Daring to be Yourself

Based on principles which have helped thousands of people!

Peter Shepherd
Daring to Be Yourself

By Peter Shepherd

Distributed by DoctorZed Publishing

ISBN 9780980623772 DARING TO BE YOURSELF

A Trans4mind Publication

Web site: http://www.trans4mind.com/

Copyright © Peter Shepherd 2007-2016
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part One: Getting Started</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Two: Background Psychology</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Three: Communication &amp; Relationships</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Four: A Positive Approach</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Five: Achieving Goals</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Six: Background Psychology II</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Seven: Going Beyond</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword

When I was five, as a child in England, I perceived little sparkles in the air around me in the garden, and indoors, in one room of the house there was a place where Jesus and some angels always were, to meet me. I also stood on the sofa and gave sermons to the family, as if to a congregation. Where I got these ideas is unclear, because it was before I was told about such things, though I can hypothesize now (past lives, archetypes...).

Outside the window were goblins that scared the life out of me but the angels gave my life back. Phew... either I was crazy or my childish brain had not yet been programmed into perceiving only the consensus reality, as a couple of years later I had none of those experiences but knew well the alphabet and times tables. Nevertheless I’d received my first taste of the spiritual dimension and that has inspired my life ever since, to know and experience more, and to understand how our everyday lives relate to our inner and more subtle lives.

A few years on, after being a choirboy at the local church, it suddenly dawned on me that all these sermons about our sinful nature and the wrath of God, were being made on a totally misguided agenda. I let go of that belief system and it was a huge relief, a huge burden off my back. Going in quite the opposite direction, I studied Buddhism and found there a validation of each individual as a spark of the universal consciousness. There were meditative methods to help the person attain a higher level of that consciousness for themselves. But again I found the orthodox dogma of that religion stifling. I decided to both stay clear of organized religions and also to look for better ways of expanding consciousness that do not take lifetimes to achieve their goal. It was enough for me to perceive of God as the quality of Love, and that when we love (which is to say accept unconditionally) we are part of God. As the saying goes, ‘When we love, we are the universe and the universe lives in us.’

I realized that inner gnosis - intuitive knowledge of spiritual truth - was the way to go, since fundamental truths are simple and graspable when we look inside to our intuitive understanding. What remained complex was the structure of mind, and the million and one ways that mind sneaks in to obscure or corrupt our natural insight.

Although my plan at school was to become a civil engineer, at 17 years I managed to damage my brain playing rugby. I had very severe concussion, and actually this happened three times, one time too many apparently. I lost memory of all the math I’d learned at school and when I started a degree in civil engineering it was completely beyond me. So... I had to make up for those missing brain cells by finding other qualities within myself. I needed to change tack, to go back to basics and follow my
own path, not just that which was intended to please others or to match their expectations, which is really what my career direction had been.

The problems I was facing spurred a lot of research in the direction of psychology and mind development, to learn about what goes on in my thoughts and feelings and to start to recover my mental abilities. I also continued looking to see if there really is a dimension even more fundamental than the mental: my spiritual self.

I actually then started a career in photography and did that for many years, but alongside I continued to learn about what I was beginning to feel was really my life purpose, and what my circumstances had pointed me in the direction of: to understand the mind and the spirit and to find out how to master these things and to teach what I find out to help others, who may be in the position I was in. So I got an education in psychology and psychotherapy over several years on a part-time basis. My primary teacher and mentor during this period of time, Gregory Mitchell, was a researcher of mind development techniques and he helped me to get my brain functioning well again - and that information forms the basis of the Mind Development courses I offer now.

A transformative moment

It was a time in England when there was a recession. I’d gotten into debt and wasn’t earning enough - the situation spiraled into bankruptcy. I lost my home and business and my relationship collapsed too. I was left with nothing and after having fought this for so long, I felt in despair. But then one day when all was lost, walking on the cliffs by the sea, with half a mind to jump over the edge, I had a sudden ‘aha’ moment. The sun and the grass seemed incredibly beautiful. I felt exhilarated and more powerful than at any time in my life, like I’d suddenly let go of the bonds that were tying me down. I felt grateful to be alive and filled with love.

It was a transformational moment for me because I finally recognized who I was - I got in touch with my heart. So this was actually one of the best moments of my life. I realized that underneath all of this trauma was really a tremendous opportunity; it was clearing the decks for me to do what I’d always really wanted to do, what I was born to do.

And that’s just what I have done. I had received training in Rational-Emotive psychology but now I started to study the ‘transpersonal’ dimension of our consciousness, that which is beyond the Ego personality connecting us with universality, as pioneered by Assagioli, Grof and others. I found these two divergent branches of psychology only really formed the full picture when combined as one. The everyday, rational and behavioral understandings of psychology were just as important
as the more esoteric understandings to do with consciousness, and in fact each needed the other to provide a true and holistic picture of things.

I continued by training and participating in a range of personal growth techniques, writing the book ‘Transforming the Mind’ which summarized my knowledge to date, further developing the most effective methods I’d found, moving to France, finding the love of my life who I knew was there, running the web site to reach all those people who are looking for the same things I’d searched so long for - and to be of service in the most valuable way I knew how.

A turning point in your life like that, when you have nothing more to lose, gives you the freedom to turn things around, to move out of your comfort zone, to think outside of the box of your conditioning, to be free of attachments. It provides the chance to be creative, to be yourself.

Of course, I don’t suggest that readers go about losing everything they have, in order to clarify their situation in this way. Far from it. But I think it’s a good idea to imagine yourself in that position... how would you feel? What fears would you have and how could you overcome them? What opportunities would it offer you... and why aren’t you taking advantage of those opportunities now, instead?

One finds, in retrospect, that the bad times had a place in the scheme of things; that you wouldn’t be where you are now without them. Provided you do indeed wake up to your life purpose - otherwise it could all effectively have been for nothing.

To find your life purpose, you need to find within yourself the loving person - because that IS the real you - and the best way to do that is to cultivate acceptance and forgiveness, and that starts at home with oneself. Not to blame oneself or others, but to accept the reality, and to see one’s responsibility for it.

One did make those choices that lead you to the present. But all choices are for what seems the best option at the time; now you may see a wiser view, that the choices were based on fear or greed or whatever... but have compassion for yourself at that time; be easy on yourself. And the same applies for others. You need not judge yourself or others, just accept, with love.

When you have a vision that is based on your true values, and that vision is not Egotistical but based on the greater good, your love expressed unconditionally, then that will empower you to acquire all the skills and knowledge, and give you the courage to take the necessary actions, to progress toward your goals - and the world around you will naturally support that process.
Psychotherapy or personal development?

During the years I practiced as a psychotherapist in England, I obtained a lot of useful knowledge and experience. But I was continually working with people who were looking to solve a problem in their lives but without any ambitions beyond that, they usually didn’t have an idea that life could be really, really great. They simply had a problem to solve that they hoped that you could help them with. I tried to get people who were open to it to understand that life is an ongoing learning process, to be happier and more fulfilled, and to achieve things of benefit not just to oneself but to everybody else. My work moved naturally, therefore into personal development, where you haven’t just got somebody who’s feeling sorry for themselves, you’ve got somebody who really wants to make a difference in their own life, and a difference in the world. And that’s a much more exciting thing to do, so I gave up being a psychotherapist and moved into personal development.

Problems can be a disabling or they can be exhilarating challenges to meet and overcome. The two very different ways you can look at problems. Most people could use bit of therapy, in fact, but they are able to handle their emotional and cognitive blocks themselves, in the context of a more positive drive toward self improvement, and start to turn their lives around. To increase their self esteem, to be happier, more fulfilled... People want to know how to do that because there are many conflicting theories in psychology, and many people trying to sell them stuff. The sales spiel for products tends to be exaggerated, which must be very confusing for people that really don’t know. So I try to guide people in this, based on my own experience and the experience of others that I have been able to help.

The issue that I have found people find most difficult to get to grips with is finding their real identity in life, because that’s usually not easy! There are pressures on you to be a certain way and to follow certain rules. You have a lot of invalidation and criticism, even from people that love you, that are trying to help you. It can knock you, so you don’t know who you really are. And then, just at your most vulnerable time, as a teenager, you have to decide about what career you want to do, and take subjects at school according to that, and that’s an incredibly difficult decision to make, particularly when you’re fighting to find an identity.

It’s something that happens to many people, that they drift one way or another into a career, they drift into relationships, when they haven’t been taught, really, anything about how to communicate, how to understand what goes on in a person to make them behave the way they do. So it’s very hard for them to have good relationships and they can drift into being married with a child, with somebody who they really hardly even
know. Relationships are important, and success is important, but the key to success and happiness with those issues is self knowledge - knowing who you are and what you really want yourself, what your talents are, what your abilities are, and knowing the potential that you have. And starting to recognize that you don’t have to believe what everybody else has said about you, and maybe you feel are thinking about you, but start to be objective and find yourself. So this, I think, is the real crux of the matter: the issue of identity and who you are.

This has always been recognized by the philosophers: the classic ‘Know thyself’ is critical. Partly because if you don’t know and accept yourself as you are you can’t love yourself, and if you don’t love yourself it’s very hard to love anybody else as they are, with all their inevitable quirks. If you don’t love yourself it’s hard to forgive yourself for your mistakes, and if you don’t love other people it’s hard to forgive them when they go astray. You can have chips on your shoulder in abundance, both regarding yourself and regarding others. It’s just not the way to a happy life, so self knowledge is the number one thing, I think.

Biofeedback is most commonly used to help stressed-out people to learn to relax and that is an important function. Because the body responds to emotional arousal, that can be measured and the information fed back to the person with audio or visual clues, so they learn how to reduce their stress, what it feels like to do that.

But it also has another important function that works in the other direction. This is the way that I used biofeedback in my psychotherapy practice and in one-to-one mind development, and continue to use in the advanced courses I run...

Biofeedback can be used to indicate when the subconscious mind is repressing an emotionally charged thought or experience - something traumatic one doesn’t want to look at, or something one has done that one wishes one hadn’t - and to stop repressing it and let it out into the open. To learn from those experiences and to re-evaluate the beliefs and decisions that derived from them. It’s this role that is useful to speed up the process of psychotherapy, and also it’s valuable in personal development.

But even without a mechanical aid of this sort, one can take note of the bodily clues - the emotional tensions - that arise when you think about particular experiences, people or topics. The heart beats faster, there’s a tension in the chest, you can feel activity in the brain. So you express that, let it come to the surface, layer by layer. Your emotions are a tremendous resource for knowing yourself better, and this results in insight or gnosis.

Emotional intelligence - intelligence of the heart - is the ability to sense and understand the power of emotions, to channel them as a source of energy, creativity and intuitive
insight. Balancing and integrating the head and heart, channeled through the left and right brain - this is the mission of personal growth work.

Any person is of the opinion that he is ‘right’ in what he believes - otherwise he wouldn’t believe it. But he can have all sort of misconceptions, misinterpretations, false information and delusions, and be holding fast onto them in order to be right. The fundamental elements of his belief system, the things that have made sense of past confusions for him, are not changeable by reasoning alone because they are held in place by force - by an unwillingness or inability to face up to certain things.

The only way that I know of to resolve this impasse is through examining the reality of our existence with ruthless honesty. Done with integrity, this can help one to see, bit by bit, the truths underlying our mental distortions. One may gain understanding, and the ability to live consciously, to be one’s true self, in those areas where one had shut off one’s vision.

By increasing understanding one is increasing awareness of truth, and then in life one needs to actually face that reality with equanimity and take responsibility. Without actually putting our insight into action, it soon tends to be forgotten and the body-mind programming (the habit patterns of many years) takes over again. Without such integrity of application, even extensive work on ourselves can become a charade.

‘Man has no body distinct from his soul
for that called body is a portion of the soul
discerned by the five senses.’ –William Blake

When I studied Buddhism as a youth, I found there the concept of each individual as a spark of the universal consciousness. There were meditative methods - not at all easy to do - intended to help the person attain a higher level of consciousness for themselves. Mystical (as opposed to orthodox) Christianity also gave me the concept of God as the quality of Love, and that when we love (which is to say accept unconditionally) we are part of God. As the saying goes, ‘When we love, we are the universe and the universe lives in us’ --O. Pirmez.

Later on, as a psychologist, I found that the rational and behavioral understandings of psychology were just as important as the more esoteric understandings to do with higher consciousness, and in fact each needed the other to provide a true and holistic picture of things. I put my awakening comprehension of all this together in a book, ‘Transforming the Mind,’ that has been freely available on trans4mind.com ever since.

Clearly the mystical and the everyday practicalities of life are just parts of the one picture. God is not to be found only in esoteric concepts but also in the hills and fields,
in our hearts and bodies, and in everyday relations. The Creator is equally a part of the
Created. Cause and effect are intertwined. Enlightenment is to be found in realizing that
the layered or hierarchic structure of our world actually has a unity.

As individuals, our being has several components: consciousness; mental processes;
emotions; and the physical. One depends on the other. Even the layers of our brain - the
cortex, limbic system and primitive/reptilian - correspond to our head, heart and gut.
Each can do nothing much on its own.

At the cosmic level, too, God can be perceived as being of Spirit, Mind and Body. The
Spirit  is  will,  under  Love,  the  essential  nature.  The  Mind  is  non-local  fields  of
information and the integration of all intentions. The feelings of God’s body-mind are
the flows of energies between us all. The Body is the Universe. And perhaps this pattern
is repeated in several planes, separated by vibrational qualities, but in truth all One.

We function in the world according to our programming. This software is in our minds
and the hardware is our brain and nervous system. We are largely unaware that we can
actually change this programming, switch one program for another, or actually to rise
above the level of mind and write new programs for ourselves as the meta-programmer.
We can do this as individuals and we can do this as humanity; it is our God-like
spiritual nature. But first we have to come to terms with reality...

My goal in life has been to break free of the consensus trance, to find instead my own
truth and to help others find their own truth also. To transform and be free, like a
caterpillar becomes a butterfly. Because we are each such different individuals, with
personal goals and at different stages on our various paths, I have found there is no
singular tool for transformation, their are many, and I’ve tried to select good ones for
my web site, Tools for Transformation. Some of the tools have a masculine or feminine
feel, a left-brain or right brain dominance, an intellectual or intuitive approach.
Ultimately, however, I believe we need to integrate these polarities and develop both
sides equally and together, for our being contains all of these. A certain tool may be
right for us now but later we will probably need the help of another kind of tool that is
not currently appropriate for us. Development is also hierarchic, one skill makes
another possible and the correct order needs to be found.

Daring to be yourself

Life for most people has evolved to the point where we find ourselves stuck with few
choices. Life is stressful because we find ourselves unsatisfied with the way we feel,
doing things most of the time that we don’t really want to do, and not achieving the
things we actually want to achieve. As individuals we tend to get swallowed up. There
has to be a better way.
You can have a new life. A life revised in small but crucial ways - or - perhaps you will totally change the way things have been up to now. You choose. No one else can decide for you the right way to make a new life. But first you need to know just who you really are and to shed the conditioning imposed on you by decades of conforming to other peoples’ expectations and other peoples’ interpretations.

It is possible to find out what your true purpose is in life, and to attain all the goals that support that purpose. It is possible to recognize what your mental and emotional blocks really are and to fix those problems for good. Unlimited possibilities then open up for you.

_Daring to Be Yourself_ is based on principles, which have helped thousands of people, endorsed by experts over the centuries. The book intersperses theoretical understanding mixed with practical exercises throughout, to help you uncover the barriers to self-knowledge and freedom of expression and action.

I trust you will find that the skills you’ll learn from this book and practice in your daily life, will soon provide a more objective understanding and control of your mind, emotions and core self - a greater degree of self-knowledge - and equally a new understanding and empathy with others.

Increased self-knowledge also inevitably leads to spiritual insight or ‘gnosis.’ The barriers to gnosis are mental considerations; when one starts to take internal responsibility for creating the way one thinks - rather than one’s identity being solely a behavioral response to environmental stimuli - one begins to ask... who is the creator? Who is the programmer of the my thoughts? I can change my beliefs, so can I change my identity, become a new person?

To transcend and go beyond the limitations of an historical identity is where transpersonal psychology begins to take over from cognitive psychology. I believe you will find that _Daring to Be Yourself_ has a considerable amount to offer in this dimension of your life as well.

Most of us struggle on. We do everything bar change our minds. Only a few realize that the path of improvement means changing ourselves. Those who have this realization - and act on it - gain what others can only dream about. All you have to lose is whatever stands in your way. Nothing will change unless you do.
INTRODUCTION

An evolutionary jump

You may, at some time, have had a ‘peak’ experience, an ecstatic moment or a moment of greater understanding, when your consciousness expanded - and you knew it. When this occurs, the integration between left brain (logical thinking) and right brain (intuitive feelings and emotions) is manifested in increased energy-flow between the two sides. This is thinking and feeling in an holistic and balanced way. It is a foretaste of an evolutionary jump for humanity - a new level of maturity in mental development, an awakening.

In this new wide-awake consciousness, the world seems to be full of possibilities - it possesses a strong sense of rediscovered meaning. This is nothing mystical, it is essentially ordinary consciousness, operating for once at its proper efficiency.

‘When we pull back and get, for a moment, the ‘bird’s eye’ view of life, it reveals meanings that are ungraspable by the narrow focus of our usual worm’s eye view’  

Colin Wilson

Research tells us that one side of the brain is usually dominant to the other, and that most of the time, very little of the potential capacity of the brain is in use. Brain studies have shown that people who are functioning optimally have a high level of inter-hemispheric communication and that the two sides are working in synchrony and balance, as described above. In the integrated, whole-brain way of being, overall arousal is optimal for the task and under conscious control - these are the skills of sustained concentration, contemplation, introspection, rationality, intuition and creativity - utilizing much more of the brain’s capacity.

This book presents a selection of introductory personal development techniques, in particular those that can effectively be practiced at home by a person of normal intelligence and emotional stability. The aim is to achieve a ‘wide-awake’ state of consciousness, with integrated use of left and right brain abilities, forming the bedrock for breakthroughs in personal consciousness and spiritual insight.

Part One, Getting Started, looks at some basic principles of happiness and some tips to start making your life more self-directed and fulfilling.

Part Two, Background Psychology, is a summary of the broad streams of psychological thought that are the context and source of the personal development techniques that follow in the book.

Part Three, Communication & Relationships, comprises a short course to improve communication skills. Communication is the solvent of all problems and is a foundation for personal development.

Part Four, A Positive Approach, is a set of personal development principles and
exercises that I have found to be particularly effective over the years, both as a psychotherapist and in teaching personal growth to many students around the world through home-study courses. It should be noted that this approach is suited for those who are mentally stable and want to improve their lives further; it is not a substitute for counseling and psychotherapy, when that is needed to help an individual get through particularly stressful times in their life.

**Part Five, Achieving Goals**, gives the key tools you need for creating the life that you most desire.

**Part Six, Background Psychology II**, sets the stage for more advanced work on self-development, leading into the transpersonal realm of enhanced spiritual awareness.

**Part Seven, Going Beyond**, concentrates on the spiritual dimension of personal growth.

Plus the book includes a short Bibliography and describes the courses I make available through my website, Tools for Transformation.

The main objective throughout is personal enhancement. The practice is based on the premise that we have learned disabilities that set boundaries to our action and knowing. But no one need accept that they must remain as they were shaped by their hereditary body-mind and by the conditioning of their childhood and culture.

Once we find a worthwhile goal, the power of will alone can change the programming of our minds. The human brain is so constructed that it will adapt itself to the demands of the mind, ordered by the power of will.

**How does personal development work?**

When you feel angry or depressed, in a self-defeating way, this is the result of negative or irrational inner-speech that you may not even be aware of, as it is often very fleeting or below the threshold of consciousness, or simply not recognized as such.

These evaluations are linked to earlier times, when they were instilled by force of painful experience. When such an experience was too uncomfortable to remember, the feelings (in the right brain) were repressed and made unconscious.

Considerable mental energy is locked-up by continuing to repress feelings and emotions, and this is justified by irrational and over-generalized conclusions about self and others.

The techniques presented in this book will enable you to look again at your beliefs with a fresh viewpoint. This will help you to release the effects of held-back trauma and have fuller access to your potential for intuitive, creative and holistic thinking. With a more flexible outlook and greater freedom of emotional expression, new horizons may appear, and goals approached that before seemed out of reach. Problems and difficulties now become opportunities for creative choice and valuable learning, stepping-stones towards what you really want to achieve.
**Why the need?**

When, as with most people, 90% of the brain’s potential capacity remains unused due to neurotic repression or badly trained mental habits, the remaining 10% is apt to fall into a robotic state. The individual acts out learned behavior patterns - imprinted as a result of upbringing, education and early experiences - that are predictable from day to day and the person only responds semi-consciously when something attracts his or her attention. The unused 90% remains susceptible to external influence and the individual is therefore driven by his environment and circumstances; this is far from the self-directed state he probably considers himself to be in. For most of us, a radical program of reawakening is urgently needed!

Resolving the chaos of conflicting beliefs and desires, which nearly everyone has to some extent, is a gradient process of self discovery, of re-discovering objective reality and the honest truth about ourselves.

Anxiety cuts through all levels of society affecting the rich and poor, young and old alike. Anxieties and tensions are insidious forces that exist below the surface of your awareness, smoldering and building up, until you reach a ‘breaking point’ and explode in a fit of anger or a violent argument, or some other unreasoned behavior. It also manifests in over-indulgence in food, alcohol, cigarettes, sex or work, in headaches, fatigue, impotence, clumsiness, sleepless nights, or any number of physical ailments. Conscious worry and fear also enter the picture to compound the feeling of frustration already being experienced because you are not able to identify the source of the unconscious anxiety and thus eliminate it.

Consequently, if you are like many people, you will gulp down a handful of pills to alleviate that dull aching feeling, or your ‘escape’ will be in the form of the after-work booze-up. Or you’ll change your job, or get a divorce, or move to another town, or some psychologist will tell you to ‘adjust’ to your problems. Or you will grin and bear it because your religious leader piously proclaims that sorrow is this life’s just reward, and so on. But you find that you receive nothing but temporary relief and that you carry your problems with you wherever you go and whatever you do.

To add to this state of tension, is the sense of ‘alienation’ that modern society produces. A sense of isolation, separation, loneliness, powerlessness, apathy, non-involvement, pessimism, meaninglessness, and the lack of roots and authentic values. Alienation may be described as that state in which the individual feels dislocated from himself, from others, from the world in general.

With mechanization, specialization and automation increasing every day, man has become lost in the giant machinery he once controlled and created, and thereupon he has become a mere ‘cog in the machine’ - mechanized, reutilized, depersonalized, apathetic, insignificant, an object to be manipulated.

With the threat of global warming and other environmental pressures on the one side,
and on the other promises of a super-abundant age of leisure from the resources of high
technology, man has become confused, uncertain and schizoid because he cannot relate
to or solve problems of such magnitude. With the instant communications systems of
mass media, informing Western man of the struggles for freedom of men throughout the
world, he may feel helpless in his inability to do anything about these situations.
Learning about constant crime, the world seems a dangerous place. And stuck in urban
dwellings, he becomes increasingly isolated from nature with all of its beauty, peace
and refreshing naturalness. And while the population of the world is exploding at a
fantastic rate, he finds increasing difficulty just communicating with his neighbor.

Thus it is that man drifts aimlessly through a world seemingly without meaning or
purpose - a world he created but over which he no longer exercises conscious control or
power. Man today has lost his identity and his purpose for existing. He has lost his
sense of the Game of Life. He is an unknowing and unwilling participant.

Man does not know himself. The task now before you is to begin to know yourself. You
must first become free of illusions about yourself, the people around you, and the
Universe. Until you begin to understand your illusions you will never be free to see the
truth about yourself or anything else. Illusions consist of all sorts of mistaken ideas you
hold about yourself: false assumptions as to your abilities, erroneous concepts about
your place and purpose in the world, and so forth.

It is difficult to break-up these illusions because they are deeply engrained habit
patterns. To be able to change, which is the only way to gain self-knowledge and
freedom, you must do things you have never done before, and recognize that
viewpoints that you were determined must be right, may possibly be wrong.

The greatest barrier to consciousness is the belief that one is already conscious. Just
considering the matter, one for an instant wakes-up, then returns to slumber in the
illusion that, yes, he is conscious. The truth of the matter is that 99% of the time, man is
behaving mechanically - running the same old patterns, which themselves are largely
determined by external forces. Nearly all of man’s thoughts, ideas, emotions,
aspirations, words and moods are triggered by external influences. Events,
circumstances and trains of thought trigger this reactive mechanism automatically,
according to the person’s previous conditioning, upbringing, education and experiences,
and the innate human nature, instincts and drives.

The collection of ingrained habit patterns and memories are linked together
automatically and unconsciously. The application of free will is only possible if vision
is free of preconceived fixed ideas or reverence to singular ideologies and cultural
norms.

The subconscious and unconscious minds play the major role in controlling your life
and behavior, when you are not fully awake and self-aware in the present moment. In
the normal human person it influences perhaps over 90% of everyday thoughts,
feelings, motivations, desires, prejudices, anxieties, tensions, illnesses, illusions,
personality problems, and everyday behavior. This book seeks to re-orient your basic unconscious concepts by changing your normal reactions and responses to life’s everyday occurrences, in the light of insight by the higher consciousness, the person that you truly are. In this way, new habit patterns are consciously built up that remain open to revision and evolution.

The principles and methods are those used in the home-study courses I have presented over the last 10 years to many students world-wide, through my website, Tools for Transformation at trans4mind.com. When applied diligently, the courses have produced excellent results and that is not surprising, since they are based on thoroughly tested psychological theory and practice.

What is required of you? An open mind and a genuine desire to learn and expand. A major goal of personal development is to facilitate the individual to take full responsibility in their lives. To be capable of this, we need to explore the unmapped territory of our minds and develop it to the full, if we are each to have the insight to be able to effectively cut through the blinkered thinking in our environments, and make an impact on what is happening to our world’s social, economic and ecological systems.
Part One: GETTING STARTED

What does it take to be happy?

Whether you are experiencing life as a parent, remembering times as a child, or if you’re just a big child at heart, I’m sure you can’t fail to be moved by the following poem by Maria-Anne Pike:

A LIFE IN YOUR HANDS
If a child lives with criticism
He learns to condemn
If a child lives with hostility
He learns how to fight
If a child lives with ridicule
He learns to be shy
If a child lives with shame
He learns to feel guilty
If a child lives with tolerance
He learns to be patient
If a child lives with encouragement
He learns to be confident
If a child lives with praise
He learns to appreciate
If a child lives with fairness
He learns justice
If a child lives with security
He learns to have faith
If a child lives with approval
He learns to like himself
If a child lives with honesty
He learns to be truthful
If a child lives with lies and deceit
He too learns how to lie and deceive
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship
He learns to find love in the world.
As you get older, it is all too easy to get in a rut - with fixed viewpoints, stuck emotions, ways of being that others can see clearly but you just think are ‘right’. A life full of safe solutions. But if you start to shut out new experiences, or if you take less interest in new things, so your capacity for enjoying life diminishes. You stay in your comfort zone, and as you get older, your comfort zone gets smaller and smaller. This is harmful because you not only stop doing things that scare you, but you also stop doing things that give you pleasure.

Feeling good is not just a luxury, it is a vital necessity for good health and long life. There is scientific research that supports this. In 1973, Dr Ronald Grossarth-Maticek undertook an experiment on more than 3000 elderly Germans. He measured how often they felt pleasure. In 1994 he followed up and found that those with the highest scores were 30 times more likely to be alive and well than those with low scores.

**How satisfied are you?**

Which of the following statements best sums up your life?

(a) It has its ups and downs but is mostly fulfilling
(b) There must be more to it than this
(c) I spend most of my time wishing it would change

How often does your job, family or social life force you to do things you don’t really believe in?

(a) Very rarely
(b) Sometimes
(c) All the time

How do you feel about your body?

(a) I’m in good shape and satisfied with my appearance
(b) It’s not bad but I would like to feel better
(c) I hate the way I am and want to change

Which best describes your social life?

(a) I have plenty of friends and try to get out as much as possible
(b) I would love to have a wider social circle and go out more often
(c) I hardly see any of my friends any more and never seem to have time to socialize

Is your life mentally stimulating?

(a) Yes
(b) Sometimes, but I would like to be stretched more intellectually
(c) I feel as if I’m vegetating. Everything is so unchallenging
How did you score?

Mostly (a) - You manage your life pretty well. You know life can be better still because you know from past experience that what you get out of life depends on what you put into it - there are no limits.

Mostly (b) - As you’re fairly satisfied with your life, you may be inclined to put off change. But unless you take some risks, you’ll never realize your true ambitions. Consider your answers and think about new ventures and things you can do to make a difference.

Mostly (c) - You’re not happy with your life - it needs a complete shake-up. It’s time to sit down, take a deep breath and plan some big changes.

In each case, Daring to Be Yourself has a lot to offer you...

Get the life you want!

Changing your life for the better isn’t easy. You know what you want but getting it seems a lifetime away. Family commitments, financial problems and fear of the unknown can all hold you back - but going for your goals can give your life the boost it needs. Happiness often depends on how close you are to what you would like to be. Here, we take the first steps towards finding the new you.

1. Make a list of things you used to enjoy in your last year at school - aim for 10 or 15 activities. Put a tick next to those you still enjoy. From the others, pick one activity and do it in the next week - yes, do it!

3. Force yourself out of the comfort zone. Taking steps to push out the boundaries of your experience will ensure that you continue to enjoy life. Think of an activity that you normally wouldn’t consider, such as taking a cold shower. Each day turn the water from hot to cold while you’re under the shower, and gradually lengthen the time you stay there each day until it’s a minute or more. After a week, turn on the cold water for just 10 seconds - it should seem easy: Your comfort zone has expanded.

Of course, this takes self-control. For this week, every time your lazy or scared self wants to say ‘No’, say ‘Yes’. It should be quite an educational experience.

Tips for happiness

What makes you happy?

Write down a list of things that make you excited, however big, small, likely or unlikely. Then work to make them occur more often. And appreciate the good things you take for granted - your child’s hug or a good book. Look for moments of joy and savor them. Recognize how many happen every day. Feeling good can be a way of life, not just an occasional accident.
Take care of your health
Eating well and getting plenty of exercise will raise your spirits. Lack of nutrients will get you down so don’t skip meals or make do with junk food. Physical exercise is known to stimulate endorphins that lift depression and anxiety - so walk, swim, run or whatever you like doing best.

Smile!
Smiling triggers happy feelings in the brain and reduces stress. Even if you don’t feel happy or confident just behave as though you do and soon you will. Find the joy in your life and you’ll be more attractive and nicer to be around, people will be nicer to you too - and you’ll smile some more! Joy is infectious but so is misery; therefore don’t have anything whatever to do with people who dampen your spirits, invalidate your achievements or tell you what to think.

Make the most of your resources
Beware of ‘must’ thinking: the belief that you must have a new relationship, a better job and a bigger house, and so on, before you can be happy. Extremes of thought only set you up for failure. Remember, what you want is what you’ve not yet got but what you need is all around you! Don’t chuck the baby out with the bathwater, work to improve things.

Get positive
Write down every negative thought you have over the course of a week, whether it’s ‘My family don’t appreciate me’ or ‘I look dreadful.’ Negativity is a habit and we often don’t realize we’re doing ourselves down. Under each negative thought you’ve written, see if you can spot an alternative way of looking at it, that isn’t so negative. See if you’ve exaggerated the situation or overly generalized, or if you are being unnecessarily intolerant, or thinking in ‘should’ and ‘ought-to’ terms.

