skip over any part in our urgency to leave the pain behind.

It's no surprise, then, that the two processes—spiritual practice and emotional healing—blend, support, and enhance each other. Both train the attention and allow values to influence one's actions. Both slow down decision making so that all factors can be considered. Both correct discrepancies between ideals (e.g., I don't want to be sexist) versus what one is seeing actually happen (was that sexism?). Healing removes obstacles to right action and right action removes disincentives to heal. What were once obstacles become experiences, complete with the wisdom that healing liberates. Healing is the best way to distinguish normal feelings appropriate to the situation from old feelings that might not be appropriate; the distinction becomes clear as one remembers events associated with the feelings. There's no need to know ahead of time whether feelings come from the past or the present: embrace them in either case and you'll do the right thing.

Embracing emotions as they arise builds understanding of them and tolerance for them. That tolerance then puts one in position to revisit painful memories without getting caught in the old behavior they spawned. So this practice that is good for ethical behavior also supports healing.

The twin processes of healing and embracing current experience are so finely woven that no distinction would be needed except for the attention barrier that protects old memories. Surmounting that barrier requires a conscious decision and then a conscious effort. Sometimes it requires additional support. The seamless life, then, is one that includes a commitment to healing, so that when feelings or thoughts come out of the past, the decision to embrace and heal is already made. All that needs to be done is to allocate resources to the process.

The resulting life is rich with meaning, whether the experience of the moment is joy or pain, fresh or harkening back to the past. It is rich because paying attention makes it so.

In fact, attention, is the source of satisfaction, meaning, and

creativity. A good life is had, not by limiting oneself to pleasant experiences, but by giving full attention to each experience, whether pleasant or painful. Sound like a big claim? You can verify it for yourself by doing an experiment.

EXPERIMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP OF EMBRACING TO SATISFACTION

In this experiment, you'll gather some data and make a computation, but first you need to make a couple tools. One is a scale and one a skill. Start with the skill of embracing experience.

How to embrace an experience

To get a sense what it's like to embrace experience, consider each of the three types of experience: perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.

You embrace perception when you listen attentively to a concert, or watch a sunset, or enjoy a meal. Thoughts might arise during a concert and you might let your attention wander away from the music or you might deliberately put thoughts aside so as to embrace the music. Mosquitoes might bite during the sunset, and again, you have the choice to be distracted or not. I dislike music in restaurants because (for me) it conflicts with giving my full attention to the food.

The perception people avoid embracing most is pain. If you stub your toe while walking in the dark, embracing pain means to stop walking and give the sensation your full attention. Now why would you want to do that? For the same reason that you need to pay attention to painful emotion: withdrawing attention from the pain aborts the normal learning process. For example, one time a bee stung me in the foot, and instead of swearing, rubbing, resenting the pain and waiting for it to go away, I closed my eyes and focused all my attention on the burning sensation. That took a very intense effort for a short time, maybe a minute. Then the pain began to lessen. When it had subsided enough to stop dominating my consciousness, I noticed a difference between this result and the usual result from swearing, etc. This time I had no residual alienation from my foot. I wasn't afraid it would hurt me or stop

me from doing things I wanted to do. My foot and I were friends. You never know what you'll learn until you pay attention!

You embrace thought when you sit down to figure out a plan. You probably pursue your thoughts until your plan is ready, because that's what you've decided to do. You also embrace thoughts when you decide, "Ok, this time I'm going to notice what I think when my parents visit. When do I flip into a ten-year-old headset?" In this case, you wouldn't pursue the thoughts but would watch them from a distance, because *that's* what you decided to do. Both of these are giving full attention to your thoughts, and either is embracing if it's what you decided to do. But if you decide to watch your thoughts and pursue them instead, then that would not fit my definition of embracing (paying full attention to what you decide to).

Emotions are even more complicated than thoughts, because they *have* both the thought component and the sensation component. Decisions are again required about how to deploy attention. You can pursue the meaning of an emotion, watch the process of it, explore its history, or split the thoughts from the sensations and attend to one or the other.

If you want to know the meaning of an emotion, you can elaborate the thought part of it. Suppose you feel annoyed and think, "She's being inconsiderate," but aren't sure whether that's accurate or not. You could then expand on the idea: "She isn't taking into account her effect on me." That idea might suggest making sure she knows just what the effect on you is. Or maybe you think the effect on you is small and realistically should not be a concern for her, in which case your annoyance must come from the past. Then you can use techniques in Chapter 10 for finding its source.

Perhaps your interest isn't in the meaning but in getting some space between the onset of this emotion and your typical behavior: next time Jimmy uses that tone of voice, I'm going to pause and notice what I feel before saying anything. In this case, you can't afford to pursue the thoughts because your attention gets swept up in them too easily; you'll need to observe from a distance.

And if your emotion is overwhelming, you might simply want

respite, in which case noticing the sensation could be your best bet for breaking a cycle that keeps triggering strong emotion.

All of these are ways of embracing emotion if they are what one has decided to do. Most of us aren't explicit about our intentions. We don't think, "Now I'll pay attention to the colors in the sky," we just stop a moment and admire the colors. But for the work in this book, it helps to deliberately decide how to deploy your attention.

Here are instructions for practicing:

Start by adopting a scientific attitude. You are the scientist, the subject, and the lab. As scientist, you'll set yourself a task and note the result, just as though you were writing it all in a lab book, an objective look at your subjective experience.

Decide what to embrace.

Decide how long you will do this task. The end can be a time limit, or resolution of the issue, or fatigue—whatever you decide.

Sit comfortably and gather your attention by noticing all the little things that are tugging at it and either letting them recede or making a note to yourself so you'll take care of them later. As the distractions subside, bring your attention to your breath.

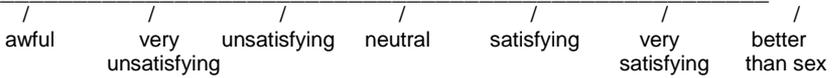
Now direct your attention where you've decided to put it. When it wanders away from the assigned task, simply bring it gently back. You can expect it to wander, so don't be dismayed or feel like you need to analyze. Just get back on task.

Do this until you reach your predetermined end. If you need to end early, that's okay, just notice why and make the decision consciously. That is, if you find yourself in the kitchen without having decided to stop, return to your task. But if you decide you've bitten off too much for now, renegotiate (with yourself) the stopping point and stop there.

Satisfaction scale

The other tool you need for the experiment is a satisfaction scale. This is sort of like those questionnaires that marketers use: on a scale from no satisfaction to maximum satisfaction, how would you rate your experience? You can use numbers like 1 to 5, or 0 to 100. A friend uses 0 to 100 and thinks of the degree of satisfaction as the percent of complete satisfaction. I use a scale

like this:



Use whatever seems best to you.

Practice a bit with your scale to get calibrated. For example, how satisfying was your breakfast? your evening last night? your last camping trip?

Now you're ready to collect some data. To test my claim that, "A good life is had, not by limiting ourselves to pleasant experiences, but by giving full attention to each experience, whether pleasant or painful," you'll need to fill in this grid:

Degree of Satisfaction in Experience

	Pain	Pleasure
Embraced		
Held at arm's length		

That is, you need four data sets: the degree of satisfaction in pain embraced, pleasure embraced, pain held at arm's length, and pleasure held at arm's length. So you'll need at least four experiences. (More gives more accurate results, so long as you include the same quantity in each data set, and select experiences randomly.)

Examples of the four types of experiences might be:

Full attention to pain - my bee sting, above; grieving at a funeral; a baby's wail when it doesn't get its way; the attention you pay when the doctor says, "Is this where it hurts?"

Full attention to pleasure - a ballroom dance lesson; watching your friend open the present you've just given her; riding a Ferris wheel.

Scant attention to pain - ignoring the stubbed toe; attacking your friend when he hurts your feelings; refusing to discuss an

issue with your spouse.

Scant attention to pleasure - over-eating, that is, eating when you're full; thinking of other things while making love; ruminating while hiking through a place you came to for its beauty; fuming about the boss while surfing.

Now you can go out and have some experiences. Give your full attention to a painful one and a pleasant one, and scant attention to one of each. After each experience, rate it for satisfaction using your scale, and enter that value in the grid. When you go to evaluate the experiences to which you gave scant attention, take care to evaluate that part, not the part to which you were giving most of your attention. For example, if you ignored an excellent meal in order to listen to your companion, don't rate the experience of listening to your companion! Rate the experience of ignoring an excellent meal.

When you have all four boxes filled, you can evaluate whether you got more satisfaction from embracing or from pleasure. If you used numbers, add the two pleasure values and then add up the two full-attention values. Which subtotal is higher? If you did not use numbers, which has more satisfaction, the pleasure column or the full-attention row?

LIVING IN ACCORD WITH YOUR VALUES

If you've demonstrated that embracing experience is the best approach to life, you can merge the healing work we've been discussing with day-to-day living. They were one thing when you were born—just normal learning—but grew apart as socialization demanded that you shut off the display of emotion that is part of healing. And that pressure may come to bear again, if you decide to cry in front of people who think less of you for it. So it might be good to decide, now, how public you want to be with your healing process. When you consider this, remember to take into account, not only your current feelings, but the past feelings that will come up again when you delve into the material. If you felt intimidated at six years old, you can expect to feel intimidated when memories from that time come up. And then it might not be so great to be

vulnerable in front of someone who sniggers.

As you embrace life, opportunities for healing will come up in the form of obstacles or feelings. As you change behavior to better reflect your values, what comes up? As you reach for your dreams, what comes up? What comes up as you implement the new strategy you decided on in the "Building trust" section of Chapter 5?

New strategies

In that section, I described how to analyze an inappropriate strategy and adopt a new one. As you use your new strategy, you will face again the pressures that made you adopt the old one. Feelings or memories may become the focus of new healing efforts. Don't be dismayed if what seemed clear when you did the analysis suddenly seems confusing or irrelevant. Just go slowly, notice the thoughts, and allow the feelings to be there. You're building the new paths you've decided to walk. You are bringing your decision down to a finer level of granularity, and the same sorts of emotional work will help you now as helped you in Chapter 5.

Keeping the new strategy in mind throughout the day (with assertion, prayer, or whatever form you chose) exposes the mechanics of the old behavior at a very fine level. I often notice a sequence in this work: First I catch myself in the act of old behavior. This is progress, since I used to catch it after the fact. Next, I notice that I'm headed toward old behavior. As I delve into how I got where I am, I see more clearly the infancy of the pattern, the situations and decisions that set me up for the old problem. As I catch this process earlier and earlier, I discover needs and motives and can think about how to meet them. I find the door to new behavior. Integration is taking place during all these phases. The memories blocking progress become available for healing and the new choices get woven into the fabric of daily life.

Chapter 5 only walked you through the analysis of one issue, but it is the same for any issues that come up. Some will come up as you keep your values salient through daily reminders, because you'll notice where old patterns abrade against what you value. Analyze these using the methods of Chapter 5 or write them down

as an antidote to denial. If you keep a log of such issues, patterns will emerge over time.

And issues will come up if you do the things your old responses have kept you from doing. Is there a dream that's been on ice? An intuition that some part of your life could be better? Go for it and see what feelings, thoughts, or memories arise to stop you. Then apply the techniques detailed in this book.

CROSSING ATTENTION BARRIERS

As you embrace all your experience, you'll likely come up against attention barriers. I usually experience this as intending to embrace but finding myself distracted instead. Then some deliberate effort may be required to cross the barrier. In my hypothetical example of Chapter 1, I made this problem trivial by using a memory only one week old and not traumatic. I could get across it when I tried. But the problem can be non-trivial. Perhaps the attention barrier is so solid that the unconscious mind foils all attempts to cross it. Or the emotions inside might be daunting. Or maybe a whole class of events have been stowed behind a barrier organized by a single conclusion. For example, a girl might connect many experiences of sexist discrimination into a network and surround the whole thing with a barrier made of the thought, "I can't win."

That example is typical of normal learning: I nail some boards together, some come apart, and I've learned about friction. Once I discover the size nail that works, I don't reconsider for every nail. I don't go back over my research but bag it all in a sack labeled "ten-penny nails." The difference between normal learning and denial is that, in the case of nails, I can return to my reasoning as an act of will. When my ten-year-old asks why I'm using those nails, I can explain. By contrast, if my ten-year-old asks why I assume that any man who seems sure of himself must know something I don't, I can't *begin* to explain. I didn't even know I had the idea. There is no barrier to my attention wandering old memories of nails, but there is some barrier to it wandering old memories of sexism.

If we rely on conclusions normally and abnormally, how do we

then remember what's behind the ones protecting painful memories? How does the girl above get to the events that convinced her she couldn't win? Here are some ways to try:

◇ Write about the idea. Just let any associations flow onto the paper, not worrying about their truth or fairness. As you write, some associations might seem closer to the source than others. A theme might emerge, or a suspicion. Let these simmer in the background for a day and return attention to the issue again. Read what you wrote and then write some more.

◇ If associations don't readily flow, you can try asking yourself any of these questions as you write:

What does this remind me of?

When have I felt this way before?

What's my earliest memory of this sort of thing happening?

When was this premise literally true?

What need did this strategy meet?

What's the positive intention behind this idea? What does/did it do for me?

◇ Invite the strongest of the associated feelings to visit you full force. Let it come, and keep your thoughts open to what the feelings tell you.

◇ What is this idea protecting you from? If you believe you're ready to face whatever it is, try summoning the feelings associated with it. For example, if the idea, "I can't win," protected the girl hypothesized earlier from competing in unfair contests, the feelings involved might be hopelessness, rage or frustration. If she summons these feelings, she can begin integrating them. Whereas the previous suggestion was to use the emotions as a path into the memory, this suggestion is to build tolerance for the feelings by integrating them with spiritual qualities such as compassion and mercy. Usually, once the emotions are integrated, the rest of the memory becomes available because the feelings were the big obstacle.

◇ This idea that organizes an attention barrier is a problem because it conflicts with something else, like your values. You can try to flush out the idea's source by acting on your values in violation of the idea. If you pay attention to

your thoughts and feelings as you proceed, you may get glimpses into the memory that you can then use as entry points for healing.

If all you get is vague uneasiness, try putting it into words. What does the idea warn you against? What is it afraid of? When you have its purpose in words, ask yourself when this concern was a real one. When was the feared-thing a literal possibility?

◇ Finding the positive intention behind your belief might give you access to its source. If not, you can embrace that old decision now by doing the undesirable thing consciously instead of unconsciously. Because this may seem counter-intuitive, I've given an example below.

◇ A last suggestion is to ask yourself for the memory. You have the conclusion you came to as a result of the incident(s). Embrace the decision (stop fighting it) and expect details to come to you as you go through your day with the old decision warmly embraced. Ask the dream maker in you for information in a dream. Ask your intuition for clues. Ask your family of origin for information. Make up stories and invite your memory to color them with facts.

When you're trying the above suggestions, avoid worrying about why one of them didn't work. Keeping a light, receptive attitude gives you a much better chance of success, and it's more fun, too. So just try them all and let the results be what they will.

Doing consciously what you would otherwise do unconsciously

The suggestions above may seem contradictory in that one says to try disobeying your problematic belief and another says to try obeying it. And that second might seem wrong. So let me explain the principle involved and give examples of its use.

I first learned the power of doing consciously what I'd been doing unconsciously with spacing out. Fighting to not space out didn't work: the fighting became the new form of spacing out. When a therapist saw me struggling, she said, "Okay, go ahead and

space out." Voilà, I was now doing something new: knowing I was spaced out and cooperating with the urge rather than fighting it. This cooperative attitude made me more receptive to my reasons for spacing out, and more appreciative of what spacing out did for me. (It allowed me to negotiate "impossible" situations.) In time, I acquired more choice about when to space out and how long to stay there. Nowadays, I have better ways of meeting my needs, so I no longer use the space bar. The path from being helpless to being in charge was cooperation, not conquest.

Here is an example showing the steps to this coyote-style co-optation of problematic behavior. The steps, as above, are to find the positive intention in it, appreciate it, and do it consciously.

This example shows me talking to something I call "Quiet Desperation," after Thoreau. I think of it as the reasonable alternative to noisy desperation. When I focused on this attitude—or this belief that getting by was the best I could do—I knew that its positive intention was to keep me from a more acute despair. Here is my dialogue with it, illustrating the steps listed above:

Dear QD,

Thanks for keeping the despair quiet so I could live through it. Thanks for letting me act with the knowledge of the truth, without having to squarely face the truth. Thanks for saving me from more discouragement, humiliation, ridicule—all the ways they beat into me that I had no chance, would not be allowed to shine. It was never about me; it was always about my gender.

I tried to get attention in the ways my brother got it because I was not given attention for myself. Outshining him was never the answer. There was no answer. They were going to use me no matter how much damage it did to me. Sexism.

So why fight? The harder I fought the more they whomped on me. Why fight?

So I got private instead. Tried to do without. Did without, without security, love or respect. Avoided rejection because it forced me too close to the truth—that unbearable truth that I depended for security on people who didn't value me.

I tried to make myself valuable. Gave them no reason to

whomp. What did I get? Survival.

I survived. Hey! QD, I survived. It's over now. The crisis part is over. I'm not dependent on them for my survival. And my survival is pretty well guaranteed. By people who have what M&D didn't: love. Just that basic love that extends to everyone, anyone.