Recognize all possibilities but expect success
There’s a world of difference between expecting failure or rejection - so as not to be disappointed when it occurs - and recognizing it as a possibility. It’s sensible to look at a situation from all angles and to have a back-up plan to fall back on if need be. People who do this will often see failure as another step on the road to eventual success; but by expecting and envisioning success, there’s less likely to be a failure. You naturally move towards whatever you envision. Those who dwell on the worst case scenario, on the other hand, and give themselves worry and stress, tend to be devastated when it actually happens, even though they’ve been predicting it.

Assert your rights
Think of things which you have a right to, e.g. ‘I have a right to an evening out with my friends from time to time.’ Think of rights that every human being should have, such as, ‘I have the right not to be bullied.’ Now, protect your rights with your life, and watch your integrity and self-esteem grow.
Nurture your relationships
Take time and trouble over your friends and your partner. Talk and laugh with
them and - especially - listen and understand their points of view. Don’t make
being right more important than a friendship. People with a few close friends are
more likely to be happy than those with many mere acquaintances.

Give yourself some time
For most of us, life is fast-paced. Be sure to put aside a little time every day for
yourself - relax with a book, in the bath or sitting in the garden with the sun on
your face. Think of some things that make you happy - worrying solves nothing.
And at night time, go to bed early enough that you get enough sleep to feel your
best the next day.

Put things in perspective
When something’s gone wrong it’s tempting to believe nothing will ever go right
again. Put it in perspective - things go wrong sometimes, even when life’s really
good. Life is for learning and without mistakes you learn very little. Notice when
you exaggerate or generalize about an issue - ‘It’s unbearable ...’ or ‘Everyone
thinks ...’ - and re-phrase your thoughts more realistically.

Take control
Instead of feeling overwhelmed by a task, break it down into small segments that
you know you can do and start on the first one. If you have lots of incomplete
jobs, list them in order of priority and tackle the most important job first. This way
you have a sense of achievement at each step - and you’ll soon find yourself
getting a whole lot more accomplished. Production equals morale.

Communicate
If you have a problem, the thing to do is to communicate: find out the information
you need to get the full picture, so that the solution becomes apparent. If you’re
upset, you need to communicate and say how you feel. If you’ve done something
wrong, again you need to communicate this. Spot where you’re backing off from
what you then need to do or say, and as the saying goes, ‘feel the fear and do it
anyway’. You’ll be glad you did!

Be creative
Making something come to life that you have envisioned - whether a painting, a
wonderful meal, a dress, an invention, a business plan - is infinitely satisfying.
And you’ll feel pleasure every time you think of it. If you want to be happy, get
active - at work, within the family and the community. You will feel happier when
you’re participating in an activity, whether it’s just playing with a child or helping
organize a worthwhile event.

Live for the moment
Joy is often about living in the moment, being absorbed in what you’re doing, not
brooding on the past or guessing your future. Decide what YOU really want and
then go for it. This may mean a job, a friendship or a hobby. It can take courage but it’s worth the risk. Then give yourself wholeheartedly to the present moment.

You deserve it
Self-esteem comes from demonstrated competence. Everyone has skills but not everyone uses them. So use your skills - find out what you’re good at and do it. Tell yourself that you deserve all the praise that comes your way and wallow in it!

Some tips to conquer melancholy
Being lonely is a normal part of our everyday lives. We get sad when we fail in our exams, when we’re rejected by the person we love, or when someone very close to us passes away. Depression, however, has consequences that could ruin your self-esteem, health, and well-being. Here are some simple tips to conquer the melancholic mood and get the most out of your daily activities...

Get enough light and sunshine
Lack of exposure to sunlight is responsible for the secretion of the hormone melatonin, which could trigger a dispirited mood and a lethargic condition. Melatonin is only produced in the dark. It lowers the body temperature and makes you feel sluggish. If you are always cooped up in your room (with the curtains closed), it would be difficult not to feel a bit down. This is the reason why many people suffer from depression much more often in winter than in the other seasons. It’s because the days are shorter. If you can’t afford to get some sunshine, you can always lighten up your room with brighter lights. Have lunch outside the office. Take frequent walks instead of driving your car over short distances.

Get busy - get inspired
You’ll be more likely to overcome any feeling of depression if you are too busy to notice it. Live a life full of inspired activities. Do the things you love. If you’re a little short on cash, you could engage in simple activities like taking a leisurely stroll in the park, playing sports, reading books, or engaging in anything that you have a passion for and love to pursue. Find a goal, a meaningful purpose in life - something that really gets you going, and sets your heart on fire. No matter how difficult or discouraging life can be, remain firm and have an unshakable belief that you are capable of doing anything you set your heart on. With this kind of positive attitude, you will attain a cheerful disposition to beat the blues.

Take a break
Listen to soothing music. Soak in a nice warm bath. Ask a close friend to massage you. Take a break from your stressful workload and spend the day just goofing around. In other words, have fun.

Eat right and stay fit
Avoid foods with lots of sugar, caffeine, or alcohol. Sugar and caffeine may give you a brief moment of energy; but they are stimulants and later bring about
anxiety, tension, and health problems. Alcohol on the other hand is a depressant. Many people drink alcohol to ‘forget their problems,’ but the problems remain and only seem more oppressive, not less.

Exercising regularly is a vital depression buster because it allows your body to produce more endorphins than usual. Endorphins are sometimes called ‘the happy chemicals’ because of their stress-reducing and happiness-inducing properties.

**Get a social life**
No man is an island. Your circle of friends are there to give you moral support. Spending time and engaging in worthwhile activities with them could give you a very satisfying feeling. Nothing feels better than having group support. Friends are important - not to have many shallow ones but just a few really genuine ones. To find such friends you simply have to be friendly yourself, then friendships naturally follow.

Never underestimate the power of touch and support. Doesn’t it feel so good when someone pats you on the back and gives you words of encouragement during your most challenging times? Hug or embrace someone today. You may have changed another’s life.

Get intimate. Establish close ties with your family and friends. The love and care expressed by others can tremendously boost your immune system and fend off illnesses. Best of all, you’ll live a more secured and happy life.

**The power of gratitude**
Did you know that the very best way to bring good things into your life is to be grateful for the good things that you already have? We each have a lot to be grateful for:

- If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more fortunate than the one million people who will not survive this week.
- If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of the world.
- If you can attend a church or political meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, then you are more blessed than three billion in the world.
- If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in your pocket, then you are among the top 8% of the world’s wealthy.

Start every day by thinking of all the things for which you’re thankful. Even things as simple as your bed, your pillow and your room. Then add friends and family members and the blessing of a fulfilling job and enough income to pay for the things you most need. Every day your list grows, along with a sense of well-being and gratitude. Also add the affirmation:
‘Today I can give out and receive love wherever I go.’
Smile at the world and it will smile back at you! When one is grateful it is an expression of self-acceptance. Needs and fears go out the window. This paves the way to an unconditional appreciation of others and a new paradigm for harmony in all relationships.

When you are wondering what is the right thing to do or you’re in doubt over the best course of action, ask yourself the question:

‘Am I acting through love?’

If your intention is truly loving, and not based on fear, envy, greed or other such self-oriented motivations, and has no conditions attached, then you know it comes from your essential self and it can only be the honest and ethical, correct way forward.

These are all things you can do for yourself, to fill your life with enjoyment, pride, affection and enthusiasm. There will probably still be issues causing anger, sadness, anxiety, guilt or frustration that remain. The mind is complex and heavily conditioned into patterns of behavior and fixed thinking that require a course of practical training to resolve. We will be tackling these issues in Part Three: A Positive Approach. The next section of the book is intended to give you an understanding of the psychology involved in intensive personal development.
The Dilemma

To laugh is to risk appearing a fool
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental
To reach out for another is to risk involvement
To expose feelings is to risk rejection
To place your dreams before a crowd is to risk ridicule
To love is to risk not being loved in return
To go forward in the face of overwhelming odds
    is to risk failure
But risks must be taken
because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.
    The person who risks nothing
does nothing, has nothing, is nothing.
    He may avoid suffering and sorrows,
but he cannot learn, feel, change, grow, or love.
    Chained by his certitudes, he is a slave -
    he has forfeited his freedom.

Only a person who takes risks is FREE
Part Two:  
BACKGROUND PSYCHOLOGY

One notable feature of humanity is the very long period of development preceding adulthood. Underlying the functioning of every adult is a complex personal history of childhood and adolescence.

Human beings are dynamic creatures, full of contradictions, experiencing trouble, conflict and fear as well as joy, boredom and satisfaction. The traumas within the personality are clearly seen in the overwhelming emotions of the small child or in the struggles for identity of the adolescent. Later on in life they are usually more controlled, or repressed in the subconscious, but are no less powerful.

The young child lives in a world in which fantasy is not clearly distinguished from reality, fears may be exaggerated and the conflicts generated are more intense and overwhelming - fears and expectations are more prone to distortion. How likely is it that experiences of such magnitude would simply fade away? More probably they are internalized and become part of the developed personality. Adult anxieties may cloak a residue of infantile fears and emotional memories.

Despite the primitive brain/mind development of early years, the essential personality of the child has transpersonal qualities, those of the Higher Self. Such a quality, in the course of a life, particularly in the relative helplessness of childhood, may easily become distorted. For instance, rejection of his caring efforts, in a less than understanding environment, may have been defended by withdrawal and fear, and leave the person with an internal ‘frightened child’ who is likely to emerge at any time, even after the original vulnerability has gone, or may become a permanent part of his character structure and be a constant handicap for life.

**Parent - Adult - Child**

The subconscious forces that trouble people are often to do with the profound things learned in childhood. From childhood to old age, inner conflicts confront us. From a very early age, the child plays very much an active role in his own development, learning at a fantastic rate, especially through play. But parents and others around the child, seek to influence this learning towards a pattern of behavior that suits their own needs, and conflict may result. Natural aggression may have been suppressed and now comes forth in a variety of ways, as repression of oneself or others (people project on to the external world, particularly material that they repress in themselves). Eric Berne made a useful analysis of the subdivisions of personality that all people have in common. Changes from one of these states to another are apparent in manner, appearance, words, gestures and bodily functions.

The first of these states, the ‘Parent,’ is an identification with the replayed recordings
of unquestioned or imposed external events, perceived in the first five years of life. Particularly the parents and everything the child saw them do or heard them say, including non-verbally through tone of voice, facial expression, cuddling or non-cuddling. All the thousands of do’s and don’ts. They are recorded as truth, from the source of all security, the people who are six feet tall at a time when it is important to the two-foot child that he please and obey them. It is available for replay throughout life. Some of it of course is inconsistent or contradictory between Mother, Father, Teacher or Priest.

At the same time, another recording is being made, of internal events - the responses of the little person to what he sees and hears. When replayed, the person in his ‘Child’ identity feels again the emotion that the situation originally produced in him, and he is aware of the original interpretations, true or false, which he gave to the experience. What he saw and heard and felt and understood. Since the little child had no vocabulary during his earliest experiences, many of his reactions are feelings. He has natural ways to express feelings and to experience movement and discovery - on the other hand there are parental demands that he give up these basic satisfactions for the reward of parental approval. This approval, which can disappear as fast as it appears, is an unfathomable mystery for the child, who has not yet made any certain connection between cause and effect.

The predominant by-product of the frustrating, civilizing process is negative feelings. This permanent recording is the inevitable residue of having been a child, even of kind, loving, well-meaning parents (let alone abusive or cruel ones). As in the case of the Parent, the Child is a state into which a person may be transferred at any time, given an appropriate environmental reactivation which recreates the situation of childhood, bringing on the same feelings we had then (which may be good as well, of course). As soon as the child goes to school, he then begins to use his Parent or Child identities in dealings with others, which has a reinforcing effect.

By ten months a child has found he is able to do things that grow from his own awareness and thought. This self-actualization in the form of play, learning and communication, is the beginning of the ‘Adult.’ Adult data accumulates as he finds out for himself what is different about life from the ‘taught’ data from the Parent and the ‘felt concept’ as a Child. The Adult develops a ‘thought concept’ of life based on his own data gathering and processing. The Adult, the ‘I’ using his analytical mind, tests the data from the Parent for validity and checks the feelings of the Child for appropriateness to the present.

Creativity is born from curiosity in the Child. The Child provides the ‘want to,’ either the Parental directives or alternatively newly self-determined Adult conclusions provide the ‘how to.’ Once checked out, these conclusions may become part of a belief structure, freeing the Adult for unrestrained creativity. But if negative Parental directives were accepted, creativity and even the freedom to adopt an Adult viewpoint may be restrained.
Sub-personalities

Under sufficient stress, the Adult can be impaired to the point where the Parent or Child take over inappropriately and reactively. They have been reactivated overwhelmingly by similar situations to the original recordings, and the ‘I’ takes on the identity of the Parent or Child viewpoint - that of imposing on or being imposed on; of dominating commandingly or feeling dominated; of controlling or being controlled; of being cause or being effect; of opposing or being opposed. Most people, in their transactions, compulsively and unknowingly slip into Parent or Child type sub-personalities.

In Freudian terms, individual behavior is determined by the ‘Id’ forces (the unconscious instinctual drives, the uncurbed passion of the child, the raw requirements of primitive thinking), under control of the conscious function of the ‘Ego,’ which itself has been modified by the development of an Ego-ideal or ‘Superego,’ a learned mode of controlling the Ego, that may consist of conscious belief systems linked to sub-conscious roots. As Freud says, ‘The Ego is the part of the Id which has been modified by the direct influence of the perception-consciousness system. The Ego has the task of bringing the influence of the external reality to bear on the Id and endeavors to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle that reigns supreme in the Id. In the Ego, perception plays the part which in the Id devolves upon instinct.’

The Child, then, is the world of feelings and the Id; this corresponds to right-brain mental processes. The Parent is the hypnotic world of commands, the Superego which directs his conscience; this corresponds to left-brain verbal belief systems with repressed right-brain emotional and traumatic components, with energetic roots into the unconscious primal lower-brain.

The Adult is the mature Ego of rational thought and free expression; this corresponds to integrated functioning with the left and right brain in un-repressed inter-active communication.

The stereotyped, habituated combination of all these is the ‘persona,’ Jung’s term for the mask that is one’s presumed face to the world. This mask will be switched as the Ego reactively identifies with one or other dominant sub-personality from his collection of Parent- or Child-type identities, to meet the perceived demands of his circumstances. He will tend to have a chronic, seemingly permanent mask that he identifies as his personality, as ‘me!,’ but also many temporary masks for acute situations, which he may not even realize he possesses and uses, since they are adopted reactively and sub-consciously.

Man the machine?

One of the most upsetting and insulting remarks made by Gurdjieff was his statement that Man is a machine. Unfortunately, Gurdjieff was right; for practical purposes we are machines in multitudes of ways we fail to recognize. We should be upset!

A person may appear to be acting intelligently and consciously, but he may be
mechanically ‘running on automatic.’ By mistakenly thinking he is conscious, he blocks the possibility of real consciousness. Gurdjieff constantly emphasized that almost all human misery results from the fact that our lives are automatic, mechanical affairs. You (your behavior, thoughts and feelings) are then the effect of external and historical causes, rather than the cause, the initiator of desired actions.

Problems occur when reality changes but your automated responses carry on. Identities and defenses are reactively enacted; though appropriate for the time they were set up, these are usually inappropriate for the present situation. When the situation fits an internal stereotype, your automated reaction then follows. If you have an emotional investment in the stereotype (feeling superior, dominant or safe) that makes it even more rigid, and you are unlikely to perceive that reality differs significantly. The automated stereotypes we know of as racist, ageist, sexist, class prejudices, nationalist and so on, are enormously costly. Automated perceptions, emotions, thoughts, reactions and particularly identities, frequently become associated with many situations, so we can be lost for long periods - a lifetime in the extreme - in automated living, rarely being the mature Adult, the truly awake Self.

Consensus trance

The automated state may be described as ‘consensus trance,’ where the hypnotist is personified as the culture. It is a state of partly suspended animation and inability to function, a daze, a stupor; a retreat from immediate sensory-instinctual reality to abstractions about reality.

Becoming ‘normal,’ a fully-fledged member of your culture, involves a selected shaping, a development of approved (‘hard working,’ ‘obedient,’ ‘polite,’ ‘cooperative’) identities, and inhibition of disapproved (‘lazy,’ ‘selfish,’ ‘rebellious,’ ‘disrespectful’) ones. From the culture’s point of view, it is best if your everyday mind, the habitual, automated way you think and feel, is shaped to reflect the culture’s consensus beliefs and values. Then you will automatically make the right interpretations, believe, behave and feel according to the ‘norm,’ for the best survival of the culture.

Identification, attaching the quality ‘This is me!’, is a process of defining yourself as only a fraction of what you could be. Your appearance, beliefs and customary attitudes are most readily identified with, but also a person can identify with anything. Your possessions, past events, family, vocation, community, a victim in a newspaper story, personality in a film or novel, cars, famous people, heroes and villains, friends, lovers and enemies, sports team, your company, race, sex, age and country... the list is endless.

We identify our personality with hopes and fears, values, likes and dislikes, skills, talents and abilities or lack of, goals and intentions, and many more subtle psychological processes.

A threat to the object of identification is a threat to ‘me,’ with according reactivation of threatened-survival trauma, felt physically as well as emotionally. We usually have a
number of socially defined roles with which we identify, such as parent, educated person, good listener, political activist, or pillar of the community. We also commonly identify with role models. We may be conditioned to identify with socially approved roles and values, part of consensus trance. It all seems so effortless (although it actually takes a lot of energy).

Indeed it takes deliberate volitional control of attention - what Gurdjieff called self-remembering - to avoid automatically falling into the appropriate identity programmed by past agreements (enforced or not) for a particular situation. Self-remembering is the ability to pause, to think, to consider the alternatives; the ability to say ‘No’ to a stimulus, when we feel ruled by an unconscious habitual pattern. The way to deal with these habits is to pause in time, before dramatization takes hold. Of course, this is asking more than most people are capable of in the heat of the moment; by self-analysis of such reactivity you can understand why they arose and erase them completely.

The insecurity stemming from the common cultural belief that the universe is hostile, that we are flawed and fragile, makes identification, as an apparent shield against change, seem tempting. But reality keeps changing - by identifying with things we set ourselves up for eventual loss. The body gets ill, ages, eventually dies. The car breaks down. Possessions wear out, or may get stolen. Memories fade. Many of the things and roles you identified with were not your choices anyway - you were cajoled and conditioned to identify with many roles, ideas, people, causes and values that may have had no interest or were counter to your essential personality, your true self-determinism. Identification is too automatic, too subconscious. Gurdjieff expressed it as the fact that any one of your many identities can sign a check; all the rest of you is obligated to pay, whether you/they like it or not. The person who has to fulfill a promise may not be the same person who made the promise.

But the main cost of identification is that a conditioned system of automatically available identities can hide you from the fact that you don’t know your real identity, the essence behind these surface manifestations. Are you really your name? Your roles? Your feelings? Your intellectual mind? Your body? I think you will agree, you are far more than anything you identify with at any one point in time.

A person in an identity state usually does not know that it does not represent the whole of himself - that is the horror of consensus trance. The usual range of identity states that we function in, ordinarily called personality, was called ‘false personality’ by Gurdjieff because the identity states were forced on us in the process of enculturation rather than by self-determined choice. The overall pattern we call consciousness is largely consensus trance, directly analogous to post-hypnotic suggestion in ordinary hypnosis: when the suggested/conditioned stimulus appears, the linked behavior, the conditioned response, the particular ‘I’ (or sub-personality) appears.

But we are not a blank state on which culture can write as it pleases with no consequences to us. We also have a unique genetic and spiritual endowment, which will
begin to manifest more as we grow, so we might dislike athletics and like walking in
the woods, for example, or find Shakespeare boring but enjoy writing letters, or find
physics pointless but be fascinated with math, or search for deeper truth despite being
ridiculed by others who believe what they’re told.

Consensus trance induction does have some powerful techniques, however. Just as we
record the Parent’s do’s and don’ts and our Child responses, childhood is inevitably a
process of shaping the behavior and consciousness of the child to be ‘normal,’ to fit
social norms. And that inevitably involved certain aspects of your essential personality
being invalidated, neglected, denied and punished until their external manifestations
were suppressed. As an adult you would act docilely and subserviently, and try to feel
that way inside. You would tell yourself that you are a good person, a normal person.
Others would tell you, you are normal, and would accept you as a friend, reinforcing
and validating your behavior. But inside, something, a part of your essence, has been
squashed - you may also have a vague feeling that something isn’t right, that even
though you should be happy, you don’t feel very happy. Some of your animation, your
essential energy, has been lost to the maintenance of consensus trance. Or you may
know that lots of things make you angry but you worry - ‘Am I normal? I’m not
supposed to feel like this’.

This sort of trance induction compares startlingly with conventional hypnosis. In an
ordinary induction, it is time limited, only an hour or two. In real life your parents and
your culture begin shaping your development from the moment of birth; it involves
years of repeated inductions and reinforcement of the effects of previous inductions.
Furthermore it’s intended to last for a lifetime - there is no cultural therapist to give you
the suggestion to wake up. Not until now at any rate.

In the cultural situation, the power relationship between Parent and Child puts a strong
forced quality on a natural consent to learn. Parents can use physical threats as needed,
and actualize them with slaps, spankings, revocations of privileges or confiscation of
toys. Since the easiest way to act in a culturally approved way is to feel that way inside,
the fear of punishment helps structure internal mental and emotional processes in
culturally approved ways. The parents may use conditional love and affection to
manipulate, as a threat or to validate conformity. As the child establishes social
relationships with other adults and children (who also act as agents of the culture) he
learns more about how he must act to be accepted. As these approved habits of acting
become established and rewarded, they further structure the habitual patterns of mental
functioning. Fear of rejection is a powerful motivator, because you have an inherent
social instinct, a desire to belong, to be normal. Nobody likes being thought bad, but we
are invalidated in so many ways that a general sense of unworthiness and guilt can
easily be built up.

Another factor that gives this process great power, is that the mental state of a young
child leaves him very open to suggestion. In our ordinary state there is an enormous
amount of automatic association of previous knowledge to incoming stimuli, but the
child does not have much other information to come instantly to mind, so the suggestions operate in a disassociated state, isolated from other mental processes - a hypnotically suggestible state.

The lack of language (which increases our ability to associate information) further contributes to the disassociated quality of the child’s mind. When we try, as adults (predominantly verbal thinkers), to understand our enculturation and conditioning, it is difficult to recall because much of it is not stored in verbal form.

Additionally, children have a deep trust in their parents on whom they are totally dependent. The parent is unconscious of the cultural trance he himself is in and simply sees himself as acting ‘naturally.’ The mental, emotional and physical habits of a lifetime are laid down while we are especially susceptible as children. They have that compulsive quality that conditioning has; it is automatic. They may include suggestions that block later change, that even block later hypnosis on that subject, for example the resistance hypnotic subjects have to immoral suggestions.

**Defense mechanisms**

The weakest moment in this conditioned state, the moment when you *could* detect that all is not as it should be, is when you switch from one identity state to another. But this is minimized, or ‘buffered,’ by the way that identities are rationalized and structured together, part of an active arrangement of false-personality, that maintains its organization in spite of change and stress. Defense mechanisms smooth out the shock that occurs when we switch from one sub-personality to another, so we don’t notice the contradictions in ourselves.

The internalized prohibitions of the culture are felt as one’s conscience or ‘Superego.’ A strong Superego can flood us with anxiety and fear for even thinking about a prohibited action, much less doing it. A defense mechanism, by making us unaware of the prohibition prevents a Superego attack; they also buffer our awareness from disappointments and threats in life. We could not maintain our consensus trance without their buffering effect.

With each surrender of an aspect of our essential self, energy is taken from essence and channeled into supporting our developing personality. Slowly we create a more and more comprehensive mask that is a socially approved presentation of ourselves, something that makes us ‘normal’. As we identify with that mask, as we forget that we are acting a role and become that role, as false personality becomes more powerful, and essence withers. We may be able to sublimate some aspects of our essential nature that are not allowed direct expression, to salvage them. A few may persist because our culture happens to value them. For many aspects of our essence, their energy is lost, absorbed in maintaining the false personality, the mask. This denial can destroy our lives, as the essence is the vital part of us, the truly living spark of spirit. As false-personality eventually uses up our vital energy, the light fades and life is a mechanical, automated set of habits, lifelessly moving us along with crowds of other lifeless,
automates victims, further reinforcing our depression and emptiness. Gurdjieff put it quite harshly, stating that many of the people you see walking down the street are ‘dead’ - that they have no real hope or even wish for change.

To really change, false-personality must die. This should be a transformation process, a skilled process based on the knowledge gained through extensive self-observation. Gradually the real ‘I,’ the essence, can grow and begin to use the resources, knowledge and power now automatically used by false-personality, from a higher level of consciousness. The magnitude of change possible (and necessary) for full awakening is indeed like death and rebirth.

Jung stated that the unconscious mind, the mind of our primitive forbears, makes itself felt through dreams, moods, accidents and illness. Since we interact as beings, there is a ‘group unconscious mind’ as well, with its own reactive emotional responses. Jung felt that any group naturally evokes a creative energy that sweeps people along unconsciously. Only through an individuation process in which a person becomes conscious of the myths and the archetypes expressed through him (the cultural personality or behavioral stereotypes which we unconsciously deify - such as ourselves, parents, symbols of reason, science, sexuality, our ancestors, Jesus, and so on) can such a person approach a level of real sanity - for the culture is pathological and ‘normality’ is not sanity. To differentiate ourselves from all the collective factors with which we identify and which are contained in the collective unconscious (transmitted genetically, by cultural programming and perhaps by group telepathy or psychic connection) is not to discard such factors but to become less driven by unconscious forces.

Experience and feelings that can be confronted and handled in the mind can then be resolved in the environment; however problematical that may become in practice; the problem is a challenge of life, and overcoming survival challenges is life’s pleasure. It is when overwhelming experiences and feelings empower unconscious, habitual and unexamined reactive thinking or limiting beliefs, that a person’s freedom and effectiveness is encumbered, and life holds few pleasures.

For cognitive growth to occur, a child must orient himself to novelty and respond to it with exploration. So long as the child operates within the protective environment provided by mother, anxiety is low and learning can proceed. But if the child’s exploration arouses maternal rejection or punishment, anxiety is aroused in a strong form, because the child is dependent on mother and fears desertion. The child can resolve this dilemma only through compromise: he voluntarily restricts his activities within the boundaries acceptable to the mother. He avoids, denies or suppresses the emotional responses which, although natural reactions to frustration, are unacceptable to mother. This creates a social environment to which he is adapted and within which he can feel at ease with himself.

These patterns of responding are not forgotten; they remain as unclear memories that are not incorporated cognitively into the rules by which a person explains himself - in
other words, they are unconscious. But they still take effect. Fear hurts; as an experience it is normally avoided. So, with no clear understanding as to why, a person comes to shy away from certain kinds of social experience that sufficiently resemble the original circumstances that created anxiety as an infant. The original fears are re-stimulated and the safe solutions that the child adopted are re-enacted.

The ‘unconscious’, then, refers to those memories that were once attended to so vividly that they cannot be erased but which, because of the fear with which they were associated, triggered so much avoidance that they failed to be incorporated in the cognitive rules that construct the understanding of the self. Indeed the interpretive brain is not fully formed when the infant experiences its early trauma; these experiences are thus laid down in the ‘old brain’, the primitive (in evolutionary terms) but powerful and very fast-acting limbic system which has major influences on emotional response.

In later life, defense is not so much against the ancient memories as such, for they are in any case barely available without extensive psychological work; rather it consists in a failure to process information which tends to arouse anxiety and for which no rules of incorporation have been established. The person either has blind spots and tunnel vision that cuts off unacceptable views, or the information is distorted to an acceptable form.

It thus comes about that personality types unconsciously seek to create for themselves social environments that do not arouse in them the fears of the primal experience. These processes are inevitable characteristics of being human, the evolved basis upon which the diversity of human personality types rests.

Jung suggested that the repressed material as revealed in dreams, fantasies, and evocative folk legends and tales, is far from arbitrary; rather it tends to be patterned in a highly thematic way. Jung’s intuition may be based on a universal responsiveness found in human affairs; each of us has a mother, a father, attempts to be a hero, seeks the wise man, and other such ‘archetypes’.

These considerations suggest that most adult human beings actually comprehend few of their sources of action and impulse and are often far from knowing consciously what they are about. What we profess to know is usually a rationalization of what has impelled or directed us from within. This includes sources such as innate bio-survival impulses for sexual proliferation and territorial dominance, though these may be suppressed for social acceptability; archetypal themes that pattern unconscious expression drawn from bedrock structures of human family and society, as well as cultural conditioning where ways of being are learned and acquired by identification; frustrating and traumatic experiences in infancy patterning our social boundaries; decisions made as a consequence of traumatic experiences in later life, that are carried over to act in the present, even though the original associated trauma is suppressed from memory and may be empowered by the infancy trauma.

The normal human personality is rife with unconscious or semi-conscious conflicts and limitations, resulting in unhappiness, upsets and depression, and an inhibition of
potential self-realization. Healing is not just about alleviating symptoms, it is about discovering the cause of a problem, which ultimately comes down to the individual assuming responsibility for his decisions and choices in the present time. We need to expose the blind spots and distortions and to re-evaluate our present environment newly and objectively. It’s never too late to change the early programming that was imprinted in childhood or even in our genes or carried over from previous existences. The life scripts based on which we act out our lives can be replaced with new world views that are empowering rather than self-defeating, based on our adult reason rather than childish fear, greed and envy.

Question everything you think. Is it a false assumption? An over-generalization? Is it copying someone else you like or admire? Do you think that way because you need to? Because you fear not to? Do you prevent yourself from thinking something because you are afraid to, because of consequences that you fear? Is it to get another’s approval? To gain admiration? To escape domination? To make yourself right? To make another wrong? To punish yourself, because you deserve it? To please or appease another? Because your parents or friends say so? Because it’s on TV or in a book? Because God says so? Because you’d like it to be so or wish it were so? Because you know it isn’t so but the lie is useful? Because you have to? Because it’s the way you feel? Because it’s convenient? Because it helps you to fit in? Because they deserve it?

By being totally objective and reality-based in our thinking, we move out of the left-brain mode of rationalized thought, with its potential for lies and fabrication, towards a new mode of thought that integrates fully with the right brain and its quality of honesty (the right brain cannot lie!) and intuitive truthfulness.

**Fear - attachment to time**

All fear is, in essence, fear of the future. We are afraid of the things that have not yet happened, but which if they did might bring us pain, suffering or some other discomfort - or stand in the way of some future contentment. And we are afraid that circumstances that are already causing us displeasure may continue in the future.

We may fear losing our jobs and the resulting drop in living standards. We may fear failure for the disapproval it might bring. We may fear having nothing to do because we might get bored. We may fear telling the truth because others may not like us for it. We fear the unknown for the dangers it may bring. We fear uncertainty, not knowing whether or not we will find what we are after. Here lies a sad irony. We want to be happy and at peace with ourselves. Yet the very nature of fear makes us anxious in the present and not at peace.

Many of our fears are not so strong that we would label them as fears. They may be just concerns, little niggles we have about how things may turn out. They may not even be conscious concerns - in many cases they surface only in our dreams, in conversation with a friend, or after a couple of drinks. Nevertheless they fill our minds with thoughts.
This is the voice within our heads that comments, often critically, on everything we do. It thinks, ‘I did that well, people will approve of me,’ or ‘If only I had said it differently she would not have got upset.’ It is the voice that speculates on the future, ‘Should I make that telephone call... what if...?’ It wonders what other people are thinking and how they will react. It is the voice of fear, the voice of the Ego-mind - the part of us that believes that only through what happens to us in the world around can we be at peace within. But filling our minds with worry over what people might or might not think, is not the most constructive use we can make of our imagination.

This internal dialogue keeps us trapped in time - it dwells on the past or the future. As long as our attention is in the past or future, we are not experiencing things as they are, we are seeing them through the judgments of the past and our fears for the future. At times we can be so caught up in our self-talk that we do not even notice the present. We ignore what is going on around us, do not really hear what people are saying, do not appreciate how we really feel. So engrossed are we in our concerns that we never seem to pause to let things be. We have lost the present moment - lost the NOW.

This moment is all that exists. This fleeting instant is the only reality. The past is gone forever. The future is not yet born.

Your body is in the NOW. But if you’re like most people, your mind is in the past or in the future. You grieve or glory over events of long ago. You harbor resentments and guilt and shame - hangovers from the past. You think of what you should have said or might have been. You fear and fantasies over the future, you worry about every moment of wasted time. You worry about death, not having enough time to achieve your ambitions, the end of your Ego. All of which cuts you off from the present like a dark screen.

If you bring the mind from miles away to the activity of the moment, if you abate the clatter in your head to focus on the physical reality surrounding your body, and the sensations from within it, you’ll gradually experience a surprising sense of well-being. Indeed, tuning in to the NOW is one gateway to perceiving eternity. The philosopher Wittgenstein observed: ‘If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, the eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.’ By experiencing a moment for itself, you stop time. Time is defined as the interval between two events. When you are in the NOW there is no interval, only the event alone.

The concept of the NOW has great validity when dealing with emotions and the senses. NOW is a point at which you are in touch with the ongoing process. Of course, we need to benefit from our knowledge and experience acquired in the past, and we need to predict and plan for the future, but past and future take their bearings continuously from the present and must be related to it. Without reference to the present reality they become meaningless.
Stress - the cost of fear

As far as the body is concerned, fear is a danger signal - it responds with an automatic reaction called the ‘fight-flight response.’ The heart rate quickens, blood pressure rises, breathing is disturbed, muscles become tense, the skin begins to sweat, while digestion, reproduction and other processes that will not be needed for the moment are turned down. The body is preparing for action - to flee or to fight.

In contemporary society such threats are few and far between. Our mastery of the world has enabled us to avoid or guard against most such dangers. But this does not mean that we are free from threat; human beings have created a whole new set of things to worry about. Our need to feel in control may be threatened by imposed workloads, tight deadlines, crowded schedules. We may feel threatened by traffic jams, delayed flights, incompetent staff, unexpected demands and anything else that might cost us time. Our need for self-esteem, recognition and approval can be threatened by the fear of failure, the fear of looking foolish in front of others, fear of criticism and the fear of being rejected. Uncertainty or anything else that makes us feel insecure can likewise be perceived as a threat.

Such threats are unique to humans; we can imagine - and thus worry about - things that a cat or dog could not possibly conceive of. The trouble is, our biological evolution has not caught up with our mental evolution. Our bodies respond to these psychological threats just as they would to any physical threat. So we find our hearts thumping, our palms sweating and our muscles tightening because of some danger that we perceive within our minds - because someone criticizes us, because we have to speak in a group, or because we may be late for a meeting.

Usually these turn out to be a false alarm, but the body cannot unwind and recover so quickly to a state of ease, as the second it took to jump to alert. The body seldom has time to recover from one alarm before the next one has triggered. Before long our bodies end up in a permanent state of underlying tension. This background tension then feeds back and begins to affect our thinking, emotions and behavior. Our judgment deteriorates, we tend to make more mistakes, we may feel depressed, hostile towards others, act less rationally, and so on. The toll on our bodies manifests in various ways: aches and pains, indigestion, insomnia, high blood pressure, allergies, illness - sometimes leading to premature death.

Rational thinking

Because we are caught in the belief that our inner state is at the mercy of external events, we usually try to manage stress by managing the world, to reduce the circumstances that we think are the cause of our stress. But this overlooks the crucial role that the mind plays in most stress reactions. In most cases it is not the situation itself that causes the stress but the way in which we perceive the situation. If I see the situation as a threat to what I want, to my sense of identity, to my expectations of the
way things should be, then I may well make myself upset.

The fact that it is our *perception* of events that triggers our reactions suggests that we can have far more influence over our responses than we normally realize. By taking responsibility for our own inner processes we can put ourselves back in control, and so have a choice as to whether we upset ourselves over things that happen.

That does not mean that we should sit back and let the world walk over us. There may be many things we can do that will relieve the pressure we are under. What we do not want to do is make ourselves upset and possibly ill in the process. In fact we will probably respond with more insight, clear-headedness, better poise and more effectiveness, if our minds are not hampered by a response more appropriate to our evolutionary past. As you learn to work with yourself in this way, you are learning to deal with the source of all fear - the voice in your head that judges and interprets what it sees - and to leave the Ego-mind behind.

The mind is full of loose words, isolated phrases, comments, complaints. An inner chatterbox is perpetually lecturing, justifying, haranguing. There are unending rehearsals, recriminations, fantasy arguments, even puns and quips. Because of the general left-brain dominance, this malady is prevalent - many people tend to intellectualize or ‘rationalize’ their feelings, and to that extent are split off from themselves or ‘schizophrenic.’ Such a person avoids contact with emotions and non-verbal reality. He is isolated from the rest of his personality and is contemptuous of his body. The words flooding from his mind thus wash-out direct contact with the moment.

Since open, direct feeling terrifies most people, they may erect walls of words as a barrier to emotion. Much neurotic behavior is based on the desperate wish to avoid emotional pain. Concentrating on the pain, locating where it effects you, recalling past experiences associated with it, learning from the gut (rather than the head) what you are feeling, will allow the real truth to emerge - the irrational beliefs and evaluations which *underlie* the bad feelings.

An event is interpreted, judged and labeled in such a way that a particular emotional response is inevitable. You are constantly describing the world to yourself, giving each event or experience some label. You make interpretations of what you see or hear, you judge events as good or bad, painful or pleasurable, you predict whether they will bring danger or relative safety. Since childhood people have been telling you what to think. You have been conditioned by family, friends and the media to interpret events in certain ways.

These labels and judgments are fashioned from the unending dialogue you have with yourself, and color all your experience with private meanings. The thoughts are constant and rarely noticed, since they are without prior reflection of reasoning, but they are powerful enough to stimulate your most intense emotions. Such ‘self-talk’ is often composed of just a few essential words or a brief visual image, acting as a label for a collection of painful memories, fears or self-reproaches. They would be seen as
unrealistic, exaggerated and over-generalized if reviewed objectively, but in practice they appear automatically in response to stimuli. They just pop into the mind and are believed without being questioned or challenged, nor are their implications and conclusions subjected to logical analysis.

Automatic thoughts are often couched in terms of ‘should,’ ‘ought’ or ‘must’ and their negatives. Each iron-clad ‘should’ precipitates a sense of guilt, or loss of self-esteem. Also automatic thoughts tend to be pessimistic, always expecting the worst and are the major source of anxiety. Because they are reflexive and plausible, automatic thoughts weave unnoticed through the fabric of your own (conscious) thinking. They seem to come and go with a will of their own and they also tend to act as cues for each other - one depressing thought triggering a chain of associated thoughts reinforcing the depression. To consider something is awful, is to attach a self-created traumatic tag to what is in reality simply what is there.

Preoccupation or obsession with one type of thought causes tunnel vision, in which only those aspects of existence that support that way of thinking are recognized. The result is one predominant and usually quite painful emotion, such as chronic anger, anxiety or depression. Tunnel vision is the foundation of neurosis and is the opposite of awareness.

Increasing awareness, requires noticing and questioning automatic thoughts, particularly those that are causing continued painful feelings. Regard your thoughts as a slow-motion film. Look at your internal dialogue frame by frame - notice the millisecond it takes to say ‘I can’t stand it,’ or the half-second image of a terrifying event. Notice if you are internally describing and interpreting the actions of others: ‘She’s bored ... He’s putting me down.’

**Combating distortions**

The best clue that you are using a distorted thinking style is the presence of negative emotions, such as feeling nervous, fed-up, frustrated or irritated. You feel disgusted with yourself; you play certain worries over and over like a broken record. You notice conflicts arising with friends or family. It is time to focus on what you are thinking.

Faulty logic is at the root of many thinking errors and a great deal of human pain. Human beings operate on all sorts of hidden beliefs that become rules (major premises) against which experiences are weighed and upon which conclusions are based. If the premise is in error, then a false conclusion will result. For example the belief that ‘All criticism is meant to hurt’ is an over-generalization. When the person with this belief is criticized he assumes the critic is trying to hurt him, when the criticism may have been helpful. Other such beliefs may be: ‘Mistakes are intolerable,’ ‘If I’m rejected, I’ll be ruined,’ ‘People can’t be trusted,’ and of course there are thousands more.

Most people believe in cherished rules like this, but they result in misinterpretations, poor decision-making, lowered self-esteem and stressful emotions. They were usually
originally made at the end of a traumatic experience when they seemed to make sense, to be safe solutions to the survival-threatening situation. The decision is repressed along with the memory of the event, but it resurfaces in automatic thinking. In other situations of course, it doesn’t make much sense.

To begin combating your distortions, you should recall a time when you were experiencing a painful emotion or were in the middle of some interpersonal conflict. Firstly, identify the emotion you felt. Secondly, describe the situation. Consider: ‘What do I believe to be true about situations like this?’ What did you think about during the event? Thirdly, identify the fallacy or distortion in the thinking. Finally, restructure your belief to take account of the uncovered distortion. The following section will help you identify the sort of distortions and irrationalities that can so easily cause painful emotion.

16 types of distorted thinking

1. Tunnel vision

Example: ‘I expect it’ll be another boring party.’ It is being stuck in a mental groove. In particular you look for that which confirms your fear or prejudice, remember it from the past and expect it in the future. You ignore other points of view or the possibility of alternative solutions.

2. Awfulizing

Example: ‘I can’t bear going on these awful buses.’ This attitude is saying that it’s unacceptable if things aren’t as you would prefer them to be. You take the negative aspect of a situation and magnify it. To handle this, recognize when you use words like terrible, awful, disgusting, etc. and in particular the phrase ‘I can’t stand it.’ Examine their rationality.

3. Black & White Thinking

Example: ‘You’re either for me or against me.’ Things are black or white, wonderful or terrible, a great success or a total failure, brilliantly clever or really stupid, a certainty or a complete mystery, friend or enemy, love or hate - there is no middle ground, no room for improvement, no room for mistakes. Judgments on self and others swing from one emotional extreme to another and are easily triggered. It is important to remember that human beings are just too complex to be reduced to dichotomous judgments, and that all qualities fall somewhere along a continuum, containing elements of either extreme.

4. Generalization

Example: ‘I’ll never be any good at tennis’ after one poor game. In this distortion you make a broad, generalized conclusion, often couched in the form of absolute statements, based on a single piece of evidence. If something bad happens once, you
expect it to happen over and over again. If someone shows evidence of a negative trait, this is picked up on and exaggerated into a global judgment. This inevitably leads to a more and more restricted life and your view of the world becomes stereotyped. Cue words that indicate you may be over-generalizing are: all, every, none, never, always, everybody and nobody. To become more flexible use words such as: may, sometimes and often, and be particularly sensitive to absolute statements about the future, such as ‘No one will ever love me,’ because they may become self-fulfilling prophecies.

5. Assumption
Example: ‘Nothing can change the way I feel.’ Making an assumption, presupposes knowledge that you do not have. Assumptions are often popular beliefs that have been adopted without examining their basis in fact, such as ‘I’m over the hill now that I’m forty.’ Making decisions based on assumptions may lead to disaster, as when an executive assumes that a new product will sell well, having made no market research. Often, taking things for granted causes people to be blind to possible solutions - assuming no-one can help them, a couple’s marriage may go on the rocks, when they could seek counseling. Question: what leads you to believe this? Why do it this way? Who says? What alternatives are there? What would happen if you did? What would happen if you didn’t?

As a practical matter, all of us must proceed with the business of living by relying on ‘maps’ of the world which we have taken on trust and which we have not tested and often cannot test. To supplement personal experience, we absorb a constant stream of reports, descriptions, judgments, inferences and assumptions coming from a multitude of sources. From this abundance of stored information, you piece together a mental ‘model’ of the world and its workings that literally becomes your worldview. However, people do vary considerably in the extent of their misinformation and in the degree to which they actively seek out new information, take opportunities to correct or update their mental models, and expose themselves to new experiences.

6. Projection
Example: ‘I know he doesn’t like me.’ Making false assumptions about what other people think depends on a process called projection. It is like mind reading - putting words into peoples’ mouths. You imagine that people feel the same way you do and react to things the same way. If you get angry when someone is late, you assume that another will feel the same way about you or others, in that situation. If you don’t like yourself, you assume others also think that way. The answer is not to jump to conclusions about what other people think and feel.

7. Negative thinking
Example: ‘We haven’t seen each other for two days - I think the relationship is falling apart.’ You read a newspaper article about some misfortune and wonder if that could
happen to you. Predicting negative consequences is a defense, to protect oneself from disappointment by expecting the worst. Consider, what are the realistic odds of that happening?

8. Self-consciousness

Example: ‘Quite a few people here seem smarter than I am.’ This is the introverted tendency to relate everything around you to yourself, to think people must be judging you, or to think that everything they do or say is a reaction to something about you. It is the habit of continually comparing yourself to other people, based on the underlying assumption is that your worth is questionable. You are therefore continually forced to test your value as a person by measuring yourself against others. If you come out better you have a moment’s relief; if you come up short, you feel diminished. Your worth doesn’t depend on being better than others, so why start the comparison gamble?

9. Blame

Example: ‘It’s your fault we’re in debt.’ If you see yourself as externally controlled, you see yourself as helpless, a victim of fate or ‘the system.’ You don’t believe you can really affect the basic shape of your life, let alone make any difference in the world, so you try and manipulate others to take care of your interests. Someone else is to blame and is responsible for your pain, your loss, your failure. The truth is that we are constantly making decisions and every decision affects and steers our lives. It is your responsibility to assert your needs, to say no or go elsewhere for what you want. In some way we are responsible for nearly everything that happens to us, including our distress and unhappiness. Taking responsibility means accepting the consequences of your own choices. Ask yourself: ‘What choices have I made that resulted in this situation? What decisions can I now make to change it?’

The opposite distortion is also very common - the fallacy that makes you responsible for the pain or happiness of everyone around you. You carry the world on your shoulders. You have to right all wrongs, fill every need and balm each hurt; if you don’t you feel guilty and turn the blame on yourself. Blaming yourself means labeling yourself inadequate if things go wrong. With this viewpoint you are very easily manipulated. The key to overcoming this fallacy is to recognize that each person is responsible for himself - taking responsibility doesn’t imply that you are also responsible for what happens to others. Remember, part of respecting others includes respecting their ability to overcome or accept their own pains, make their own decisions and be in control of their own lives.

10. Unfairness

Example: ‘It’s not fair, he should take me out more often.’ The consideration of unfairness results from resentment that the other person does not want or prefer the same as you, or that events do not turn out in your favor. The person gets locked into
his or her own point of view, with a feeling of ever-growing resentment. Be honest with
yourself and the other person. Say what you want or prefer, without getting involved in
the fallacy of unfairness: that people and situations shouldn’t be the way they are.

11. Emotional reasoning

Example: ‘I feel depressed, life must be pointless.’ You believe that what you feel must
be true - automatically. If you feel stupid then you must lack intelligence. If you feel
guilty then you must have done something wrong. If you feel angry, someone must
have taken advantage of you. However, there is nothing automatically true about what
you feel - your feelings can lie to you, they can be based on misconceptions. If your
feelings are based on distorted thoughts, then they won’t have any validity. So be
skeptical about your feelings and examine them as you would a used car.

12. Manipulation

Example: ‘If we had sex more often, I’d be more affectionate.’ The only person you can
really control or have much hope of changing is yourself. When you pressure people to
change, you are forcing them to be different for your own benefit. Strategies for
manipulating others include blaming, demanding, withholding and trading - in order to
make the other feel obliged. The usual result is that the other person feels attacked or
pushed around and resists changing at all, or feels resentful if they do. The underlying
fallacy of this thinking style is that your happiness depends on controlling the behavior
of others. In fact your happiness depends on the many thousands of large and small
decisions you make during your life.

13. Shoulds

Example: ‘You should never ask people personal questions.’ In this distortion, you
operate from a list of inflexible rules about how you and other people should act. The
rules are right and indisputable. Any particular deviation from your particular values or
standards is bad. As a result you are often in the position of judging and finding fault.
People irritate you, they don’t act properly or think correctly. They have unacceptable
traits, habits and opinions that make them hard to tolerate. They should know the rules
and they should follow them. Of course, the answer is to focus on each person’s
uniqueness: his or her particular needs, limitations, fears and pleasures, and
consequently different values. Personal values are just that - personal.

You are also making yourself suffer with shoulds, oughts and musts (or their negatives).
You feel compelled to do something or be a certain way and feel guilty if you don’t, but
you never bother to ask objectively if it really makes sense. Some people beat
themselves up constantly for being incompetent, insensitive, stupid, too emotional, etc.
They are always ready to be wrong. The psychiatrist Karen Horney called this the
‘tyranny of the shoulds.’
14. Got to be right

Example: ‘I’ve been doing this longer than you, so I know what I’m talking about.’ In this distortion you are usually on the defensive, needing to prove to yourself and others that your views, assumptions and actions are all correct. You never make mistakes! If you’ve got to be right, you don’t listen. You can’t afford to - listening might reveal that you are wrong sometimes. Your opinions rarely change because if the facts don’t fit what you already believe you ignore them. This makes you lonely, because being right seems more important than an honest, caring relationship.

The key to overcoming being right, is active listening - making sure you really understand what’s been said to you, to appreciate the other’s point of view and what you can learn from it, which is effort better spent than in devising rebuttals and attacks. Remember that other people believe what they are saying as strongly as you do, and there is not always just the one right answer.

15. Heaven’s reward

Example: ‘I worked and raised these kids and look what thanks I get.’ This distorted thinking style accepts pain and unhappiness because ‘those who do good are rewarded in the end.’ You expect all your sacrifice and self-denial to pay off, as if there was someone keeping score. You feel hostile and bitter when the reward doesn’t come. In reality the reward is now. Your relationship, your progress toward your goals, and the care you give to those you love, should be intrinsically rewarding. If not, you need to rearrange your activities to provide some here-and-now reward, dropping or sharing the activities that chronically drain you - Heaven is a long way off and you can get very tired waiting.

16. Rose Tinted Spectacles

Example: ‘If I intend everything to go well then I’m sure it will.’ Often this is the product of wishing rather than genuine willing, which is backed up by actions. In a certain way, one is out of touch with reality. The extreme form of this distortion is found in mania. Here we are concerned with lesser phenomenon: overconfidence, no planning for failure (no plan B or Z), over-elation, self-esteem not based on competence, heedlessness of danger and many others. With wisdom comes a measure of caution, based on experience.

The best way to practice identifying Thought Distortions in everyday life, is to take particular notice of one of the distortions for one day, and notice whenever it is used - by others or by yourself!

Frequently, several Distortions are combined in a statement, or a statement fits into several categories of Distortion. These are commonly Rationalizations - i.e. seemingly plausible explanations, excuses or justifications, which in fact are ignoring or fudging the real issue. For example. ‘I don’t need to work hard on this job because no one else
will,’ is an assumption, a generalization, negative thinking, tunnel vision, projection, and so on.

**Misconceptions**

Misconceptions about the self may drastically and unrealistically limit the kinds of behavior an individual is willing to engage in, or they may relentlessly force him into unwise behavior that leads him to perpetual defeat. The misconceptions of most people are corrected by experience, whereas those of neurotic people are impervious to correction by training, experience, or reasoning by others. This is because when misconceptions have been avoided, repressed or denied, they are often kept inaccessible to correction by still other misconceptions, which can be termed ‘defensive.’ The defensive misconceptions prevent the individual from recognizing the more threatening and uncomfortable misconceptions. Thus, misconceptions tend to be grouped in clusters.

Misconceptions in *depressive* neurosis include:

- I am, have been, and always will be hopeless (or helpless, or worthless).
- I never will recover.
- Nothing is worthwhile
- No one cares about me
- I am unable to engage in normal activities.
- I am so guilty and hopeless that suicide is the only solution.

*Obsessive* persons show many of the following misconceptions:

- I always must be punctual, orderly, conscientious and reliable.
- I cannot tolerate dirt and germs.
- I must control everything and everyone, including myself.
- Details are vitally important.
- I cannot really trust anyone.
- Being right is more important than anything else.

Hysterical personalities manifest such misconceptions as the following, along with acute anxiety and depression:

- I am effective when I am flirtatious, seductive, vivacious, dramatic.
- I cannot tolerate frustration and disappointment.
- By acting helpless and dependent, I can achieve my goals.
- I am a victim and not responsible for my problems.
• I deserve more attention and help from others.

Individuals with phobic reactions show three clustered misconceptions:

• The feared object is dangerous.
• I probably will collapse when the feared object is present.
• I cannot eliminate my fear reaction to the object.

Phrenophobia is the false belief, and associated fear, that there is something wrong with one’s mind that may result in ‘insanity.’ This belief, although widespread, is often denied or concealed by misleading euphemisms such as ‘nervous breakdown.’ A cluster of five misconceptions is usually present. All are misinterpretation of anxiety symptoms resulting from sustained tension and stress.

• My feelings of anxiety point to approaching insanity.
• My memory failures or distortions are signs of mental breakdown.
• My difficulties in concentration indicate mental disorder.
• My irritability signals mental disturbance.
• If these symptoms do not lead to psychosis, my insomnia will.

Exaggerated self-importance has various names - superiority complex, arrogance, vanity, conceit, egotism, and many others - and is based on special-person misconceptions. The individual is constantly engaged in attempts to have others acknowledge his or her superiority, which if threatened, is defended vigorously. If the defense is unsuccessful, anxiety and depression result. The following six false beliefs are manifested by most:

• I must control others.
• I am superior to others.
• I should not compromise.
• I suffer from more frustrations than do others.
• I must strive to be perfect.
• Others cannot be trusted.

The special person’s constant efforts to control, his attitudes of superiority, his refusal to compromise, his masked hostilities, and his empty perfectionism betray the highly competitive person who must have his own way and must be right at all costs. The failure to trust others is manifested by suspiciousness that may verge on the paranoid. Other characteristics of the ‘special person’ are a highly critical attitude towards others, little empathy with others, lack of insight about the self, and self-righteousness.

Over-indulgence in childhood may be the cause, although other sources may include early identification with an illustrious or dominating parent or with fantasized heroes.
Such people often become flawed leaders, who have problems with their families and intimates.

**The reactive response**

The opposite of being response-able is to be ‘reactive’ - in this case one’s response is not conscious and self-aware, it is mechanical, like the trigger of a gun. Rather than being objective in the present, one is subjectively in the past. A situation reminds you of the past and there you go. The thoughts that go through your mind - thoughts from the past - trigger an unpleasant or self-defeating emotional reaction, and result in behavior that is not in your best interest. In other words it is your beliefs and your perspective on things that determine your emotions, which then drive your resulting behavior.

These thoughts derive from times when they seemed like the best solution to trying circumstances, and they may be an agreement with a dominant, authoritative or persuasive force, or derive from the conclusion to an episode in your life of success or failure. If the original circumstances were unpleasant and become painful to think about, the accompanying thoughts, decisions and purposes become suppressed too, but continue to operate subconsciously.

When brought to light, it is apparent that the thoughts are affecting current life unnecessarily, as they are usually an over-generalization, an exaggeration, a negativity or an intolerance that is irrational. To become responsible again rather than reactive, one needs to become aware of these thoughts and examine them objectively. And to be conscious of the present moment, and so act (rather than react) as circumstances change.

The route to the underlying thoughts and beliefs is to recognize the situation or circumstance that triggers unwanted feelings and subsequent behavior, then see what thoughts are driving that reaction. Most often these are fleeting and subconscious, since they are associated with painful experiences or because they have long been installed in the mind as seemingly safe solutions to the situations of life and have therefore become taken for granted - ‘built in’ as part of one’s identity. Normally you can’t see what you are being - first you need to fully experience, accept and release the emotion.

Finding the underlying thought pattern is crucial to resolving the reactivity, and when it is seen in the light of an objective view this is a great relief, because the past decision - and the beliefs surrounding it - can normally be changed quite readily. It may mean finding a new solution to the problem that it has been ‘solving’ in the mind, but the clearer view makes this possible.

If the previous solution is used to make one feel right (or justified if connected with bad actions) and/or to make others wrong defensively or manipulatively, then some courage is needed to adopt the new, more rational view. If you have done something wrong in
the past, it is best to be thankful you made that mistake, because it gives you the opportunity now to learn a valuable lesson.

These principles are common to much of humanistic psychology, and are also the basis for further transpersonal work. To recap, the way it works is this:

The person has a traumatic experience, of pain or loss.

As a result of the experience, s/he makes a decision or intention for the future, such as ‘men are selfish bastards, I can’t trust them’ which becomes part of their belief system.

Because the incident was painful it is suppressed, and the accompanying decision is identified with, but both remain in the mind and continue to have influence.

When the incident is reactivated by similar circumstances in the present, the old decision is subconsciously replayed. The tape replays subconsciously.

The decision may have been relevant and appropriate to the original circumstances but it is probably not appropriate now - it is therefore irrational and somewhat stupid, i.e. it may contain an assumption or generalization that causes intolerance or negativity.

The current situation is interpreted according to the reactivated beliefs and considerations, and so the person creates unpleasant emotions (sadness, fear, antagonism, anger, etc), which then drive him or her to behave in an inappropriate and self-defeating way; rather than the appropriate and self-empowering way that a rational and objective interpretation would encourage.

**Rational Emotive Therapy**

Beliefs are conclusions that are reached as a result of past learning, whether this is directly from personal experience or indirectly assimilated through peer and parental pressures to conform to a ‘normal’ way of thinking (for that culture).

Having perceived a situation in a certain way, i.e. having picked on an aspect of it that he considers most significant, the individual will then make an evaluation, according to his beliefs, about how he relates to that aspect of the situation. He will (perhaps semi-consciously) say a sentence to himself, based on an underlying assumption or belief. This belief may be rational, i.e. based on reality and what exists and is logical, or it may be irrational, based on delusion, prejudice and ideas that are fixed and not open to inspection.

For example a person is nearly knocked over by a bus, and he infers that the driver was going too fast, and then believes rationally that the driver, like anyone else, is a fallible human being and he had better make more allowance for poor driving in future, when crossing the road. Alternatively, he may respond irrationally and say to himself that it is absolutely terrible that the driver should do such a thing, and if he could get hold of the driver he would shoot him. This is a greatly exaggerated evaluation based on an
underlying irrational belief that the driver’s behavior was impossible to tolerate.

The procedure of Rational Emotive Therapy, the work of Albert Ellis, is very powerful to help resolve problematic issues that are the result of self-defeating behaviors and the inappropriate emotions and distorted thinking that underlies them. When a problem presents itself - an issue that obstructs being able to live one’s life with ease and contentment - the first step is to assess the emotions associated with the behavior. The emotions to be looked for are painful ones such as anxiety, damning anger, guilt, shame, depression and jealousy. Alongside such emotions there is likely to be self-defeating behavior as negative emotions have a destructive effect.

Then assess the activating event, or inference about the situation, that triggers off the response - what specifically one is disturbed about in the example of the problem that is being examined, both objectively (the key practical aspect of the situation) and subjectively (what was inferred about this aspect, how it was interpreted in his own mind).

Different emotions are evoked by different interpretations of an event. Interpretations that involve distortions of reality, i.e. distorted thinking, give rise to inappropriate or exaggerated emotions.

A difficult or traumatic situation may not be viewed as clearly by the person under stress, as it would be by somebody not in that situation, who can view it objectively. The person under stress is likely to be reminded, at least subconsciously, of previous, somewhat similar traumatic situations, and may therefore view the reality of the situation through a filter of prejudice or fear and make all sorts of inferences that would not bear scrutiny to the objective viewer.

For example, the person who was nearly knocked over by a bus may have made a rational inference that the driver was going too fast, since he would normally have had time to cross safely. Or he may have inferred that the driver was going too fast to excuse his own carelessness. Then again, he may infer that the bus was deliberately trying to run him down. The interpretation of a singular event may then differ for each individual observer according to their belief systems. A joke told at a party for instance, may provoke embarrassment or offence to one person but send another into fits of laughter.

One inference may lead on to another. For example the rejection of an approach to a potential girlfriend may infer in the man’s mind that he is not adequately good looking or interesting as a person. This may provoke further anxiety, if he generalizes the interpretation, in that he may then feel that he will never get a girlfriend who is attractive. Furthermore this makes him anxious because he worries what his male colleagues will think of him, and he may be afraid that his career will suffer. A chain of such inferences may stem from the actual situation in reality. But only one of these will be the main provocation, from the person’s point of view, that has triggered off a fixed belief and caused an irrational evaluation and the inevitable inappropriate emotion and
self-defeating behavioral response. So this must be assessed and handled first.

**Secondary emotional disturbance**

The painful emotional response that one feels, when faced with a problem about which there is an underlying irrational belief, may be enough of a problem in itself that it triggers a further, secondary emotional disturbance. For example, one may feel embarrassed about having become angry and ‘blowing your top.’ This may well need looking at first, as until it is out of the way, your attention may be stuck on this response and prevent you from contacting and understanding the feelings of anger.

Alternatively the secondary emotional disturbance may become apparent when the primary one has been dealt with, and you denigrate yourself for the original response, or for responding again in that way after you know it is irrational.

**Irrational beliefs**

The next step in the Rational Emotive approach is to assess the irrational beliefs that you are holding, which support the emotions that result. Maladjustment occurs when unrealistic and absolute rules are applied inappropriately and arbitrarily. Rational Emotive Therapy attempts to substitute more realistic and adaptive rules.

Self-imposed rules seem to focus on danger versus safety and on pain versus pleasure. Dangers and risks involved in common situations are overestimated. Psychosocial dangers are the source of most problems - fears of humiliation, criticism, rejection and so on. Attitudes that predispose people to excessive sadness or depression include the following:

‘In order to be happy, I must be successful, accepted, popular, famous, wealthy, and so on. If I make a mistake, I am incompetent. I cannot live without love. When people disagree with me, they do not like me. These beliefs are framed as absolutes or extremes and cannot be satisfied.’

Usually there will be a demand (should, must, ought) from which the belief is derived. The question is asked, ‘What are you telling yourself to make you feel and behave (as resulted)’? Examining the reasons for the belief, one should spot any ‘musts’ and ‘shoulds,’ and exaggerated views such as ‘it’s awful,’ signs of low frustration tolerance such as ‘I can’t stand it any more,’ and damning generalizations about self or others.

Having recognized this irrational belief explicitly and perceived the connection with your emotional and behavioral response, the next step is to dispute the rationality of the belief: to understand that it is getting you nowhere and that it is illogical, unrealistic and does not stand up to rational inspection. If this is unclear, try to demonstrate to yourself that the belief is logical, realistic and helpful, so you can see for yourself that actually it is not. You may consider, what is the worst thing that could happen to you in the circumstances, and what good things may occur.