It's ok now. I've lived happily. It's a done deal. No worries.

Well...I'm not so sure. Not so sure you can stand rejection. Not so sure you can keep taking risks, won't give up at the first failure.

Yes, I've given up a lot.

Now, with that one fellow, you did hang in there and he ended it.

And it doesn't bother me. I lost something, but it doesn't bother me. I know it's his problem. Is that how recovery looks?

A piece of it, definitely.

But I guess the main thing I want is to stop taunting myself on behalf of absentee critics.

But of course, I taunt myself for protection, to anticipate the blows, to see as they saw and take what security I could. To be a clever slave, who works the system so as to stay alive. So let's do it consciously.

Okay: this book is by some dumb girl with no credentials. She's not exciting. I need confidence that I'm reading the right author. She doesn't push my confidence buttons. She's not glamorous. She's not rich. Shouldn't she be rich? How do I know it's good advice?

Well, that's not as bad as I thought it would be. Just the reservations everyone has about everyone else. I could win them over as I've done in past. Usually, I don't. Hey, they don't excite me, either. But I could. Yes, I could.

You can see some integration in this dialogue, some willingness to use tools, face issues, take risks. Perhaps you can see some black-and-white thinking moving into the gray zone.

The living/healing approach to life described in this chapter

automatically sorts out what material you need to work on (as opposed to what you can happily ignore) and how important each issue is. The one thing it does not do is break through the denial that prevents a person from recognizing when his responses are patterned. To do that takes a deliberate effort and is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 9

What to Work On

If denial can keep me from recognizing where my behavior is patterned or inappropriate, how do I know what to work on? This chapter gives two approaches to that question, one when I have a particular problem and another when I don't. Looking for issues when I don't have a problem is actually good, since my vision is freer than when I'm pressed by a problem. Each time I've done such an analysis, my life has come up to a new level of harmony and effectiveness.

FINDING THE CRUX OF A PROBLEM

A problem is a situation that intuition claims could be better. I don't have a problem when I'm happily pursuing options, none of which pan out. I don't have a problem when I've done all I could and failed. I have a problem when I believe there's something I'm missing, some solution or way of looking at it or attitude. Once I understand that the experts have no solution and I've done all I could and it just has to be this way, then I might have grief or even anger, but I don't have a problem. Feelings are not problems. Inner conflict is a problem. Not wanting to mow the lawn is just a feeling. The problem is when I think I have to mow the lawn and feel unwilling. This section gives ways to move a problem from its stuck place to having a focus for emotional work.

An easy way to get stuck is by defining the problem as something over which one has no control, often other people's behavior. It's fine to ask other people to change their behavior, but when they don't, then what? If you accept the situation and choose among your options, you don't have a problem. But if you don't choose because you "shouldn't have to," then you can get stuck. Or if you spend time thinking about ways to make them change that you aren't, in fact, going to use, then you have a handy-dandy red flag that your response is coming from the past and not working well in the present. When your thinking is free from

patterned responses, you'll work out a resolution, even if it's not what you would wish for.

Suppose, for example, that a neighbor walks his dog past a woman's house and lets him desecrate her front yard—her beautiful yard that she spends Saturdays maintaining. The neighbor is nasty, thoughtless, evil or whatever. If that's as far as the woman goes, that's a candidate for healing. When she's free of whatever holds her back, she'll choose from a wide array of options: befriending the neighbor so he'll come to care about her dismay, asking him to clean up, thanking him for the compost, putting up with it, complaining repeatedly, offering him plastic bags, threatening legal action, moving the deposits to his door step, teasing him about his habit... When she chooses among her options, she may not be delighted, but she'll be at peace. These resolved issues are not problems. So the fact that something is a problem means there is work to do— not work changing the neighbor, but work freeing oneself to respond in an appropriate and satisfying way.

Analyzing the problem

If you have such a problem and want to get unstuck, you can start by writing a single-sentence statement of the problem. If you can't do that, write about the problem until you have all the essentials down on paper. Then write, "In summary," and a summary. What title could you put on your writing? Imagine calling a friend to ask him to listen to your problem. What would be the first thing you said, to sketch out what it's about? Pick the best title you can think of and work with it; you can revise it later if you think of a better one.

Next write your feelings about this problem. If you feel the emotions rise, use them as the focus for your work. They may dissipate and give way to another focus, but if they come up, stop this analysis and work with them. You can resume analyzing later.

When you've attended to the feelings, list out your options in this situation. Each thing you list must be something you can do. For example, "Tell Pat what I think," is something you can do, while "Convince Pat to go along," might not be. Be specific and avoid metaphor. For example, instead of "Twist Pat's arm," write,

"Tell Pat I need this in order to continue with the project."

If this situation is a problem, then you must not like the options you've written. As a focus for your work, start with your feelings about each option. Don't leave any out, because the elegant solution might be staring at you, but your patterned response (thoughts, feelings, behavior) prevents you from recognizing it.

You may get to your solution this way. If not, a theme will probably emerge, an obstacle (or choice of obstacles) that make every option unpalatable. This theme is the crux of the problem. Use it as your focus when you apply the techniques in Chapters 9 and 10.

FINDING CHRONIC PROBLEMS

Once a person commits to live in accord with his values, anything that gets in the way is a candidate for healing. This strategy of living as one wishes and working on issues that arise, produces a balanced life.

But there are times when it is not forceful enough for chronic problems, the patterns that blindside us over and over. The fact that our response is patterned tends to hide behind the attention barrier that produced it. And a determined effort is needed to surmount the barrier. So the balanced life is available if we actively look for our own patterned responses and then actively engage them in healing. Without this effort, denial will tend to undermine our efforts to manifest our vision in the outer world.

Self-examination, therefore, is the easiest way, even though it seems hard as a task. Here I present a series of steps that break up the task into manageable chunks. It produces a list of patterned responses that create discord in one's life. By discord, I mean inner turmoil, some conflict among one's own thoughts, feelings and values.

Briefly, the method is to list all the events, people or institutions one feels uneasy about, all cases of discord in one's life, then answer questions about each item on the list: the feelings and needs involved. The completed list suggests patterns: "Same thing here: I said 'yes' when I meant 'no'." If denial still prevents a clear recognition of patterns, any third party can probably help. It

need not be a trained counselor, since anyone outside the sufferer will be free of her blind spots.

The patterns that now create discord were once elegant solutions to problems, strategies we adopted at some point in our lives. At that time, they were the best options available to us. But now they are costing us the inner peace we intuit is possible. Perhaps we live in different circumstances from those which forced us into this strategy. So an update is in order. If this update was going to happen spontaneously, it would already have done so. Therefore, this update will take deliberate effort.

Instructions for a systematic analysis of discord

Read these instructions through before starting. An example follows the directions.

Start by listing the areas you feel conflicted about: incidents that seem like they should have gone better; people you're frustrated with; goals you're not making progress toward; institutions you hate... It doesn't matter what other people think discord is; if two things inside you disagree about what to do or think, list it.

For each item you've listed, vent your feelings on the paper.

What is the main emotion associated with this situation? You can list several emotions if one isn't enough for you, but keep it simple.

What need do you have trouble meeting because of this? By needs, I mean universal, human needs, rather than needs peculiar to you. On the next page is one list of such needs. Feel free to write your own.

Universal Human Needs⁸

acceptance	creativity	peace
affection	discovery	play
air, food, water, shelter	ease	respect/self-
appreciation	effectiveness	respect
authenticity	empathy	rest/sleep
autonomy	equality	security
beauty	growth	self-
belonging	harmony	expression
challenge	honesty	sexual
clarity	hope	expression
closeness	humor	space
communicati on	independence	spontaneity
communion	integrity	stability
community	intimacy	stimulation
compassion	joy	to celebrate
competence	learning	life
connection	love	to contribute
consciousness	meaning	to know and
consideration	movement/exer cise	be known
cooperation	mutuality	to see and be seen
	nurturing	to understand and be understood
		touch
		trust
		understanding

If you still have trouble answering the question, try saying, "When I feel _____ (the emotion you listed in the previous step), I'm not getting the _____ I need." Peruse the list above and see what best fits. If you aren't sure, use your best guess and continue.

What strategy were you using to meet that need? For example,

⁸ This list is adapted from one available at www.cnvc.org

if your sentence reads, "When I feel angry I'm not getting the cooperation I need," and your action was to yell at your child for not picking up his socks, then your strategy for getting cooperation was to yell.

When you've answered these questions for all items on the list, read through the strategies and pick out the recurrent ones. These are the patterns most in need of healing, because they are causing discord inside you. Use each of these, in turn, as your focus when applying the techniques of Chapters 9 and 10.

If you don't see patterns, ask someone else if they can see patterns. Read them the whole analysis you have written, not just the strategies. For this purpose, choose any willing person whose input you value and with whom you can speak freely. Some of us can speak more freely to strangers than to friends, so it need not be a friend. It just needs to be another pair of eyes.

Here is an example:

DISCORD: Al made me so mad with his sexist comments. I asked him to stop but he just got ugly, so I left.

VENT: What a jerk. Sexism, still! Well, I'm not going to get in a pissing war with a skunk. But I am tired of leaving every time someone's a jerk.

FEELING: Frustration, anger, grief

NEED: Respect

STRATEGY: I asked for the behavior I wanted. When I didn't get it, I didn't know what to do.

DISCORD: Bob wants to micromanage and I'm just not willing to be micromanaged. Tried to discuss it but he left in a huff.

VENT: I hate the way he talks to his wife. Unbelievably condescending. Well, he's not going to talk that way to me.

FEELING: Anger

NEED: Autonomy

STRATEGY: I asked for the behavior I wanted.
When I didn't get it, I didn't know what to do.

DISCORD: I'm worried about money.

VENT: I'm anxious about starting my own business, but every time I consider getting a job, I decide to stick it out.

FEELING: Fear

NEED: Financial security

STRATEGY: Doing what I love and hoping the money will follow.

DISCORD: My body's getting old.

VENT: Argh!

FEELING: Fear

NEED: Health, effectiveness

STRATEGY: Fiddle with diet and exercise, and hope that works.

DISCORD: Chris talks too much.

VENT: Oh god. What will I do?

FEELING: Boredom, dread

NEED: Mutuality

STRATEGY: Asked everyone to limit comments to their own experience. Didn't help.

Recurrent strategies:

Asking for appropriate behavior but not knowing the next step.
I seem to hope a lot in place of taking effective action.

Chapter 10

Finding the Template Memory

Finding the memory that gives rise to a current response is like fitting a key jigsaw-puzzle piece where it clarifies the picture. Things "click" and new insights come easily. If you've been scratching your head over why you feel what you feel, the reasons might suddenly come clear.

For example, in high school I went on a date where my feelings baffled me completely. I felt so revolted when this nice boy held my hand, that I ran away. I had no idea where the revulsion came from until years later, when a memory of childhood molest came out of occlusion. The feelings came from that old experience, and the puzzle now made sense.

An attention barrier had kept me from remembering the old incident, but once the barrier was breached, it was easy to pay attention. In fact, feeling and integrating happened so readily that I found myself in a healing whirlwind and the only effort needed was to keep my seat. It was much as if the molest had happened the day I remembered it.

This is typical of memories that have been completely repressed: remembering feels like re-living the event, with emotions that strong and details that vivid. Even the aftermath is similar: after my memory I was hypersensitive to sexual references, as sexual-assault victims are.

Much of psychotherapy is aimed at finding the memory that serves as a template for whatever problem the client faces. But you needn't be a psychotherapist to learn effective techniques, and if you *are* a psychotherapist, it might work well to set aside psychological theories and counter-theories and simply try methods until one works.

Some methods for locating the appropriate memory include:

Articulating the problem and asking yourself when that description was literally true;

Reviewing times in your life when you've felt these feelings;

Letting your intuition bring up past experiences the problem reminds you of, even if your rational mind does not immediately appreciate the connection;

Entering into dialogue with the emotions;

Getting outside perspective;

Writing a fictional account of the event;

Asking the unconscious to mediate using a symbol; and

The systematic analysis described in the previous chapter often helps by exposing a pattern of occurrences and forcing the pattern into words.

In some cases, the original memory will remain occluded for good reason; perhaps resources are still inadequate for integration. In the case of my molest, the memory stayed in hiding until I had the social support of others like me and the spiritual perspective to sustain me through the disillusionment that accompanied healing.

It is possible to integrate using an idea or symbol in place of the memory. The disadvantage is that important things might remain occluded, but the work can still improve the quality of life and serve as a stepping stone to later work. My childhood experience generated fear, as well as revulsion. Before the molest memory, I was able to work with the fear indirectly, so that it didn't order me around so much. Life was far better when I obeyed guidance than when I obeyed fear. But the ability to fully enjoy sex remained in hiding with the memory that produced it, and the two came back together.

Regardless of the method employed, finding the memory means traversing a well-worn path in reverse direction from usual. Usually, the unconscious mind proceeds from the memory to current behavior. We know this because the current behavior is not fully accounted for by the current situation. So the link to the past is there. Consciously, we may not have much ability to work backward. But the subconscious can do so. We ask the subconscious to lead us backward, and we make space in the conscious mind to receive the answer.

The request might be very direct, as in "When have I been in this situation before?" or very indirect, as in writing a fictional story. The less direct methods allow the subconscious to deliver partial information—facts without feelings or feelings without facts, ideas instead of memories, abstractions in place of perceptions, etc. It's important to allow this, since the subconscious determines when a person is ready for healing, when she has sufficient resources. It yards out emotional pain at rates she can integrate. To the extent her world view is built on false images of her original family, the subconscious will deliver information in small doses as she gradually corrects her thinking. Success at locating old memories rests on cooperation with the subconscious.

The thread that connects a past incident to more recent feelings, thoughts and behavior is hard to guess in advance. Suppose I once fell off a horse and am now afraid to ride horses, bicycles and motorcycles. Is it a feeling of fear, or the feel of straddling, or the idea of riding that connects the past to the present? Although fear might be the obstacle that caused me to withdraw attention after falling off the horse, fear is not necessarily the thread that links that memory to present-day refusal to ride a motorcycle. It might be seeing the ground go by that connects the two networks in my mind. So finding the memory often involves a lot of guesswork, casting about for any possibilities that come to mind.

TECHNIQUES IN DETAIL

The techniques below are listed from the most direct to the most indirect. That's not a bad way to work through them on any particular problem.

Start your search by forming a short description of the problem, pattern or issue you seek to heal. One word is fine. A whole sentence is okay so long as it gets to the point without a lot of qualifiers. Here are some examples:

Fear of horses

Certainty that I'll die if I ride a motorcycle

I'm revolted by the smell of hay

You can use an image or sensation if you prefer that to words.

Useful questions

With your issue in mind, try any of these questions:

- ◇ What does this remind me of?
- ◇ When have I felt this way before?
- ◇ What's my earliest memory of this sort of thing

happening?

- ◇ When was this premise literally true?

(For example, when was it true that I would have died if I rode a motorcycle?)

- ◇ What need did this strategy meet?

(For example, avoiding the smell of hay kept me out of the barn, which kept me safe.)

Scanning the past

Scanning your memory for incidents related to the topic at hand is a very direct approach. You can follow an emotion (e.g. fear), an idea ("horses are dangerous"), or a pattern (getting sick at the smell of hay). You can also use a symbol, which is probably an idea or set of ideas embodied in an image (leg in a plaster cast).

You can do this in writing or with another person. After you've had some practice, you can probably do it in your head, although the risk of falling into old patterns is high.

Just think when you've felt this way before (or thought this thought or responded in this way). Tell the story of that time. If you can't think of any events, tell what this reminds you of. When you're telling a past event, if it reminds you of others, tell those as well. Keep doing this until one of the following happens:

1) You remember an incident that seems pivotal. Then slowly tell this story, embracing all the feelings and noticing all the thoughts, and making connections to your spiritual perspective.

2) You feel like you've remembered enough relevant material, even though no one incident stands out. Proceed with integration: telling the memories slowly, feeling the feelings, and pay particular attention to the thoughts; keep articulating the thoughts and noticing which are appropriate to the present

and which cause problems. If the emotions involved come up but won't stay for loving attention, try curling up with just the feelings, inviting them to cuddle with you, not trying to resolve anything or figure anything out. You can also try any of the methods below that seem interesting to you.

3) You've remembered all you can, even though it doesn't seem like the root cause is there. In this case, you can try other methods below. But if some memories came to light, it's worth trying this method again in a day or so.

Vent

If the focus of your efforts is a feeling, or if it evokes strong feelings, venting can allow you to keep your attention on it long enough to connect to the past source as well as your spiritual view and social knowledge. Venting just means to give voice to your feelings without trying to be at all reasonable; the focus is on releasing, not on figuring out. If you vent to someone who has agreed to listen, make sure they understand that this time is not for being reasonable or offering solutions. Those things distract attention from the feelings. Besides getting as loud as you need to, get as active and as wet. Pound a pillow, cry, whine—whatever helps you fully express how you feel.

If you have a history of destructive behavior, set limits with yourself before starting. If you'll be tempted to throw china, vent where there is no china to throw. Set it up to be safe, so you won't have to hold back. If you tend to hurt yourself, get someone to help who can make sure there is a cushion between your fist and the wall. Your friend may be able to hold you and offer resistance at the same time, somewhat like wrestling.

Starting from a strategy

When your starting point is one of the strategies you identified in Chapter 9, a good first question to ask yourself is when in your life that strategy worked well. At some point, it was the best solution to the problem you faced. When was that?

The idea that our bad habits were elegant solutions can be hard to take. For example, my story of self-hate raises the question, when was I in such a horrible position that self-hate was an elegant

solution? The answer is: when I was quite young. I did not have an adult's tools to buffer me from other's foibles, denial, deceit, false accusations or outright brutality. Adults who witness abnormal behavior know it's abnormal; young children don't know because they don't have enough knowledge of behavior ranges. Adults have a strong enough sense of self to know that they are right when falsely accused, but a young child does not. He believes everything his parents tell him. An adult can take a blow and know whether it threatens her life, but a child might fear for her life in circumstances the rest of us watch without intervening. And adults can call the police or leave an abusive spouse, but children are trapped.

So adults don't necessarily recognize the trauma in common ways of treating children. I have a pet theory that this is why we like to write spy stories: they are the events it would take to produce in an adult, the feelings we had as children. Take my four-year-old neighbor for example. His father yelled at him, then marched across the lawn, grabbed him by the arm and dragged him into the house. The boy screamed as if he were being kidnapped, but no one helped him—him, a spy in enemy territory, his face bright red and wet with tears as he disappeared into the dungeon of absolute helplessness.

So don't worry about entertaining extravagant notions of what happened to you. Just follow your intuition and trust that the pieces will fall into place as you assemble the puzzle.

Ok, you have a strategy, when in the past did you use it? What does this predicament remind you of? If your feelings are too big for the current situation, what situation were they the right size for? If you're afraid for your life, when was your life in danger?

Follow all the leads that present themselves. The obvious one may not be most powerful, so follow them all. Trust yourself.

Talk to feelings

Perhaps your starting point is not a strategy but a feeling. You can talk to your feelings directly; you can talk to the person you were when you had these feelings in the past; or you can talk to a teddy bear or other surrogate. In all cases, you're talking to a network in your own mind. If this idea bothers you, you might be

able to have a conversation between yourself representing emotion, and some very loving icon, such as Mother Theresa or the Buddha. It needs to be someone who *will not* condemn you.

An advantage of picturing the child you were or using a stuffed animal is that it keeps your attitude loving and compassionate. If your feeling is anger, it's easy to be angry with the anger. But it won't give up its secrets to a hostile attorney. It needs love. So find what helps you be loving.

You can have this dialogue in your head or on paper. You can even have it with a friend, you speaking for the feelings and your friend speaking for the adult you.

Start by thanking your feelings for what they've done for you. Let them know you'd like to understand what it is they've done. But even if you never understand, let them know you appreciate their contribution.

Ask the kind of questions you would ask a three year old: how do you feel? what's wrong? what do you need? do you need a hug? what do I need to understand? what do you want me to do? what happened? did someone hurt you?... You're looking for the positive intention or the belief or the event, person, etc. Just getting a picture of how this situation came to be. Not prying, just lovingly understanding.

Tell a friend

Tell a friend who has explicitly agreed to listen. Give your friend instructions first. He should not say anything along the lines of "Maybe you're just perverse," and should say things along the lines of, "There must be a reason why you respond this way." Because our friends did not grow up in the same family with us, they don't have exactly the same distortion. They may have a better sense of what's normal vs. what seems normal to us but actually leaves problems in its wake.

My own healing path began this way. I mentioned to a friend that I had no memory of sharing affection with my mother as a young child, and she, lightly touching my hand, simply said, "That's not normal. Children love their mothers unless something gets in the way." That's all it took.

Ask the subconscious

You can make an explicit request to your subconscious: "Please show me why I say 'yes' when I would rather say 'no'" or "When did I learn to say 'yes' when I want to say 'no'?" After making such a request, watch for the answer until it comes. I never know when or in what form it will come. It could be an immediate intuition, the answer could come days later while I listen to another person speak, or anything in between. It might be symbolic, literal, sudden, gradual, or partial—addressing some part of the issue other than what I asked. It might even be the reason why my subconscious declines to grant the request.

This method works best if you cultivate your rapport with your own subconscious, for which exercises are given in Chapter 12. If your usual form of communication is prayer to a deity, you can use that here.

Ask for a dream

One way to ask yourself for an entry point into the relevant memory is with a dream. Before falling asleep, think about your issue. Go over everything you know about it. Then ask yourself (or your dream maker, or your deity...) to give you a dream for healing it. Upon awakening, write down your dream. Write any associations you make with the dream or the problem. As you do this, do you remember the incident in question? If so, write it as well. If not, use the symbols in the dream to refer to it when you do your healing work.

This technique works best if you're in the habit of writing your dreams upon awakening.

Make up a story

If your subconscious won't let you in the front door, it might still let you in the back. Assign your issue to some cute little animal, such as a kitten or puppy. Start with, "Once upon a time..." and see what happens.

This is best done aloud. For example, a friend was afraid about a new job, but couldn't say what was scaring her. I asked her to make up a story about a little puppy who had a new job. She didn't like the puppy idea but immediately changed it to a butterfly who

needed to get to New York. That's perfect. Her changes showed that we had engaged whatever shy butterfly needed to speak from behind its veil.

Work in symbols

Although I'm on a personal crusade to replace vagueness and metaphor with explicit understanding, there is no denying the power of symbols. With the single word "arithmetic" I can refer to years-worth of learning that you and I both share, a huge mental network.

In fact, I'm using the word "spiritual" in this way, to refer to something large, complex, and different for each of us. Our minds are so good at using symbols, that I can do this without even knowing you and you will use my suggestions appropriately, your mind picking out the pieces that are right for you.

You can also use a symbol for the network in need of healing and let the unconscious mind handle the finer detail. If your subconscious has given you a symbol for it, use that one. If not, take your short description of the problem or strategy and use that if you like to work in words, turn it into an image if you prefer the visual, assign it to a fictional character if that mode is comfortable, or otherwise represent it symbolically.

Now summon your spiritual perspective using the symbol that best represents it. You now have two symbols, one for the problem and one for spirituality. Spend some time getting peaceful or meditating. Think of your values, know that your will is for harmony and well-being. Or see and feel the light or other image that embodies healing and wholeness for you.

Now bring into this force field the symbol for your problem. Let it be absorbed, transformed, understood, loved, suffused or whatever else it needs.

If these instructions are too vague for you, you can use the guided meditation in Chapter 12 called "Connecting loss to light."

Working symbolically is not full integration, but it sometimes opens the way for the rest of the work to happen.

When you find a memory connected with your issue, debriefing it may lead to other memories. Debrief those as well.

By that time things will have changed and you can enjoy the new state of affairs. You might have more work for the future, in which case you can start fresh with a new statement of those issues. But do celebrate what you've accomplished.

If you have tried all these suggestions, you've done a lot of work. You may have a memory you can work to integrate or a new access point into an old memory. Even if the results are not dramatic, you have shone the light of consciousness on your issue from many angles. You can use your symbol of it to keep working. The next chapter provides maps for the continuing journey.

Chapter 11

A Program of Development

Your own healing process is the best guide in this work, but here are some steps to get you going, if you need them. Let your intuition take over when you're ready. If you want to cultivate that intuition directly, do the exercise "Tapping unconscious wisdom," in the next chapter.

Three sections below give ways to approach three phases of the work: starting to work with emotional pain, developing resources, and ongoing work. If you are experienced with emotional work, you can look through the first section and do only those exercises that are unfamiliar to you. The purpose of this section is for you to experience what each technique does, so that you will think of it when it suits your current challenge.

Then next section, "Building Resources," makes your work as productive as it can be. You can work through it next, using issues you want to address in your life. You might be tempted to rely on your strengths if you face pressing issues, but you do yourself a favor to deliberately work on under-developed areas. Up-front investment gives you the most change for the pain you take on.

INTRODUCTORY PROGRAM

Do the following exercises in order to get an introduction to emotional healing. The purpose here is to put some necessary experiences under your belt, rather than to make changes in your life. Just reading these won't do anything for you; you need to do each exercise.

One exercise per day makes a reasonable pace. Exercises 12-16 are compound exercises, and each of the nested exercises is plenty for a day. If you're in a hurry, do them at any pace that does not push you, as pushing can trigger a backlash.

1. Do the exercise, "Guided meditation on connecting loss to light," in Chapter 12.
2. Choose a recent incident that you're a bit upset about. You

might be annoyed or nervous or sad, but not enraged, terrified or devastated. (If you have a very loaded issue hanging fire, hold off using it until exercise number 5.)

Debrief this incident on paper, using the instructions below.

Instructions for debriefing

"Debrief" means to tell the story of what happened. If the incident carries an emotional charge, debriefing will usually dissipate the charge: you lose interest in it so that it becomes just another experience, rather than one that starts your heart racing.

Your feelings at the time are part of the story, so include them. In fact, when you're tempted to use an adjective, consider instead what you felt. For example, instead of, "He was rude," try, "He said, 'No chance,' and I felt angry." Also include what you feel as you are writing. You can differentiate these parts as asides ("Now, as I write, I feel fear about my reputation.")

Some people have easy access to their feelings and can just write what they felt. If that's you, you can tell the issues in this incident and your thoughts and feelings about them. If that's not you, try remembering more of the sensory detail: what color was the room? were you sitting or standing? could you hear traffic? Writing all this helps you re-live the incident and gives you a better chance of feeling the emotions involved.

Write about the incident until you either resolve things in your mind (e.g., "Next time I'll ask for a menu first") or you can succinctly say what is unresolved (e.g., "I need to know what they offer, but I'm too shy to ask for a menu.").

3. Choose another recent incident that you're a bit upset about—same criteria as above. Use the instructions in "Venting," Chapter 12, to relieve the feelings brought up by the incident.

4. Pick another recent incident that you're a bit upset about—same criteria. Debrief to a friend. Get permission and be clear what you're asking: the friend is to listen without comment, although he can help you get the whole story out if you get stuck. For example: "Do you want to hear what happened this morning? I just need to put it out there and I'm not ready for any suggestions or comments. Would you be willing to just listen?" If the answer is "yes," tell the story, just as you did on paper.

Don't worry about boring your friend; he's helping, not being entertained. Ask for help if you get stuck before it's resolved or focused into the as-yet-unresolvable. For example, "I feel like I've missed something, but I can't think what. Did it sound like I left something out?"

When you're done, thank your friend. Let him know that you're further forward because of his patient listening.

5. Pick a recent incident you're a bit upset about. Catalog your thoughts about it. You can write them or not, but don't pursue them. That is, if you think, "He sure was rude," avoiding going on to think how very rude he was and how he should be different. Just notice that you think he was rude, then go on to notice what else you think.

If you realize that you got carried away by a thought, don't worry about it. Just go back to noticing all your thoughts connected with this incident. Do this until you feel like you've got the full list.

6. Pick a recent incident that you're a bit upset about. You can use the same one you used in the previous exercise if you're still upset about it. Embrace the feelings it brings up as described in Chapter 8, "How to embrace an experience": feel them fully with no attempt to change them. Just let them be there. Fully feeling does not mean indulging the thoughts; notice the thoughts without pursuing them, as you did in the last exercise. Similarly with feelings: pay attention without getting carried away by analysis or plans for change. Just feel, then feel some more. Let the feelings be there. Let them stay or go as they will. Do this until you're familiar with the feelings, able to embrace them with no urge to act, able to think independently of them about what action might be appropriate.

7. Pick a recent incident that you're a bit upset about, one you've already worked on or a new one. Summarize what happened in a single sentence: "Robin was late and I'm mad," or "I believed her but it wasn't true."

What does this remind you of?

When have you felt this way before?

What's your earliest memory of this sort of thing happening?

Debrief each past incident that you remember, noting thoughts and embracing feelings. The purpose is not to change yourself, but to understand.

8. Choose something from the past. Pick an incident that you believe had an impact on your life, whether positive or negative. Don't pick your biggest trauma, just something significant.

Tell or write the story of what happened. You can tell it to your pet if you like, the point of telling being to keep the process slow like talking instead of fast like thinking. Embrace the feelings that come up. Notice the differences between what you thought then and what you think looking back. Notice how it has influenced you.

9. Return to the story above and imagine the person you are now talking to the person you were then. Can you offer comfort or guidance?

10. Bring up one of the feelings you dislike. To do this, think of something that makes you mad or sad or whatever it is. As you call up the emotion, scan your body and note what physical changes take place to help keep the emotion at bay. For example, do you hold your breath, clench your jaw, wring your hands, rock back and forth, etc. Noticing these habits can help you engage your feelings when you want to: simply stop the behavior.

11. Do the exercise called "Choose a symbol" in the next chapter. It expects you to be working on an issue, so choose any that you've worked on so far.

12. Problems often present themselves as "issues" rather than incidents: too many jerks in the world, people climb over the fence, they talk about me behind my back... Choose such an issue.

If you have strong feelings about this issue, start by venting them. Next, write down what this issue is. The examples I gave above all focus on other people: "They do this or that." In order to heal, the focus needs to shift onto what you can do. For example,

"Too many jerks in the world," might become, "Learn to live happily in a crazy world,"

"People climb over the fence," might become, "Understand why people climb over the fence,"

"They talk about me behind my back," might become,

"Explore my feelings about gossip."

If you don't see how to change your focus, try writing all your options, then use each of those as a focus: why do you reject it? how do you feel about it? what does it remind you of? If you can't select one as a way to proceed, write that dilemma and use it as the focus.

Using your me-centered statement, do the following exercises:

"Cost-benefit analysis," in Chapter 12

"Find the positive intention in the strategy," from Chapter 5

"Writing with alternate hands," in Chapter 12

"Choose a symbol," in Chapter 12, then use it to bring this issue into your spiritual perspective and to bring compassion to the feelings involved

13. Do any of the exercises in Chapter 12, "Access to feelings" that look interesting to you.

14. Do all of the exercises in Chapter 12, "Tolerance for feelings."

15. Do the section of Chapter 12 called, "Bringing the spiritual to the emotional."

16. Do the "Giving help" and "Getting help" sections of Chapter 12.

BUILDING RESOURCES

If you didn't take the resources assessment in Chapter 7, do that now.

Choose one to three resources from that survey to work on first. These are the ones you scored to the left of the others, the under-developed one(s). If your resources are well-balanced skip down to Ongoing Work.

Go to the section of Chapter 12 for the resource you have targeted. Skim through that section and select an exercise. Some sections advise you to work in order, while others say you can choose whatever interests you. Do this for each of your underdeveloped resources. You'll have selected one to three exercises.

Now do those. Take them at any speed and in any order.

When you finish an exercise in a section, choose another in that same section, until you feel you're stronger in that area.

When you've done that for your three chosen resources, take the assessment again. You should be in position to decide what to do after that.

ONGOING WORK

Start with the issue you're most motivated to tackle. Write it down.

Event or class of events

If your issue is an event or set of events, you can use the following to bring attention to it:

- ◇ Debriefing, described above;
- ◇ Embracing the feelings, using the instructions given in Chapter 8, "How to embrace an experience" or venting, described in Chapter 12;
- ◇ Writing, using the instructions for debriefing, or writing as you would speak to a friend or therapist, writing a letter-not-to-send to someone involved, or the "Writing with alternate hands" exercise in the next chapter;
- ◇ Seeking the template memory, the experience that this set of experiences is patterned on. Methods are detailed in Chapter 10.
- ◇ When your issue is a belief, it can be necessary to change your behavior and let that change bring up the feelings in need of attention (the reverse of the more usual process). Use the "New strategies" method in Chapter 12.

Feeling

If you think of the issue as an emotion—you're depressed or anxious—the indicated thing is to embrace it, as detailed in Chapter 8. You can use the methods in "Tolerance for feelings," next chapter, if you have trouble warmly welcoming this one.

Problem

If your issue is a current problem, it will help to do some analysis first. You can use the method described in Chapter 9,

"Instructions for a systematic analysis of discord" but with this issue as the focus, that is, listing all incidents of this problem and working through to one or more strategies you adopted in the past that now create problems. Now use the methods in Chapter 10 to seek out the original memory.

After you've worked in one of these ways, you may be ready to move on or you may have learned something about this issue without having solved it. In the latter case, re-state the problem and go through Chapter 12 looking for other ways to tackle it. If nothing looks promising, try consulting your inner wisdom. If you're not sure how to do this, two exercises in the next chapter may be useful: "Direct contact" and "Tapping unconscious wisdom."

It will also be best to develop helping relationships with others. Use the giving and getting help exercises in Chapter 12 to start using friends for healing. Some of these attempts will work well and others won't, which shows the potential in your various relationships. Work to develop those with the most potential. You can make this explicit by asking your friend if she wants to do this with you, or you can simply draw her along and see how she responds.

As you do the work, you will develop some resources. Now and again, it will be good to re-take the assessment in Chapter 7, and bring all areas up to par with your new, higher level of development.

All of these suggestions are ways to get started. If you're already started, you already have some intuition about the work. And you probably already have favorite tools for doing it, but you know how craftsmen are: fascinated with tools. The next chapter gives you 106 of them to consider!

Chapter 12

Exercises for Developing Resources

Chapter 6 discussed the resources needed for spiritually-assisted emotional healing. This chapter details exercises to build each resource.