In this way you are introduced to the possibility of another point of view, and able to
test out the feasibility of your old belief against the evidence of logic, reality and what is best for yourself. This would not happen in most cases without a positive intervention using such a procedure. Experience of logical analysis is however also an education, and this may be applied continually in life, to recognize existing false ideas as they emerge in the stimulation of everyday affairs, and to prevent the build up of further misconceptions.

**Shame-attacking**

The feeling of shame is always dependent on an underlying irrational belief, e.g. that you simply cannot stand up to the disapproval of others. So a shame attacking exercise is a good way of practicing a new-found awareness of an irrational belief, by deliberately testing this out in a real-life situation (equivalent to the activating event) designed to trigger that belief. Deliberately put yourself in the situation that previously you would have avoided, and see what happens with your new-found awareness. If the irrational belief triggers, it may be spotted and replaced with the more rational alternative, and this further put to test. The habitual behavioral response may then be changed as confidence is built up that the new belief is workable and results in more pleasurable feelings than the irrational belief caused.

**Self-esteem versus Self-acceptance**

A common misconception is that the assessment of a person’s competence and ability is equivalent to a value judgment of the worth of the actual person. Any self-esteem that results from such an identification is a house built of cards that may instantly collapse, when the next action is judged as wrong, incompetent or stupid, and the person therefore as ‘less worthy.’

A more logical, realistic and beneficial approach to the individual is an unconditional acceptance of the core Self. The essential worth of an individual is unarguable, but the personality, the adaptive Ego, may carry along maladaptive behaviors like tin cans trailing behind it. The individual and his learned and practiced behavior patterns or beliefs, are not the same thing. Every person is fallible and prone to make mistakes, indeed that is the only way to learn from experience, and every person is trying to achieve goals in life, whilst surrounded by all the difficulties and struggles that survival necessarily entails.

To accept this about oneself is then to be immune to demands upon others’ approval, and gives a greater freedom to act in a way that has reason to be right, rather than because a way is approved of by others. Unconditional self-acceptance is therefore a more realistic and aware form of self-regard, than self-esteem based on peer approval. And this awareness brings with it the corollary: an unconditional acceptance of the essence of others, friend or foe alike. To consider the essence of a person as ‘unacceptable’ is to insist that somebody should or must be different from the way they actually are, and that is essentially irrational.
The behavior of self and others, as demonstrated by competence and ability, then remains to be criticized or admired and esteemed, according to the ethics and aesthetics manifested, and this judgment may be rational (when it involves preferences) or irrational (when it involves musts and intolerances). When that judgment is rational then it is a valid criteria for esteem and for self-esteem.

The following is a list of beliefs that are irrational, superstitious, or ‘senseless’ but which are universally inculcated in Western Society and would seem inevitably to lead to widespread neurosis, when used compulsively and blindly, to make the self right and others wrong, or by projecting, to make the self wrong and others right:

- **It is essential that the person be loved or approved by everyone he or she knows.** This is irrational because it is an unobtainable goal, and if the person strives for it, the person becomes less self-directed and more insecure and unhappy. Even those who basically like you, will be turned off by some behaviors and qualities. The rational person does not sacrifice his or her own interests and desires in order to be admired, but rather strives to express them, with outflowing creativity.

- **A person must be perfectly competent, adequate and achieving to be worthwhile.** This again is an impossibility, and to strive compulsorily for it results in a constant fear of failure, and paralysis at attempting anything. Perfectionist standards quickly alienate partner and friends. The rational individual strives to be fully alive: to do well for his or her own sake rather than to be better than others, to enjoy an activity rather than to engage in it solely for the results, and to learn rather than to try to be perfect.

- **People who do wrong must be bad.** ‘Wrong’ or ‘immoral’ acts are the result of stupidity, ignorance or emotional disturbance. All people are fallible and make mistakes. Blame and punishment do not usually result in a less stupid, better informed and less neurotic personality. If a rational person makes a mistake, he or she accepts and attempts to understand the cause of the behavior, and does not let it become a catastrophe. At the same time, behavior and ethics can and must be judged, if law and order are to prevail.

- **It’s unacceptable if things aren’t the way I want them to be.** This is the spoiled-child syndrome. As soon as the tire goes flat the awful-izing self-talk starts: ‘Why has this happened to me? I can’t take this!’ The result is intense irritation and stress. The rational person avoids exaggerating unpleasant situations and works at improving them, or accepting them if they cannot be improved.

- **Unhappiness is caused by external circumstances.** When someone is unkind, rejecting, annoying, etc., this is considered the cause of unhappiness. Ascribing unhappiness to events is a way of avoiding reality. In practice, unhappiness comes largely from within, from self-statements interpreting the events. While you have only limited control over others, you are capable of enormous control
over your emotive evaluations. Many believe they have no control over their feelings and that they are helpless; the truth is that we can control how we interpret and emotionally respond to each life event.

- **Anything that is unknown or uncertain is cause for great concern.** Fear or anxiety in the face of uncertainty, imagining a scenario of catastrophe, makes coping more difficult and adds to distress if things do turn out to be threatening. Saving the fear-response for actual, perceived danger allows you to enjoy uncertainty as a novel stimulation, or exciting experience.

- **It’s easier to avoid life’s difficulties and responsibilities than to face them.** This is irrational because avoiding a task is often more difficult than performing it and leads to later complications and problems, and probably loss of self-confidence. An easy life is not necessarily a happy one; on the contrary, a challenging, responsible, achieving life is an enjoyable one. Life is not necessarily ‘fair’; pain and suffering are an inevitable part of human life, accompanying tough, healthy decisions and the process of growth.

- **You need someone stronger than yourself to rely on.** Dependency results in loss of individuality and self-expression. Your independent judgment and awareness of your particular needs are undermined by a reliance on a higher authority. This propitiating attitude leads to insecurity as the person is at the mercy of the other’s whim. This is enacted in the need for a guru or religious Father figure. The rational person does not refuse to seek or accept help when necessary but strives for independence and responsibility, recognizing that risks, while possibly resulting in failures, are worth taking and that failure itself is not a catastrophe.

- **Good relationships are based on mutual sacrifice and a focus on giving.** This belief rests on the assumption that it is better to give than receive, that it is bad or wrong to be selfish. It is expressed in a reluctance to ask for things, and the assumption that your hidden needs will somehow be divined and provided for. Unfortunately, constant self-denial results in bitterness and withdrawal. The truth is that no one knows your needs and wants better than you, and no one else has as great an interest in seeing them fulfilled. Your happiness is your responsibility.

- **The influence of the past cannot be eradicated.** The presumed influence of the past may be used as an excuse for avoiding changing behavior. Just because you were once strongly affected by something does not mean that you must continue the behavior patterns you formed to cope with the original situation. Those old patterns and ways of responding are just decisions made and enacted so many times that they have become automatic. You can identify those old decisions, solutions that seemed valid at the time, and start changing them right now. You can learn from past experience but you don’t have to be the effect of it.

- **Other peoples’ problems and difficulties are disturbing.** Feeling responsible for others’ hardships implies that you have power to control them and the duty to do
so. This is an imposition on the others’ freedom to experience and control their own lives and feelings. If requested to do so, the rational person will attempt to do something that will improve the situation. If nothing useful can be done, he accepts that as the reality of the situation. By being too protective over other peoples’ feelings (because ‘people are fragile and should never be hurt’), relationships become full of dead space, where conflicts developed but nothing is said. Honest communication of current feelings need not be taken as an attack upon the personal worth and security of others.

- There is always a ‘right’ or ‘perfect’ solution to every problem. This is obviously not necessarily the case but the insistence on finding one leads to anxiety, panic and often dissatisfaction. It is more rational to attempt to (more open-mindedly) find various possible solutions to the problem and accept the best or most feasible one, doing one’s best to carry it out effectively. An accompanying belief is that there is ‘perfect love’ and a perfect relationship. Subscribers to this belief often feel resentful of one relationship after another - no one matches their expectations.

- When people disapprove of you, it means you are wrong or bad. You may have done something wrong or bad, and this should be taken note of and if necessary, corrected. But preventing this objective viewpoint is the fear of disapproval, which sparks chronic anxiety in most interpersonal situations. The irrationality is contained in the imagined generalization of one specific fault or unattractive feature, to a total indictment of self. It is a by-product of low self-esteem (based on a lack of self-acceptance) and the belief that if you don’t please others, they will abandon or reject you. You usually run less risk of rejection if you offer others your true unblemished self. They can either take it or leave it, but if they respond to the real you, you don’t have to worry about letting down your guard and being rejected later.

These fallacious ideas are almost universal in our society, unwittingly installed from earliest childhood from parental and other authoritative influences, and frequently accompanied by traumatic circumstances that empower their imprinting in the child’s mind, and cause their repression, so that their source becomes hidden and unknown. When they are accepted and re-enforced by continual self-indoctrination, throughout life, they lead to emotional disturbance or neurosis, since they cannot be lived up to. People become inhibited, hostile, defensive, guilty, ineffective, inert, afraid and unhappy. All dissatisfaction in life is because individuals cannot live up to their installed unreasonable ‘shoulds,’ ‘oughts’ and ‘musts’.

**Towards, against and away**

Karen Horney analyzed the ways in which an individual moves towards, against and away from others and the world around him. These ‘flows’ are reflected in healthy attitudes of extroverted interest, assertiveness to overcome obstacles, and reflection
upon results. If these flows become compulsive however, neurotic dependency, aggression and introverted withdrawal may result.

As a child grows, a sense of intrinsic separateness appears. Conformity, to belong to the herd, is a prevalent solution to being alone; the more causative way is by communicating, to forge understanding with others, whilst retaining integrity by staying true to one’s own view of what is right and wrong.

The most basic action, in being alive, is to reach and withdraw; it is the basic survival dynamic, to reach out for food or to withdraw from danger. It is also the basis of communication. If sufficient intention is used and another is paying attention and duplicates that which is being put across, then communication is taking place. The basis of communication and interaction, then, is: reach - withdraw; speak - listen; give - receive. If viewpoints are shared through a process of two-way communication, affection and empathy may be built up, resulting in mutual understanding.

In practice of course, people have different objectives and viewpoints in life and these can conflict. ‘Reach toward’ becomes ‘fight against.’ Conflict may be between one’s self (or any part of one’s self or environment that is being identified with, such as parental ‘shoulds,’ child insecurities, family, friend, boss, lover, teacher, footballer, politician, pop star, possession, or fixed attitude, belief, idea or feeling) opposing any element of the outside world that is felt to counter the intention of self. This conflict only becomes a problem if one can’t confront or experience comfortably, the confusion it creates; otherwise it could be handled and the situation viewed (realistically) as part and parcel of the ‘game’ of life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATIONAL</th>
<th>NEUROTIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reach TOWARD</td>
<td>together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>confront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdraw AWAY</td>
<td>apart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternating 2-way communication</td>
<td>interact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To the extent that these movements are flexible and spontaneous, the individual is free. When they are inflexible and rigid, he has become entrapped. If one direction has become compulsive, e.g. ‘towards’ may be compulsive between lovers, then the other flows are likely to be repressed, e.g. between the lovers, repressed ‘against’ may include anger, and repressed ‘away’ may include the desire to be with other people. These repressed factors may suddenly and seemingly inexplicably erupt.

If ‘against’ has become stuck, as in an irresolvable problem, this will tend to hang up in time, floating in a no-time rather than in a location on the time track of experiences, and
cause a mental ridge of opposing energy flows - a feeling of heaviness and tension around the head.

Creative causation becomes reduced to a fixated compulsion as a safe solution, or defense, to unconfronted pain, fear, anxiety, confusion, change or guilt. A solution may involve dominating others, pleasing them or attracting sympathy. It is internally rationalized as being ‘right’ or ideal behavior, with other points of view being ‘wrong.’ The solution becomes a fixed pattern and the rationalization is a self idealization; these connected ideas are held unconsciously alongside the traumatic experience which originally necessitated them. When the unacceptable circumstances reappear, or similar ones, the pattern is replayed automatically, and the person does not realize he is dramatizing reactively or that his true self is ‘asleep.’ His views become unrealistic, mystifying and idealizing how the world is or should be.

Early character molding, where parents imposed a set of ‘shoulds’ and ‘shouldn’ts,’ causes a child to derive a picture of what he should be like to be secure, to get over the basic anxiety of being ‘not OK.’ This is later reinforced by other dominant personalities among friends, teachers and so on.

Idealizations, and the claims on others that result, conform to this internal ‘should be’ image, e.g. that ‘people should do things my way because naturally my way is right,’ or ‘this shouldn’t happen to me because I’m special.’ Frequently claims contain the expectation that things will come to you without having to make any effort. Indignation when such claims are frustrated may cause self-pity or victim feelings or be repressed and surface as psychosomatic symptoms.

Internal demands on self (e.g. ‘I should be independent’), result in external demands on others (‘leave me alone to do it’), using pride as a defense against self-hate, which is the result of constant unrealistic internal demands that cannot be fulfilled.

False-pride and self-hate are two sides of the same coin: the compulsion to be right, and this is the cause of so much misery and suffering.

When a person is operating on basic anxiety and uncertainty about his real capability and worth, failure to live up to his idealizations leads to unconscious self destructive impulses and actions, symptoms of self-hate. Such things as recklessness and drug abuse, as well as self-contempt (‘No-one could possibly love me’), still further demands on the Self (‘I shouldn’t get upset’), self-accusations (‘I’m just a fraud’). Morbid dependency or ‘acting victim,’ are means to get reassurance by refusing all responsibility.

Detachment may be seen as a solution to this conflict - anything to cut off sensitive feelings, ‘leave me alone’; not giving a damn about anybody else; or ‘Don’t try to change me.’ The self hate may be projected against other people, ideas, institutions or life itself, with generalizations used to protect the untruth from scrutiny, e.g. ‘politicians are stupid,’ or ‘there’s no justice in life’.
Or in an effort to ‘be right’ idealizations may be identified with, a false pride, resulting in a never ending search for glory, being perfectionist, ruthless, arrogant, devious, etc., to prove the ideals are truth. Because they are not founded on reality, however, life is likely to be disappointing and undiluted self-hate reappears.

On the other hand when a person operates with a confidence based on realistic self-knowledge, he will not mind making mistakes and will be willing to learn from them. Integrity, wholeness of self, is based on respect for self and others. Discriminating loving, principled struggling and taking time and space for oneself, are free choices, far from the compulsions of false-personality.

**Incremental changing of habit patterns**

An effective approach to changing misconceived imprinted behavioral and thinking patterns, is to learn new, more rational ways of behaving and thinking, in the form of skills that have application in broad areas of the individual’s life.

This is the function of training in personal development courses. Personal development has three aspects: cognitive, emotional and behavioral. Letting go of a mental block can have sudden and dramatic results; the person may feel as if a large burden has gone. He or she can confront a task with enthusiasm and courage where before there were negative fearful emotions. There may be an insight into why the mental block was put there in the first place. Yet in many cases actual performance and ability remains unchanged - the dimension of behavior has been left unaddressed.

Behavior is determined by habit patterns imprinted or programmed in the brain, derived from, and re-enforced by, the person’s typical lifestyle - the way he or she confronts and handles the problems and challenges of life. New habits require new connections in the brain and this requires conscious effort.

The brain is capable of working subconsciously on automatic programs. For example, you do not have to think consciously about which muscles to move, when you decide to reach out your arm. Similarly we do not have to think consciously about many behavioral patterns (if we did we’d never get anything done). When such programming is irrational, inappropriate behavior results. This is the price we pay for the advantage of a variable threshold to consciousness (i.e. not being submerged under a mountain of sensory input).

Unless this behavioral dimension is examined, habitual ways of being and doing in the world will act as a form of auto-hypnosis and before long the mental block will unconsciously be put back in its familiar position, accompanying the habit pattern, and will start to re-assert itself.

So removing emotional or mental blocks does not necessarily produce gains in ability or change in behavior; behavioral change requires a determined and persistent act of willpower in the real world, and frequently the learning of new skills and the development of new habit patterns with which to carry them out.
To learn to sing, play an instrument or think with a trained mind, and to do this with above average ability, requires hundreds of hours of practice, normally in the form of practical exercises or drills.

Modern education neglects drills. Mostly it consists of grasping a principle in a stumbling sort of way. This becomes the shaky foundation of the next thing to be learnt but after few weeks, the structure falls down like a house of cards. Only a last-minute cramming of data before an end-of-term exam, demonstrates that anything has been learnt at all.

Outside of music, sports and the military the concept of over-learning has been all but lost. In the army a lot of time is spent taking a gun to pieces and reassembling it, until this can be done blindfolded in an instant. In learning to play the piano, scales are repeated thousands of times. In this way no further attention has to be put on the skill when it is used in actual practice and attention can instead be put on finer skills such as tactical maneuvers or musical interpretation. Under stress, the skills will not let the person down.

Over-learning will be familiar to all those who drive a car; thousands of hours of practice have made the skill automatic. All automatic mechanisms have in fact, consciously or otherwise, been over-learned in this way, and they will not surrender their grip unless they are replaced by over-learned new ways of thinking and acting. That the brain is re-programmable in this way throughout life, is little known, and reassuring for those of us determined to break through our evolutionary limitations.

Another key aspect of learning is the necessity of improving ability and acquiring knowledge, in small incremental steps, each of which is manageable. The size of increment will vary for each student so that an element of challenge maintains interest. With this gradient approach, the student does not become overwhelmed by demands that are beyond his capacity. Furthermore, by over-learning at each increment, the habit pattern is continually nudged up-and-up towards higher ability - the brain is able to replace the old pattern with one only slightly different as those only needs minor ‘rewiring.’

Although the student probably could do the exercise for a while with a steeper gradient, the new pattern would be too different from the old and would not replace it stably; a ceiling of ability would soon be reached. The slow incremental approach will, in the end, build up to a much higher level of ability than would have been the case by ‘going for broke,’ and this ability will be completely stable.

**Two ways of knowing**

A creative person is one who can process in new ways the information directly at hand - the ordinary sensory data available to us all. A writer needs words, a musician needs notes, an artist needs visual perceptions, and all need some knowledge of the techniques of their crafts. But in addition, in the creative process, a second mode of
mental processing takes place: in an altered state of consciousness, an individual intuitively sees possibilities for transforming ordinary data into an original creation.

Concepts of the duality, or two-sidedness, of human nature and thought have been postulated by philosophers and scientists from many different times and cultures. The key idea is that there are two parallel ‘ways of knowing’: thinking and feeling, intellect and intuition, objective analysis and subjective insight. Political writers say that people generally analyze the good and bad points of an issue and then vote on their gut feelings. The history of science is replete with anecdotes about researchers who try repeatedly to figure out a problem and then have a dream in which the answer presents itself as a metaphor intuitively comprehended by the scientist. In another context, a person may intuit about another, ‘The words sound OK, but something tells me not to trust him’: both sides of the brain are at work, processing the same information in different ways.

The brain functions in broadly two quite different modes. The first mode is linear, logical, verbal thinking, which we normally identify as our ‘mind’ - the ‘semantic program’ of the left hemispherical cortex. The second mode is holistic, intuitive, non-verbal functioning (one cannot call it ‘thinking’) of the right hemisphere. Of this we are usually not consciously aware, except as the results of its functioning, which are passed over to the left hemisphere for analytic verbal interpretation.

This duality of functioning passes over to the manipulation of objects by the hands. The right hand of a person controls fine detailed movement, such as writing, adjusting mechanisms, using tools or doing anything that requires a sequence of actions. Meanwhile the left hand establishes and anchor point or reference.

You might say that the left brain is chalk and the right brain the blackboard. The right side is concerned with plan, the left side with putting it into action. The left side is linear, it cannot deal with more than one thing at a time, and it forgets strings of words or numbers rather rapidly. The right side holds the gestalt, the overview. It can compare many things simultaneously and its memory of pictures, feelings and emotions is permanent. It is like ‘figure and ground,’ subject and background, focused imaging and overall perception.

Luria, the great Russian neurologist describes this in his book ‘Man with a Shattered World.’ He writes of a soldier who received a bullet wound severely damaging the right cortex, yet the man survived, but with very strange experiences. While eating soup, when he concentrated on the soup the spoon disappeared, when he concentrated on the spoon the soup disappeared, and when he concentrated on the flavor the whole room disappeared!

Without this capability music would not be possible. The left hemisphere can concentrate on only one note at a time, while the right hemisphere is able to look at the overall context, of what has been played and anticipation of what is to follow, such that improvisation and emotional interpretation are possible. Whereas a left-brain dominant
musician could merely tune the instrument and play simple tunes robotically.

Mostly our consciousness resides in the left, organizing hemisphere but this does not mean that the right side is inactive - it continues like the shining of stars in the daytime, there but unperceived. If the left hemisphere has become excessively dominant the right hemisphere has reduced opportunity to share in consciousness, being blocked in various ways, and can only express itself in deeply sub-conscious functions (often only apparent in dreams). Full consciousness would arise from a collaborative integration of the two sets of processes.

How such blockage comes about is demonstrated in the following example. Imagine the effect on a child when its mother presents one message verbally but quite another with her facial expression and body language. ‘I am only spanking you because I love you, dear’ says the words, but ‘I hate you and will destroy you’ say the face and body blows. Each hemisphere is exposed to the same sensory input, but because of their respective specializations they each emphasize one of the messages. The left will only attend to the verbal cues, because it cannot extract information from the facial gestalt and kinesthetic sensations efficiently. The right will attend to the non-verbal cues because it has become specialized to do this and cannot understand the words.

In this situation the two hemispheres might decide on opposite courses of action: the left to approach, the right to flee. Since the left is the organizing hemisphere it can take control of the output channels most of the time but if it cannot ‘turn off’ the right completely, it may settle for disconnecting the conflicting information from the other side. The mental process in the right hemisphere, cut off in this way from the left hemispheric consciousness that is directing overt behavior, may nevertheless continue a life of its own. The memory of the situation, the emotional content and the frustrated plan of action may all persist, affecting subsequent perception and forming the basis for expectations and evaluations of future input. These may have their effect when the right hemisphere is not blocked and cause irrational misinterpretations.

When a person is in a right-brain mode of extreme emotion such as love, rage or grief, the pain and emotion and effort is experienced but he is unable to access the postulates, conclusions and other verbally and conceptually stored material in the left, as this is below the boundaries of consciousness - a person overcome is often speechless.

As a result of the more common left-brain dominance, emotions become a symbolic memory (‘I was angry’) rather than the feeling sensation of what was actually experienced. The person may have a verbal description of events but is unable to experience the emotion and pain thereof. The painful emotions persuade the left hemisphere to hold-off the right side’s contribution habitually. Eventually, with reduced nervous traffic between the hemispheres, the nerve fibers of the connecting channel (the corpus callosum) become atrophied with disuse (though this may be stimulated to regrow with Transpersonal Psychology techniques) and the potential quality of brain functioning is then severely retarded.
A frequent cause of such blockage is when the right hemisphere contains data that the left finds distinctly uncomfortable - such as the truth! For example, the fact of a misdeed may be repressed in this manner, as may any experience that the mind finds embarrassing, unacceptable or unconfrontable. Similarly, deeply held beliefs that have a strong emotional investment become charged areas in the right hemisphere. The person who is left-dominant tends to be governed by words and belief systems often to the exclusion of external reality; a person with an integrated mind uses words as his servants and is in touch with the truth of where he stands.

The average person lives too much in a state of sensory illusion, of indoctrination, to be clear about anything except at rare, lucid intervals. Trance states are much more prevalent than is generally realized; there is rarely an ‘objective’ state of consciousness. Most of us are in a semi-waking, semi-sleeping trance induced by our cultural and genetic heritage and our personal belief system. To become fully awakened we must be wholly aware of all the influences that bear upon our daily state of consciousness.

For many centuries the Sufis have said that man must learn to use his mind in a different way if he is to progress. That missing link is the recovered integration of holistic right brain functions. Our right hemisphere, with its capacity for appreciating a complex whole, for facial recognition, map reading, maze solving, provides the alternative mode of understanding.

How did we get this way? Left-brain dominance probably came about because of a basic need to survive in a physical world. It may have developed when man changed from simple food gathering to having to kill for survival - including having to kill others who threatened his survival or territory. Man had to organize in larger groups in order to live. He had to give up part of himself, to deny his own needs and feelings in deference to those of his society. And in order to kill animals and other humans he required some sort of shut-off mechanism in allow such acts.

The point about the split is that one side of our brain can be feeling something while the other side is thinking something very different. The split person can yell at you and not know why he is doing it, though he will manage to rationalize his acts and put the blame on others. With that division of the brain one could think one thing and do another. Feelings could be transmuted into symbolic form, disconnected from their feeling roots the elaborateness of the ritualistic and symbolic life being commensurate with the loss of self. Man could then murder others for religious reasons or kill others when the state (an abstraction - not himself) was threatened.

As man came to defer to higher authority, his symbolic and repressive hemisphere became more active. He developed all sorts of ideas and rationales that were out of keeping with his feelings. The cultural trance had begun.

Through thousands of years our ancestors added to left-brain dominance because that was the way to get things done. The two specializations work effectively, the right supporting the left hands use of tools, including writing. Our entire system - books,
schools, universities, industry, political structures, and churches - is fundamentally left-brained in learning, application and operation. We have generally regarded right-brain functions with suspicion, frustration and awe.

In fact we use our right brain throughout our daily lives in many subtle ways. While the left-brain serves our consciousness, the right brain serves our awareness. Though the left-brain seems to predominate and to coordinate general behavior from both halves, it is the minor side that sees things in a broader perspective. It sees the context and views the parts of an event as its gestalt. It is the right brain that takes the facts worked out by the left-brain and can make proper conclusions (connections) from them. It makes facts ‘meaningful’.

The importance of understanding our dual consciousness is that it is possible to have thoughts that have nothing to do with what one is feeling, and to try to reach and change someone for the better through his thoughts and intellectual apparatus alone, without reference to the necessity for connection, is a vain exercise. The left-brain can be quite aware that smoking causes cancer but the person will still pull out a cigarette. The person is aware but not conscious.

Man is conscious, as are animals, of external stimuli, but to be conscious that he is conscious, to be self-aware, is the introspective faculty that separates him from the animals. But he can only be meaningfully objective about that self when his feelings and contextual understandings are connected and integrated.

Logic is fine for mentally running over the mistakes of the past and for anticipating the future so that we do not commit the same blunders twice. But we cannot actually live in either of these two time realms, and the effort to do so may damage both our minds and bodies. Our task, then, is to learn to free ourselves from the cultural trance, the daydream of illusions, and with an awakened mind, live life today, in fully objective consciousness.

In our daily life we live in two worlds simultaneously, the left and right modes. The left mode is associated with logic, linear thinking, rationality, schedules, time, sequencing, measurements, the obvious, names, dates, deductive reasoning - the things we learn at school. The right mode is about intuition, holistic understanding, expressive movement, art, poetry, emotions, the hidden, the inferred, and imagery - in short, it is the ‘ah-ha’ state. In therapy, the unconscious is best accessed through the route of images and feelings; answers are then revealed from the unconscious that the rational mind would not otherwise be able to reach. The right brain, by its very nature, cannot lie; the left brain is an expert at lying - at fabricating answers, telling stories, rationalizing, blaming and erecting all of the Ego defenses.

As we converse in normal language, we tell each other anything we want to: details, about admissible feelings, social pleasantries, half-truths, lies or anything we need to say to function in the day to day world. But we may not say what we really think - we may omit information and lie, in order to protect others or ourselves from potentially
hurtful truths.

We are, meanwhile, always telling ourselves the repressed truth, both about our conscious reality and also relating to the deeper dimensions of our innermost Self, giving facts about events and information about our motives, but this may not be revealed through the conscious mind. It is our direct feelings, utilizing images and metaphors, and does not disguise itself with pleasantries. The hidden messages occur especially at times when the right-brain is stimulated: when a person is expressing his or her Self emotionally or creatively.

So there is no more need to lie or pretend. To do so is to support power struggle, tyranny, low self-esteem and isolation. Truth conversely brings us closer, though it might take more risk, openness and vulnerability. As human beings we want to be welcomed, for our needs to be honored, to be able to be strong and still be loved, to be recognized for who we really are. By being honest with our fellow beings and our selves, we can often strike a chord that resonates in every human heart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEFT</th>
<th>RIGHT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal description, explicit</td>
<td>Non-verbal awareness, implicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear - one thought following another</td>
<td>Spatial, relational, holistic, synthesizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential, orderly, counting</td>
<td>Simultaneous, spontaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational, conclusions based on reason</td>
<td>Non-rational, willing to suspend judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract - representing a whole by a part</td>
<td>Analogical - seeing similarities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual, word-symbols</td>
<td>Perceptual, concrete, image-symbols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical thought, analysis</td>
<td>Intuitive ideas, connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolized, evaluative feelings (head)</td>
<td>Affective feelings and emotion (heart)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convergent, focused (attends to detail)</td>
<td>Divergent, contextual (ignores detail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solves problems towards goals</td>
<td>Perceives problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizes actions, masculine</td>
<td>Supportive, receptive, feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deals with time, reflective, objective</td>
<td>Has only present time, active, involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ends oriented, goal setting</td>
<td>Means-whereby oriented, involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagines details, fictionalizes stories</td>
<td>Constructs contexts, assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term symbolical memory</td>
<td>Long-term perceptual memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile weakness, friendly strength</td>
<td>Friendly weakness, hostile strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypocritical, lying</td>
<td>Authentic, genuine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego-consciousness</td>
<td>Sub-consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Malfunctions: falsifying, fabricating, misowning, mistaking, or fixating)</td>
<td>(Blocks: repressing, invalidating, denying, or accepted imprinting)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Body-mind defenses

Throughout life an individual will develop many defenses to protect himself against any real or imagined threat to his functioning. When the heart stops a beat or races we experience anxiety at the very core of our being. When a person has built up solid defenses (which soon become unconscious response-patterns or automatic behavior) he will not allow his heart to be touched easily and will not respond to the world from his heart. The defenses work in layers:

I  The **core** or heart from which the feeling to love and be loved derives, at the center of which is the soul or spiritual identity. This is always present, even if defenses on further layers make it unconscious.

II  The **emotional** layer of feelings which include the suppressed feelings of rage, anxiety, panic or terror, despair, sadness and pain.

III The **muscular** layer in which is found the chronic muscular tensions that support and justify the Ego defenses and at the same time protect the person against expressing the underlying layer of suppressed feelings that he dare not express.

IV The **Ego** layer is the outermost layer of the basic sense of self or identity, and which contains the typical Ego defenses of denial, distrust, blaming, projections (other-determined viewpoints), plus rationalizations (excuses) and intellectualizations.

The breakdown of defenses has necessarily to consider each of these layers. While we can help a person become conscious of his tendencies to deny, blame, project or rationalize, this awareness rarely affects the muscular tensions or releases the suppressed feelings. If these layers are not cleared, the conscious awareness can easily degenerate into a different type of rationalization with a concomitant but altered form of denial and projection.
Assuming it is possible to eliminate every defensive position in the personality, how would such an ‘open’ person function?

The four layers still exist but now they are coordinating and expressive layers rather than defensive ones. Core impulses reach the real world. The person puts his heart into everything he does. He loves doing whatever he chooses, whether it is work, play or sex. He can be angry, sad, joyful or frightened depending on the situation. These feelings represent genuine responses since they are free from contamination by suppressed emotions stemming from childhood experiences. And since his muscular layer is free from chronic tensions, his movements reflect his feelings and are subject to the control of the Ego - they are appropriate, meaningful and coordinated.