RICH, ROBUST SPIRITUAL VIEW

The more developed your vision, the more it inspires your new solutions to old problems. Using it every day makes it easily accessible when you need it—in the throes of old pain.

This section breaks cultivating the spiritual view into four subtasks. The only essential one is the first, articulating your values. Use the others if they seem helpful.

Articulating Values

Articulating your values is a fundamental task in living a spiritually sound life. It provides the basis for making decisions, guiding behavior, aligning the will and seeking guidance.

List your values

Can you list the things you value, have always valued, and always will value?

What I Value

If that question is too abstract for you, it might help to ask these:

◇ On your death bed, what will you look back on with satisfaction?

- ◇ What will be meaningless?
- ◇ What will you regret?

The idea here is to drill down through the derivatives to the thing that never changes. For example, you weren't born valuing money, but you may have been born valuing something that money can buy. That something is still with you, and if you mull over the urge to buy, you can probably label the thing you have valued since birth. An example might be "health."

If your list seems incomplete, you can fill it out as follows:

Pick something you've done in the past two hours and label the motivation for it. Has this motivation always been with you, or is it a derivative of something more fundamental? Name the more fundamental thing. Keep doing this until you reach something unchangeable, then add that to the list.

For example, I just turned the water on to irrigate the garden. I did that because the plants need water. Behind that motivation is a desire for a healthy garden that keeps me healthy. My motives are harmony with my environment, independence from the grocery store, the pleasure of fresh vegetables and a good diet. I was born valuing harmony, so that goes on my list. Independence resolves to something more like freedom, effectiveness or autonomy, so I'll put freedom on the list. Pleasure in eating was there at birth, although I suspect it is simply the physical manifestation of a deeper value for health. So I'm putting down health. And that covers good diet as well.

Keep doing this exercise until your list seems to cover everything you do in a day.

List what you want guiding you

Once you have your values listed, you can decide what you want to guide you. We do this intuitively, but doing it explicitly has advantages. First, the exercise exposes any discrepancy between what you really value and what you allow to guide you. These discrepancies are important things to heal, as they cause discord between your actions and your ethics. Work at this level is very efficient, since all the resulting behavior changes without your

having to review each separate deed.

When I first did this exercise I discovered that fear guided me much of the time, but I didn't want it guiding me at all. I had a lot of work to do! Fear and I are now old friends, and we both know who drives.

The second advantage of explicitly deciding what you want to guide you is that working it out creates entry points into your spiritual understanding. When remembering a past incident, you will be much more likely to think of mercy if you've chosen mercy as one of your guiding principles and work to keep it in mind.

You can frame the question in any way that fits your beliefs: What qualities do I want to manifest? What qualities do I want in a guiding light? What qualities make the deity I worship worthy of my allegiance?

What I want guiding me

You're putting together a check list that you can use when you're confused about what to do. You can ask whether a decision you're considering reflects the qualities on your list. For example, if you're debating whether or not to invite Robin to dinner, and your list has "kindness" and "honesty" on it, you can ask whether inviting Robin would be kind and honest.

Inner peace or harmony, well-being

Invite a quality

Are there qualities on your list of guiding principles that you would like more of in your life? If so, try inviting one of them in. Morning and night, invite it into your life. Ask yourself how it fits into the decisions you make throughout the day. Make room for it.

Experiments in perceiving spirit

When do you feel connected to the outer world, at peace, centered? Whatever your answer, do that every day. The purpose is to strengthen your connection to this spiritual resource. If you do the exercise seven times, that's seven new entry paths into your spiritual outlook. When life challenges you, your spiritual perspective is that much more available to meet the challenge.

Contemplation: Spiritual Yearning

For some of us, spirituality manifests as an intuition that something is missing in our lives, that more is possible, that the most important thing eludes us. We might read books or follow disciplines, always reaching for better understanding or a broader picture. If this describes you, it might be useful to contemplate this feeling itself.

Pick a time and a place where there will be few distractions. Turn off the phone. Face a blank wall or dim the lights. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position, but not so comfortable that you'll fall asleep. Relax your body.

Call up the feeling and let your attention dwell on it. If attention wanders away, gently return it. Thoughts will arise; notice what they are but don't pursue them. Return attention to the feeling. Let the attention spread out to anything around the feeling. Relax. Receive.

Investigate Well-being

Now here is a direct approach:

Try feeling good. Just invite a sense of well-being to come visit you. What happens? Does it work? If so, how? If not, what gets in the way?

Guided Meditation: A Peaceful Place

If you don't naturally tend to relax and feel centered, you can try this more deliberate approach. It is a guided meditation that uses self-hypnosis. Hypnosis is not a mystical thing; it is just addressing oneself to the subconscious mind.

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Relax the muscles in

your left foot. If you're not sure when they're relaxed, flex them and then relax them; you should feel the difference. Next, relax the muscles in your left calf. Then the left thigh. If you want, you can coordinate the muscle groups with your breath: on each breath, relax the next part of your body. Proceed with the right leg, torso (I usually relax the front and back separately), arms, neck, jaw, mouth, cheeks, brow, scalp...until the whole body is relaxed. Don't leave anything out. Spend as much time as necessary on areas with a lot of muscle tension.

Now imagine yourself walking down to a peaceful place. You can walk down ten stairs to get there. Maybe you'll go down an incline with 10 levels. Whatever appeals to you. Count your progress down from 10 to 0.

You're now in your peaceful place.

Take a look around. What is here? Who, if anyone, is here?

Enjoy this place.

What form does enjoying it take? Do you simply drink in the beauty? Do you summon a wise being to come advise you? Do you dance?

Spend some time being peaceful, doing that in whatever form appeals to you.

When you are ready, bring yourself back by the way you came. Travel back from 0 to 10 and open your eyes.

Now consider what makes you feel connected. Are there things you'd like to do more of in your day-to-day life?

Meditation on peace

For 5-10 minutes, sit quietly and still, where you won't be disturbed. Consider for a moment what it means to be at peace. Bring your attention to your breath. Each time you inhale, think "peace." The rest of the time, just allow yourself to be at peace. Don't pursue your thoughts. When thoughts arise, gently redirect attention to your sense of peace.

Gratitude practice

For 5-10 minutes, consider what you're grateful for. Right now, what are you glad of? This can be anything—creature

comforts, progress toward goals, beauty, friends, plans... Savor that until the next thing comes to mind. Only savor things you're truly pleased about, not things you think you should be pleased about.

Receiving practice

Receptivity is key to appreciating life. It is also essential for discovering your own past and its influence in the present.

What calms and feeds you? A walk in the woods? Music? Talking to your pet? Whatever it is, do it giving it your full attention. When you get distracted by other thoughts, bring your attention back to this nurturing practice. Receive all it has to give. It may help to take a pencil and paper so that you can write down anything you think of that you want to pay attention to later. That makes it easier to set distractions aside now and go back to appreciating your activity.

Connection

Connection is the spiritual quality that gives rise to ethics: we treat those we feel connected to the way we wish to be treated. Ethics is extending such treatment to people we don't know or don't like. Much of the work of spiritually sound living is to retain or foster the natural sense of connection, without denying the dangers to oneself. For example, if your friend wants you to get in the passenger seat while he drives drunk, you have choices: You can summon anger to keep you out of the car, damaging your sense of connection in the process; you can get in the car for fear of damaging your friendship; or you can retain both the sense of connection and the knowledge of danger, in which case you might lift the hood and take a spark plug wire.

It's a lucky child who grows up learning the knack of retaining connection without denial. If you've sacrificed connection, the exercises below may help you recover it. As you do them, think about why you made the habit of keeping distance; this is the work of integration that will allow you to be as wise as a serpent while loving with a whole heart.

If you always seem to want more connection, you may have opted for denial. If that sounds like you, try the exercises below

called "Replace judgment with statement of needs," and "Taking it personally," along with the Boundaries exercise in the "Getting Help" section of this chapter. For now, concentrate on recognizing your needs and negotiating for them, rather than on cultivating a sense of connection.

Guided Meditation: Interconnection

Read each line, then close your eyes and follow the instruction.

Our usual way of thinking is that this room is full of air and we are in it: we are separate from the air.

But close your eyes and imagine that the oxygen in this room is visible.

If it were white, maybe it would look like mist.

As you breathe in, picture the white oxygen molecules flowing into your lungs.

Imagine the molecules crossing the permeable lung tissue and entering your blood stream.

Visualize the white molecules moving from the lungs to the heart, moving forward at each pulse.

See them collect in the chambers of heart.

Now they stream out of the heart, like headlights moving along the artery.

Some flow to the muscle in your arm.

They cross the cell walls and enter the muscle cell.

They enter every cell.

If they don't enter a cell, it dies.

We depend on the oxygen to penetrate our muscles, bones, brain.

See the body suffused with white oxygen molecules.

Even the skin needs oxygen. The cells die without it.

From the lungs to the skin, every cell is suffused with oxygen.

See your whole body, penetrated by the white oxygen molecules.

We depend on the oxygen to penetrate us completely. Otherwise, we would die.

If we were separate from the air for even a short time, we would die.

If any part of us is not penetrated by the air, that part dies.

We know that we take in O_2 and breathe out CO_2 . So we give back something we didn't take in. Something we called "me" just a moment ago is now part of the air.

And some of the oxygen remains inside. What was air is now me.

Imagine the CO_2 leaving your lungs and going into the air. Visualize it entering the green leaves outside your door. They keep your carbon and breathe out oxygen. Picture the oxygen that was part of the leaf leaving it, flowing to your lungs, becoming part of your skin.

Complete interpenetration.

We depend on this. Without this exchange, we die. Without the trees, we die.

Complete interdependence.

Every molecule in my body was part of someone else not very long ago: a tree, a carrot, a stream. Nothing remains of the molecules I was born with. What I called me back then is now all in other beings or the earth.

Completely interconnected.

Now return your attention slowly to your surroundings, coming back fresh and rested.

Giving practice

The meditation above calls attention to our interconnectedness at the physical level. If you'd like to focus on our social and emotional interconnectedness, give something to a stranger. This can be a material thing or it can be your time. For example, you could help cook in a soup kitchen, donate to a thrift store, or take a drunk to an AA meeting. Write your feelings afterward.

Inferring needs from feelings

This exercise is preparation for several that follow. Below is a list of universal human needs. Unmet needs give rise to unhappy

feelings, and you are to list the feelings you would expect when a need is unmet. I've listed a few to get you started. Feel free to change them if you disagree; the point is to think what feelings each unmet need produces, so that you have a better chance of guessing the need when you see the feeling.

In real life, you will tend to work backward, from the feeling you have or someone else appears to have, guessing at the need that might be behind it. This allows you to find common ground with others by identifying the need that both you and they understand. You can then work to get the need met, rather than wrestle with the feeling.

<i>An unmet need for:</i>	<i>might give rise to:</i>
acceptance	anxiety or anger
affection	loneliness or anxiety
air, food, water,	physical discomfort
shelter	hurt or anger
appreciation	disgust or shame
authenticity	frustration or anger
autonomy	depression or alienation
beauty	
belonging	
challenge	
clarity	
closeness	
communication	
communion	
community	
compassion	
competence	
connection	
consciousness	
consideration	
cooperation	
creativity	
discovery	
ease	

effectiveness
empathy
equality
growth
harmony
honesty
hope
humor
independence
integrity
intimacy
joy
learning
love
meaning
movement/exercise
mutuality
nurturing
peace
play
respect/self-respect
rest/sleep
security
self-expression
sexual expression
space
spontaneity
stability
stimulation
to celebrate life
to contribute
to know and be
known
to see and be seen
to understand
to be understood
touch

trust

Replace judgment with statement of needs

Think of a recent time when you got stuck in a problem, thinking the only solution was for the other guy to be different.

Put into words each of these four elements:

◇ *What happened.* One sentence with "just the facts, Ma'am." E.g., "He called at 3 a.m. to wish me good night."

◇ *How you feel about it.* An emotion, not a verb in the past tense. E.g., "angry" rather than "badgered."

◇ *What you need.* You can roll this in with the above: "I feel angry because I need consideration." If you don't have an intuition of the need, use the list in the previous exercise for ideas.

◇ *A request,* framed as what to do rather than what not to do. E.g., "Would you please call before 10 p.m. when you want to wish me good night?"

Having once been a world-class finger pointer, I've gotten a lot of mileage from this exercise. The more I recognize my needs, the less I'm inclined to be a victim first and blame later. Of course, I don't always get what I ask for. Then it's up to me to decide what I'll do about it. Again, my focus is making a decision rather than blaming, even if I don't like the choices I'm left with. I may stop interaction with the person and feel sad about the loss, but I am not in conflict either with them or myself.

Stop taking it personally

Did your care-takers call you stupid or lazy or worthless? Did your teacher predict that you'd never amount to much? Did someone you had a crush on call you ugly?

Most of us respond to such input by feeling distant or disconnected from the rest of humanity. That feeling can then hamper access to our sense of connection as adults. This exercise is one possible antidote.

Summon that queasy feeling of self-doubt and think back to an incident that provoked it. Write down what the person said.

What do you think that person was feeling at the time? If you don't know, make your best guess.

What do you think that person needed? If you draw a blank, refer to the list in the exercise before last, "Inferring needs from feelings."

Now translate the sentence you wrote down to start this exercise into one that does not refer to you. That is, what would your detractor have said if he simply stated his need?

Use this translation to redirect your attention from doubting yourself to understanding your accuser.⁹

Experiment in praying for someone else

The purpose of praying for someone else is to align your will with your values. It's useful when strong feelings tend to pull you away from what you believe your attitude should be. If prayer isn't your thing, you can do this exercise with visualizing, voting, or asserting.

Think of someone you dislike, resent, or hold in low esteem. What does that person need? (Refer to the list above if you don't have a good guess.) What do you need because of that person? What does the relationship need in order to come into balance?

If you are comfortable with prayer, write a prayer that the needed quality come into your relationship. If you don't use prayer, imagine the needed quality coming into your relationship. Run some scenarios in your mind, so that you can see what it might look like for your relationship to come right. You can assert your openness to this outcome, e.g., "I would have harmony with George."

Implicit in doing this is putting out for the two of you to get what you need. When you get caught in fruitless wishing for the other to be different, try substituting this vote for her well-being.

Here is an example:

I find myself wishing (for the 100th time) that Dan were different.

⁹ If this exercise or the previous two were particularly helpful, you can learn more from Marshall B. Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, PuddleDancer Press (2003).

What does he need? Reassurance would be my best guess.

Because of his accusations, I keep my distance, but I wish we could have understanding instead. The accusations scare me because I don't know what he'll do. So I could use some reassurance, too.

The relationship needs trust.

My prayer reads, "Divine Will, I would have Dan get any reassurance he needs. Show me the way to a relationship of mutual trust."

When I say this prayer, I realize that keeping my distance allows us to have a relationship of mutual trust, albeit a distant one. My work seems to be to accept it as it is, complete with my unfulfilled wish for understanding.

Universality test

When you face a decision that is morally ambiguous, sometimes this exercise can bring clarity. In it, you think what should be done from your own perspective, from the other person's, and then from both at once. That view is the one with the most sense of connection. The story below walks you through the process. Once you've done it in this contrived situation, you can easily adapt it to a real one.

Imagine that the year is 1864 and you're an army doctor. There have been a lot of bloody battles, and there has just been another. Wounded men scream in pain and you have to concentrate on the one you're working on. You work until you're tired. Then you work until you're exhausted. How much longer will you work?

Now imagine that the year is 1864 and you're a wounded soldier. You've been lying forever in hell. When will the doctor get to you? You learn that the doctor is exhausted and needs some sleep. How long should the doctor sleep?

This time the year is 1864 and you're a disembodied spirit hovering over the battle scene. In just a moment, you will be incarnated into either the doctor or the soldier, but you don't know which. Before you go, you have to decide how long the doctor will work, how long he will sleep, and what the criteria are for making those choices.

Try on another's shoes

Once, at a documentary of some atrocities, I overheard a viewer ask, "How can people do such things?" I knew how people could do such things, because I had done things, less atrocious but still in violation of my ethics, under similar pressures. The same acceptance that allows me to see why others might behave as they do allows me to admit my own misdeeds. And I can't correct them if I can't admit them. To put it differently, judging others keeps me judging myself. Since I can't afford that, it's useful to work at understanding others in place of judging them.

Imagine four people touched by war: a displaced person who has lost home and family to enemy soldiers, an enemy soldier, a war reporter, and the political figure who ordered the invasion. It will be best if you pick a recent or current war for this scenario.

Now put yourself in each of the four roles, one at a time. Explain from your (in the role) point of view, why you have done what you've, how you feel, and what you think. When you occupy a role that you consider the bad guy, take some time to feel your way into what this person really believes and what pressures she is responding to. Avoid caricature.

Beliefs

The purpose of this section is to stimulate assessment of what you believe. We are taught beliefs in childhood, and they may not agree with what we've decided as adults. But we don't review old ideas until something brings them to our attention. This is one way I have violated my own ethics, by acting on beliefs I no longer subscribe to before I have time to think. This section helps avoid that and also build entry points into one's spiritual understanding.

Inside or Out?

Do you think of divinity as being inside yourself or outside? What about guidance?

This experiment examines these questions.

For a week, keep a log of events where you find guidance or value.