The structure of problems

When you want to change yourself or help others to change, you need to gather information, the noticeable parts of a problem, the symptoms one is uncomfortable with. This is the present state.

There will also be a desired state: an outcome that is the goal of change. There will be the resources that will help to achieve this outcome and also side effects to reaching it, for oneself and others. There will of course be the barriers and difficulties. But there will also be underlying causes that maintain the problem: what does the person keep having to do that maintains the problem, and why?

The element of conflict is intrinsic to problems and the trick of solving them is to be able to spot the counter element to one’s own intention, and thereby, to recognize that one does indeed have a causative contribution to the situation, otherwise it would not be intention versus counter-intention - a problem! The ‘solution’ to the problem is simply a realization of the structure of the problem itself. The charge or confusion of the problem will then drop away, and appropriate actions may be taken.

Conflicts are frequently self-imposed, when both the intention or the counter-intention are one’s own, but one forgets this obvious fact and swings back and forth between the opposing points of view. Once a tension exists, because of a discrepancy between what is desired and what exists, there is a natural force leading to resolution. But then the other tension-resolution system is stimulated and the force reverses. This structure will lead to oscillation because of the competing tension-resolution systems. You cannot simultaneously achieve both aims because they are conflicting. And you cannot achieve the aims sequentially, since movement towards the resolution of one increases the tension in the other system. There is a shift of dominance from one approach to the other. It’s a no-win situation.

For example, if you were hungry you would naturally tend to resolve this tension by
eating. However if you were obsessive and became overweight, a new goal would become apparent - the need to lose weight and the necessity of going on a diet. This second need is in conflict with the first and the two cannot be met simultaneously and not for long sequentially either. If you don’t eat you become more and more hungry and revert to the old behavior. The dieter may consider: What is the problem? Too little self-control, emotional complexes, self-destructive tendencies, lack of willpower, the wrong diet plan, an unfulfilled sex life, the economy? In truth it is the structure in play leading to oscillation; that is all it can do.

Another very common structural conflict in everyone’s life is between a heartfelt desire or need and an incompatible dominant belief or even knowledge that you are not able to fulfill your desire, that it is impossible, that there isn’t time, that one is not capable enough or doesn’t deserve it.

At first sight it would seem easy to ‘solve’ this structural conflict by changing the dominant belief to a more positive ‘I can have what I want.’ However this just sets up a new desire - ‘to change my belief’ - that is incompatible with the belief itself, so the conflict persists, no matter how sincere you are or how diligently you try to brainwash yourself. The other obvious solution to structural conflict is to give up your desires. But if you attempt to relinquish all desires, this itself becomes your new desire. Also implicit in ‘giving up desire’ are spiritual goals such as enlightenment or being freed from the ‘illusion of reality.’ But these goals are still connected with the ‘I can’t have what I want’ tension-resolution system and will therefore fail.
The fact is, structural conflict is not resolvable from within the structure. Mutually exclusive goals cannot both be achieved either simultaneously or sequentially (for any length of time). People often attempt to overcome this with great hope and optimism but this is usually followed by disillusionment. It is inherent that any actions you persuade yourself to take to resolve structural conflict, or to stay within an area of tolerable conflict, may give temporary relief but ultimately they only reinforce the experience of limitation, and entrench the conflict further. It is only by changing the underlying structure (the roots of the desires and beliefs) of your life that you can make any real and lasting change - changes from within the structure (to alter or suppress it) will not work.

As an example, if your car’s front wheels were out of balance and pulled slightly to the left, you might develop a compensating strategy of steering to the right in order to move straight ahead. If the car’s tendency to pull to the left developed gradually, your compensating mechanism would also develop gradually - you might not even realize this was going on. (Driving another car, your habit would be dangerous, and that may be how the behavior comes home to you). If a friend observed you driving this way he would be alarmed and suggest, ‘Don’t steer to the right - let me out!’ Much of the advice people give one another will not work because it is designed to change compensating strategies without any notion of the structures that are causing them.

In the language of organizational management, what do we do, then, when faced with two incompatible requirements, or two parties who want apparently incompatible things? There are only three possibilities:

**Domination** - one side wins and the other loses. This often leads to the losing side building up its forces so that it can win next time around.

**Compromise** - each side gives up a part of what it wants for the sake of peace. This is always unsatisfying to some degree and each side may try to get its way in some overt or covert way. This approach tends to reduce integrity.

**Integration** - both sides get what they really want, and for this to be possible we look for the needs behind the wants. This way, when it can be found is most satisfying, but it needs a counseling approach to reveal the underlying compatibility of the needs of the two sides. Conflicts must be carefully brought out and worked with, rather than being overridden, smoothed out or ignored. The outcome of this is that creative solutions may emerge which nobody had in mind at the beginning of the process, because the underlying structure has been perceived for the first time.

All growth is a matter of differentiation and integration, and the differentiation is just as important as the integration. The first rule for obtaining integration is to put your cards on the table, face the real issue, uncover the conflict, bring the whole thing out into the open. If we do this, and attempt to bring things out into the open so they can be worked on, it is possible to meet people whom one knows are opposed in interest and to confront them as a whole person, unafraid and ready to use whatever power one has.
It is possible to be flexible and human and at the same time to stand no nonsense. And it seems that this is possible for individuals and for oneself, as well as for groups. It also seems that if we want creative solutions, this is the only way to get them. But what won't work is attempting to resolve conflicts and change beliefs by suppression or effort.

Beliefs
Our beliefs strongly influence our behavior. They motivate us and shape what we do. For instance, it is difficult to learn anything without the belief that it will be pleasant and to our advantage. What are beliefs? How are they formed and how do we maintain them?

Beliefs are our guiding principles, the inner maps we use to make sense of the world. They give stability and continuity; they are stable data that helps us to make order out of confusion. Shared beliefs give a deeper sense of rapport and community.

Beliefs come from many sources - upbringing, imitation of significant others, conclusions as a result of past traumas, and repetitive experiences. We build beliefs by
generalizing from our experiences of the world and those of other people. Some beliefs come to us ready made from the culture and environment we are born into. When we are young, we believe what we are told about ourselves and the world, because we have no way of testing, and these beliefs may persist unmodified by our later achievements, because they had parental authority and became embedded as unconscious commands in the developing Superego.

When we believe something we act as if it is true; we have then made an investment of effort. This makes it difficult to disprove; beliefs act as perceptual filters - events are interpreted in terms of the belief, and ‘exceptions prove the rule.’ Beliefs are not just maps of what has happened, but blueprints for future actions. Positive beliefs are permissions that turn on our capabilities; they are permissions to play and explore in the world of possibility. Limiting beliefs on the other hand, usually center around, ‘I can’t...’ This may be a valid statement at the present moment, but believing it is a description of your capability now and in the future, will program your mind to fail, as it will prevent you finding out your potential capability. Limiting beliefs have no valid basis in experience.

Beliefs can be a matter of choice. They change and develop. We think of ourselves differently, we marry, divorce, change friendships and act differently because our beliefs change. We have each created many beliefs about our possibilities and what is important in life, and we can change them. But it is no use attempting to do so in the context of structurally conflicting intentions. We have to understand such conflict-structures completely so that we can accept their reality and then they will no longer be charged and limiting. Only in that context, knowing ourselves more fully, can we then visualize new possibilities, ones that we genuinely want to happen, without limitations, and work enthusiastically towards them with a creative (integrated high arousal) frame of mind. This creates a new tension-resolution system that is not in conflict and will be unstoppable.

The Shadow Self

We each have a belief system full of ideas imprinted by our culture and upbringing, and as the effect of earlier traumatic experiences, and even influences we are born with. They are here with us all the time in the present and effect our view of things and interpretation of events, so that we are not really free to be ourselves, and to know our true selves and our true goals and purposes in life.

Part of our belief system is conscious and makes up the personality we knowingly present to the world. Another part is less conscious and these are beliefs that we suppress because they are uncomfortable to face - they make up our ‘Shadow Self’. It includes aspects of oneself that we resist - qualities we have that we don’t like, things
we’ve done we are ashamed of, things we’ve believed that others have told us that are negative evaluations or invalidations. Accompanying these beliefs are put-downs, self-invalidations. For example, I found myself feeling afraid on occasions and judged myself a coward: ‘I despise this cowardly streak I have.’

To help in suppressing painful aspects of the shadow self, we then use these put-downs against others too, e.g. criticizing someone because he is cowardly to speak up, to reinforce the suppression of the belief one has about oneself.

So when you resist, deny or suppress a belief about yourself, you then reinforce this by projecting the same suppression on others. I might suppress the belief that I’m not a kind person by criticizing another for being mean. Ironically, when we realize someone is being kind, this is only possible because one has recognized that kindness within oneself, otherwise it would not be real to you.

Men who deny the feminine aspect of themselves often then criticize other men for being soft or over-sensitive. And women who through their conditioning suppress their masculine aspects may criticize other women for being tough or aggressive.

As we become more aware, through practices discussed in this book, we can let go of these ‘Shadow’ aspects of our personality, we no longer need them as ‘safe solutions’, their lies have been exposed. And the energy we put into anger, hate, jealousy, guilt, envy and so on is freed up and transmuted to its true nature, which is our own true nature, love.

**Responsibility - yours or mine?**

Another person’s will and actions (including their emotional responses) are their responsibility, not yours. This is a hard lesson to learn. If I promise to my wife that we will have a holiday this year, but this turns out not to be possible, she may be upset and angry. It is easy to fall into the trap of taking responsibility for this upset, to feel that I have caused it. But it is your wife who causes her own grief, not you. You are responsible for doing what you think is right, according to your ethical judgment. If you do something wrong according to your own ethics, you are responsible for that. You are not responsible for the other person’s reactions though, that is their determinism, their freedom.

If you do something you think is right and someone gets upset about it, even if you could have predicted that, the upset is nevertheless that person’s responsibility. Sometimes you do something you know another probably won’t like, because it is the right and therefore responsible thing to do. The other person’s reaction is their personal responsibility. You may decide to withhold an action because of a predicted effect, although that effect is another’s responsibility. Here it is an ethical judgment - withholding that action, if it is the right thing to do, may be a wrong-doing in itself.
For example if you were to withhold doing personal development because your partner has said they do not want you to change in any way, perhaps because they project their personal fears and insecurities, that is your choice. But if you consider making a better life for yourself is the ethical thing to do - for the benefit of yourself and ultimately for others too - and you tell your partner that and she gets upset, it is your partner who is responsible for the upset - it is her interpretation of your actions that creates her own upset, not your action in itself, which is a responsible action.

You can genuinely love someone whilst nevertheless doing something they don’t like or agree with. You do it because you feel it is the right thing to do, though you still understand and have empathy for their different viewpoint (which causes their emotional reaction, part of their ‘map of reality’ which they have created by their own choices and belief system).

If one only did things others can easily accept then the status quo would never progress. That would truly be a trap. The solution here is better communication, leading to increased understanding of each other’s viewpoint, and therefore acceptance of the differing personal realities.

There is strong cultural conditioning to feel sad, guilty, etc. for painful emotions that our actions, however well meant, may cause to others. In society there’s a general misconception that you are your emotions. ‘I am angry’ and ‘you make me angry’. This is conditioning not truth. In terms of cause and effect, it’s a viewpoint at effect. Some say that to be happy only do what others can easily experience - it’s the same lie.

The Church teaches ‘Do unto others as you’d have them do unto you.’ This is evidently true, as if you are being ethical then it’s going to be OK for others to do the same to you. And if it isn’t then you’d better re-think whether you are indeed doing the right thing. It is one definition of a ‘wrong’ action: that which you would not like another to do to you.

It’s a basic principle of respect for others (as one would wish for oneself) that they are responsible for their actions and reactions - that is their freedom of choice. They are not a slave or puppet.

From your interpretation of reality you make decisions and your decisions and choices and emotional tone have enormous influence on the direction of your life and what happens.

Looking at life and relationships in terms of Communication, Understanding and Empathy (CUE) is a spiritual viewpoint. It is like the ‘love of God’ - it can seem harsh but it’s about the ‘greatest good’. It has no room for the ‘victim’ identification, jealousy and those kinds of very human responses, which are based on conditioned lies.

Consideration for the other person comes into play when you judge ethics, what is best overall, not just for oneself. However the other may not agree with your judgment nor
like it. That is an aspect of the unknown and randomness of the game of life. You try to make it a win-win rather than competitive game by increasing the qualities of CUE.

You are responsible for your choices, decisions and actions. For being true to your judgment. For communicating with honesty and integrity, developing and maintaining an open mind, and promoting understanding and empathy. For never compromising your freedoms and rights nor trampling on another’s. For always acting from the primary motivation of love. That’s all and quite enough.

**The unified field**

An individual is situated within the wide context of his world and life, and this consists of six different levels of operation at which learning and change can take place:

- **Spiritual identity.** This is the deepest level, where we consider and act out the great metaphysical questions: Why are we here? What is our purpose? This spiritual level guides and shapes our lives, and underpins our existence.

- **Personal identity.** This is the body-mind self, the core of imprinted values, the structure of character and the drive to survive.

- **Beliefs.** The various ideas we think are true, and use as a basis for daily action. Beliefs can be both permissions and limitations; they are the basis for feelings.

- **Capability.** These are the general and specific skills that we use in life.

- **Behavior.** The specific actions we carry out, regardless of our capability and whether they are conscious or automatic, forced upon us or self-determined.

- **Environment.** What we react to, our surroundings, the other people we meet.
The environment is multi-faceted: there are eight domains that make up the unified field of life. Surrounding one’s own identity, involvement in life grows to include: one’s sexual partner and family along with other close friendships; groups which one leads or supports; sense of belonging to the human race; concern and interest in various forms of life in the world; knowledge and mastery of the sciences and mechanics of existence; communication between people on a spiritual level, through empathy and through art, music and other shared aesthetics; and finally awareness of a universal source of spirituality - the Godhead, All-That-Is, Implicate Order, or however you conceive such a quality.

These levels interact. How I behave may change some belief about myself; however a change in belief will definitely change how I behave. It is difficult to make a change at the level of identity without the beliefs and capabilities to support you. The spiritual viewpoint selects a personal identity, which selects beliefs, which select capabilities, which select behaviors, which in turn directly affects the person’s environment. Choices on one level may conflict with choices on another, e.g. a capability may be highly rewarded by the environment yet clash with one’s beliefs or identity. Or there may be a conflict of choice on one level, e.g. on a trivial behavioral level, the conflict between choosing to stay in and watch television or to go and visit friends.

The levels are often confused. Behavior is often taken as evidence of identity or capability, and this is how confidence and competence are destroyed in the classroom.
Getting a sum wrong does not mean you are stupid or that you are poor at math. To think this is to confuse logical levels, equivalent to thinking that a ‘No Smoking’ sign in a cinema should apply to the characters in the film.

For example, I might misspell a word. I could put this down to the environment: people are rushing me. I could leave it at the level of behavior: I got this one word wrong. I could generalize and question my capability with words and feel bad about that. I could start to believe I need to do more work to improve my spelling (which may be a rational belief!), or to believe that the English language is poorly designed (probably irrational). Or I could call my identity into question by thinking I am not a writer.

The way we view time is important. A problem may have to do with a past trauma, which has continuing repercussions in the present. On the other hand hopes and fears for the future can paralyze you in the present state, where personal history and possible futures converge. The unified field may be viewed in a further dimension, on a time line stretching back into the past and forward into the future. You can use this model to understand the balance and relationship of the different elements in yourself and others. The key is balance. Problems arise from a lack of balance and the unified field enables you to identify which elements have assumed too great an importance, and which are absent or too weak.

**The hierarchy of needs**

Before any progress is possible on a path of personal development, motivation must be established. Abraham Maslow identified a range of motivation that he rated on an ascending scale:

1. **Physiological needs**
   The needs for oxygen, food, water and a relatively constant body temperature. These needs are the strongest because if deprived, the person would die.

2. **Safety and security needs**
   Children often display signs of insecurity and their need to be safe. Adults, too, need the security of a home and means of income, and often have an underlying fear that these may be lost, e.g. in war or times of social unrest, or due to misfortune. Fear is the opposite flow to need. Accompanying any need for something is an equivalent fear of losing or not obtaining it.

3. **Social needs**
   This includes the need for mastery to be able to get one’s own way, to establish some control over one’s situation and environment, to express some degree of personal power, to be able to communicate and obtain objectives. And the need for love, affection and belonging. People need to escape feelings of loneliness and alienation and to give (and receive) love and affection, and to have a sense of belonging with high quality communication (with understanding and empathy).
4. Esteem needs
People need to feel good about themselves, to feel that they have earned the respect of others, in order to feel satisfied, self confident and valuable. If these needs are not met, the person feels inferior, weak, helpless and worthless.

5. Self-Actualization Needs
This is our need to develop to our full potential, to be creative, to feel we are contributing something worthwhile, to be one’s true self, to know the truth, to feel ecstasy. It is about fulfilling one’s purposes in life, a full expression of our creative potential. It is to be autonomous and fully-functioning. If these needs are not met, a person feels restless and frustrated, even if successful in other respects.

One reason that a person does not move through the needs to self-actualization is because of the hindrances placed in their way by society. For example, education can act to inhibit a person’s potential (though also of course it can promote personal growth). So can other aspects of the family and culture act to condition and funnel an individual into a role that is not fulfilling. To escape this conditioning, a person has to awaken to their situation, to realize that their life could be different, that there are changes that can be made in the direction of self-actualization.

To promote our personal growth, we can learn to be authentic, to be aware of our inner selves and to hear our inner feelings and needs. We can begin to transcend our own cultural conditioning and become world citizens. We can help our children discover their talents and creative skills, to find the appropriate career and complementary partner. We can demonstrate that life is precious, that there is joy to be experienced in life, and that if one is open to seeing the good - and humorous - in all kinds of situations, this makes life worth living.

There is one further need that Maslow didn’t mention. Though he probably intended it to be included as a self-actualization need, really it deserves its own category. This is...

6. The need for a higher truth
This is the need to make contact with the creative force that is beyond the human personality, to make sense of all the suffering and injustices of the survival struggle on earth. This need has been evident in all cultures, expressed by all religions, and is the spiritual path towards enlightenment, towards knowing God, towards discovering the truth of All That Is.

It is only by having at least a glimmer of this spirituality that we each are part of, that we can aspire to the highest potential of being human. To be able to genuinely love and to forgive unconditionally, we need to see in all others - even our enemies - the same essential quality that we ourselves are part of. Spirituality is a transpersonal quality, it is beyond the Ego and obsession with the self. It is the maturity of intuition.

The path of personal transformation is primarily a process of becoming aware of, facing up to and taking responsibility for one’s thoughts, feelings and actions, and then expanding this self-realization by communicating with others, retaining integrity.
whatever the response, and further enhancing the quality of communication with ever-increasing empathy and understanding. Through understanding others better, we can recognize their essential goodwill, however misguided it might have become, and begin to recognize the spirituality of humankind.

**The dimensions of creativity**

One can approach tasks in one’s life in a positive, creative manner or in an ineffectual, at worst destructive manner. These are the various dimensions involved. They’re a good way of assessing where a person is at - where you are at...

**Challenge**
In response to a challenge, the creative person will approach it energetically and with enjoyment. In the same situation a negative person will feel alienated and approach it with indifference - or even with hostility or fear, considering it a threatening problem.

**Freedom**
A creative person prefers to be independent and is happy to take initiatives and give voice to ideas. A more ineffectual person tends to be passive and rule-bound, questioning little.

**Liveliness**
If someone’s excitedly busy, happy and humorous they’re probably being creative, or at least productive; if they’re boringly slow, serious and dull, it’s unlikely.

**Openness**
Someone with a positive mentality tends to be trusting and considers mistakes as something to learn from. A negative person tends to be suspicious and considers failure as deserving of punishment.

**Conflicts**
When conflicts arise, a positive, creative person will look for a helpful win-win compromise, which requires willingness to communicate with understanding and empathy. A negative mentality loves being critical, won’t listen and the result is worsened conflict or even outright warfare.

**Risk taking**
A positive, creative person takes responsibility readily and doesn’t hesitate to risk acting on new ideas. A more negative person is fear-driven, tending to make cautious, safe decisions, fusses about the details, and is content to be committee-bound, thus avoiding responsibility.

Creative people: employ them, promote them, go into business with them, make friends with them, if you get the chance marry one. Destructive people: don’t!
When we’re enthusiastically doing something, involved in an activity that is aligned with our needs and goals, of course it’s easy to be positive. When everything goes badly wrong it’s hard not to be negative. So one cannot necessarily be classified as a positive/creative or negative/destructive person, there are all the in-between states, and in one area of our life we may be enthusiastic whilst in another, we may be deeply depressed. And this can vary over time. Nevertheless there tends to be a mean, a state that we are typically in, and that we identity with - an identity that others at least can clearly recognize.

One reason for feeling down is when we don’t feel we are getting love or respect from others, or we don’t feel cared for or even cared less about. Belonging is a basic need for all people.

The other side of the coin is when we don’t really love ourselves, when we are lacking integrity, not feeling whole. This occurs when we are not being true to our own values and goals. When we’re doing what we don’t really want to do, or not doing what we really do want to do. Or when we’ve made mistakes and try to disown the action, as if it never happened or was another’s responsibility, instead of taking the positive, creative approach, which is to learn from the mistake, to understand and empathize with why it was done and why it would be better to act differently next time.

Knowing who you are, self-realization, is another basic human need. It’s about making the most of your life. Some of the things that make living worthwhile are creatively envisioning and achieving goals, having fun through involvement and inter-action, beauty of all kinds, humor and unpredictability, being of service to others, to love and be loved, and to discover truth. Life is, to a significant degree, for learning - so when things don’t go right, when we do wrong, make mistakes, and when we do things right as well - these are all learning opportunities.

Learning can be positive, when an experience has been properly digested, so new skills, coping and mastery are developed - or learning can be negative, when the experience is perhaps overwhelming and has not been integrated and so future avoidance patterns become imprinted, what could be termed ‘unskills.’ So long as you eventually learn from it in a positive way, no experience is wasted.
Part Three: 
COMMUNICATION & RELATIONSHIPS

Your relationships with other people have a great impact upon every aspect of your life. The essence of relationships is communication; and yet, even between people who care deeply for each other, communication sometimes becomes blocked. We cannot put our feelings into words. Our partner speaks but we do not hear. We stare helplessly across an abyss of silence, or in frustration we hurl attacks that drive us further apart. Work on communication skills helps us to break through these sorts of impasse.

Introduction

The most basic action, in being alive, is to reach and withdraw; it is the basic survival dynamic, to reach out for food or to withdraw from danger. It is also the basis of communication. If sufficient intention is used and another is paying attention and duplicates that which is being put across, then communication is taking place. The basis of communication and interaction, then, is: reach - withdraw; speak - listen; give - receive. If viewpoints are shared through a process of two-way communication, affection and empathy may be built up, resulting in mutual understanding.

In practice of course, people have different objectives and viewpoints in life and these can conflict. ‘Reach toward’ becomes ‘fight against’. Conflict may be between one’s self (or any part of one’s self or environment that is being identified with, such as parental ‘shoulds’, child insecurities, family, friend, boss, lover, teacher, footballer, politician, pop star, possession, or fixed attitude, belief, idea or feeling) opposing any element of the outside world that is felt to counter the intention of self.

This conflict only becomes a problem if one can’t confront (face up to with equanimity) or experience comfortably, the confusion it creates; otherwise it could be handled and the situation viewed (realistically) as part and parcel of the ‘game’ of life. Possible responses to a conflict situation include:

- **Reach TOWARD** - when rational it is togetherness and affinity; when neurotic it is dependence.
- **PASSIVITY** - when rational it is acceptance of reality, when neurotic it is resistance to the truth.
- **Fight AGAINST** - when rational it is to negotiate needed changes, when neurotic it is aggression.
- **Withdraw AWAY** - when rational it is to simply give space, when neurotic it is avoidance or flight.
- **Two-way COMMUNICATION** - when rational it is to interact, when neurotic it becomes an obsession.
To the extent that these movements are flexible and spontaneous, the individual is free. When they are inflexible and rigid, he has become entrapped. The neurotic behaviors are based on fear.

If one direction has become compulsive, e.g. ‘towards’ may be compulsive between lovers, then the other flows are likely to be repressed, e.g. between the lovers, repressed ‘against’ may include anger, and repressed ‘away’ may include the desire to be with other people. These repressed factors may suddenly and seemingly inexplicably erupt.

If ‘against’ has become stuck, as in an irresolvable problem, this will tend to hang up in time, floating in a no-time rather than in a location on the time continuum of experiences, and cause a mental compaction or ridge of opposing energy flows - a feeling of heaviness and tension around the head.

Creative causation becomes reduced to a fixated compulsion as a safe solution, or defense, to unacceptable pain, fear, anxiety, confusion, change or guilt. A solution may involve dominating others, pleasing them or attracting sympathy. It is internally rationalized as being ‘right’ or ‘ideal’ behavior, with other points of view being ‘wrong’. The solution becomes a fixed pattern and the rationalization is a self idealization; these connected ideas are held unconsciously alongside the traumatic experience which originally necessitated them.

When the hard to accept circumstances reappear, or similar ones, the pattern is replayed automatically, and the person does not realize he is dramatizing reactively or that his true self is ‘asleep’. His views become unrealistic, mystifying and idealizing how the world is or should be.

Early character molding, where parents imposed a set of ‘shoulds’ and ‘shouldn’ts’, causes a child to derive a picture of what he should be like to be secure, to get over the basic anxiety of being ‘not OK’. This is later reinforced by other dominant personalities among friends, teachers and so on.

Idealizations, and the claims on others that result, conform to this internal ‘should be’ image, e.g. that ‘people should do things my way because naturally my way is right’, or ‘this shouldn’t happen to me because I’m special’. Frequently claims contain the expectation that things will come to you without having to make any effort. Indignation when such claims are frustrated may cause self-pity or victim feelings or be repressed and surface as psychosomatic symptoms.

Internal demands on self (e.g. ‘I should be independent’), result in external demands on others (‘leave me alone to do it’), using pride as a defense against self-hate, which is the result of constant unrealistic internal demands that cannot be fulfilled.

False-pride and self-hate are two sides of the same coin: the compulsion to be right, and this is the cause of so much misery and suffering.

When a person is operating on basic anxiety and uncertainty about his real capability and worth, failure to live up to his idealizations leads to unconscious self destructive
impulses and actions, symptoms of self-hate. Such things as recklessness and drug abuse, as well as self-contempt (‘No-one could possibly love me’), still further demands on the Self (‘I shouldn’t get upset’), self-accusations (‘I’m just a fraud’). Morbid dependency or ‘acting victim’, are means to get reassurance by refusing all responsibility.

Detachment may be seen as a solution to this conflict - anything to cut off sensitive feelings, ‘leave me alone’; not giving a damn about anybody else; or ‘Don’t try to change me’.

The self hate may be projected against other people, ideas, institutions or life itself, with generalizations used to protect the untruth from scrutiny, e.g. ‘politicians are stupid’, or ‘there’s no justice in life’.

Or in an effort to ‘be right’ idealizations may be identified with, a false pride, resulting in a never ending search for glory - being perfectionist, ruthless, arrogant, devious, etc. - to prove the ideals are truth. Because they are not founded on reality, however, life is likely to be disappointing and self-hate reappears.

On the other hand when a person operates with a confidence based on realistic self-knowledge, he will not mind making mistakes and will be willing to learn from them. Integrity, wholeness of self, is based on respect for self and others.

The basis of communication in a relationship between two persons or more is these factors, which work together:

**Communication - Understanding - Empathy**

If you communicate well to another, you obtain good understanding and empathy in the other person for yourself and your message. If you comprehend clearly, and have empathy for the other’s viewpoint, then you are listening well and are in good communication. If you use empathy in your communications, you will obtain better mutual understanding. So if you make one of these factors better, the other two improve too.

Communication, Understanding and Empathy add up to **Duplication**. That is, a sharing of reality.

Communication is a flow of energy, which reaches and withdraws between two or more people, as they share their individual viewpoints and agree upon a shared reality. The source of this flow of energy is the originator of the communication; it reaches out to the receiver and then withdraws, as the receiver then responds with his or her own communication. The quality of the communication is demonstrated by the understanding and empathy obtained between the parties.

Empathy does not depend on liking what another has to say, nor agreeing with it; instead it is an acceptance of the other person’s viewpoint. Commonly, if a person disagrees with another’s opinion, or dislikes their views or behavior, then a breakdown in the relationship will occur, an upset and maybe a parting of ways; at the least a sense
of frustration may occur. But none of this is necessary if you adopt a more spiritual viewpoint, that of empathy with the other, in which you are tolerant of the other person’s views and can understand them - even if you do not much like nor agree with them, nor wish to share them.

The essence of relationships is communication; and yet, even between people who care deeply for each other, communication sometimes becomes blocked. In the enthusiasm of the initial courtship, a person who generally has a poor ability to listen may be motivated to change this in order to attract the partner, but later on returns to his or her habitual ways. So at the start of a relationship it may not be recognized that important communication skills, such as the willingness and ability to ask appropriate questions and to listen effectively, are not part of the person’s normal behavior. Eventually, there will be a price to pay...

A satisfying relationship with another person requires good communication, mutual understanding and empathy. If there is a significant drop in one of these factors, e.g. we disagree and have an argument, then an upset ensues. An upset occurs when there is a sudden departure from what is wanted or expected. Such upsets inevitably have emotional consequences: ranging from less enthusiasm, through boredom and hostility, to fear and eventually to apathy. So the effect of upsets is cumulative; a small upset may be easily forgotten but many such instances, or a particularly painful experience, will likely never be forgiven - unless the upset is resolved in the present time by new and effective two-way communication.

Misunderstandings between people are very often due to poor communication skills. When a couple are unable to effectively discuss their feelings and ideas together, their relationship may eventually break down. Issues such as financial arrangements, family visits, pressures at work and contribution to home maintenance are common ‘hot spots’ in which failure to disclose feelings, or when those feelings are not genuinely listened to and understood, can lead to tension or serious upsets. Perhaps the ‘hottest’ issue is sexual response, since sex is such an integral aspect of a loving relationship.

For the body-mind’s natural sexual response to function correctly, a relaxed state is necessary. If there is emotional tension between a couple, or if there is internal fear and anxiety about sexual performance, then the nervous system cannot switch into the parasympathetic mode required for sexual arousal. The solution in this situation is better and more open communication between the couple, to let each other know how they are feeling and to have a mutual acceptance of the other without blame or recrimination. After all, that is what a loving relationship is about, and sex as an expression of love is far more exciting.

Another factor is that many men have little clue about their partner’s sexual response. This isn’t taught in school nor in the movies. Women can become resentful and eventually give up on the matter of receiving sexual pleasure. Sex becomes a cold ritual
or is abandoned completely, as the man (who doesn’t understand) is simply not in proper communication with his partner on this issue.

As men get older, often the ability to respond sexually is no longer like it was in the teenage years. The man may feel guilt and anxiety about his sexual performance, and even avoid sexual relations as a consequence. To help overcome this barrier, many have turned to Viagra supplements to boost their arousal. But these are expensive and unnatural pharmaceuticals. I would recommend primarily to begin to develop more intimate communication within the couple - this in itself can be a ‘turn on.’

**Intention**

An important aspect of communication we need to be aware of is **intention**. With sufficient intention, your words are able to reach the recipient, with whom you want to enter into communication. Without enough intention they may not reach across the distance between Source and Receiver.

![Diagram of communication cycle](source_receiver_diagram)

It is a prerequisite to first obtain the **attention** of the Receiver. For example, you want to speak to Terry, who is not at present in communication with you. So you say, ‘Terry,’ to get his attention, followed by ‘How are you doing?’ or whatever message you want to communicate. Of course, if either ‘Terry,’ or ‘How are you doing?’ are not spoken clearly nor loudly enough to reach Terry, and perhaps to impinge through his thoughts and daydreams, the communication will not reach its target and may be ignored or misinterpreted.

Communication may also be defined by the following cycle:

![Diagram of communication cycle](cause_effect_diagram)

You intend to make an effect on the other person by what you say, at the very least for the Receiver to fully comprehend and see the point of your message: to **duplicate** it. You would also hope for a response, an answer or an exchange of views.

If you don’t receive a response to your question, you need to repeat the question, making sure you use sufficient intention. You also may need to rephrase the question, in case the receiver had not understood what you were asking - if in doubt first ask, ‘Did you understand my question?’

When you do receive an answer to your question, or when the other person does finally do what you request, be sure always to **acknowledge** this clearly. An ‘OK,’ ‘right,’ ‘thank you,’ or even just a nod of the head - whatever is adequate to make clear to the person that he has been heard and understood. This completes the cycle of communication. It is most important, as lack of an adequate acknowledgement can
cause mystery and confusion and is a frequent cause of minor upset and frustration — such emotional charge builds up in time even though it is hidden or suppressed. This ‘bypassed charge’ then emerges in later reactive and exaggerated outbursts.

If you have a problem, the thing to do is to communicate: find out the information you need to get the full picture, so that the solution becomes apparent. If someone doesn’t understand or agree with you, clarify your own communication and ask clarifying and extending questions, until both of you begin to see each other’s viewpoint.

If you’re upset, you need to communicate and say how you feel, what you find frustrating. If your rights are being trampled on, say so! If you’ve done something wrong, again you need to communicate this.

Spot where you’re backing off from what you need to do or say, and then as the saying goes, ‘feel the fear and do it anyway’. You’ll be glad you did!

The emphasis is on getting the point across, not being fobbed off but obtaining a valid response to your question, whilst maintaining politeness and a positive tone. Practice with real-life situations in which you need to get your point across or obtain an appropriate answer to your question.

**Each One of Us Has the Right to...**

- Say no to a request.
- Not give other people reasons for every action we take.
- Stop others from making excessive demands on us.
- Ask other people to listen to our point of view when we speak to them.
- Ask other people to correct errors they made which effect us.
- Change our minds.
- Ask other people to compromise rather than get only what they want.
- Ask other people to do things for us.
- Persist in making a request if people won’t respond the first time.
- Be alone if we wish.
- Maintain our dignity in relationships.
- Evaluate our own behaviors and not just listen to evaluations that others offer.
- Make mistakes and accept responsibility for them.
- Avoid manipulation by other people.
- Pick our own friends without consulting our parents, peers, or anyone else.
- Let other people know how we are feeling.

**When Criticizing Others...**

- Make your comments specific.
- Attempt to provide the person with some valuable information.
- Help them to understand exactly what needs to change.
• Be sure the criticized behavior can be changed.
• If the person can do nothing about the problem, you will probably just make
  things worse by being critical of it.
• Use assertive communication.
• Speak calmly and try not to let your emotions dictate the conversation.
• Try not to shame, humiliate, or blame the person.
• Give the person a reason to change.
• Inform them of any benefits which might come out of acting on your suggestions.
• Time your criticisms well.
• Avoid criticizing someone in public.
• Wait until the person is in a reasonably good mood.
• View constructive criticism as feedback not punishment.
• Positive change should be your goal.

**Closed and Open Questions**

There are two primary types of question:

The **closed question** which demands a single answer. For example: ‘How old are you?’ ‘What time is it?’ ‘Did you go to the concert last night?’

The **open question** that demands an unlimited amount of information. For example, ask an opinion that may build on the answer to a closed question: ‘What was the concert like?’

Here is a practical exercise you can do with a cooperative partner...

Ask your partner a closed question followed by an open question. Your partner gives the answers to each of these questions. To show you have listened properly, repeat or paraphrase the answer to the open question back to your partner, who corrects you or acknowledges that you duplicated their answer properly.

When you have this mastered, then swap over roles. Remember to ensure that proper communication is being practiced, i.e. that you are accepting each other’s presence, without adopting some kind of reaction to being comfortably there with that person; that you communicate with adequate intention to reach and be understood clearly; that you always obtain an answer to your question, and acknowledge the answer.

When receiving an answer to your open question, sometimes it helps to show you are listening and understanding by giving a half-acknowledgement - this is not a strong acknowledgement that would end the cycle of communication prematurely, but just a small nod of the head or ‘hm-hm’ or similar, that helps to keep the flow going.

Also, the requirement not to be reactive in response to the other does not mean you should be impassive. For example, you would respond naturally to a humorous remark,
or say ‘I understand’ to an intimate one. However, two things it is very important NOT TO DO:

**Invalidate** the information that you obtain.

**Impose your evaluation** about the information received.

In counseling, these are the big sins, as the aim of counseling is to encourage the individual to express their feelings, to look newly and without fear at a situation, in order to see more clearly. The person needs to discover for themselves, and any invalidation or evaluation ruins the process.

Even in everyday relationships, to invalidate the other’s opinion or to give your irrelevant or premature evaluation is most unhelpful. Give facts and ask pertinent questions, but never tell someone they are wrong or give your opinion unless they ask you. So you listen to what the other person says and ask further questions as necessary. For example, if you didn’t understand what was meant or if you need clarification or more information. These are called clarifying and extending questions.

Be sure to really listen so you obtain a clear picture of what is in the other’s mind; ask questions that you need to fill in any gaps in this picture. And if the picture differs from the reality of the situation, don’t say so directly as that would be invalidating and you may be mistaken yourself, but ask the person you are trying to help some pertinent questions so that they will see for themselves.

For example, the person may say, ‘People can be very lazy sometimes.’

Clarifying questions: ‘In what situations do you find people lazy?’ ‘All people?’

Extending question: ‘What other characteristics do you ascribe to people in general?’

**Questions & Answers**

In this exercise you pose a question to your partner from a prepared list. The partner replies and then asks you what the reply was. So you need to listen! Then you ask a further clarifying or extending question, followed by your partner asking you what the reply was to that, and so on.

Remember to ensure that good communication practicing are being observed, i.e. that you are comfortably being with and accepting each other’s presence, without reacting negatively to anything said; that you communicate with adequate intention to be heard and understood clearly; that you always obtain an answer to your question, and acknowledge every answer.

These are personal questions about your values, your beliefs and your life. Love, money, sex, integrity, generosity, pride and death are all here. To respond to these questions, you will need to examine and interpret your past, project yourself into hypothetical situations, face difficult dilemmas and make painful choices. There are no correct or incorrect answers to these questions, only honest or dishonest ones. Let
yourself be swept up in these situations, so that you care about the choices you make. Your partner will ask questions to get you to expand your answers and pursue interesting tangents - give your imagination full rein.

1. What could you do today?

2. For what in your life do you feel most grateful?

3. Do you have any specific long-term goal?
   *How do you plan on reaching it?*
   *In what way will reaching this goal make your life more satisfying?*

4. If you could choose the manner of your death, what would it be?
   *How do your feelings about death influence the way you lead your life?*

5. Which people do you hate?
   *Why?

6. What is your most treasured memory?

7. What would constitute a ‘perfect’ evening for you?

8. Do you think men or women have it easier in our culture?
   *Have you ever wished you were of the opposite sex?*

9. If you were to die right now, what would you most regret not having told someone?
   *Why haven’t you told them yet?*

10. In what way does a person inspire you?

11. If you could wake up tomorrow having gained one ability or quality, what would it be?

12. Is there anything so important that you would sacrifice your very soul for it?

13. What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?
   *Is there anything that you hope to do that is even better?*

14. What was your most enjoyable dream?
   *Your worst nightmare?*

15. Have you ever been attracted to someone of the same sex?
   *To someone in your family?*
   *If so, how did you deal with it?*

16. Given the choice of anyone in the world, who would you want as your lover?

17. When you tell a story, how do you exaggerate or embellish it?
   *Why?*

18. In what way do you feel in control of the course of your life?

19. For what reason did you last yell at someone?
20. Do you have any considerations about eating meat?

21. Would you feel ill at ease going alone to the cinema?
   *What about going on holiday by yourself?*

22. In what way would you like to be famous?

23. How would you like to be remembered after you die?
   *What would you like said at your funeral?*
   *Whom would you like to speak?*

24. How much would it bother you to have an ugly, stupid or crippled child?

25. How would you play in a game against someone much less talented than you?
   *Would it matter who was watching?*

26. Is there something you’ve dreamed of doing for a very long time?
   *Why haven’t you done it?*

27. What are your most compulsive habits?
   *Do you regularly struggle to break any of these habits?*

28. What from your childhood has proven most valuable?
   *Most difficult to overcome?*

29. What could make life not worth living?

30. If you were unconcerned about what others would think, what might you do?

31. Would you like to wake up in another person’s body tomorrow?

32. How do you feel about God?

37. Who is the most important person in your life?
   *What could you do to improve the relationship?*
   *Will you do it?*

38. What would you change about the way that you were raised?
   *In what ways would you treat your children differently?*

39. What things do you do, that you don’t want to do?
   *Why?*

40. If you found yourself on a nudist beach, how would you feel?
   *How much do you like your body?*

41. What is too serious to be joked about?

42. Do you have a favorite sexual fantasy?
   *Would you like to have it fulfilled?*

43. What do you value most in a relationship?

44. If there was a public execution on television, how would you feel?
45. What things are too personal to discuss with others?

46. How would you feel about becoming paralyzed?

47. When was the last time you stole something?
   Why haven’t you stolen anything since then?

48. Is there anything anyone could have told you that would have made your first sexual experience better?

49. What do you like best about your life?
   What do you like least?

50. How do you feel about someone more successful than you?

51. What things do you do, to favorably impress other people?

52. Do you think it is bad to break a promise?
   What does it take for you to trust someone?

53. What would you never willingly sacrifice?

54. How much impact do you have on the people you meet?
   Has someone you met significantly influenced your life?

55. In what way would you like to have more physical contact?
   Could you initiate it?

56. What has been your biggest disappointment in life?
   Your biggest success?

57. How do you rate your physical attractiveness?
   Your intelligence?
   Your personality?

58. Are there any drugs you would enjoy trying given a legal opportunity to do so?
   What appeals to you about such drugs?

59. If you could determine the dream you will have tonight, what would it be?

60. Given the chance, is there a time you would return to?

61. What would you like to be doing five years from now?
   What do you think you will be doing five years from now?

62. What is the most embarrassing thing you can imagine?
   What bothers you about looking silly in front of strangers?

63. Have you ever wanted to kill someone, or wished someone dead?
   Could you look into the person’s eyes and stab the person to death?

64. Do you find anything disturbing about immortality?
   What age seems ideal to you?

65. How much do you expect from someone who loves you?
What would make you feel betrayed?

66. Do you feel you have enough time?
If not, what would give you that feeling?

67. What kind of people do you like to spend time with?
What do such people bring out in you that others do not?

Two Keys

There are two keys that are most important in interpersonal relationships and in relationships with oneself. They are almost secrets (which everyone knows!) yet they are conspicuously missing in most of our relationships. They result in our imagining or hallucinating what others feel and what they think. Their absence causes a great deal of personal misery. To the degree you use these two, you will find your relationships with others improve, and you feel better about yourself. These two great keys are:

Tell others what you think, feel and want, and

Ask others what they think, feel and want.

Two beliefs that get in the way of improving feelings and relationships are:

‘People should know what I really feel and want’

‘It is a weakness to show how you feel and think’ (when there is a problem).

The reality is that others do not know what you think and feel; they might not even realize they are upsetting you, especially if you smile to cover your hurt. And they do not know what you want unless you tell them.

If people know what you think, feel and want without your telling them, then they must be reading your mind. If you know what others feel, think and want without their telling you, you must be reading their minds. If the previous two statements are true, then we must be terrible mind readers. Think of the spouse who suddenly leaves the other. The other is amazed to hear that their husband or wife wasn’t happy. They thought everything was fine! Clearly the mind reading wasn’t working very well! Unfortunately they did not tell each other what they thought, felt and wanted. And they did not ask the other what they felt, thought and wanted!

We expect others to tell us what they feel, think and want. But we can ask them. And we cannot expect others to ask us what we think, feel and want, but we can tell them.

Of course, there are times to be silent. We would not continually express what we think, feel and want about every little thing. But our modern society could do better if we stopped hallucinating what others think, feel and want, and asked them; and if we stopped expecting others to read our minds, and said what we thought, felt and wanted.

It is a matter of good communication, and communication is the solvent of all problems.
As children we expected our parents to know what we thought, felt and wanted. Mothers have to hallucinate what their babies think, feel and want (because babies do not have language.) Yet how many people claim that their parents did not understand them; didn’t know what they thought, felt and wanted - how they ‘Always got it wrong!’ How many children (of any age) do not understand their parents?

Just to ram this thought home, people do not know what you think, feel or want unless you tell them. You do not know what others think, feel or want, unless you ask them. So in future, don’t hallucinate about what others think and feel about something, ask them. And don’t expect others to imagine what you think and feel, tell them!

**Sentence Completions**

The psychologist Nathaniel Branden developed a technique called Sentence Completion, to help his clients uncover and communicate their true feelings, which previously were suppressed. This denial of feelings and true wishes or desires occurs because of fear that acting on them or communicating them will bring scorn or ridicule - in short, will upset the apple cart. But to continue suppressing what one truly wants is to die inside, to lose integrity.

With your partner, complete the following sentences, with as much honesty and frankness as you can muster. Move on to the next one when you have uncovered an awareness that you were previously suppressing. (And then be sure to put this self-realization into action in your life!)

Your partner says, ‘Please complete this...’

I am a person who ...
One of the things I’d like people to know about me is ...
One of the things I have to do to survive is ...
All my life, I ...
It isn’t easy for me to admit ...
Sometimes I feel frustrated when ...
If I didn’t care what people thought, I would ...
Ever since I was a child, I ...
One of the things I’d like to be valued and appreciated for is ...
One of the things I wish my partner understood about me is ...
One of the things I wish my parents understood about me is ...
One of the things I wish people understood about me is ...
One of the things I appreciate about my partner is ...
One of the things I appreciate about my friend is ...
One of the things I appreciate about my family is ...
One of the things I appreciate about my parents is ...
Mother gave me a view of life as ...
Mother gave me a view of men as ...
Mother gave me a view of women as ...
Mother gave me a view of love as ... 
Mother gave me a view of sex as ... 
One of the unspoken messages I got from Mother was ... 
One of the things I’m still doing to win Mother’s love is ... 
Father gave me a view of life as ... 
Father gave me a view of men as ... 
Father gave me a view of women as ... 
Father gave me a view of love as ... 
Father gave me a view of sex as ... 
One of the unspoken messages I got from Father was ... 
One of the things I’m still doing to win Father’s love is ... 
One of the things I long for in relationships is ... 
One of the things that frustrate me about relationships is ... 
One of the things that first attracted me to my partner was ... 
I feel especially happy with my partner when ... 
I feel especially happy with my friends when ... 
One of the rules I try to live by is ... 
With people, sometimes I’m afraid that ... 
The scary thing about being more conscious is ... 
I am becoming aware that ...

**The self-defeating should**

One usually cannot go through a day without saying to oneself, to another or hearing from another the word ‘should’ (or its variations: must, ought, mustn’t, shouldn’t, oughtn’t) - several times, at least. These ‘shoulds’ are imprinted in our minds and limit our choices and happiness.

These are just a few of the ways people use the word ‘should’ and its variations:

- I should be studying (very popular among students of all ages).
- I should have called ....... (you fill in the blank).
- I should be making more money.
- I should love my husband/wife.
- That’s not fair (it should be).
- You really ought to get the house painted.
- I (you) should be a better (more competent, etc) person.
- You (I) should have taken out the garbage.
- You shouldn’t run in the house.
- I (you) shouldn’t be so negative.
In each of the above examples, the word ‘should’ is used or implied in a way that suggests several things. First, each of the statements has some basis in reality. The garbage most likely did need to be taken out and the listener probably agreed to perform that task. Second, each of the statements is usually used when the listener did not perform the task as agreed (did not take out the garbage). Third, the implication of the statement is that by not doing the agreed task the listener is bad.

These kinds of statements are generally used to get someone (frequently ourselves) to do something. ‘You should have taken out the garbage’ really means, ‘I want the garbage out of here and you agreed to take the responsibility for that task!’ By using the word ‘should’ we put the listener at a disadvantage. We do this by getting him/her to focus on the possibility that he/she is a bad person and not on the fact that we are telling him/her what to do. If all goes well the listener will not question our motives for making the statement, will feel embarrassed (bad) enough to think about his or her areas of responsibility, and finally, take out the garbage.

Incidentally, we learn at a very young age to associate bad feelings with the word ‘should.’ Most every kid has heard his/her parent saying that he/she should have done or not done something in particular. It is extremely unusual for the parent to express something like that without either stating or implying that the kid is bad. We learn that when we do something that we ‘shouldn’t’ do we are bad -- and -- when we do not do things we ‘should’ we are also bad. We learn this so well that we are able to elicit the same emotional response from ourselves and others when we use the word should, as our parents did when we were kids.

We also learn to use the word ‘should’ in another strange way. We say things like ‘I should be studying’ when we are at a football game (though it’s essentially impossible to study at a football game). We get (a) to feel bad about not studying (a just punishment), (b) to not study (that’s OK because we have been punished for our transgression), and (c) to stay at the game. However, we do not tend to enjoy the game as thoroughly as we might if we hadn’t gone through the punishment chain.

To avoid the bad feelings associated with the word should, see if you can substitute one of several other words (might, could) that imply choice. Example: ‘I should take out the garbage’ may become ‘I could take out the garbage,’ or ‘It might be a good idea to take out the garbage.’ If you substitute other more empowering words in place of ‘should’ in your thoughts, you will probably cut out a large portion of the bad feelings you experience daily.

If you are saying ‘I should have washed the car,’ finish the statement with something realistic: ‘and I didn’t,’ rather than moralistic: ‘and I am bad for not doing what I promised.’ Then ask yourself if you really want the car washed, and if so, do you really want to wash it now rather than doing some other activity. This gives you the opportunity to become clear about tasks, establish priorities and make choices about your behavior.
A similar statement works when dealing with other people as well. Instead of ‘You should take out the garbage,’ try ‘The garbage pile is very large, will you take it out, please?’ The person may say no but will probably add the reasoning behind his/her decision to say no (‘No! I’m in the bathroom now.’). You then have a choice: take out the garbage yourself if that is your highest priority or wait until the person who is responsible for the task to become available.

Beware of others who ‘should’ you. Before you respond, ask yourself if you really want to do what they are ‘shoulding’ and make an active choice. When talking with others, avoid ‘shoulds.’ Explain what you want and ask their cooperation.

**Improving communication skills in personal relationships**

Create a context in which your friend can feel free to share feelings, thoughts, fantasies, hurts, and complaints, without the fear that you will condemn, attack, lecture, or simply withdraw. We tend to be as critical of others as we are of ourselves.

- Know that you have a right to your feelings as others have a right to theirs.
- Working on a relationship always begins with working on ourselves.
- Try not to blame all of the relational problems on your partner.
- Remember, you only have control over changing yourself, not others, and the temptation is to blame others for our problems.
- Don’t rush yourself into sharing emotionally painful information.
- Sometimes it’s best to write out your concerns in private then share them with your partner at a later time.

The Sentence-Completion method can help. Set aside a block of time when you and your friend can talk and after obtaining agreement, do the following exercise...

Both of you should take turns completing the following statements on communication:

- Communication to me means ...
- The hard thing about intimate communication is ...
- Sometimes I withdraw from communication when ...

It is also beneficial to complete the following statements on self-disclosure:

- I am a person who ...
- One of the things I’d like people to know about me is ...
- When I try to talk about things that are important to me...
- When I try to express intimate feelings ...
- If I were more open about expressing my feelings and opinions ...
When people try to talk with me, sometimes I ...  

Further it is useful to explore obstacles to communication by completing these statements:

If I weren’t concerned about the listener’s response ...

Sometimes I become blocked when ...

One of the ways I sometimes make it difficult for people to talk to me is ...

**Communication in sexual relationships**

Although it is tempting to begin arguing when one of you is angry, try to mentally step back for a moment to allow the heat of the anger to pass somewhat. Some tools which might be helpful to achieve a calmer mental state include counting to ten several times, taking several deep breaths (count to four slowly as you inhale and count backwards from four to one as you exhale), walk around the block, or write your angry, uncensored thoughts in a journal.

Often people will see the anger but refuse to look at the real emotions that might be hidden beneath it. For example, when my partner hurts me with something she says, my immediate response might be to lash out at her in anger rather than looking at the hurt that is there. Each person has a choice to either strike back verbally or to discuss the feelings of hurt, misunderstanding, etc.

Think about what effect your words will have on your partner - would you like to receive them? Certain methods of communication will almost always cause further misunderstanding. These include: claiming that your view is fact rather than qualifying it as one’s perceptions; exaggerating, generalizing, making assumptions; being negative or intolerant; being judgmental, rude, or insulting; name-calling; using ‘you...’ statements rather than ‘I...’ statements; and jumping to conclusions.

Communication at a time of upset is a chance to share your feelings that would otherwise be suppressed and later give rise to frustration and resentment. And by genuinely listening and understanding the other it is also a chance to show that your love is unconditional - accepting of the other as they are - and therefore truly love, rather than need or attachment or selfish manipulation.

In the enthusiasm of the initial courtship, a person who generally has a poor ability to listen may be motivated to change this in order to attract the partner, but later on returns to his or her habitual ways. So at the start of a relationship it may not be recognized that important communication skills, such as the willingness and ability to ask appropriate...
questions and to listen effectively, are not part of the person’s normal behavior. Eventually, there will be a price to pay...

A satisfying relationship with another person requires good communication, mutual understanding and empathy. If there is a significant drop in one of these factors, e.g. we disagree and have an argument, then an upset ensues. An upset occurs when there is a sudden departure from what is wanted or expected. Such upsets inevitably have emotional consequences: ranging from less enthusiasm, through boredom and hostility, to fear and eventually to apathy. So the effect of upsets is cumulative; a small upset may be easily forgotten but many such instances, or a particularly painful experience, will likely never be forgiven - unless the upset is resolved in the present time by new and effective two-way communication.

Misunderstandings between people are very often due to poor communication skills. When couples are unable to effectively discuss their feelings and ideas together, their relationship may eventually break down. Issues such as financial arrangements, family visits, pressures at work and contribution to home maintenance are common ‘hot spots’ in which failure to disclose feelings, or when those feelings are not genuinely listened to and understood, can lead to tension or serious upsets. Perhaps the ‘hottest’ issue is sexual response, since sex is such an integral aspect of a loving relationship.

For the body-mind’s natural sexual response to function correctly, a relaxed state is necessary. If there is emotional tension between a couple, or if there is internal fear and anxiety about sexual performance, then the nervous system cannot switch into the parasympathetic mode required for sexual arousal. The solution in this situation is better and more open communication between the couple, to let each other know how they are feeling and to have a mutual acceptance of the other without blame or recrimination. After all, that is what a loving relationship is about, and sex as an expression of love is far more exciting.

Another factor is that many men have little clue about their partner’s sexual response. This isn’t taught in school nor in the movies. Women can become resentful and eventually give up on the matter of receiving sexual pleasure. Sex becomes a cold ritual or is abandoned completely, as the man (who doesn’t understand) is simply not in proper communication with his partner on this issue.

As men get older, often the ability to respond sexually is no longer like it was in the teenage years. The man may feel guilt and anxiety about his sexual performance, and even avoid sexual relations as a consequence. To help overcome this barrier, many have turned to Viagra supplements to boost their arousal. But these are expensive and
unnatural pharmaceuticals. I would recommend primarily to begin to develop more intimate communication within the couple - this in itself can be a ‘turn on.’

Sexual arousal is only possible when one is feeling relaxed; it is destroyed by fear, anxiety or tension. When one partner is not able or is unwilling to enjoy sexual relations, it is therefore very important to communicate openly, so these negative feelings can be understood and the causes resolved. Couples need to talk honestly with each other, preferably at the first opportunity rather than later when emotions have become overwhelming. Through the lessons learnt, the relationship will only grow stronger. If this sort of communication is not possible then there really is no longer a relationship at all; but even then it is not too late to begin speaking the truth and listening, perhaps for the first time, and recover the empathy that is the spark of love.

Personal relationships deteriorate when what is needed and wanted is not expressed; the resulting frustrations build up and result in increasing anxiety and upset. This is particularly likely to occur with sexual relationships, when problems or disagreements about sexual issues are not discussed openly and honestly. If this is the case in your personal life, then here are some tips for how to go about improving matters. Of course, many of the principles apply equally to any sensitive issue.

**Break The Ice**

Talk with your partner about why it’s hard to talk about sex.

Share earlier experiences with talking about sex

Begin by discussing less threatening topics such as birth control, sex education, etc.

Gradually move toward discussing more personal feelings and concerns.

Read and discuss material if it seems easier than spontaneously talking about personal matters.

Share your sexual histories including such areas as sex education, first experience with sexuality, etc.

**Listen and Provide Feedback**

Active listening helps to show you are interested in what your partner is saying. Ask questions and make brief comments to help increase your understanding of what is being said.

Maintaining eye contact (but not in a fixed way) displays caring and validation.

Reflect back to your partner what you have understood them to say. This conveys active listening and an interest in understanding.

Be supportive of your partner’s efforts to communicate.
A statement of appreciation or thanks can go a long way to strengthening a relationship.

Express ‘unconditional positive regard.’ Convey the sense that you will value your partner regardless of what they communicate to you.

**Discover Your Partner’s Needs**

Ask open-ended and either/or questions to gain the most information about your companion’s desires. Your partner will probably appreciate your concern.

If the subject you are interested in is particularly sensitive, try self-disclosing first. Self-disclosure will model trust and a willingness to take risks.

Compare notes on sexual preferences. This can be an effective way of learning about what does and doesn’t stimulate your partner, and is certainly more efficient than trial and error.

Give your partner permission to talk about his/her feelings.

**Learn To Make Requests**

Take responsibility for your own pleasure. Realize that people are not mind readers and genuinely communicate your needs and desires.

Make requests specific. This will increase the chance that your wishes will be understood and granted.

Use ‘I’ language. Although it is sometimes difficult to personalize requests, it is often the best means of getting a positive response.

**Delivering Criticism**

Be aware of your motivation. Is it based on a constructive desire to make your relationship better?

Choose the right time and place. Try not to be critical when anger is at its peak. Give your partner a choice about when he/she would like to talk. Be aware of your partner’s needs when choosing a location.

Temper criticism with praise. This will reduce the likelihood of your partner responding in a defensive or angry fashion, and increase the chances of him/her accepting what you have to say.

Nurture small steps toward change. Be generous with your support and encouragement of change. Realize that it is normal to revert back to comfortable patterns that have developed over time, so don’t be too discouraged if there is some backsliding.

Avoid ‘why’ questions. They tend to be perceived as attacking and hurtful. Better to say ‘I don’t understand...’
Express your anger appropriately. Direct your anger toward your partner’s behaviors, not his/her character. Don’t forget to remind your partner that you appreciate them as a person. Take responsibility for your anger.

Your partner cannot make you feel angry; you choose to respond that way.
Part Four:

A POSITIVE APPROACH

This part of the book presents information and exercises that cover many of the key issues in personal development. The purpose is to help you become more clear about your own identity, what you want in life - your life vision - and how to consciously transform your life for the better. You will learn how your beliefs shape your life experience and become aware of exactly how you are creating your personal reality. Each of these items includes a practical element that you can apply in your daily life, so your life can genuinely start to improve in ways that are meaningful for you.

Invalidation

When you act according to the will of another person and suppress your own wishes, you have identified a part of yourself with the other person. You have let them into your mind, as your master. You have become fragmented. One of the main ways this comes about is through invalidation, or ‘making wrong’. If somebody says your effort was ‘not good enough’ or that you ‘shouldn’t have done that’, then you start to question yourself. You begin to introspect and ask, ‘Is there something wrong with me?’ When another person wrongly evaluates or misunderstands your communications or your state of mind, naturally this is upsetting. It means the other has not understood you. Your enthusiasm wanes. You may accept this false evaluation - perhaps because of the authority or dominance of the other person. If you ignore your own feelings and believe they must be right, you begin to follow their will, not your own. A part of you has identified with the other person and split from the real you. The you that is responsible for your choices.

This very commonly occurs with children, where they take on the characteristics of their parents. It is also very frequent in relationships where one partner adjusts to match the other’s expectations. And of course it happens at work too. When our goals are suppressed by another - however well meant - it is eventually life destroying. Negative evaluations (personal criticisms, opinions) by another especially at times of stress can cause extreme upset.

There are many and various ways you might have been put-down by others and as a result agreed to have less power. You need to look again at what happened and ask yourself:

1. What choices did I make? Consider:
   a. What did I decide about myself?
   b. What did I decide about the other person or other people?
   c. What did I choose to think?
d. How did I choose to feel? What emotion did I choose?
e. What did I choose to do?
f. How did my choices affect my behavior going forward?

2. What other choices could I have made? And what might the effect of each of those choices be?

3. What positive learning can I get from this experience?

The positive learning is basically whatever insight you have found after realizing you have chosen one direction and can revise that choice if you want.

You always have choices. If a mugger threatened you with a gun, you have the choice not to give him your wallet. He might have killed you or given up and run away. But you had the choice. You may have chosen to give him your wallet, which may have been wise. But you never have to do anything against your will. You can always choose.

Following is a list of ways you might have been invalidated in the past, or it may be happening to you now. For each question that applies to you, go through the procedure above and see what you can learn from this experience, and what part of yourself you can reintegrate.

- Did anybody say you don’t have a right to your opinion?
- Did anybody criticize you unjustly?
- Did anybody make an unfair generalization about you?
- Did anybody tease you?
- Did anybody make you feel insignificant?
- Did anybody tell you that you shouldn’t be there?
- Did anybody tell you that you don’t belong?
- Did anybody tell you that you couldn’t leave?
- Did anybody force you to follow their rules?
- Did anybody trick you into an agreement?
- Did anybody judge you?
- Did anybody make you do something you didn’t like?
- Did anybody decide things for you?
- Did anybody take away your ability to choose?
- Did anybody bypass you or take away your job?

To take an example. Perhaps my wife says I’m a useless lover. I feel invalidated, put down, and upset, naturally. And perhaps I accept what she says, that I am indeed a useless lover and now I really don’t want to make love any more. I have chosen to accept what she said as the truth. Looking at it again now though, I can see that it was simply words she spoke and perhaps she had other reasons for stating that - there was certainly a breakdown in communication between us at the time. I realize now that invalidations can occur when what is said is not really meant (after all, many times
before that she said I’m a great lover) but is a symptom of a more significant upset. I can repair such an upset by honest and open communication. That’s positive learning for me.

**Co-dependence**

Sometimes we put aside our true self and instead exist from the position of being effect. We may be involved in relationships and work situations we know are harming us, but we feel helpless to change them. We may have addictive relations to people and situations. We must have what is harming us, or we must do what (we really know inside) is harming us. We are co-dependent.

One may be addicted to a relationship if one feels ashamed and therefore needing to propitiate - or if one fears abandonment, being rejected or being alone and therefore forced to be independent. But these feelings are suppressed, hidden from ourselves. Co-dependence is really emotional dishonesty, because we are suppressing our true feelings and substituting those of another. We lose our integrity and are therefore stuck on our spiritual path. It needs dealing with!