Sometime during the week, walk in a pretty place. Choose something you like there: a tree, a view, a still life, an animal or

child. What is valuable about it? What would be lost if this thing were destroyed? Write your thoughts.

Sometime during the week, sit quietly and turn attention inward. What is valuable in there?

At the end of the week, look at your log for how many times guidance came from inside and how many times it came from outside yourself. Do the same for value.

Ideas to consider

Below are eight assertions about the intangible qualities human beings value. For each one, do you agree or disagree? What examples from your own life apply?

◇ In the material realm, one person can benefit at another's expense, but in the spiritual realm this is not so. Anything that increases spiritual qualities (such as truth, beauty, and harmony) for one person, increases them for all people.

◇ No one can be barred from grace except by himself. Grace, or harmony, is available as soon as we become receptive. Always.

◇ The person most affected by a deed is the doer. Again, this spiritual principle is the opposite of its material counterpart, where the person most affected by a deed is the one done to.

◇ While material assets decrease when we give them away, spiritual ones increase. The qualities you've listed on your values list (such as goodwill or honesty) grow with giving:

Love is something if you give it away
you end up having more.

It's just like a magic penny,
hold it tight and you won't have any.

Lend it, spend it and you'll have so many
They'll roll all over the floor.¹⁰

¹⁰ Malvina Reynolds, "Magic Penny" in *The Malvina Reynolds Songbook*,

◇ Using spiritual qualities increases them: "As I lived according to the highest light I had, I discovered that other light was given; that I opened myself to receiving more light as I lived the light I had."¹¹ Light, here, means understanding or guidance.

◇ Harmony is satisfying: Cognitive dissonance nags until it's resolved. A rift between friends is uncomfortable, and fixing it is satisfying. Honest relationships are stable and fulfilling, while dishonest ones are unsatisfying.

◇ Error yields to harmony, not to conquest: "This is the way of peace—overcome evil with good, and falsehood with truth, and hatred with love."¹²

◇ The only difference between a dream and our waking experience is that sensory data is manufactured in the dream and taken in from the external world when we're awake. Otherwise, the two are the same. And to what degree do we use sensory data accurately? Judging from eye-witness discrepancies, we modify, select, or distort sensory data all the time. Although we don't have conscious control of this process, recognizing that we make the decision what to pay attention to and how to interpret the data puts appropriate responsibility for our feelings on our own shoulders.

In addition to these spiritual principles, let me offer a quote on the relationship of material to spiritual. For the purpose, I'll define greed as subordinating spiritual concerns to material ones, violating ethics in pursuit of wealth: "[Greed] grows with opportunity. The more there is to grab, the greedier people get."¹³

Review old ideas

List the main religious ideas you were raised with. If your family did not subscribe to a religion, list the ideas having to do with morality, authority, and sacredness.

Schroder, Berkeley (1974) p. 50.

¹¹ Peace Pilgrim, *Peace Pilgrim: Her Life and Work in Her Own Words*, Ocean Tree, Hemet (1982) pp.10-11.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 26.

¹³ Dick Francis, *Hot Money*, Putnam's, NY (1987) p. 62.

Now decide which of those ideas you want guiding you in your current life and which you'd like to let go of.

Reflect on the ones you want guiding you. Remind yourself of them daily until you feel they are fully incorporated into your actions.

Reflect on the ones you want to let go of. How do they influence you now? Have any of them contributed to discord in your life?

For those who believe in God

I've discovered that monotheists view God in a very wide variety of ways. To some, God is a man, while others view God as the whole universe or some force within it. Some believe God is jealous and vindictive, while others believe God could not have such characteristics. Making your own beliefs explicit will ensure that they honor your values and also create entry points into your spiritual understanding.

Consider the attributes or qualities of God.

- ◇ How are they different from the attributes of the people who raised you (parents or other close caretakers)?
- ◇ How is God similar to those people?
- ◇ What makes God worthy of your allegiance?

Pin down what you mean by evil

Personally, I think that believing in evil is playing with fire. But if you do, bringing your beliefs into consciousness can protect you from violating your ethics in the name of combating evil. And there may be healing to do around how you acquired the concept.

Imagine two neighbors, Paul and John. They inherited adjacent farms and just despise each other. For years, they've argued over the boundary line, whose daughter is prettiest, whose son most deserves to become sheriff, and who should keep the fence between them in good repair.

One day Paul's milk cow gets through the fence and tramples crops on John's side of the line. John is irate but Paul just shrugs him off. The next morning, the cow is dead in her stall.

Question 1: Has any evil occurred so far in this story?

Paul notices a footprint in the stall and thinks he recognizes it. He goes to John and accuses him. John replies, "Of course I killed your cow. She destroyed my crops. And besides, you're an insufferable good-for-nothing who insults my daughter and refuses to keep the fence in good repair."

Question 2: Did John do anything wrong? Did he do evil? Is there a difference? If so, what?

You are a judge and Paul has brought his grievance to you.

Question 3: Assuming the laws in this story are as you would like them to be, what judgment do you hand down? What remedy or punishment do you decide on?

It turns out Paul didn't come straight to you. Before that, he took an ax and chopped off John's arm. Now John has brought his grievance to you.

Question 4: Has Paul done wrong? Has he done evil? What remedy or punishment do you hand down?

Now suppose that the setting for this story is medieval England. You are a bishop.

Question 5: Does that change any of your answers? If so, then some of your answers reflect social norms rather than pure ethics. What pressures are you responding to? What makes the difference?

Ok, we're in medieval England, the story is the same except there is no footprint, no confession, and Paul comes to you without chopping of John's arm. That is, we are at Question 1, above.

Paul says that John is a witch and killed the cow without leaving home. John denies killing the cow.

Question 6: Has any evil occurred so far in this story?

As a medieval bishop, you have at your disposal the means for tearing John's arm off (a rack). People accused of witchcraft usually confess on the rack.

Question 7: Should you put John on the rack?

Question 8: Is there a moral difference between you taking off John's arm and Paul doing it? Is one more ethical than the other? If so, why?

Now suppose the story is the same except that you are not a bishop but an onlooker, a neighbor. The bishop puts John on the rack, tears off his arms, gets a confession from him, then burns him at the stake.

Question 9: Has any evil occurred in this story?

SALIENCE

Applying your values to the little decisions you make every day may be the single biggest thing you can do to change the tenor of your life. The increased availability of your spiritual thinking is then an important asset for healing.

Gratitude

Right now, what are you grateful for? Are you warm and dry? Last time you were cold and wet, do you remember how sweet it was to get warm and dry? Are you glad you're not cold and wet? Are you grateful for the means to keep yourself warm and dry? What about the last unpleasant thing you experienced—are you grateful it's over? If you've lost someone you loved, are you grateful for the time you shared with that person?

The idea here isn't to manufacture gratitude, but to think of the

things you truly are grateful for. Make a point of doing this morning and night for a week as an experiment, or once a day as a permanent practice.

Prayer

Prayer is the most direct way to keep your values salient.

Earlier in this chapter is an exercise called "Investigating Will" in which I asked you to write the qualities that you want guiding you. Now consider how best to represent those qualities to yourself. If the list of abstractions you already have works for you, fine. If not, what about a character in your mind with those qualities? Or a web of forces. Or...? For example, if you decided to be guided by loving kindness, do you feel loving kindness most readily when you think "loving kindness," or when you think of your grandmother, or a guardian angel?

Pray for guidance from that source(s). You can ask—it's ok. But if you don't like asking you can assert: "I would manifest loving kindness." Or, "Today I invite loving kindness into my thoughts, words and feelings."

Repeat the prayer every morning, mindful of the day's tasks. Repeat it at night, considering how you were guided today, or perhaps when you failed to be guided. Ask for clarification on anything that did not go well today. Repeat the prayer before each decision, each difficult situation, and any time you remember.

In time, you will incorporate loving kindness into your life by habit, without having to think consciously about it all the time.

New strategies

In Chapter 9, you found recurring strategies that cause you grief. You may have used Chapter 10 to locate the source of the strategy, and that might be enough. Sometimes it's not. Sometimes that removes the obstacle (or booby trap) but leaves you the task of finding new solutions. This exercise is a bid to look for new solutions in your spiritual understanding. By doing so repeatedly through the day, you keep your understanding salient while noticing the situations that used to lead to trouble. It's a good way to make new strategies, and it also tends to bring up past incidents for healing.

Formulate a prayer (or assertion) for ways to meet the need that the strategy was designed to meet. For example, if I said 'yes' when I meant 'no' because I needed social acceptance, I might pray, "I would notice the social acceptance I have when I'm honest with my boundaries," or perhaps, "Divine Wisdom, Please show me how to say 'no' gracefully."

Do this in the morning and repeatedly through the day. The repetition helps you catch yourself before acting in the old way. In the evening, consider how it went that day. Did anything come up that needs your full attention?

Compassion in daily life

The quality of compassion is a particularly good one to cultivate access to. People can tolerate painful emotion better when they feel compassion for themselves, so extending compassion to the child they once were can help them face now what they could not face then.

To cultivate compassion, you can start the morning with a prayer such as, "Divine Love, fill my heart." Or, "I would let divine love fill my heart." As, always, modify my words to be right for you. Take time to let divine love into your heart. Whenever you remember through the day, say a prayer for the people you see: "Divine Love, fill his heart." Or you could try this one, (silently), "May you be happy. May you give freely and receive all that you need." That one is particularly nice when you're upset with someone.

Mindfulness

Old patterns can influence us more easily when we're thinking of other things, so slowing down and doing one thing at a time can help integrate your values into your actions at a very fine level. For example, my behavior has never been antisocial or grossly unethical, yet it's unloving in that I lash myself into productivity most minutes of the day. I'm thinking about what I'm doing, not how I'm doing it, so I easily miss this low-level violation of my own ethics.

Mindfulness is just paying attention to each thing you choose to pay attention to. We're always doing more than one thing—

breathing, thinking, standing, at least—so you have to choose one. We do this implicitly, by intending to weed the garden, for example. In mindfulness practice, if I intend to pull weeds and find that I'm thinking about lunch while doing it, I bring my attention back to the garden. If I need to think about lunch, I stop paying attention to the garden and give my full attention to lunch planning.

The purpose is to make the habit of conscious decisions about the deployment of attention. It supports the attention training of meditation, by practicing the same skill at a coarser level.

Decide when and how long you'll practice mindfulness. Start small—say 15 minutes. Practice not beating yourself up when you discover that a lot of time has gone by without much conscious recognition; you'll need to keep it nurturing—not painful—in order to stay with it.

Nightly Review

If you start your day by reminding yourself of your values, you can bookend by reflecting on the day at night: What went well? What went badly? Why? What were your motives? Did your actions do justice to your values? Did you harm any one or anything? If so, how can you fix what you broke? Is there anything you would want to do differently next time?

Others' attitudes

My own sense of connection to others sustains the most damage when I blame them for hurting me. For those of us trained to blame instead of to protect ourselves, spiritual growth involves a lot of social learning: learning what we need, how to ask for it, what to do if we don't get it, how to ask what others need, how to say "no" or "yes, with conditions," etc. A common red flag that this sort of work is needed are thoughts about the other person's attitude. He may be disrespectful and she may be selfish, but what am I going to do to live happily in the same world with them?

As I've adjusted to the fact that I can expect people to do in the future what they've done in the past (rather than what I would do in their position), my interest in blaming them for hurting me has been largely replaced by an interest in protecting myself from

future hurt. Or, as I sometimes put it to myself, "Do I *want* to step in front of a moving freight train?"

The analysis here is fairly simple:

Blame becomes *boundaries*

When I'm angry with someone, I ask whether I expected different behavior. If the answer is yes, I ask what it will mean for the future, that this person acts as they have. What do I need to do because of that?

Here is an example: I'm in an organization with someone whose role is to send notices to members. The first time, he did so, the second, he didn't do it until I asked. I got his agreement to send notices a week in advance. He has not done that. My next step will be to ask him whether it's realistic for him to have this role, and if so, what he needs in order to fulfill it.

Splitting the infinitive

Our language has a lot of words that we call feelings but that actually accuse someone of something. Expressing feelings with these words can bring a defensive reaction because of the implied blame. "I feel harassed," implies that you have harassed me; "I feel anxious when you interrupt," might be just as accurate without accusing. And it conveys more information, because it says exactly what behavior triggered my feelings.

Since I've started trying to translate these words into their components (the behavior and the feeling), I seem to say a lot of, "I'm disappointed because I hoped..." Where I used to figure out what the other person did wrong, now I see where my expectations were unrealistic.

Here are a few more sample translations:

"I feel abandoned" becomes, "When you didn't show last night I was disappointed and sad."

"I feel disrespected" becomes, "I get angry when you raise your voice."

Try translating these:

I feel violated.

I feel shut out.

I feel betrayed.
I feel invisible.
I feel blown off.
I feel ripped off.
I feel like you don't care.
I feel like a second class citizen.
I feel like you're not listening.
I feel like a failure.
I feel like a loser.
I feel attacked.
I feel rejected.
I feel beaten down.
I feel like I'm in jail.
I feel like I have to walk on egg shells.
I feel set-up.
I feel exploited.
I feel misinterpreted.
I feel shamed.

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### *Get specific*

A friend of mine was frustrated with his neighbors because visitors parked across his driveway. He asked his neighbors to prevent such behavior, but of course, they couldn't control their numerous visitors. By the time my friend complained to me, he was looking for a bigger hammer. But it sounded to me like he needed a more specific hammer. He can't really ask his neighbors to control other people, but he could ask them to put a saw horse in front his drive each day, or a sign directing visitors where to park. Perhaps the best solution didn't involve them at all, but would mean marking his driveway to be more conspicuous.

Vague requests can be frustrating to everyone involved, when the requester doesn't get what he wants and the requestee knows he's unhappy but doesn't know what to do about it.

Can you think of people you know with a bad attitude of whom you haven't made specific requests for behavior change that would make the difference to you? Try writing out some requests you

could make.

As a second exercise, go through your requests and convert any DON'Ts to DOs. For example, "Please don't yell," can become, "Please speak to me at a normal volume when you're angry." And if you can ask for something the person can do immediately, that's best of all. Using the above example, "Would you say that again at a normal volume?" I once made an agreement with a child but worried that we would not recognize the situation next time it was upon us. So we practiced.

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As you do any of these exercises, you might notice feelings or issues arising that need healing attention. You know what to do with those!

Who am I?

This is a practice that can bring attention to one's essence, or spirit. It resonates with some people and not others, so don't worry if it doesn't click for you. The idea is to let yourself feel, or intuit, the answer to a question, rather than answer it from the intellect.

To get you started, choose one of these three questions that intrigues you most:

◇ "Who am I?"

◇ The difference between me and a machine is that I care. My computer might be smarter than I, but it doesn't care. What in you cares?

◇ If spirituality is the realm of intangibles that all people value, what is it in you that values? Or, more briefly, "What values?"

At first, sit in a quiet place to consider your question. Once you've worked with it a bit, you might not need quiet. Ask the question. If you directly experience yourself as a process, just enjoy that. If your intellect supplies an answer, rephrase the question using the mind's answer. For example, if the mind says, "I'm Harold," ask yourself, "Who is this called Harold?" If the mind says, "I'm the one who feels," ask yourself, "Who feels?" Continue in this way until the response to the question is not words, but a feeling or direct perception of this I.

I prefer to ask, "What am I," because I experience myself as a what, not a who. Suit yourself.

Relinquish Material Means

Since all people value a common set of intangibles, aligning yourself with your values aligns you with a transpersonal power—the collective will to honor universal values. I don't mean that we all write the same list of things we value. The way we name and conceptualize them might vary, and certainly our strategies for honoring them vary. But we humans are built on a common pattern, psychologically as well as physically.

The strategies for getting what we need that made sense as children but cause problems as adults often fail to use this transpersonal power. We try to use personal power, or self-will, to achieve what can only be done collectively. For example, I tried to make people love me instead of trusting their inclination to love. I put myself beyond receiving when I tried to coerce. In order to receive, I need to look for how each acquaintance expresses love and work with that.

With this in mind, you can repeatedly remind yourself to give up self-will where it backfires. Open the door to spiritual qualities by giving up the strategy that crowds them out.

You can frame this reminder to yourself in any way you like: through prayer, or thinking of someone who locked in on transpersonal power, or making an image in your mind, or whatever. My prayer for the example above was to notice the love that already surrounds me.

Repairs

A guilty conscience can pull a person backward, into old behavior. This exercise clears your conscience by listing the times you've violated your ethics and then repairing the damage done. Repairs are like tent pegs in the social world: each time you publicly behave in your new manner, you anchor your own and others' expectations of you. It is integration at the coarsest level, and it often brings new issues to be healed internally.

List the times you have harmed other people or yourself. You can also list times you've harmed non-human beings, such as pets.

Include animals if your conscience says you did something wrong. (The purpose here is to clear your conscience.) For each item in the list, consider how you might repair the damage done. For example, if you stole money, you can return the money. It's ok to return it anonymously.

If you are still doing this type of damage, start by changing your behavior. When you're sure you've stopped, make repairs.

If you can't repair the damage done in the world (because the other person is unavailable, for example), you may be able to do something that has a similar effect on you. For example, if the person you stole money from is dead, you could give the money to charity.

Now pick the easiest item on the list and go repair the damage.

When you've recovered from that effort, pick the easiest one remaining and do it.

The reason for always choosing the easiest is that it builds your strength like weight training. If you come to one that you can't face, use the feelings that come up when you try to face it as the thread for healing work. There is no deadline to get the list finished. So take the time to heal everything in the way.

ACCESS TO FEELINGS

If you already have good access to your feelings, this section might not be for you. Otherwise, getting access is the first step toward building tolerance of feelings, so that avoiding them no longer pushes you into doing things you regret.

The exercises below are presented from easiest to most strenuous. Getting access to emotions is not hard, since they are always with us. Just gently start paying attention and let your interest grow.

Attitude

Since many of us are taught that emotions are a weakness, the first thing is to review your ideas. What were you taught? What did you adopt for yourself? Did you train yourself not to cry? Have your beliefs changed? If so, it will be helpful to revisit old ideas so that they don't exert a pull from the unconscious.

How do you feel if you see an Olympic gold medalist weep with joy? What if a hopeful cries with disappointment? Does the display of emotion imply blame to you? That is, do you assume the person displays for its effect on others rather than himself?

What thoughts or feelings come up as you consider welcoming into consciousness your own bitterness, rage or despair?

The point of this review is not to change anything, but to make it all conscious so that it doesn't blindside you.

Name that feeling

To start paying attention to feelings, you can just name them when they arise. If you can't identify what you're feeling, try scanning this list and picking the one that seems closest. Over time, you'll develop more distinctions, more different names for slightly different feelings. Each time you do this, you make a new connection point around the feeling, so that integration is easier.

affection	enthusiasm	jealousy
anger	excitement	loneliness
anxiety	fascination	love
apathy	fear	openness
appreciation	frustration	over-
awe	giddiness	stimulation
boredom	gratitude	passion
calm	grief	pride
comfortable	guilt	relief
compassion	happiness	resentment
confusion	hope	satisfaction
contempt	horror	security
contentment	humility	shame
delight	impatience	shock
disgust	interest	stimulation
dismay	intrigue	surprise
embarrassment	irritation	tenderness
		warmth

A journal of feelings

Write what you're feeling through the day. Write what you know about it—what triggered it, what the thoughts are that go with it, its intensity or other characteristics. Just notice, don't try to change it. If you notice that you judge a certain emotion, just notice that. If you hate certain feelings, write that as well.

Listen to your feelings

We have feelings for a reason. As animals our feelings stimulate us to act in pro-survival ways. Since we are social animals, pro-survival is also pro-social. But we're also very trainable, so we start linking our feelings to external stimuli about birth or before.

When you have an emotion, try sitting down and giving it your full attention. Welcome it. If this is a feeling you hate, embrace the hate and let that be the focus of this exercise.

Now let the feeling tell you what's up. Why is it there? What triggered it? What does it remind you of? What thoughts go with it?

Don't worry if your feelings are inarticulate or don't make sense. Accept everything they say and thank them for it. Ask more questions. Show your interest as you would to a child who has something important to tell but needs help saying it.

If you're keeping a journal of feelings, you can write all this. You can write with alternating hands if you like—some people find it helpful. Put a pen in each hand, and let the feeling write with the non-dominant hand, your questions with the dominant.

Exploring Emotions

I claim that emotions are pairings of thoughts with states of physical arousal. (See Chapter 5 for details.) This exercise explores that premise.

Notice what you're feeling right now. Can you name it? What intensity level does it have? (E.g., calm/moderate/strong, or a 0-10 scale, however you gauge intensity).

Now think of some other emotions that have the same intensity level as this one. For example, anticipation and annoyance might have the same intensity level, somewhat lower than excitement and

anger.

Say, "I feel ___(your feeling)." What thoughts follow? Write them down.

Say "I feel ___(one of the other feelings)." What thoughts follow? Write them down.

Say "I feel ___(intensity level)." What thoughts follow? Write them down.

The structure of emotion

If emotions are pairings of ideas with physical states, you should be able to investigate the two separately. In fact, this is a way to increase tolerance for intense feelings. This exercise simply introduces the method.

Sit comfortably where you won't be interrupted. Turn attention to the emotion you're feeling. Just let it be there.

What idea goes with this emotion?

Where in your body do you feel it?

Let go of the thoughts and explore the physical sensations. Are you hot or cold?

Is your breathing fast or slow?

Do you notice tension in your face?

Hands?

Shoulders?

Chest?

Belly?

Is there tingling or other sensation?

While you've been noticing these things, has your emotional state changed?

Now move attention away from the body to the thoughts. Notice the thoughts without pursuing them.

What do you believe when you feel this emotion?

What do you expect?

What do you remind yourself?

What do you have the urge to do?

Why?

What's your earliest memory of feeling this way? Don't worry when it was, just think back to any previous time.

Thank the feelings

If your feelings have reasons, then they are there to serve you. In a well-integrated human, emotions reflect values. If some of yours don't, then they are candidates for healing attention. Start with the assumption that they were appropriate responses to some past situation. Thank them for their service. This is easier after you know what service they've rendered, but it's actually more important *before* you know. Thanking them on the assumption that you needed what they gave opens the door to them telling you what it was. Feelings always bring us a grain of truth, even when they also bring distortion. Look for the truth. They will keep offering it until you fully acknowledge it.

In case that is too abstract, here is an example. Back in the day, I had a lot of disdain for a lot of people. Then I decided I shouldn't have it, without realizing what service it provided. This exercise tells me to say, "Well, disdain, thanks for what you do. It must be important, because I'm paying a high price for it." It turns out, I used it to keep distance because I did not know how to have healthy boundaries. Now I can keep distance without disdaining the other person.

Exploring Criticism

Some of us might have access to feelings through criticizing others. This was a favorite in my family, but we only traversed well-worn mental paths and didn't break out into healing. This exercise uses the tendency to criticize but redirects the thoughts into potentially-productive paths.

I've heard people say, "If you spot a problem in someone else, you've got it in yourself." I disagree. Harville Hendrix offers three possible reasons someone's behavior might bother you unreasonably, of which you-spot-it-you-got-it is only one.¹⁴ This exercise uses Hendrix's three reasons to explore the source of over-reaction.

List all your criticisms of Person X. Have at it. Don't hold back.

Now for each criticism, ask yourself the following questions:

¹⁴ Harville Hendrix, *Getting the Love You Want*, Harper, NY (1988).

◇ True or False?: "It would be nice to be a bit more like X."

◇ True or False?: "If I did to X what she does to me, it would be appropriate for her to be angry."

If true: Convert the criticism into a request for behavior change.

If false: When in your life have you encountered this sort of behavior from others? Is there an issue from the past that needs healing?

◇ True or False?: "Sometimes I do the same thing X does."

◇ Fill in the blank: "If I was like X, I would feel _____ about myself."

◇ Fill in the blank: "When X acts this way, I feel _____."

Letting go of judgment

This exercise is much like "*Try on another's shoes*," above, except it uses an event in your personal life. The purpose is to feel into the reasons behind behavior you consider bad, rather than stop at judging it.

Pick something you judge and write as if you were the person who did it. Explain why you did what you did. Your first explanation might not ring true if this behavior is very foreign to you. But as you speak from the person's perspective, you'll begin to feel what it might be like for them. Let your explanation ramble and shift until you get some intuition that makes sense. For example, if I tried to put myself in Hitler's position, I might start by saying that my way of life was threatened by Jews, but I'd probably end by saying I just need control; I really, really need control because my father beat my mother and I really, really need control.

If you can't think of anything you judge, try using something you've done that someone else resents or criticizes. Try writing their opinion of your behavior.

TOLERANCE FOR FEELINGS

A feeling you can't tolerate can push you around. You might

have to run from it, or deny it, or project it onto someone else. Tolerance for feelings lets you use them without bowing to them.

Dipping in to overwhelm

Overwhelm accompanies most problematic memories, so it is a very efficient place to start cultivating tolerance.

Arrange a time and place where you won't be disturbed. Set a timer for 10 minutes. Notice your surroundings. Are you safe? You're an adult now; how is this different from the childhood in which you felt overwhelmed?

When you feel overwhelmed, what do you typically do? What thoughts come to you? Which of these do you believe?

Can you allow yourself a little of the feeling of being overwhelmed, continuing to notice your surroundings and the safety of this situation?

What sensations do you feel in your body?

Can you allow these sensations to be and not try to make them go away?

What thoughts come to "help" you handle overwhelm?

Can you allow thoughts to come and go without acting on them? Can you make friends with this feeling that you have felt so many times, that warned you to withdraw attention, back when you were so powerless?

Now bring your attention to the present. How many sounds can you hear? How many shades of yellow can you see? What are you looking forward to?

Venting

Strong emotion is much easier to tolerate when we freely release the physical expression of it through tears, laughter, shouting, pounding pillows, screaming into a pillow or shoulder, or anything else our bodies want to do. Putting the thoughts into words allows all this to happen and helps integrate the mental component of the feeling.

Arrange things so that you can make all the noise you want without alarming your family or neighbors. If you want the help of a friend, instruct her to listen enthusiastically without saying much or getting emotionally invested. Her job is to help you keep

attention on your feelings. One thing she can do is bookmark, in her mind, the things you say that particularly seem to help you off-load. Then, if you start running in circles, she can repeat one of those things and see if it puts you back on track.

If you'd like to try venting in a big way, do something scary that you can scream your way through: a roller-coaster ride, a high jump into the lake, a horror movie, etc. This is really fun. The unrestrained release of emotion allows the mind to clear, to get out of the fog that big feelings can put it in.

Embrace minor pain

Embracing pain (paying attention directly to it) is a skill best acquired gradually, by deliberately embracing minor pain and working up to the big stuff. You will get to the point where you have presence of mind even with really big feelings, like fear of abandonment. You can also practice on minor physical pain; the same skill applies to both emotional and physical pain.

Remove distractions, allot time, and bring the emotions to mind. Choose an annoying one, not a terrifying one. Let it come up and let it be there. This feeling is part of you. No need to push it away. No need for any action at all. Just let it be part of the family.

Let it say anything it has to say.

Notice the sensations.

Notice the thoughts.

Don't argue with the thoughts; just notice them.

Can you relax in the presence of this feeling?

When you've had a visit with this emotion, pull your attention back to the outside world.

What are you looking forward to?

Cost-benefit analysis

We often become more willing to embrace emotional pain when we see the price we pay for holding it at bay. Like an accountant, you can figure the cost and benefit of the strategy you've been using, then choose whether to continue or change.

Chapter 5 walked you through a more detailed version of this analysis and you can refer back if these instructions are

insufficient.

Write down the problem.

Write the effects it has on your life, both good and bad. How does it affect your career, family, friends, relationship with co-workers, health, finances, contentment?

What need does it seek to meet?

How has it benefited you in the past?

How does it benefit you now?

Now that you can see the cost and benefits, do you still want to change? If so, do you want to get rid of this strategy completely, or modify your use of it? Write down your specific goal.

If achieving this goal means feeling pain fully for 20 minutes at a time, as many times as necessary to get free, are you willing to do it?

Experiment with feelings you hate

Most of us avoid the feelings we hate. Unfortunately, that's a bit like running from a grass fire: it will chase you to exhaustion. So it can be a big relief to turn and run right into it instead. As with a grass fire, the pain is more intense but doesn't last. And on the far side, you are free forever. Try it with a feeling that hounds you:

Decide on an amount of time (start in the 3-10 minute range) that you will deliberately engage this feeling. Embracing an emotion does not mean believing the thoughts that come with it. The thoughts are what usually push us around, so you need to commit yourself to observing the thoughts from a third-person perspective. E.g., "Oh, I'm telling myself I'm not good enough. No wonder this hurts." The goal here is to take the bull by the horns, neither to run away nor to throw yourself under the hooves.

When you've done this for your pre-set time, stop. Don't keep on because you're having success or relief. Set another time tomorrow and do it again. You can slowly increase the time if that seems like a good idea.

If the emotion you're trying to engage goes into hiding, just keep the door open for the pre-set time. Notice your thoughts. You can think about the feeling and your history with it, even though you're not feeling it. You can consider what thoughts it

contains that make it hard to tolerate. Stop at the pre-set time and make another appointment for tomorrow.

Split the physical component from the mental

I used to have trouble sleeping outside and would imagine all sorts of bizarre dangers that my rational mind didn't believe in. When I really needed to sleep, I would turn my attention from the sounds of man-eating lions to the feeling of a racing heart. That broke the chain of thoughts that always ended in lions getting their dinner. With the chain broken, I could hold my attention still longer and gradually get out of the cycle of fear-stimulating-thoughts-stimulating-fear. You can try it when big feelings commandeer your attention despite your best efforts.

Notice the physical sensation of this emotion.

Notice the thoughts it brings, without pursuing them.

What name do you give this emotion?

Isolate some specific physical sensations that go into feeling this way.

Turn your attention to one of them. Embrace the sensation. Let it be there. Don't try to make it go away. If the urge to make it go away is strong, acknowledge that urge.

What makes this sensation hard to tolerate?

Now move to another of the sensations. Embrace this one. Notice its character. Does it change or stay constant? If it changes, track its life cycle.

Does your tolerance for this sensation ebb and flow? If so, what increases or decreases your tolerance?

Move to the next sensation and do the same with it.

Move through all the sensations.

Has the emotion changed since you began?

Has your tolerance for it changed since you began?

What does this feeling need for healing or harmony?

Find the positive intention in the feelings

Finding the positive intention in your painful feelings makes them much easier to tolerate. Try answering the questions below, stopping when you find one that explains the positive intention in the emotion.

What effect does this feeling have on your life? Was there a time when that effect was a good thing?

What beliefs go with this feeling? When were those beliefs literally true?

What do you do under the influence of this feeling? What might happen if you stopped doing that? If you can find no negative consequences, give it a try. Act as you imagine you would, even if it feels contrived. Keep your eyes open for the bad thing the feeling warns you against.

Writing with alternate hands

Writing can help slow down network traversal. Writing with alternating hands can help, at a coarser scale, to break out of mental ruts.

With a pen in each hand, write about your feelings. Write the history, the intensity level, the triggers, the sensations and thoughts. Ask questions with one hand, the third person perspective, and answer them with the other, the first-person perspective. This technique seems to work for some people and not others, so you can try and see which type you are.

Tell a friend

Other people are one of the most powerful assets for healing. If you have a friend who will listen without getting in the way, talk to her about your feelings. They will be easier to face with an ally.

Start by telling your friend what you want. You might want no comments at all, just her interest expressed non-verbally. Or you might want her to say her thoughts when they show that she understands. Later, you might even want her observations, but not when you're in the throes of big feelings.

Crying in her arms can be very powerful, but it's up to you to initiate contact and keep whatever boundaries you need. Tell her up front not to try to comfort you with pats or strokes any more than with words. Comforting can distract attention from the pain. Make sure she understands that your goal is to engage it fully.

Using desire

Is there something you'd like to do but are scared of? You might be able to use your desire to slowly stretch the limit of fear

you can tolerate.

I did this with sleeping outside. I would start the night outdoors but come inside if I had a nightmare, woke up scared, or couldn't get to sleep. My comfort zone expanded to where I can now sleep outside pretty easily, and I am much better friends with fear.

The important thing is not to push yourself to where you have a backlash. Go to the edge of comfort or as far beyond as your desire pulls you, then stop. Stop for now and do more next time.

Exploring resistance to feelings

When you want to embrace some issue but hate it so much that you can't really get into it, you can work on hating it instead. Instead of seeking to embrace fear, for example, you can embrace the anger or frustration at having this fear. Make these feelings the focus of your healing effort. For example, you could use the exercise "Embrace minor pain," above, with this feeling of resistance as the minor pain.

The principle here is useful in general: when your path is blocked by an obstacle, make the obstacle into your new path. It's a way of admitting that you are where you are, instead of where you'd like to be. Sometimes, this new path turns out to be far more productive than the original.

A second focus for work on resistance is the habits one has adopted to keep emotional control in social settings where she doesn't want to display her feelings. Tightening the jaw and holding the breath are useful tools, so long as one can use them at will and drop them in order to engage feelings. To have this control, it helps to consciously recognize the habits and break them.

When you try to summon an emotion, as in the "Embrace minor pain" exercise above, and it doesn't come, try scanning your body for physical efforts at control:

Are muscles tense in your face? throat? shoulders? torso?

Is your breath free or restrained?

Scan your thoughts as well: What thoughts arise to divert attention from the feeling you're trying to engage? What thoughts tell you not to go there?

You might even find yourself in activity, such as eating, cleaning, or playing games.

Notice all these and any others. Then try deliberately letting go of the controlling behavior.

This work is efficient, because it opens the door to all our feelings thereafter.

Escape

Sometimes friends tell me they feel harassed or overwhelmed by feelings that seem to dog their every step. Depression and alienation are often the culprits. If they can devote full attention to the feeling for 20 minutes or so, usually they get a break for about a day. When they can break up the chronic, push-it-away method of noticing it into periods of fully attending and fully not-attending, healing proceeds and so does life.

The exercise below is for when that doesn't work. If you're running from feelings, you've read my grass-fire analogy and you still can't help running, you can try this and see if it helps you get enough tolerance for healing.

Start by ranking the level at which this feeling is hounding you right now. You could use a scale from 0-10, or just "small, medium, large." If we use the hounds analogy, how many decibels is their bark? Write down this rank.

Where in your body do you feel this emotion?