Do any of the following apply to you?

- Do you depend on somebody else’s approval?
- Do somebody else’s problems feel like your problems?
- Do you put aside your interests for another person’s?
- Do you feel responsible for another’s feelings?
- Do you feel you can’t say no, or very guilty and anxious if you do?
- Do you worry how another may respond to your feelings and behavior?
- Do you fear being hurt or rejected by another?
- Do you put another’s needs and wants before your own?
- Do you judge things by another person’s standards?
- Are you steadfastly loyal even when shamed, neglected or abused?

If so, spot the co-dependence and take responsibility in that area - reclaim your own choices. (You can change the following questions to the present tense if appropriate.)

1. What choices did I make? Consider:
   a. What did I decide about myself?
   b. What did I decide about the other person or other people?
   c. What did I choose to think?
   d. How did I choose to feel? What emotion did I choose?
   e. What did I choose to do?
   f. How did my choices affect my behavior going forward?

2. What other choices could I have made? And what might the effect of each of those choices be?

3. What positive learning can I get from this experience?
You need to look at the situation in terms of choices you have made and that you can revise, now that you are more conscious of what’s going on.

By becoming conscious of our attitudes and perspectives, we can start discerning what works for us and what does not work. We can then start making choices about whether our view of life is serving us - or if it is setting us up to be victims because we are expecting life to be something that it is not.

An example. I allow my son to watch any program he wants on TV and miss my own favorites, because I’m afraid to upset him and I want him to love me. I’ve chosen to believe that he will only love me if I allow him to do whatever he wants. I realize now however that I’m his father, he loves me anyway, and my behavior is not actually going to increase his respect for me, in fact the opposite, and it isn’t a good example to set him either [my positive learning]. I have my own right to watch my favorite programs and the TV is a resource we share, not to be dominated by one person. So now I choose to explain that to my son (assertively but calmly and with empathy, certainly not with anger or resentment) and in future we will have a better arrangement.

Empathic communication is always the answer, but remember that empathy does not necessarily require liking or agreement, it’s to recognize and respect the other as an independent living being, with their own rights and responsible for their own beliefs, feelings and actions. And yourself likewise. That’s what love actually is: unconditional acceptance. That quality is who you really are, your essential nature.

Co-dependence applies to perhaps a majority of people, so don’t think there’s anything wrong with you, so much as you’ve now started on a path of personal growth, so you can begin to switch these things around. Choose one of the aspects of co-dependence and start to put it right. Not all at the same time as that would be overwhelming, but choose one in which you feel you can take some positive steps toward changing your situation and your customary responses. If you can make some empowering changes, this will encourage you to tackle further areas of your life and relationships, and the snowball will be rolling. However, if it all seems too much, then get some help from a counselor, who will give you support.

**Suppression**

It’s easy to blame ‘devils under the bed’ as the cause of all one’s difficulties. Something else to blame so one can shed responsibility and be unaccountable. But what happened to being at cause?

A ‘suppression’ is not normally the result of any such evil entity. It is simply caused by a person who has different intentions than myself, expressed persuasively, so that I now feel suppressed, depressed and stressed.

There other person is not necessarily evilly intentioned toward you, or anything of that nature. They may be well intentioned and often are. They merely have to cross your goals and purposes without malice or forethought and for the best of reasons. As
someone once said: ‘The path to Hell is paved with good intentions and roofed with tears.’ How right he was.

So what is suppression? Suppression can be defined as being forced out of one’s own time and space by another’s purposes and goals. One moves out of one’s own identity into the time and space of another’s goals and purposes in order to handle the situation being presented - instead of saying ‘Get stuffed’ or something more diplomatic and going on with what one was intending to do in the first place. In other words one didn’t maintain integrity.

There are two directions in which one might move - toward or away from. Either creates the Catch 22 situation that is suppression. One can align with the other’s identity, which their goal or purpose imposes, or one can resist the goal or purpose and become another identity - but not one’s true self. But there is another alternative - one could maintain one’s integrity, just be oneself. This also means taking responsibility, acting on the basis of a clear sense of one’s own identity, goals and purposes.

For example, a proud father wants his son to become an engineer like himself. If this is not what the son intends he either complies and makes a lousy engineer and is subject to suppression throughout his life by having to follow his father’s vocation. Or he resists this persuasion and becomes something quite the opposite, such as an artist, but he doesn’t do well at it this either because it was set up in opposition to his father, not as something he really wanted to do. So again that person feels continually suppressed by life. His problem is that neither way can he be himself, a Catch 22. Compliance or resistance generates constant emotional charge in the person’s life that doesn’t resolve. Its a locked situation. He may - and normally does - hide this situation from himself and he may have no real idea who he himself is, what he really wants to be and do in life, what his true goals and purposes are.

Notice which people in your life make you feel good and which make you feel bad. When you find yourself feeling limited or put down or depressed in somebody’s presence, write down who it is and exactly what happened. And when you feel uplifted and in a good mood in somebody’s presence, note down who it was and exactly what happened.

Look for specific reasons for your feelings in those situations. What is the difference between the people or situations where you feel good and the ones where you feel bad?

Isolate what is going on. What are your intentions, likes, dislikes, purposes and goals that are being suppressed. They may be being suppressed by yourself now as well, but originally they were aspects of your own identity that were effectively suppressed by another’s influence. Or that suppressive influence - perhaps with the ‘best of intentions’ but not your intentions - may be continuing into the present.
Just recognizing the truth of one’s current situation will help to free it up. Work out how you can organize your life to minimize the negativity and reclaim your power.

Remember that the situations in your life where you feel at effect or a victim are something you are doing and creating by yourself. It might appear to be other people’s fault, however, we are the ultimate cause of our lives.

When I was a child, parents or teachers were ‘always right,’ and I had to conform to their rules. They had all the power. So the choices left would be extreme, like running away from home or jumping from a bridge; or being unquestioningly obedient and gradually losing touch with myself; or just being thoroughly depressed. How these experiences can be resolved? The past cannot be undone but I can change my interpretation of it. From a mature, adult point of view I can show my inner child that perhaps another choice remains: to understand that my parents or teachers may have been misguided but were acting in what they thought to be my best interest, so instead of feeling resentment I now have the choice to instead feel a little more understanding and empathy. And then I have the choice to forgive them, a choice that I did not feel I had then, and to learn some valuable life lessons from the experience.

**Criticism**

In the first stage of this series we have been looking at the factors that can cause fragmentation of our identity: invalidation (feeling put-down by someone), codependence (where we put aside our own feelings), suppression (the opposition to one’s goals and purposes by another), and now we look more at how criticism can affect us, and how best to handle it.

A person tends to defend himself and protest, when confronted by another’s criticism or complaint. Nevertheless he may afterward start to introspect - ‘Is it really true, what was said?’ - causing him to fixate his attention inwardly on himself. Compulsive introspection is caused by a false criticism being accepted, which causes the person to look inwardly and worry about the mystery caused by this error. In a normal person this can cause diminished activity and unhappiness or illness. With a neurotic person it can push him over the edge into psychosis.

This may begin early in childhood with the ‘overcautious-parent’ syndrome - ‘What are you doing?’, ‘Careful, careful, careful!’ when you’re climbing up a ladder, and such things that interfere with the natural flow of simple actions, so the person arrives at a point in life where he is inhibited from handling the world around him. Such a person has to think about everything he does, rather that just do it.

Another’s criticism or complaint is rarely specific and accurate enough to be helpful. Often it is a generality or exaggeration, i.e. more than the truth (‘You’re always moaning’ whereas I only moan sometimes); or it may be not quite true (‘You don’t give
clear instructions’ whereas I have normally been giving clear instructions but I didn’t in this particular person’s case).

If the criticism is completely off the mark it is less likely to cause confusion and introspection. The trouble is, criticism often has an element of truth in it, and if the criticism is rejected off-hand, the truth of things remains un inspected and unhandled.

Even if the criticism is accurate, having behaved in a certain way for some time, often all his life, a person asserts the rightness of it - he IS the behavior! - and becomes resistive to inspecting and handling the condition objectively. Further criticism just makes this worse. But unless a person is able to evaluate his own behavior objectively, which includes learning from other peoples’ point of view, he will not be able to break free from the shackles of a limited personal identity and realize his actual unbounded Higher Self.

For each person that you know, consider if there is something that that person has suggested is wrong with your behavior or attitude?

For each criticism that you find, consider whether it’s an over-generalization or exaggeration, and whether the criticism was made from a viewpoint of intolerance or negative thinking. Was the criticism based on a false assumption? Is the criticism partly true or is it true of just a specific instance? Have you ever criticized someone of the same thing?

**Whose responsibility?**

Now we move on to look at the issue of responsibility. This is often confusing. If I make a comment to someone - even though it was kindly and sincerely meant - and they get upset or take offense, is their upset my responsibility?

Take the example of a father who needs to tell his son it is time to go to bed, and no, he can’t watch the rest of the film on TV, he needs to sleep and be up in time for school. The boy is angry and resentful and reluctantly goes to bed, feeling little love for me even though my action was based on my love and care for him.

There is a principle here: another’s choices and creations (which includes their emotional responses) are their responsibility, not yours or anybody else’s. In the same way that jealousy is less than love, since it resents the other’s freedom to choose, to be themselves. This might seem like a cold or hard-hearted view but really it is based on love and respect for the other person’s freedom.

So what is your responsibility? What if you do something wrong. Take this example: I promise my son to go to the circus with him, but then I’m too busy and don’t have time to go, and he is understandably upset. For me, breaking my promise has been a wrong action on my part, and I would be responsible for it.

The conventional wisdom is that I have caused my son’s grief. In truth however, it is my son who causes his grief, not me. But yes, it was still be a wrong action since I
promised to take him to the circus and didn’t. I am responsible for doing what I think is right, according to my ethical judgment. If I do something wrong according to my own ethics, I am responsible for that. I decided my work was more important than keeping my promise - in retrospect I may realize I made a mistake, apologize to my son and learn from that experience. I am not responsible for my son’s reactions though, that is his determinism, his freedom, his life.

If you do something you think is right and someone gets upset about it, even if you could have predicted that, the upset is nevertheless that person’s responsibility. And if you do something you know (or later realize) is wrong and another person is upset about that, their upset is similarly their own responsibility.

Another example: if you were to withhold doing personal development because your partner has said they do not want you to change in any way, perhaps because of their personal fears and insecurities, that is your choice. But if you consider making a better life for yourself is the ethical thing to do - for the benefit of yourself and ultimately for others too - and you tell your partner that and she gets upset, it is your partner who is responsible for the upset - it is her interpretation of your actions that creates her own upset, not your action in itself, which is a responsible action.

You can genuinely love someone whilst nevertheless doing something they don’t like or agree with. You do it because you feel it is the right thing to do, though you still understand and have empathy for their different viewpoint (which causes their emotional reaction) which they have created by their own choices and belief system.

If one only did things others can easily accept then the status quo would never progress. That would truly be a trap. The solution here is better communication, leading to increased understanding of each other’s viewpoint, and therefore acceptance of the differing personal realities.

There is a strong imprint in our culture to feel sad, guilty, etc. for painful emotions our actions may cause to others. There’s a general misconception that you are your emotions. ‘I am angry’ and ‘you make me angry’. This is conditioning not truth. In terms of cause and effect, it’s a viewpoint at effect. Some say that to be happy, only do what others can easily experience - it’s the same lie.

The Church teaches ‘Do unto others as you’d have them do unto you’. I believe this IS true, as if you are being ethical - acting from integrity, being true to your self - then it’s going to be OK for others to do the same to you. And if it isn’t then you’d better re-think whether you are indeed doing the right thing. It is one definition of a ‘wrong’ action: that which you would not like another to do to you.

You are responsible for your choices, decisions and actions. For being true to your judgment. For communicating with honesty and integrity, developing and maintaining an open mind, and promoting understanding and empathy. For never compromising your freedoms and rights nor trampling on another’s. For always acting from the primary motivation of love. That’s all and quite enough.
Look at some experiences you have had and perhaps see them in a different light. Times when somebody was upset and you felt it was your fault. Separate the right and wrong actions you made from the interpretation the other made, based on which they were upset. If you made a mistake, learn from that - if their interpretation was faulty, realize that is their responsibility, their freedom.

Look at times when you were upset and you felt it was their fault. Realize that you created your emotional reaction, and that their actions were based on their own understanding (or misunderstanding) of the situation. If they were mistaken, forgive them.

**Empower yourself**

Empowerment means being at cause: that is, we determine the direction of our lives. We are responsible for our existence. We are in control. When we are responsible for something, it is we who have to explain why it is, as it is. After all, we have exercised our power to change and create - and to begin and to end.

So we are the person responsible for what is good and what is bad in our life situation. Here lies the crux. With responsibility comes the possibility of blame and then shame. If all goes well, we are praised - but if not, we are the one who may be blamed. It is then ‘our fault’ and we may feel shame. As our failures and wrong-doings increase, so does our pain and guilt and shame. Is it surprising that many have relinquished their power, given up control and responsibility, in many aspects of their lives - to hide safely at effect rather than express themselves at cause? In truth, you are the creator of your own life. Yet you can pretend to be ‘at effect’: to be disempowered.

If we yield our power of choice we no longer control our own life. Someone else controls it for us. We no longer have the power to change our situation for the better - but also we no longer can be blamed. We sometimes invest a lot in being at effect in this way and don’t give it up easily. It can assuage our guilt and hide our true failures. It’s a safe solution to our problems.

Unfortunately it’s not the best solution. By being a victim, we try to escape the burden of responsibility but then have to accept the pain of losing our freedom. We refuse to choose, and have others choose for us. We refuse to control and allow others to control us. We do not accept our power, and give it to others. We do such a good job at this that we believe we have no real say in our lives. Our pain is their responsibility. It is their fault. Yet by doing this we deprive ourselves of so much pleasure and fun in life.

To reverse this situation it is necessary to recognize we are responsible for our choices that bring about our present and future conditions - how we are already causing our situation. Then we are empowered and we can choose again!
Why did we give our power away? The fact is that we never did give it away. We are always making choices. Even choosing not to choose. We always choose what we interpret to be the best option that we have available. We are always at cause.

When we choose to (pretend to) be effect, it is because the problems of responsibility appear greater than all the trouble that comes from being at effect. For example, being beaten by a drunken husband seems preferable to the alternatives of remedying his behavior or starting a new independent life.

There must be something of value that the person is finding in the current arrangement of being at effect. Maybe

- having somebody tell you what to do provides safety;
- being on drugs provides peace;
- having somebody scream at you every day helps you to feel something;
- being with an alcoholic ensures uncritical company.

We really wouldn’t be in that sort of situation unless the apparent advantages outweighed the drawbacks.

Also, the idea of being responsible for our actions, our feelings and our beliefs may be uncomfortable. Our interpretation of past negative experiences may maintain it is dangerous to recover our own ability to choose. Most likely we have tried things in the past that failed and led to us feeling upset, so now we refuse to take that kind of responsibility, to express our true selves.

Where we go wrong is in the interpretation. What seems to be safe is not necessarily in our best interest. If I don’t try for promotion, I won’t be disappointed by rejection - but I’ll have to continue at the same old job that is not fulfilling any more. So the fear of rejection is more powerful in this case than our desire for a better job. We pick the apparently safe position of being effect. Sadly, we have chosen misery rather than challenge and delight!

You can reclaim your power if you can recognize that you are the cause of your life. That you have made choices and continue to live by them, and therefore you have the power to choose again and create the world you want. To do this you need to become conscious of your fears and the way they influence your choices. Fear is a strong and painful emotion so we try to suppress it from our consciousness, but it continues to act subconsciously, limiting our choices within the safe boundaries that do not trigger the fear.

How can I accept a fear and transcend it? I think a good way is to realize that fear is a two-sided coin. The other side of the coin is love, the positive dynamic in our life for
truth and freedom. Love is about acceptance, fear is about resistance. Our fears can help us to become aware of the expression of love that may be missing in our life - because our choices are being hidden alongside our fears under the floorboards of our consciousness.

So begin to accept your fears instead of hiding them away, recognize that each fear is based on a judgment that just isn’t necessary, and delight as the flower of your true self begins to bloom.

Reconnecting with the past

To the extent that we put a barrier up against the past, we cannot be integrated. Remembering things by its very nature puts attention on the past. The past may be pleasant, nostalgic or painful to recall but it doesn’t govern the present - though one may feel it does!

Between you and your memories there may be a barrier created by suppressing the memory of unwanted past experiences. This reduces your ability to enjoy your present life. It denies you that resource of youthful energy, enthusiasm and wonder that somehow got lost during the years. It got lost because the energy was subsumed in creating the barrier of suppression, a barrier that became fixed and automatic, closing down the mind/body connection. When you remove this barrier, you will find it much easier to be in the here-and-now, and be pleasantly and joyfully aware in the present moment. There is a very simple and powerful way to break through this barrier of suppressed emotional charge between your conscious mind and your memories and accompanying feelings. You can regain your enthusiasm and wonder of life: you will discover it is still there, you just have to reclaim it.

Recall Exercise:

You simply give yourself the direction ‘Recall Something’ and as quickly as you can, obtain a memory, then repeat the direction immediately. Any memory will do, whether it is from one minute ago or from years ago. But don’t dwell on a period or experience; try to ‘jump around’, allowing whatever comes up to be OK before you quickly move on. Intend, each time, to recall something different.

After a while you will run out of ‘stock memories’. You may dry up and find it hard to find a memory. You will then be aware of this barrier. You have billions if not trillions of memories. You should find memories with ease at first. When recalling becomes difficult you will know that something is going on! Your mind is being careful in case you recall something it doesn’t want you to. Keep going! Give the direction ‘Recall something’ and if no memory is found, simply repeat the direction again. Know your unconscious mind is actually answering the question and finding a memory. You just aren’t aware of it.
Soon the memories will start to flow again - this is the breakthrough you’re expecting. Keep giving the direction and keep the memories coming as quickly as possible. Do not dwell on any of them. The purpose of this exercise is to be able to freely recall the past, not to relive the memories in depth. This seemingly simple procedure will take you a long way in your development. When the going gets difficult, or if nothing seems to be happening, persist with the exercise until the breakthrough occurs and you feel more whole, at one with your mind, body and feelings.

**Our resource of pleasure**

Suppressing the painful memories of the past - bad things that have happened or that we have done - may help us avoid some unpleasantness. But it also suppresses our pleasurable resources that support our self-esteem and wellbeing. And the energy expended suppressing our past drains our present-life living. By recalling pleasant moments you can recover your lost energy and enthusiasm, and at the same time drain the energy from negative memories. Releasing wonderful new feelings and enjoyment into your present life. This lesson helps you do this.

When you re-experience positive memories you reclaim your vast resource of enthusiasm and joy. So you can enjoy it now. These experiences are left-behind golden nuggets of your life-energy that you can now reclaim. In the following exercise you recall some of the pleasant experiences of your life. By putting your attention on the positive, you increase your energy and validate your good and honest qualities. Your increased life-energy then makes bad experiences less significant. It helps release those negative experiences.

**Positive Memories Exercise**

Step 1. Ask yourself a question from the *Recall List* overleaf.

Step 2. Recall such an experience and briefly run through it from beginning to end, as if it were happening in the present. For example, ‘I’m running along the road and...’.

Step 3. Ask yourself the next question.

If you cannot recall an incident, or you get an unpleasant memory, leave that question and go on to the next one.
Recall List

Recall a time when you enjoyed yourself.
Recall a time when you earned some money.
Recall a time when you heard some good music.
Recall a time when you mastered something.
Recall a time when you got something you wanted.
Recall a time when you enjoyed a cozy fire.
Recall a time when you rode a bicycle.
Recall a time when you played with an animal.
Recall a time when you rearranged furniture.
Recall a time when you really knew what you were talking about.
Recall a time when you gave a successful demonstration or talk.
Recall a time when you straightened out a messy environment.
Recall a time when you felt good about the way you looked.
Recall a time when you enjoyed talking with someone.
Recall a time when you were acknowledged for a job well done.
Recall a time when you kept a promise.
Recall a time when you held somebody close.
Recall a time when you enjoyed exercising.
Recall a time when you drew a picture.
Recall a time when you helped somebody.
Recall a time when you won.
Recall a time when you met someone you got on well with.
Recall a time when you had a good time dancing.
Recall a time when you felt important.
Recall a time when you were having a good holiday.
Recall a time when you achieved something worthwhile.
Recall a time when you were enjoying a long walk.
Recall a time when you enjoyed working in the garden.
Recall a time when you had a good idea.
Recall a time when you kissed somebody you liked.
Recall a time when you laughed at a joke.
Recall a time when you painted something.
Recall a time when you felt enthusiastic.
Recall a time when you were with a friend.
Recall a time when you stood your ground.
Step 4. When you can recall pleasurable experiences without much difficulty, repeat the above and look for earlier experiences of the same kind. That is, you ask:

Recall a time when ...
Recall an earlier time when ...
Recall the earliest time when ...

If you feel complete after several passes through the list, you may continue by imagining an ‘experience’ in response to the questions - let your imagination run wild!

So instead of ‘Recall a time when... (e.g. you enjoyed yourself),’ ask: ‘Imagine... (e.g. enjoying yourself).’ Imagine yourself experiencing this in the present.

If there is an episode from your childhood that you wish to recall, you can bring it into clearer focus by using literal description:

1. Let the scene or episode come into mind. When the scene is there with its people, color, sounds and atmosphere, begin to describe it in the present tense. ‘I am standing in the doorway looking out into the garden. A car drives up and stops ...’ Continue, including everyone who is present, what they say, their expressions, what you feel, how you react and how they react. Re-create the movements, smells, sound, tastes, the temperature, any music that was playing, and any sexual feelings you had.

2. When you have taken the scene as far as you want to go, let it fade away.

3. Describe in the present tense what is happening now. ‘I am sitting looking across the room. On the wall I see a photograph and beside it is a lamp and I can here the birds singing outside the window ...’

Go through it several times from the beginning to the end. When you have taken the scene as far as you want to go, let it fade away.

Concentrate on pleasurable or meaningful times from the past that you would like to pleasantly relive again. The negative ones will just fade away!

**Here are some more recall questions:**

Recall a time when you observed a birth.
Recall a time when you won something.
Recall a time when you completed a project.
Recall a time when you noticed you were growing up
Recall a time when you made an advancement in your career.
Recall a time when you got something published.
Recall a time when you reached a milestone.
Recall a time when you observed a child learning.
Recall a time when you observed something growing over time.
Recall a time when you felt a strong sense of identity.
Recall a time when you were anticipating a special event.
Recall a time when you were anticipating sexual pleasure.
Recall a time when you anticipated seeing someone after a long time apart.
Recall a time when you appreciated receiving an award.
Recall a time when you appreciated being accepted as leader.
Recall a time when you received unexpected respect.
Recall a time when you received encouragement from someone.
Recall a time when you received media attention.
Recall a time when you observed a wonderful view.
Recall a time when you admired some beautiful flowers.
Recall a time when you watched some wild animals.
Recall a time when you enjoyed looking at the sky.
Recall a time when you observed graceful movements.
Recall a time when you were carried away by a passage of music.
Recall a time when you admired a painting.
Recall a time when you had childish playfulness.
Recall a time when you had childish innocence.
Recall a time when you had childish wonder.
Recall a time when you discovered something as a child.
Recall a time when you made a friend as a child.
Recall a time when you shared something as a child.
Recall a time when you observed a child’s cute behavior.
Recall a time when you received affection from a child.
Recall a time when you felt connected to a sense of tradition.
Recall a time when you felt a oneness with the world.
Recall a time when you felt connected to a community.
Recall a time when you felt a group accepted you.
Recall a time when you felt you were a good friend.
Recall a time when you felt a spiritual connection.
Recall a time when you felt part of a larger whole.
Recall a time when you were in a parade.
Recall a time when you were happy to be part of crowd.
Recall a time when you felt a sense of caring.
Recall a time when you liked your appearance.
Recall a time when you felt well organized.
Recall a time when you made things neat and tidy.
Recall a time when you ate healthily.
Recall a time when you enjoyed exercising.
Recall a time when you cleared your desk.
Recall a time when you felt totally in control.
Recall a time when you worked well as a team member.
Recall a time when you were singing along with others.
Recall a time when you created something with others.
Recall a time when you took part in something beneficial to others.
Recall a time when you liked your co-workers.
Recall a time when you decided to take a risk.
Recall a time when you decided to make a commitment.
Recall a time when you made love for the first time.
Recall a time when you decided to get married.
Recall a time when you decided to buy a house.
Recall a time when you decided to go into business.
Recall a time when you decided to quit a job.
Recall a time when you made up after a fight.
Recall a time when you won a concession.
Recall a time when you forgave someone.
Recall a time when someone forgave you.
Recall a time when you had a sudden inspiration.
Recall a time when you gained a new understanding.
Recall a time when you discovered a secret.
Recall a time when you discovered you had a shared experience with someone.
Recall a time when you had a new idea that others agreed with.
Recall a time when you made a new friend.
Recall a time when you discovered a new sensation.
Recall a time when you discovered a new interest.
Recall a time when you had a new experience.
Recall a time when you were really enjoying your holiday.
Recall a time when you enjoyed going out to eat.
Recall a time when you enjoyed a party.
Recall a time when you went someplace different.
Recall a time when you found an incident really funny.
Recall a time when you were thinking about your future.
Recall a time when you planned some decorating.
Recall a time when you saw light at the end of the tunnel.
Recall a time when you had a fantasy come true.
Recall a time when you righted a wrong.
Recall a time when you gained proper respect after ill treatment.
Recall a time when you received a due apology.
Recall a time when you enjoyed free time.
Recall a time when you were free from constraints.
Recall a time when you paid off a debt.
Recall a time when you enjoyed being alone.
Recall a time when you solved a problem.
Recall a time when you decided to leave and did so.
Recall a time when you cut out a bad habit.
Recall a time when you found something you thought was lost.
Recall a time when you got a bargain.
Recall a time when you received a special gift.
Recall a time when you found something for your collection.
Recall a time when you gave someone a surprise.
Recall a time when you received affection.
Recall a time when you got a pleasant hello from a stranger.
Recall a time when you gave without expecting anything back.
Recall a time when you shared an intimacy.
Recall a time when you received exciting news.
Recall a time when you cooked a favorite meal.
Recall a time when you received a thoughtfully chosen gift.
Recall a time when you enjoyed exercising.
Recall a time when you were enjoying playing a sport.
Recall a time when you had fun dancing.
Recall a time when you heard good news.
Recall a time when your past decision worked out to be a good one.
Recall a time when your past prediction was right.
Recall a time when your opinion proved to be correct.
Recall a time when you fixed something.
Recall a time when you volunteered to do something helpful.
Recall a time when you helped relieve another’s suffering.
Recall a time when you listened with caring & empathy.
Recall a time when you made the right rather than the easy decision.
Recall a time when you received an unexpected kiss.
Recall a time when you hugged someone spontaneously.
Recall a time when you hugged and kissed after a long separation.
Recall a time when you enjoyed flirting.
Recall a time when you finished a challenging assignment.
Recall a time when you performed well at work.
Recall a time when you learnt a new skill.
Recall a time when things went well with your boss.
Recall a time when you found meaning and value in your work.
Recall a time when you acquired some interesting information.
Recall a time when you were prepared with a timely answer.
Recall a time when you helped your parents.
Recall a time when you had a bit of luck.
Recall a time when you bought some really nice new clothes.
Recall a time when you found a bargain.
Recall a time when you cut a good deal.
Recall a time when you had plenty of money.
Recall a time when you felt financially secure.
Recall a time when you had loving memories of a dead person.
Recall a time when you felt nostalgic.
Recall a time when love was in bloom.
Recall a time when you observed an act of bravery.
Recall a time when you heard about an inspiring action.
Recall a time when you warmed to a change.
Recall a time when you healed old wounds.
Recall a time when you felt it was time to forgive.
Recall a time when you felt ‘on the ball’.
Recall a time when you reached a personal best.
Recall a time when you created something which expressed how you felt.
Recall a time when you felt intelligent.
Recall a time when you concentrated long and hard.
Recall a time when you felt energetic.
Recall a time when you felt enthusiastic.
Recall a time when you were ecstatic.
Recall a time when you were greeted by a pet.
Recall a time when you enjoyed a new possession.
Recall a time when you felt proud of your family.
Recall a time when you felt proud of your country.
Recall a time when you were pleased by another’s success.
Recall a time when you reached safety.
Recall a time when you felt safe, secure and well cared for.
Recall a time when you felt attractive.
Recall a time when you felt healthy.
Recall a time when you felt popular and liked.
Recall a time when you felt needed.
Recall a time when you felt creative.
Recall a time when you felt strong.
Recall a time when you felt capable.
Recall a time when you had an erotic experience.
Recall a time when you shared pleasure with another.
Recall a time when you got a good surprise in the mail.
Recall a time when you gave helpful advice.
Recall a time when you enjoyed a massage.
Recall a time when you found out you’d reached a goal.

**Zen memory exercise**

When you look back at what you have been doing, the moments you find easiest to recall are the times when you were most conscious or ‘awake.’ The following is a time-honored Zen approach to raising the level of consciousness.

Go over, in your mind, the precise events of the last twenty-four hours. Get as much detail as you can. Whenever you sit down, having done a cycle of action such as going
shopping, a board meeting or whatever, again, go over the sequence of events in precise
detail, paying attention to all the sensory modalities. You will find that you get better
and better at doing this, and that as a result you stay more fully conscious in the here-
and-now.

**Life-Chart**

A very useful way of recovering your personal history and putting it into perspective, is
to make a ‘Life Chart.’ Take a large sheet of paper (preferably A3) and draw horizontal
lines to divide it into decades - starting from birth at the top, down to the present time
three-quarters of the way down, plus some space at the bottom for the future decade.

Then draw three further vertical lines to make four columns - the 1st for personal events
in your life; the 2nd for family events and sexual relationships; the 3rd for events
concerning groups you have taken part in; the 4th for international events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>birth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to 30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to 40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>next 10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now fill in the spaces with your recollections, gradually building-up to a full chart of
events and personal memories. Include all the significant events of your life. Add the
names of people who had the most influence on you, and how. Include your key
interests in early life and how they changed with time. Note your key decisions.

**Thought - Feeling - Action**

There is a simple model that I find useful to understand how the mind works. Briefly
stated, it is our beliefs and considerations that drive emotions and resulting behavior.
The thoughts that go through our mind in particular difficult circumstances may trigger
an unpleasant or self-defeating emotional reaction, resulting in behavior that is not in
one’s best interest.

These thoughts derive from times when they seemed like the best solution to trying
circumstances, and they may be an agreement with a dominant, authoritative or
persuasive force, or derive from the conclusion to an episode in our life of success or
failure. If the original circumstances were unpleasant and become painful to think
about, the accompanying thoughts, decisions and purposes become suppressed too, but
continue to operate subconsciously.
When brought to light, it is apparent that the thoughts are affecting current life unnecessarily. The over-generalization, exaggeration, negativity, false assumption or intolerance frequently does not stand up to rational inspection. In personal development we can learn to become aware of these thoughts and to examine them objectively. We can be more conscious of the present moment, and so act (rather than react) in a way that is more emotionally intelligent.

To ‘be in the moment’ means to observe consciously right now, rather than being stuck in our thoughts, which are linked to time: past memories and future expectations.