Direct some compassion to each place where you feel it.

Breath a few breaths into that place, letting it relax as much as it will.

Again rank the volume of the feeling.

When was the last time you *didn't* feel this? Did you get respite last night in your sleep? This morning while cooking breakfast?

It seems like it's always there, because we don't notice the moments it is absent. Notice them now. How many moments today has it been absent? Add up the hours today during which you can't remember noticing it.

Again rank the volume of the feeling.

Does the volume change from moment to moment? Does the feeling hit full volume when you awake, or do you wake up

relaxed and then get more oppressed over time?

Start keeping a daily log in which you rank the volume of this feeling whenever you think to do so. At the end of each day, add up the hours during which you did, and didn't, feel it.

The idea that we are constantly hounded comes from noticing moments of emotion and linking them with the concept of continuity. If you replace that concept with one of pulses, you are in better position to polarize: full attention sometimes, no attention other times. Are there fluctuations in this feeling? Do they increase if you deliberately relax and allow the feeling?

CONTROL OF ATTENTION

Controlling attention so that it does not run away with you so easily, or stay away so long, is an enormous asset for healing. And control is learned; it is not natural for human beings.

These exercises move from easy to hard, so you can do each one for awhile and move on when you feel ready.

Getting some distance

Attention gets trapped in networks (or it might feel like it gets trapped in emotion) and a first step to getting control can be to take a perspective outside the thoughts and feelings. Imagine a movie camera pulling back from the close-up shot to show more of the setting. Some attention focuses on the setting, thoughts *about* the network instead of thoughts *inside* it.

This exercise is good for big feelings that want to engulf your attention. Imagine you are a scientist investigating the phenomenon that you are suffering from.

What name do you give this feeling?

What time today did it start?

Did it arise at that time yesterday?

How often does it come up?

When it comes up, how long does it stay?

Does the intensity of the feeling vary?

If there is a pattern, when did the pattern begin?

What physical sensations go with the feeling?

Do these sensations vary?

What thoughts go with the feeling?

What's your earliest memory of this feeling?

Counting breaths

You can train your attention using no emotional content at all, just following the physical sensations of breathing. This is one of the surest ways to gain skill with keeping hold of your attention, and it's easy.

Pick a time and a place where there will be few distractions. Turn off the phone. Face a blank wall or dim the lights. Set a timer for 10-20 minutes. (Start with 10.) Sit or lie down in a comfortable position, but not so comfortable that you'll fall asleep. Relax your body. Now count your exhalations, from 1 to 4, then start over again at 1. Do this until the timer goes off. If you lose the count, begin again at 1. When other thoughts arise, gently return attention to the count.

Avoid analyzing why you got off onto other thoughts; that only prolongs the interruption. Avoid beating up on yourself for forgetting to count and avoid setting a goal to stay on track. Actually, the more often you lose track, the more practice you get at returning to the count, and that's the most valuable part.

So there you are, you exhale and think, "one." Now there's a long pause until the next exhalation. During that pause, hold the mind steady. If you need something to focus on, focus on the sensations of the breath. But if you can simply suspend mental activity, waiting for the next breath, do that. Relax and allow the mind to be as calm as it will.

Noting perceptions meditation

After you've worked with counting breaths for awhile, try noticing perceptions.

Pick a time and a place where there will be few distractions. Turn off the phone. Face a blank wall or dim the lights. Set a timer for 10-20 minutes. Sit in a comfortable position and relax your body. Note the sensations in the breath. For example, on the inhalation, just notice the feeling in your torso that comes with breathing in. On the exhalation, notice the sensation of breathing out.

After you have established this rhythm, allow yourself to notice any perceptions—temperature, sound, the feelings of sitting up, whatever you notice. Do this until the timer goes off.

Structure for engaging feelings

Here is a structure designed to give you the best possible chance of engaging strong emotion without attention getting swept away in its patterned response:

Think of five things you're grateful for. Don't dwell on these, just bring each to mind.

Summon an emotion you want to pay attention to. If you don't know how to do this, try thinking of times in your life when you felt this way. Embrace the feelings.

When you're ready to stop, bring your attention to the present situation. Notice the sensation in your right foot. Now look around you and identify three blue things. Name three foods that begin with the letter "w."

This basic structure: marshalling attention, using it, and withdrawing it, gives you skill with engaging feelings but not getting caught in loops. The first step, marshalling attention, can be done with anything that focuses your attention. I've used a spiritual practice here, and any practice that brings your spiritual understanding to mind makes a good start for healing work.

The third task, withdrawing attention from the material you're working on, can be done with anything sufficiently compelling: turn attention to immediate sensory perception, or pleasant memories, people you're fond of or events you're looking forward to.

Start at the end of a memory

If you want to integrate a certain memory but find yourself running in circles instead, you can try working backward from the end to the beginning. Tell the epilogue first, and see if you can do that without losing control. If you can, then tell the last event and check with yourself: did you get caught or did you do some healing? If it's the latter, try starting at the second-last event, and so on.

Noting thoughts and perceptions meditation

Control of the attention means that attention does what you have consciously decided to do with it. Bringing the activity of attention into consciousness is, therefore, a step toward control. This exercise makes your ordinary use of attention conscious.

Set the timer for 15-30 minutes. (In the old days, before timers, a common practice was to light a stick of incense and meditate until it burned out.) Minimize distractions. Note what you're thinking or noticing. Sound, sensation, emotion, memory... In this meditation, you note the event (thought or perception) and then note the next one. Watch thoughts, perceptions and feelings. Don't pursue the thoughts, and when you discover that you've wandered off into some thought chain, just notice. Then notice the next thought or perception. A teacher once explained it this way: "Let your thoughts come and let them go, but don't invite them in to tea."

Psychiatrists use a technique called "free association" which is similar except you say to another person the things you notice, rather than noting them silently to yourself. If you have trouble with noting, using another person might provide a stepping stone to greater control of the attention.

Guided meditation: Watching the experience parade

Below is a guided meditation that you can read into a tape recorder. When you listen to the tape, the periodic instructions help interrupt any digression that you might have wandered into. This is a stepping stone toward greater control.

When you record this, take time between each instruction to do what it says, so that there will be long enough pauses on the tape.

Get comfortable in your chair and relax.

Feel the weight of your body. How many places can you feel it?

Is there heat or coolness anywhere in your body?

Notice the rhythm of your breath.

What are you hearing?

What do you smell?

What images are passing through your mind?

What words are passing through your mind?

What likes and dislikes are you noticing?

What emotion prevails?

Now simply wait for the next thing to come into consciousness, whether thought, feeling or perception.

Let that one go and await the next.

Letting go, waiting, noting each event in consciousness.

Watching the parade.

Thoughts go by.

Emotions pass through.

Hearing comes and goes.

A long, magnificent parade.

What's next?

Let it go.

Let it go.

Joy passes through.

Let each thing come. Let each thing go.

Watching.

Noticing.

What now?

When you're ready, return attention to the space around you. What colors do you see?

Mindfulness

Instructions for mindfulness are given above in the Saliency section. This is where the practice would occur in the graded sequence here for acquiring control of the attention, so if you haven't done that exercise yet, this is the time.

Letting go of the breath

Breath is like deploying attention in that it can be either voluntary or involuntary. In this exercise, you notice the involuntary process of breathing without taking control. The skill carries over into noticing the involuntary deployment of attention without interfering in it. With that skill, you can consciously traverse a network that has been unconscious. You can watch yourself without stopping yourself. The reason for using the breath to get started is that the breath is much, much easier to

watch.

As a side benefit, watching oneself without interfering extends to noticing other people without interfering in their process.

Pick a time and a place where there will be few distractions. Turn off the phone. Face a blank wall or dim the lights. Set a timer for 10-15 minutes. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position, but not so comfortable that you'll fall asleep. Relax your body.

Turn attention to your breath. Notice the rhythm of it. Don't try to make it faster or slower; just notice. Notice the sensation as you exhale, then as you inhale. Is there a pause between? Don't decide to inhale, just watch it happen. Let the exhalation happen on its own. Notice feelings in the belly, chest, throat, nose. Don't make the breathing deeper. Let it be as deep or shallow as it naturally is. Don't take control of it. Just notice how it goes without intervention.

Regular Meditation

If you've tried some of the above ways of meditating, you might want to pick one to do regularly. It's not the particular practice that matters; it's the deliberate training of the attention to not run away with you that gives you time to pause before taking action.

Choose a small amount of time and do your meditation in the same place and at the same time each day. (This is the easiest way to keep at it.)

OTHER AIDES FOR ANCHORING ATTENTION

Other people are the greatest aid to anchoring attention, but if you're serious about transformation, you'll need to do more emotional work than there are friends to help. The second best aid is skill, which the section above develops.

The devices below can augment these two resources, making healing possible in many cases of issues that are not overpowering but not trivial either. Each of them serves as an anchor to help keep attention from running away. Try them all to see which ones you like. And you may know of others, as well.

Writing

Writing slows network traversal, so just write as you would speak to a friend or therapist. You can even write their part of the dialogue as well as your own.

Pets and stuffed animals

You can cuddle your dog and tell her your troubles and this will not only slow down network traversal because talking is slow, it will bring the animal's unconditional love into the mix as a resource. Stuffed animals work almost as well, provided you've bonded to them, which then brings your own love into the mix as a resource.

Talking to someone in your imagination

If you have a friend who is loving and helpful, you have an idea of that friend in your mind that might be useful. Psychologists call this idea an "introject." It means you've internalized the friend's characteristics and can now ask yourself, "What would Sylvia say?" This introject can be family, friend, hero, mythical character, or a character you devise for the purpose. Many people use God in this way. (Make sure your idea of God is a loving and helpful one before you do this!)

Talk to this introject just as you would to the actual person. Let them answer as they might. Let them comfort you.

Analysis

Analyzing an issue can build infrastructure to support healing. For example, if you need to heal a memory of believing yourself to be bad, it won't do any good to go back and again believe yourself to be bad. You need a belief in your own goodness that's strong enough to withstand whatever happened. Then when you remember and feel horrible, you can tie in to your understanding that you weren't bad. The idea part of your emotion will change.

Write down the problem.

What beliefs does it entail?

Where are there errors in those beliefs?

What are your current beliefs that run counter to the memory's assertion?

Practice finding examples of these beliefs, using yourself or

others.

If that approach is too abstract for you, try talking to a pet or teddy bear. Tell it what you know is true. Explain the error as you would to a young child. E.g., "Sometimes when things go wrong, it seems like we should have been able to stop them even though we never had that power."

Fiction for analysis

This method is similar to analysis but for memories that are so emotionally charged you don't have a clear sense of them. That is, they are partly or fully occluded. What you have then, is the results, the footprint left by this event.

Make up a story to account for the footprint. It doesn't matter how wild it is; abduction by space aliens is fine. Get the feel of it into your story, so that when you're done you say, "Yes, that would leave me feeling as I do."

Now remember back to high school English class, when you had to analyze fiction. Look at your story through the English teacher's eyes and tell the class what it's really about.

When the lecture is done, take the things that ring true to you and consider what you think about them now, when they happen to anyone, not just you.

Here's an example: I feel a great alone-ness even though my partner is everything I could wish for. The story I make up is that, in my last life, I was abandoned by comrades and left to die alone behind enemy lines. Speaking to the senior class, I say this story is about helplessness, the feeling of helplessness in the face of death. After the lecture, I decide that humans are profoundly helpless in the physical world, but that our social and spiritual connections support us in the face of physical disaster. I can think of examples in my own life when that happened, and also some great loss to a dear friend. With these examples salient, I am in better position to remember my very early life-threatening experience without coming to the same cynical conclusion that friends will abandon me when I need them most.

Fiction for catharsis

It can be easier to embrace feelings brought up by a movie than the same feelings in one's own life. The distance makes it safer. There is no need to do anything, and it's easy to bring compassion to the movie characters.

You can write your own tear jerkers. Bring to mind the issue you're working on, then make up a story in your mind. Crank up the emotional content as far as you can, knowing that this is a stepping stone to more direct healing.

Alternating bilateral stimulation

No one knows why this trick can help you stay out of revolving doors, but it seems to. Don't use it for issues that seem overwhelming, because you'll still need greater support for those.

Lie on your back with your arms supported comfortably so that your hands touch your ears. Lightly rub one ear so that you hear a sound. It doesn't need to be loud. Next rub the other. Repeat at about one rub per second as you embrace your feelings. Stop when you break out of the revolving door.

GIVING HELP

Giving help to other people is rewarding. It also builds a support network because you can ask them to return the favor. And it consolidates your own understanding of the healing process. The more you learn about helping others, the more you know about helping yourself.

The biggest challenge in helping another person to traverse a network slowly is not interfering. Since you don't know where they're going, any directing is liable to derail them. The exercises below are a graded set to develop the skill of showing interest without interfering. You can do them with anyone telling you their troubles; you don't need to explain what you're doing.

Translate spiritual images

This exercise can be done now, without a speaker. Think of one of the spiritual symbols or images you use, then translate that into the corresponding images used by the world's five major religions, plus atheists who use abstractions and new age people

who use a pidgin dialect of symbols. For example, I think of a mother-figure when I want to bring divine love to an image. My best guess as to how that translates is: His Holiness the Dalai Lama for Buddhists, Jesus or Mary for Christians, Mohammed for Moslems, King David for Jews (probably grandmothers for a lot of Jews), the guru for Hindus, agape in the abstract, and light in the new age. I may be wrong about some of those, but the exercise gets me thinking in symbol sets other than my own. The ability to translates lets me both understand what another is referring to and also to speak in her terms.

Do this for the most important spiritual concepts or qualities. That is, if you pray to celestial beings or saints, go through them and translate; if you use devices such as crystals or Tarot cards, go through them; if you use abstractions, go through the list of values you made in the exercise "List your values" earlier in this chapter, reflecting on how each religious group represents those values symbolically.

Listen without speaking

With a speaker, first practice just listening without saying anything at all. Do this until the urge to jump in and help subsides. This may raise feelings of helplessness that you then have to integrate. Remember that the speaker knows how to heal (unconsciously if not consciously) and trust that just telling you the story is helping. When they look to see if you're following, nod or grunt. You can show compassion in your face, just don't use words. At the end, just thank them for sharing.

End the listening session

When you do the exercise above, you might find yourself wondering how long you have to listen. It's best to decide ahead of time how long you're *willing* to listen, and let the speaker know that at the outset. Sometimes it's easy to say, "Oh tell me about it; I have ten minutes." Other times you find yourself in the middle before realizing that you've started. In those cases, you need to bring it to a close when you can no longer listen with enthusiasm. Whether it's your next appointment or your judgment pulling attention away, you stop being useful when you can't give the

speaker your full attention. Even if you aren't saying anything, it is attention that heals.

Knowing this, start giving "wind up" cues as soon as you realize you need to stop. The speaker may need to downshift several times before stopping, so allow for that. Thank her for sharing with you. If she puts out for more (either by word or deed), you can express your confidence that she is in a healing process and will make it through.

Practice this as an exercise in itself. You need to protect your own boundaries and motivation, and letting your schedule or your head get messed up will hurt your motivation.

Speak only to encourage the other

When you're comfortable with not speaking, you can move on to helping the speaker keep the flow going. You can ask to hear the story again or ask for details when he seems at a loss. "Tell me more about this issue," is the broad sort of stroke appropriate here.

Only try to understand

The next skill is interacting with the speaker for the purpose of clearly understanding. This is all that's needed in a very large number of cases. Its value is not limited to helping conversations; it is also an excellent approach to conflict.

Follow what the speaker is saying until you think you have the picture. Then ask them to verify your understanding and tell it back in your own words: "Let me see if I understand this..."

When you've got the story, try listening for the feelings and needs, as you practiced in the "Inferring needs from feelings" exercise above. Then ask whether you understand those correctly: "So, is it the case that you're angry with your boyfriend because you need to know his intentions?"

That's all you do. Don't take it the next step.

Remember the other's goodness

The goal in this exercise is simply to keep contact with your own spiritual source while you listen to the other person. You become a doorway when you do this, whether or not the speaker enters. To be a doorway, you need to keep your own connection and not get lost in the problem you're listening to. When you start

thinking in practical terms, you pull attention off the spiritual and may cease to be a doorway. There is a place for practical suggestions, but emotional healing is not it.

Considering how you access your spirituality, how can you apply that to the speaker? For example, if you use the image of white light, you could picture the speaker surrounded and protected by white light. A monotheist could imagine him held in God's hand. An atheist might see him cradled by love.

Let your natural love and compassion flow freely, even though you don't put it into words. Trust that to be enough.

Finding the speaker's spiritual access points

Once you can keep hold of your own inspiration, midwifery becomes intuitive.

Listen for how the speaker accesses his spiritual source; what ideas, images or names does he use? If you don't hear them, ask directly.

How do these translate in your own spiritual thinking?

Keep the speaker's device (idea, image or name) in mind as you listen to his problem.

As you seek to understand the problem and verify your understanding, include this device in your description. Again, first verify that you understand the story, then move on to the issues within it. For example, if the speaker uses Love as his spiritual connection, you could ask, "Do I understand correctly that, when you get scared, you have trouble finding the Love in this situation?"

Other suggestions

This is the last exercise in this section because it is the riskiest. Don't attempt it until you feel well detached from the outcome of the listening session you are giving. As you get to know a certain speaker, when she is open to suggestions, you can offer any of the tricks in the sections on tolerating feelings or finding the original memory. That is, if she has feelings with no idea of the source or issue, you could suggest she make up a story about a little kitten who felt this way. Your goal is still to keep the flow going, so don't interrupt a healing process to make suggestions. Offer them

if the speaker asks for them or if she is repeating herself without engaging the feelings or is going in a destructive direction ("I'm just so stupid. I should kill myself," kind of thing). And keep your suggestion short—one sentence.

GETTING HELP

How do you train your friends to listen?

You can enter into an explicit partnership with someone to help each other "process feelings," or whatever way your crowd would put it. The two of you can do the above set of exercises together, taking turns. The guideline for such a partnership are:

◇ Be explicit about who is in what role. Take turns and negotiate for whose turn it is now.

◇ Take small risks to start, only increasing as you know you can trust the other person to stay in the role of listener.

◇ If something isn't working, stop. You can't force the relationship to be supportive. Just use the support that's there and allow more to grow as it will. This is easier if you have more than one support person.

◇ Don't try to combine emotional work with negotiating your relationship. That is, don't ask your friend to listen and then talk about him. If you want to talk about your relationship, do it as equals, not with one person in the role of listener.

◇ The speaker is in charge and should say what he wants explicitly.

You can also train your friends without them knowing what you're doing. Just start getting permission and saying what you want at the beginning: "Do you have time to listen to me rant about something that just happened? I don't need advice or anything, just an ear to bend." It works well for physical contact also: "Would you just hold me while I cry? I'm not trying to figure it out, so you don't need to do anything."

Your part

Your part of the interaction, as speaker, is to use your friend well. Keep your focus on embracing all the feelings and noticing all the thoughts. Avoid analyzing other people or condemning them. Vent the feelings and thoughts that tug at your attention. Debrief the incident if there is one. Lay it all out where you can see it. Use any tricks you would use alone, such as telling the times you felt this way in the past or making up a story. Avoid using the time to decide what you're going to do about a problem, as this tends to draw your listener into problem-solving and suggestion-making. Instead, express the confusion, fears or frustrations you have when you consider options. "And I'm afraid if I say 'no' I'll get fired," instead of, "Do you think I'll get fired if I say 'no'?"

Boundaries

Even when you train your friends and ask for what you need, you won't always get it. You have to make yourself vulnerable in order to heal, and then when your friend pops in with advice or criticism, your work is stopped, your feelings are hanging fire, and your trust is threatened, what do you do?

You'll need to pull back from engagement with the material for a moment, if not the rest of the conversation. And then you need to let the other person know what happened. If part of your trouble is difficulty in letting people know what's going on with you and trusting them to care, it can be pretty tough to do it in the crisis. Advance preparation can be very, very helpful.

Practice a repertoire of one-liners you can say when something isn't working for you. Here are some possibles:

"I'm not ready for that."

"I just need you to listen."

"Could you save that for later?"

"That's not helping."

"This isn't working for me."

If you can't say anything constructive to get things back on track, you can stop the effort at emotional work and go take care of yourself. Later, talk to your friend about what went wrong, avoiding criticism and emphasizing the specifics of what you need.

You might want to work on lighter material with this person until you feel sure they understand what you expect.

BRINGING THE SPIRITUAL TO THE EMOTIONAL

The more you think in spiritual terms, the more you'll think in them during your emotional work. But we tend to forget because the original memory doesn't contain the spiritual understanding we need and usually blocks paths to it. The exercises below are deliberate efforts to access the spiritual when you need it most. You might find one method you particularly like, but it's good to have lots of options. So try them all.

Choose a symbol

In the first chapter, my hypothetical therapist used the Dalai Lama as a symbol for my spiritual understanding. What could you use? Light seems to work for a lot of people. God works for many. Forests, mountains and oceans; saints, gods, fairies; Mother Theresa, Mohandas Gandhi; our children, pets or others that we love...

When you have one or more symbols, think how to apply it or them to your issue: do you picture the sunset glow bathing your grief? or feel Mother Theresa's arms around you? or cuddle a puppy?

Use your symbol when you write about your issue. Bring it into your fiction as the factor that saves the day. Bring it to mind before engaging big feelings. Consider it when deciding how to act. Where were the spiritual qualities you value back when the thing happened that you're now working to heal? Bring your symbol to your memory and let them interact. That is, imagine spiritual power back in the original situation. Rewrite history, as I did when I imagined the Dalai Lama behind me in the grocery store. Let the compassion brought by this presence soften the pain you feel now.

The next exercise is a guided meditation that uses the word "light" as a symbol. Try replacing "light" with your own symbol. For example, you could replace "light" with "love" or "Mother Mary" or "awareness."

Guided meditation on connecting loss to light

Think of some difficulty you want help with. It could be a situation or a person, a habit or an idea. Write a phrase that very specifically states the difficulty, for example, "pushing myself too hard." In the meditation below, the words "difficulty" and "challenge" refer to this issue.

The meditation uses the word "light" to refer to the power that upholds us, guiding us to harmony and well-being. If you prefer another word, substitute that word for "light."

Close your eyes and picture the light. Let it fill your mind. Let it suffuse you. Let it surround you. Feel it touching your skin with its warmth. The light upholds you. It protects you. You are safe. You are loved. You *are* love. You glow with this light.

This light fills all of space. Let it radiate out from you. Let it touch the difficulty you are working to heal. There is room in this light for you and your difficulty. Both can be blessed by this light.

Let the light suffuse your challenge. Let it surround and caress this challenge you face.

Let it protect and support you as it suffuses your difficulty. See your challenge glowing with this loving light.

Here, all is peace. All things are possible.

Here there is space for every knot to unravel.

Let it unravel.

Let the tension unwind.

Let your challenge be blessed.

It is your precious challenge.

A chance for healing.

An adventure.

A gift.

Let yourself be blessed.

And when you feel ready, come back to this room, refreshed. Come back to this time, and open your eyes.

You can expect to get new insights into your difficulty in the next 24 hours or so.

What does best possible outcome look like?

You might be able to connect your inspired vision to your problem by considering how things would look if everything

miraculously came right. What is the best outcome, no matter how unlikely it seems?

If you can answer that question, stop here. If not, here are some more questions to try:

Considering your difficulty, what would healing look like?

Imagine some cosmic force or being blessing you so that this difficulty becomes a strength. What would that feel like?

Something happened that you weren't able to absorb at the time. How should it have been instead? If you could rewrite history (not to erase the event but to have absorbed it and grown from it), how would you write it?

What would you do if you weren't burdened with this material from the past?

Get a hug

For most people, physical affection taps into our understanding of love, harmony and well-being. There are levels of feeling we can only withstand in the arms of someone who cares. If you have access to hugs, even from your dog (who also cares) try bringing up hard feelings within that embrace.

BEFRIENDING THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

I wonder if Bigfoot or his cousins across the world, the huge, shy man-beasts of folktales, are symbols for the unconscious mind. The quiet but brilliant nerd might be another good representation. Encyclopedic memory, literal speech pattern, poor social skills... The unconscious evaluates when a memory is ready for healing and yards out emotional pain. It can give or withhold information and wisdom, so we do ourselves a favor by learning how to open the channels. A narrow focus, as when you're thinking about the details of a project, closes off access. It's when you take a break from the details that your subconscious can hand you a tip that there is a better way to do your task. The basic protocol is to make a request (explicitly or, as in the case of the project, implicitly) and then await the answer. Demanding an answer can backfire, as can trying to suck one into consciousness through force of will.

Once you've established rapport with your unconscious, it's not

necessary to keep practicing. The exercises below start easy and get harder, but you don't have to do them all in order. You can pick the ones that most interest you.

Notice and thank

The unconscious gives us the information we need every minute. When you remember where your car keys are or get a good idea or toss a wad of paper into the trash from across the room, the unconscious is serving you. Thanking it for these gifts is an easy start to appropriate dialogue.

It's 10 o'clock. Do you know where your attention is?

What do you think about when you just let your mind wander? What's the motive behind those thoughts? Some part of your mind decides where to direct your attention; what is it trying to achieve?

Dialogue

Writers refer to their inspiration as their Muse, from the Greek goddesses of literature and art. And the rest of us receive inspiration in our own fields. You can consult your muse deliberately, by considering ideas and then waiting to make a decision. "Sleep on it." Give your unconscious a chance to put in its two cents. The form of that two cents might simply be a certainty about which path to follow, but it might also be new ideas.

You can do the same with decisions. Make a decision tentatively and live with it for a few days. Listen to your intuition.

Do it consciously

What do you do unconsciously that needs the light of attention? Try doing it deliberately. For example, if you currently worry unnecessarily and then try not to worry, turn it around. Decide, "Ok, I'll worry for the next 15 minutes." What do you notice? Does it help you understand the reasons you worry? Does it bring forward feelings that are boiling over on the back burner? Whenever you find yourself in a power struggle with your unconscious, try following its lead in a spirit of inquiry instead.

Remember your dreams

The unconscious mind seems to think in symbolic images, and

we can watch the show by remembering our dreams. To start, put a pen and paper beside your bed. Each morning, as soon as you wake up (before visiting the bathroom), write what you remember of last night's dreams. Over time you'll remember more.

If a dream intrigues you and you want to know what it means, you can try this:

For each character or force, name its three main characteristics. E.g., the bus is a vehicle, it's out of control, but it seems beneficent.

What part of you fits that description? Or, in what sense, or at what times, do you fit the description?

Using these players by their descriptions, briefly summarize the action. E.g., the friendly vehicle with a mind of its own takes me deep down into a dim but beautiful place. Sound like anything going on in your life?

Ask for a dream

Once you're remembering your dreams, you can ask for information or inspiration through them. For example, you could ask why you feel anxious when the roses bloom or how to help your son. Simply make this request right before going to sleep.

Devices

Devices are of two kinds: amplifiers and condensers. Amplifiers hear the quiet voice of the unconscious and turn into something hard to miss, usually through tiny muscle movements. Familiar examples are the pendulum and Ouija board. Condensers apply some amorphous criteria to a question and distill an answer. Examples include flipping a coin, reading tea leaves or praying for a sign.

An amplifier

Start by orienting yourself in your values, intending that this exercise will be for harmony or health or whatever basic value applies. Let a pendulum (a necklace works well) hang from your hand, then ask your subconscious to move it in a direction that will mean "yes," another direction for "no," and a third for "don't know." Then just start asking questions. Make them precise, like your math teacher used to do, because the unconscious takes things

literally. For example, if you ask, "Is there some reason I don't remember Grandma," the answer will be yes. Of course there's a reason. But if you ask, "Do I have enough support to integrate a memory of Grandma," the answer might be yes to that, also.

To get familiar with the pendulum, try some easy questions first, like, "Did I put the sprinkler in the garage last fall?" or "Are there two N's in "Tennessee"?"

Sometimes when I've done this, I've become sure of the answer without the pendulum giving it to me. This is fine. It means I've opened the lines of communication and am getting the answer directly.

A condenser

Formulate a question in your mind. Summon your intention that the answer you are about to get be in harmony with your basic values. Take a book of fiction or non-fiction that's not too technical, close your eyes, open the book to any page and put your finger on the page. Open your eyes and read what's under your finger.

How does this answer your question? Spin a connection if one isn't immediately obvious. Your unconscious mind will supply the appropriate spin, because your intention is to do justice to your values.

Direct contact

Hypnosis is a direct conversation with the unconscious. The filters normally used to screen information are suspended, which makes the subject "suggestible." Self-hypnosis gives you the chance to watch the unconscious more easily than in dreams, although what it says won't be so spontaneous. You can also query it. It's important to make your values salient before directly contacting the unconscious, because you are about to bypass the filters that normally check the ethics of an idea. So let your unconscious mind know that you're relying on it to work for harmony.

Get comfortable and close your eyes. Relax your muscles by thinking of each part of your body and deliberately relaxing those muscles. You can coordinate this with your breathing if you like:

one muscle group per breath. Break up areas with a lot of muscle tension, like the face, into small pieces. You can repeat an area to get it fully relaxed. It usually takes me three tries to relax my jaw all the way.

Now descend. You can count down from 10 to 0. You can imagine walking down a stair case or hill. You can picture the floor indicator in an elevator slowly taking you to the basement. You can feel yourself going deeper into trance. You can imagine a voice slowly dropping, lulling you into blissful relaxation.

Now ask your question or watch the show.

When you're finished, come back up the same way you went down. Expect to return rested and with this sense of well-being intact. Open your eyes and slowly move your body.

Tapping unconscious wisdom

I use characters to think about my own unconscious: the dream maker, the censor, the muse. If you're open to the method, here are instructions for a guide.

Some people will see images while others hear sounds or feel things. Some people will just know. So I've included cues for all these modes, but you only need to use the ones that work for you.

Get comfortable and close your eyes. Relax your muscles by thinking of each part of your body and deliberately relaxing those muscles. You can coordinate this with your breathing if you like: one muscle group per breath. Break up areas with a lot of muscle tension, like the face, into small pieces. You can repeat an area to get it fully relaxed.

Now descend. You can count down from 10 to 0. You can imagine walking down a stair case or hill. You can picture the floor indicator in an elevator slowly taking you to the basement. You can feel yourself going deeper into trance. You can imagine a voice slowly dropping, lulling you into blissful relaxation.

You're now in a place of peace and harmony. Truth, inspiration, health and well-being hold sway here. Check it out. Notice the details, the colors and sounds, the balmy breeze or pervading sense of security. Are you outdoors or in? Are there plants? Animals?

You are about to meet your guide. Your guide has access to all the wisdom you need. This guide will be honest and kind, working for your well-being and honoring your values. The guide won't advise you to do any harm.

Step through the portal you are now approaching and meet your guide. Ask any question you like.

When you're finished, come back up the same way you went down. Expect to return rested and with this sense of well-being intact. Open your eyes and slowly move your body.

Next time you want to meet your guide, you'll already know what she or he looks like.

LOVE FOR YOURSELF

Love is the ultimate motive for everything we do. Can you trust this about yourself? It lets you dig deep into your own motives, knowing that if you dig deep enough, you'll find love.

Before I learned to trust, my unconscious mind withheld things from me that I couldn't lovingly receive. It protected me. Since love for myself didn't come naturally (or had been trained out of me), I had to cultivate it deliberately.

Contemplation of compassion

The purpose of this exercise is to build good access to your compassion.

What is compassion? When have you had it? What prevents you from having it at all times? Consider compassion for yourself. Consider compassion for others. Reflect on this quality until you feel familiar with it.

Now let yourself feel it. Practice letting it be there. Extend a wish for well-being to yourself and everyone you know. Wish for them to get what they need.

Start each day by letting this attitude come to you. Extend your good wishes.

Guided meditation on compassion

Close your eyes and reflect for a moment on the quality we call compassion.

What is compassion?

When have you had it?

Bring to mind someone for whom you feel compassion.

As you exhale, wish that person well.

With each exhalation, extend to them your best wishes.

Other people might be suffering as they suffer. Let your compassion include those others who are suffering.

Still more people suffer in other ways. Let your compassion encompass them as well. On each exhalation, wish them the best.

Now bring to mind someone for whom it is difficult to have compassion.

Does this person suffer in ways not visible to you?

Did they adopt a strategy that now does harm?

Was it their best choice at the time?

Can you wish them well?

In your mind, say, "May divine love fill your heart."

Imagine divine love filling this person's heart.

Say, "May you be free from anything that would block divine love."

Imagine this person freed from whatever blocks divine love.

Wish for them the best that you can honestly wish for them.

Imagine yourself when you adopted the strategies that now cause trouble.

It was your best option then. Let your compassion include the person you were at that time.

On each exhalation, wrap that long-ago person in love and compassion.

The troublesome strategy was a gift back then. Thank it for what it has done for you.

Send feelings of love to the strategy.

Send feelings of love to yourself.

Say to yourself, "May I be free from anything that would block this love."

And when you're ready, come back to this room refreshed.

Guided meditation on loving yourself

Make yourself comfortable.

Notice the sensation of weight in your body.

Notice what your muscles do to support that weight.

Your body works hard for you. Thank it for all it does.

If you have ever been harsh with your body, apologize now.

What does your body need from you?

Will you give that?

Promise your body what you can give.

Apologize for anything it needs that you can't give.

Kiss your cheek by kissing your fingertips and pressing them to your cheek.

Kiss the other cheek.

Picture a child who represents your emotions.

Call to mind the feelings it brings you.

Thank this child for all the passion it brings.

Thank it for the pain it gives you.

If you have ever been harsh with this part of yourself, apologize now.

What does this child need from you?

Will you give that?

Promise it what you can give.

Apologize for anything it needs that you can't give.

Send feelings of love to the child.

Say, "May you be free from anything that would block this love."

Kiss the child good night.

Think of your capable, adult intellect, both conscious and subconscious.

Without it you couldn't read this book. Incredible what it does for you.

Thank it for all this reasoning, all this elegant figuring out of what to do.

It has served you every minute of your life.

If you have ever been harsh with your intellect, or taken it for granted, apologize now.

Does it need anything from you? To take its subtler
whispers more seriously, perhaps? Those intuitions you can't
justify? To be appreciated? Trusted?

Can you give it what it needs?

Thank it for serving you with love.

Kiss it good night.