The route to the beliefs is to recognize the situation or circumstance that triggers unwanted feelings and subsequent behavior; then see what the underlying thoughts are that drive that reaction. Most often these are fleeting and subconscious, since they are associated with painful experiences or because they have long been installed in the mind as seemingly safe solutions to the situations of life and have therefore become taken for granted - ‘built in’ as part of one’s identity. Normally you can’t see what you are being.

Finding the underlying thought pattern is therefore crucial to resolving our problematic reactions, and when it is seen in the light of an objective view this is a great relief, because the decision - and the beliefs surrounding it - can normally be changed quite readily.

The way it works is this: as a result of an experience, a person makes a decision or intention for the future, such as ‘men are selfish bastards, I can’t trust them’ which becomes part of their belief system. Because the experience was painful it is suppressed, along with the accompanying decision, but both remain in the mind and continue to have influence. When the past experience is re-stimulated by similar circumstances in the present, the old decision is utilized. The tape replays subconsciously. The decision may have seemed relevant and appropriate to the original circumstances but it is probably not appropriate now - it is therefore irrational and somewhat stupid, i.e. it may contain an assumption or generalization that causes intolerance or negativity.

The current situation is interpreted according to these old beliefs and fixed ideas - we hold onto them because they we feel they serve us - and so the person creates unpleasant emotions (sadness, fear, antagonism, anger, etc), which then drive him or her to behave in an inappropriate and self-defeating way; rather than the appropriate and self-empowering way that a rational and objective interpretation would encourage.

You are not responsible for everything that happens to you (although often you may contribute to it.) But you are responsible for how you react to these events, how you experience them and move on from there. Your reaction has three facets:

• A mental reaction, how you interpret the situation, which is often a replay of old stuff you’ve attached to as part of your identity.
• An emotional reaction that results from your interpretation, so you feel happy, angry, sad, or frustrated.

• And a behavioral reaction: based on your feelings you act in a certain way, such as jumping for joy, getting away as soon as possible, or punching the other guy’s nose.

It might seem that the circumstances caused your emotional reaction, or even that it caused your behavior. So, if your girlfriend criticizes your manners, you might get angry and leave the restaurant. Later, you may feel that your girlfriend made you angry or that you had to leave the restaurant because of her. But really it was your belief that no one has a right to question your rightness, such as the way you eat with your mouth open. ‘That’s rude and intolerable.’

So you created your own reaction with what you told yourself. It may have been instant and below the level of your consciousness but there was your voice inside telling you these things. Actually, though, you did have other choices. You could have actually listened and understood her viewpoint – you would then still have a girlfriend and have learned something useful. And your girlfriend would have renewed respect and love for you.

Your inner voice can talk you into a lot of trouble or it can create a positive outlook that changes your life experience. The secret is to stay in the moment, to stay conscious, and spot your voice when it is replaying old tapes and talking nonsense, when it is being intolerant, exaggerating or over-reacting.

You are made of love; when your thoughts are judgmental and resisting what is, then you can recognize that is not the real you. So my advice is: if it’s not love, STOP, gather yourself in the moment and reconsider.

**Overcoming our fears**

Fear is the opposite flow to need - accompanying any need for something is an equivalent fear of losing or not obtaining it. We may become attached to the solutions we find for obtaining our needs - needs for love and affection, control and mastery, and for self-esteem and to find and fully express one’s true self. Underlying those attachments is fear. A basic principle of Buddhist doctrine is that attachment leads to suffering, and to be truly happy in life we do better to replace fear with acceptance.

What we resist persists. When a belief, feeling or physical sensation is stuck and just won’t go away this is usually due to a lack of acceptance, underlined by fear. We resist and this only empowers and validates that which we don’t like, or hate or fear. The most powerful antidote to fear is our natural ability to accept.

To accept a situation does not mean we are pleased with it or resigned to it, rather it is being ourselves without demanding our past and present experience to be anything other than what it is. It is an aspect of love.
So let’s find something that we are not confronting - that we don’t feel able to accept as it is - either in our past or current circumstances. The clue is fear - fear that a past experience will happen again or fear that we will lose something precious to us.

For example, I may fear that my partner will find another man attractive and that is reinforced by a previous experience when a lover did indeed choose another man in place of me. That’s a painful memory that I don’t want to recur.

What am I not confronting? That my partner - in the past and in the present too - does have a choice. Behind my lack of acceptance is one or more irrational beliefs or thought distortions. This lies or untruths cloud my viewpoint - I am not seeing clearly so how can I accept what is? So I need to look deeper and in each case spot that what my mind is telling me is not helpful - really I know better. If I look honestly and drop my Ego attachment...

  False assumption: They have no right to choose another!
  Truth: Do I have the right to choose my partner? Er, yes.

  Negative thinking: I am not good enough to keep a woman!
  Truth: Who says? Me - well I can change my mind about that then. Besides my present relationship is going well, it’s me that’s creating this idea.

  Generalization: All women are unfaithful!
  Truth: And all men too? What women do I know that are faithful? Erm, lots.

  Heaven’s reward: It’s not fair, I stayed with her for years, I deserve better!
  Truth: Yes, I deserved to be loved and still do, but I wasn’t going to get that from a person who wanted to move on. That’s the reality. I wish her well. And now I do have a loving relationship.

  Intolerance: It’s not OK that I am not the person she wants as a partner!
  Truth: Well, my current partner hasn’t said that, quite the opposite. I’m projecting the past situation, that it wasn’t OK that she left. But I realize now that it was for the best for both of us. If it happened again the same would be true.

Exaggeration: No women want me, I’m ugly and boring!
Truth: That’s what I think about myself. But actually plenty of women have found me attractive, including my present partner.

Try this process and I’m sure you’ll find some insights that can change your life around.
Emotional intelligence

Our ability to view situations objectively and thus to understand ourselves and other people depends on balancing and integrating the head and heart. Emotional intelligence is the ability to sense, understand and effectively apply the power of emotions, appropriately channeled as a source of energy, creativity and influence.

Emotions serve as the source of human energy, authenticity and drive, and can offer us a wellspring of intuitive wisdom. Each feeling provides us with valuable feedback throughout the day. This feedback from the heart is what ignites creativity, keeps us honest with ourselves, guides trusting relationships, and provides the compass for our life and career.

Emotional intelligence requires that we learn to acknowledge and understand feelings - in ourselves and others - and that we appropriately respond to them, creatively applying the energy of the emotions to our daily life, work and relationships.

Emotional intelligence is demonstrated by tolerance, empathy and compassion for others; the ability to verbalize feelings accurately and with integrity; and the resilience to bounce back from emotional upsets. It is the ability to be a deeply feeling, authentic human being, no matter what life brings, no matter what challenges and opportunities we face.

Emotional intelligence (EQ) may be even more important than IQ in one’s ability to achieve success and happiness. I may score well on intellectual tests and excel academically, but how well do I handle disappointment, anger, jealousy and fear, the problems of communication, and all the ups and downs of relationships?

Persons with high EQ - who have developed emotional literacy - will have more confidence and trust in themselves, and more understanding of others and therefore empathy with them. So they will make better relationships and experience more achievement, love and joy in their life. They will be emotionally mature, a state that many adults do not achieve. If these skills were taught widely, in the home as well as at school, and amongst adults too of course, it would provide the basis of a much saner and happier world to live in.

At its essence, a meaningful and successful life requires being attuned to what is on the inside, beneath the mental analyses, the appearances and control, and beneath the rhetoric. It requires being attuned to the heart, the center of our emotions and outgoing reach to the world. Our heart activates our deepest values, transforming them from something we think about to what we actually do in our life. The heart is the place of courage and spirit, integrity and commitment - the source of energy and deep feelings that call us to create, learn, cooperate, lead and serve.

When we have painful feelings, the heart is telling us we have unmet needs, or we are interpreting reality through some kind of distorting filter. When we have positive feelings, the heart is telling us we are pointing in the right direction, towards fulfillment
of our needs and towards truth. Our Higher Self, the all-knowing part of us connected to all consciousness, communicates to our body-mind through this channel - not through verbal messages but through the heart. We just need to be open to receive this intuitive wisdom.

The word emotion is a fascinating word. Look at it this way: E-motion, or Energy, put into motion. That is what our emotions do. They move energy and bring things into motion, or manifestation. The force behind what we feel is what allows us to create. First we have our thought, or perception. But it is the emotional energy, the fuel, that allows something to get created. ‘I felt so strongly that I just had to rush out and do it’. Therefore, to create in a positive way, we must generate positive emotions from clear thoughts and perceptions.

Thought triggers emotion. See what kind of thoughts you are thinking, and what kind of emotion that creates. Tune into how you feel. Use all your senses to ask if something doesn’t feel right or comfortable in the way you are responding or feeling. If you don’t like the emotion you are feeling, change the thoughts you are thinking that are the reason for you creating that emotion. Get a new perspective, in other words. Healing comes from taking responsibility: to realize that it is you - and no-one else - that creates your thoughts, your feelings, and your actions.

The opposite of being reactive is being response-able, i.e. responsible. When you are being responsible, you’re thinking as well as feeling: you’re experiencing your feelings but also conscious of what is rational and therefore not driven by emotion to act impulsively. This is an integration of left and right brain functions. As you become free from reactive (stimulus-response) behavior then to that degree you know that you are also free to be spontaneous, because you know that will incorporate responsibility.

Responsibility also allows you to maintain your self-worth, despite anything another person might say about you. The thoughts and feelings of others no longer drag you into a pit of self-doubt. You will see all sorts of new options and choices in your dealings with other people because your perspective and your sense of reason are not being buried by emotions. Taking responsibility for your mind puts back into your hands a good deal of control over your life.

When another or others continue to attempt to manipulate and dominate, you can then stay calm and refuse to be stampeded: then you retain the power. For example by responding non-defensively, this breaks the cycle of attack-retreat-defense-escalation. The moment you argue, apologize, explain, or try to get them to change their minds, you give them the power to withhold the understanding that you are asking them for. One can instead say, ‘That’s an interesting point of view,’ or ‘I shall consider that as one option.’ It is also necessary to assert one’s position in a matter-of-fact manner, without worrying about upsetting them, but without any hostility or embarrassment: ‘I’m happy to let you stay for a specified, limited time.’
One’s response to this approach may be to say, ‘I just don’t think I can stand up to (him or her).’ But instead of saying ‘I can’t,’ reframe your statement in the form: ‘I haven’t yet stood up to my parents.’ ‘Haven’t yet’ implies choice, whereas ‘don’t’ and ‘can’t’ imply the opposite: finality. Similarly, ‘I mustn’t’ or ‘I shouldn’t’ can be reframed as: ‘I could choose not to.’ ‘I should’ or ‘I must’ can be reframed: ‘I could choose to.’ There is a big difference between choosing to capitulate to another because you’ve considered the alternatives and decided that you’re not prepared to make a change at this moment, and automatically capitulating because you feel helpless. Making a choice means taking a step toward control; knee-jerk reacting means backsliding into being controlled.

We cannot accept responsibility for everything that occurs and sometimes our choices have no bearing on a particular outcome. There is always an interaction between what some may call their fate (or their genes, environment, etc.) and their decisions. Many people are affected by the behavior of others; complete self-control is a rarity. Certainly, events sometimes overwhelm us. If my girlfriend has an affair with another man, and I feel quite miserable at this loss, it would be difficult, at least initially, to me to choose to feel differently. It does me little good to tell myself that I have made a choice to be miserable and could just as easily be happy. To be upset is a normal and rational reaction to my girlfriend’s behavior.

What I am responsible for, however, is if I choose to dwell on her behavior, to berate myself, maybe condemn her for her choice of partner, or to plague myself with thoughts of her actions for months to come - then I will have chosen to continue in a destructive pattern of behavior, to adopt the stance of victim, which will result in my continuing misery.

On the other hand, I may choose to see things differently, to apply a different meaning to what has happened, to value the experience for the positive lessons it brings me. I may not be able to change the past but I can certainly alter what it means to me. My interpretation of events is my choice and responsibility.

By understanding how easily reactive responses can take over one’s behavior you will find yourself not taking personal offense when others behave in their own way; you can see that they are just dramatizing the problems and conflicts in their own heads. Enlightenment always leads to understanding, empathy and improved communication, in short, love.

**Releasing**

The work we do here is for personal development rather than psychotherapy. We’re starting off with a state of being that is the majority of the time reasonably happy and stable, and looking to enhance our life by recovering freedom of viewpoint - to be free of cultural conditioning and also free of the fixed ideas we have created for ourselves, including unconscious ones. We will go on to spiritual issues and understanding how we envision and create our life experience.
But we recover our full spiritual awareness through learning the lessons our everyday life provides. There may be experiences or issues in our life that we can’t think about without tears or anger, hard to face issues that severely interrupt what we want to do in life. What can we do to get ourselves together, to learn from these experiences and begin again to working more effectively toward our goals?

We have looked at thought-feeling-behavior patterns that get reactivated when given the same stimulus, i.e. by repeating circumstances. So how do we let go of these, so when given the same stimulus nothing happens?

Being aware of a reactivation occurring is an important step of awareness and it’s half way to resolution of the issue. Two further steps are to release the resulting emotion, to accept it and let it go. You can do this by realizing that the painful feeling is an energy that you are creating, that you can experience with acceptance rather than resistance, and that you can continue to create or not. The second step is to spot what interpretation is causing you to have that painful emotion (the pain is really the resistance). What are you saying to yourself at the time of reactivation? What tape is being replayed in your head (or it may be a picture with attached feelings)? Is the interpretation/belief really true, or is it an exaggeration, an over-generalization, an unnecessarily negative or intolerant view? Is it actually somebody else’s view that you have attached to or identified with, not truly your own?

So it is a process of letting go of the feeling and preceding thought. Becoming aware of them rather than just reacting on auto-pilot is the critical first step. Releasing the emotion and spotting the untruth are the second and third steps - and are really a process of dis-identification. Then the behavior pattern will also no longer have any roots holding it in place.

The Release Technique given below, devised by Lester Levenson, helps you to re-experience the painful emotion, to the point that you realize that you actually create the emotion based on your interpretation of events, and that you are not the emotion, i.e. ‘I create the feeling of being angry’ rather than ‘I am angry’. With acceptance of the emotion, so that you can have it or not have it and still be content, then you can let the emotion go.

For the releasing to be permanent you also need to spot the underlying irrational thought, assumption, decision or intention, and how it has been driving your emotions. Now the emotion is cleared it will no longer be dominating your view of the situation and these thoughts will be exposed. Upon examination it becomes clear that you can change your mind about this and see things differently, so will you no longer need to feel upset in similar circumstances and have new freedom to behave in ways more aligned with your goals in life.

In essence, Levinson found that people have three usual ways of handling a feeling:

The first way is to suppress the feeling. But suppressed feelings don’t go away - they build up and fester inside, causing anxiety, tension, depression, and a host of stress-
related problems. The repressed energy (or ‘charge’) these suppressed feelings create eventually drives you to behave in ways you don’t like or understand, and which you cannot control.

The second way is to express the feeling. By ‘blowing up’ or losing our tempers we relieve the pressure of the accumulated emotions. This can feel good because it puts the feeling into action - but it doesn’t get rid of the feeling, or the roots that create the feeling; it simply relieves the pressure of it momentarily. Negative emotions may also be unpleasant for the person on the receiving end, which in turn causes more distress and guilt.

The third common way to cope with feelings is by attempting to avoid the issue by attending instead to distractions - by talking, watching TV, eating, smoking, drinking, taking drugs, having sex, etc. But despite our attempts to escape them, the feelings are still there - and still take their toll in the form of stress.

But there is another option for handling a feeling - you can focus on it, fully experience it, and then let go of it: release it, discharge it.

This is the healthiest way to handle a feeling that is consuming us. We’ve all had the experience of being in the midst of an emotional explosion and then suddenly began to laugh at ourselves, realizing how silly or inappropriate or useless our behavior is. In other words we became conscious.

Typical feelings include the following:

**Apathy** and related feelings such as cold, cut-off, dead, defeated, depressed, discouraged, disillusioned, drained, futile, hopeless, lost, numb, overwhelmed, resigned, shocked, stuck, worthless, neglected, unaccepted, insignificant, lifeless, abandoned, loveless, pessimistic, rigid, stagnant, stopped, insensitive, disconnected, depressed, defeated.

**Grief** and related feelings such as abandoned, abused, accused, anguished, ashamed, betrayed, blaming, cheated, embarrassed, helpless, hurt, ignored, left out, longing, loss, melancholy, misunderstood, neglected, lonely, pity, poor me, regret, rejection, remorse, sad, unhappy, melancholic, betrayed, discouraged, self-punishing.

**Fear** and related feelings such as trapped, anxious, apprehensive, cowardly, devious, doubt, dread, foreboding, inhibited, insecure, jealous, guilty, nervous, panicky, scared, secretive, shaky, shy, stage-fright, suspicious, tense, trapped, withdrawn, worried, threatened, fearful, undesirable.

**Resentment** and related feelings such as exploited, harassed, frustrated, deprived, hurt, embarrassed, used, abused, confused, rejected, offended, unacknowledged, disappointed, ignored, hidden hostility.
Anger and related feelings such as aggressive, annoyed, defiant, demanding, disgusted, fierce, frustrated, furious, hatred, impatience, lack of control, mad, mean, outraged, rebellious, rude, spiteful, rigid, stern, stubborn, vengeful.

Antagonism and related compulsive feelings such as aloof, argumentative, arrogant, boastful, clever, contemptuous, craving, critical, demanding, driven, envious, frustrated, greedy, impatient, judgmental, manipulative, lack of acceptance or approval, need to be right, lust, obsessed, pushy, vicious, violent, righteous, ruthless, selfish, self-satisfied, snobbish, spoiled, superior, unforgiving, vain; wanting desperately to have or to hurt; wanting to make another wrong.

Indifference and related feelings such as bored, careless, cautious, conservative, forgetful, indecisive, lazy, skeptical, tired.

Enthusiasm and related feelings such as adventurous, alert, amused, anticipating, aware, competent, confident, courageous, creative, curious, daring, decisive, desire, eager, friendly, happy, independent, interested, joyful, motivated, open, positive, proud, resourceful, self-sufficient, strong, supportive, vigorous.

Love and related feelings such as acceptance, balance, beauty, belonging, compassion, delight, ecstasy, empathic, open, receptive, secure, understanding, wonder.

Serenity and related feelings such as calm, centered, complete, free, fulfilled, peaceful, perfect, pure, whole.

Note: the last three are positive feelings - it is important to release on even very good feelings such as serenity, love and enthusiasm, for driving these feelings are sometimes hidden and compulsive needs and desires. When you release these good feelings you feel a physical and emotional release, just as when you release negative feelings. What lies behind the emotion is something even better, an imperturbable serenity, the Higher Self.

The Release Technique
This is the healthiest way to handle a feeling that is consuming us. We’ve all had the experience of being in the midst of an emotional explosion and then suddenly began to laugh at ourselves, realizing how silly or inappropriate or useless our behavior is. In other words we became conscious.

Step One: Locate. First think of some problem area in life - something that is of great urgency and concern. It may be a relationship with a loved one, a parent or child; it might be your job, health or fears; or someone else. Perhaps a situation you find yourself in or that is going on in the world. Or it might simply be the feeling that you are experiencing now.

Step Two: Identify your feeling. Determine your feeling about the problem area, or the current feeling. What word comes to mind? Is that exactly how you feel? If not define it more clearly.
Step Three: Focus. What do you really feel? Get in touch with it now. Open yourself up, become aware of the physical sensations attached to the feeling and focus on them.

Step Four: Feel your feeling. Deliberately create it. Let your feeling inhabit your entire body and mind. If the feeling is a grief feeling, you may break into tears; if it is anger, you may feel your blood begin to boil. That’s good - now is the time to feel the feeling.

Step Five: Individuate. Become aware of the difference between your self - YOU - and what that self is FEELING. When the feeling is fully experienced and accepted, there will at some point be a clear sensation that your feeling is not you, so it would be possible to let go of the feeling.

If you do not feel that it is possible to let the feeling go, feel it some more. Sooner or later you will reach a point where you can truthfully answer: ‘Yes, I could let this feeling go’.

Step Six: Learn the lesson. The most vital aspect of this procedure is the learning of life lessons. Unless you recognize what you are to learn from your negative emotions, they will not release permanently, because they will have to regenerate again until the lesson is learned once and for all. After all, the very nature of strong emotions is a message to you -- letting you know that something needs to be learned.

Step Seven: Release. When will you let this feeling go? Sooner or later you will be able to answer: ‘I am willing to let this feeling go now’. So let the feeling go, simply release it, if you haven’t done so spontaneously. It feels good to let it go - all the built-up energy that has been held in the body is released. There is a sudden decrease in physical and nervous tension. You will feel more relaxed, calm, centered, empowered.

Step Eight: Check. Do you still have any of the feeling? If some of it is still there then go through the procedure again. Often releasing is like a well - you release some and then more arises. Some of our pent-up emotions are so deep that they require a number of releases.

When you are familiar with the technique, you can distill your practice down to just a few simple commands: ‘Could I let this go? Am I willing to? When?’ Use this whenever you are conscious of an uncomfortable feeling, and even when you are just starting to create the feeling for the first time.

Once you’ve learned to release you’ll find that simply becoming aware of a feeling is often enough to trigger a natural, spontaneous release, and you will carry the ability over into your everyday life, resulting in a stress-free mind and body.

We can feel one emotion regarding a particular circumstance, whilst at the same time or soon after feeling quite a different emotion - like when watching a dramatic movie. The
emotions that we need to release are the fixed ones that we identify with and feel the effect of - we feel we ARE the emotion: ‘I’m angry and you make me so.’ A free emotion is one that we CREATE as an appropriate feeling to accompany our considerations, beliefs, desires and involvements: ‘I feel anger according to the way I interpret my current circumstances.’

An emotion is adopted chronically when it accompanies the belief structure of a particular identity we are absorbed in - a way of being, such as a people pleaser who is dominated at work by more confident colleagues, or a mother with children who feels bored and restricted to the house. And then, suddenly a different identity may become activated (through new circumstances or through one’s thoughts reactivating past circumstances) and we see a dramatic personality change - the person at work may get promotion and start to feel and behave quite differently, or the mother may remember her pleasure at giving birth and suddenly looking after the children is a different proposition.

**Success in Releasing**

When individuals buy a personal development course or read a book such as this, the most common subsequent actions are either to enthusiastically get on with the program and do all the exercises thoroughly; or to be pleased with having bought the product and to proudly shelve it but never actually begin; or alternatively, to feebly attempt the first exercise and decide it’s too much like hard work. A few also drop out because they have insufficient basic intelligence to follow detailed written instructions or if they are not emotionally stable enough to do subjective personal exercises.

For those who do seriously tackle their personal development, the results are inevitably positive and the releasing of unwanted emotions is an important element in their progress. People can be unsuccessful with Releasing. This occurs primarily through not persisting sufficiently with the technique to obtain the expected result. It may feel like ‘nothing is happening’, or the technique may reactivate a lot of painful memories. These phenomena have to be worked through, and this requires either trust or strong motivation, and without a therapist to guide them, some individuals may not have enough of either to complete the process. Another factor is when the instructions have not been properly understood or are misinterpreted, so something quite different is actually practiced than the intended technique. Techniques can be over-done too, in the attempt to achieve an unrealistic goal, which invalidates what is actually being achieved. Most often in personal development it’s many small gains that add up to the breakthroughs, and they are easily taken for granted and ‘absorbed’. And so one can also fail to recognize even the big changes - though another person may more easily see these improvements going on.
Emotions can be hard to release if in some way they are serving the person. We often tend to justify those of our actions that we know to be wrong, by suppressing that knowledge and replacing it with beliefs (and subsequent emotions) that make ourselves right, and the other wrong. So we may be reluctant to let go of hate or antagonism that we are convincing ourselves is deserved. Or before we reach that stage, we may feel ashamed and unwilling to take responsibility for our actions. Releasing can only fully resolve when accompanied by acceptance of our responsibility for (as creator of) our beliefs, feelings and actions.

A fear may seem subjectively rational and justified, so why let it go? Stuck emotions generally seem ‘right’ and appropriate to us, or we would not stick with them. Releasing aims to get through this barrier by demonstrating that since we can consciously recreate the stuck emotion, that we are indeed creating the emotion, rather than it being caused by past events or other peoples’ actions. When we are no longer so identified with the emotion but realize that we are creating it, and can take responsibility for that, the underlying beliefs come into the open and we can see more easily what is rational and what isn’t.

People are naturally somewhat afraid of emotions, in that they can be ‘carried away’ by them, even to lose themselves and their sanity if they are not careful. It is only really by successfully practicing the method of Releasing that one comes to understand that we are truly the master of emotions and not their slave.

For many people, the initial stage of creating the emotion deliberately and consciously, is the hardest. We tend to suppress painful emotions to protect ourselves, and it is characteristic of male cultural conditioning in particular to suppress ‘weak’ feelings. It’s not always easy to ‘get into’ the feeling - and when we have done, we may wish we hadn’t, as it may cause us considerable discomfort. Nevertheless, the way out is the way through, these stuck/hidden emotions are ruling our lives and only by becoming master of them can we reclaim our personal power and freedom. This requires acceptance, not resistance as we might have thought.

Emotions can reactivate (i.e. cause the person to remember and bring back to life, whether consciously or subconsciously) painful past experiences and if this is overwhelming, the process can feel too painful to continue without support from a therapist, who is able to guide the person to face up to and eventually desensitize these experiences, so their lessons can be learned (which is the primary clearing action).

For this reason, Releasing and other forms of in-depth personal work are not recommended for those persons who feel particularly vulnerable about certain issues and experiences. They should get help from a therapist to clear these issues first - then
continue from there to increase their personal responsibility for growth. In practice, however, most often persistence in recreating the painful emotion (in applying the Releasing procedure) does effectively take a person through this barrier, if they have the courage and motivation to do so.

We should remember that to release is not to ‘get rid of’ but simply to accept as it is and no longer resist or fight the feeling. By realizing that one is creating it, rather than that one actually is (identified with) that emotion, you can release the attachment and experience that feeling when and how you want, rather than in a stuck or reactive way.

Why release even positive emotions? You are removing the attachment to it, you are realizing you are more than that emotion. This is the spiritual aspect. Who realizes that? The Higher Self. The part of you that is more than a body-mind, which is your connection with or portal to, God.

Any technique that increases acceptance (rather than resistance, which is not the same as blind agreement), awareness and personal responsibility for one’s own creation, facilitates releasing emotions. Meditation can be used for opening the mind and accepting and releasing - in particular, ‘mindfulness meditation.’ But some types of mantra meditation can create a wall of suppression and actually work against increasing awareness. It’s the same with any strategy that blocks out reality - it can give temporary relief but not any kind of resolution. That requires viewing what is, as it is, in order to learn the lessons that will free you in that aspect of your life.

Of course, there are those, perhaps the majority of persons, who do not care to pay any attention to their problematic emotions. Perhaps yourself. You might be quite happy and you will stay that way, until something happens that you don’t have the resources and wisdom to handle - then you may go downhill. Or you may get old and wonder where your life went, since you had been living in a safe but limiting cocoon. Or you might be pretending you’re quite happy, because you don’t want to face that actually you are living someone else’s life rather than what you want to be doing, and that you spend considerable effort avoiding things you don’t want to confront. Or you might consider than painful emotions are just a part of life that is inevitable, and you can continue to live with this suffering. Most people do nothing, and so human nature continues to create all the problems that we see in the world, on a personal, familial and social/political scale. But it is possible to ‘find ourselves’ through releasing the limitations we impose on ourselves as a result of our upbringing and negative learning experiences. Only such a person can fully and freely love - without judgment - their fellow man.

*Aggressive feelings*
Anger is the commonly experienced emotional state that gets us into the most troubling of situations. It is rooted deeply in our biology and is based on the ‘fight or flight’ reaction that we have when we feel in some way endangered. Anger is a passive state from which we can then choose either to make a positive response and take effective action to remedy the situation or we may choose to adopt a more negative emotion: if we feel some confidence we may move into an antagonistic stance, or if we feel the threat is overwhelming we may move into the state of fear.

We feel anger when we face a situation that is most definitely not as we feel it should be, which gives us a sense of being violated or wronged or threatened. When feelings of anger get to a certain point they are extremely hard to contain. This signals us to take action, to do something to relieve ourselves of the discomfort in the anger we feel. We may want to flee in fear, to leave in disgust or to attack with hostility; or it may stimulate us in a positive way to communicate with empathy and understanding, try to set new limits or rules or to enforce necessary changes, and to take power over our own lives.

The sooner we recognize the signals of anger, the better able we are to manage the anger successfully, to keep our cool and be responsible in the situation. Breathe slowly and deeply and count to 100 if necessary. Anger management should begin as soon as the pot begins to turn warm rather than waiting until it is threatening to boil over. The anger should not be denied, suppressed or avoided; instead it needs to be expressed, but in a positive way that does not have harmful consequences to yourself nor your relationships, and preferably in a way that enhances your situation. And then the state of anger can be released.

When anger is not acknowledged and expressed, and when nothing is done about the situation that we are unhappy about, this energy stays locked up inside. It cannot be released. This suppressed energy subconsciously takes a lot of our attention and the stress negatively impacts our ability to perceive objectively. It reinforces the Ego and we begin to misinterpret what we perceive, our vision colored strongly by this cloud of anger. We tend to see everything in a negative way and cannot determine, as we normally might, the best way forward.

Depression may result from suppressing the anger that we feel because of the fear that we will get in trouble for expressing it. If you aware of being depressed about a situation, give yourself permission to experience and express your anger and much of your depression can lift from your shoulders. Anger is actually a much more causative and potentially responsible standpoint - we can use the energy of anger to move upwards in emotional tone, and then to take positive steps towards improving the situation.

Anger gives us an opportunity to learn about ourselves. To learn anger’s lessons, what we need to do is acknowledge and accept our feeling of anger so that it passes through us harmlessly, so then we have a clear mind to deal rationally and empathically with the
situation and we can see better just what it is we are getting so worked up about, or what it is we feel has been violated. And then we can use this released energy to do something about the situation in a positive way.

Anger that is not expressed and released but instead is held inside, so the hurt is not exposed, can soon turn into resentment and hatred. The feeling of being ‘victimized’ instead of empowered undermines self-confidence. This kind of pain takes time to heal, unlike anger, which surfaces and passes through us quickly.

After the same hurtful experience is repeated several times, a person may develop a belief system based on resentment. Unless corrected, the person will unconsciously use these beliefs as a self-fulfilling prophecy, and become a person whose primary role in life is ‘victim.’

Most people feel hurt when their core beliefs are challenged, especially if it is by someone who refuses to have empathy for their views nor to communicate properly about the issues. The person then feels frustrated and ignored. If he also received incorrect evaluations or invalidations of his way of being, he may also introspect and be left wondering if these observations are really true.

Conquer hurt feelings by acknowledging and facing the hurt, to the point where it can be accepted and then released. Just the act of looking squarely at what has actually happened and what has been hurtful frees you from some of the pain. Handle hurt in this way instead of pretending things are ‘all OK!’

It is necessary to realize that other people are entitled to have quite different opinions than oneself, and that need not be considered any threat nor invalidation of one’s own. Maybe the other person is lacking in sensitivity and the ability to empathize with your views, but that is their problem, not one’s own.

You need to identify what are your beliefs and what are the other person’s, and clearly separate the two; then accept both views as individual expressions that have every right to be made and to exist.

If you are helping another person to face and release feelings of hurt, provide a safe and supportive atmosphere for working with feelings. Eschew any kind of evaluation or invalidation of what the person says, even if it seems correct to you - they need to rebuild their own reality and adding yours to the mix is actually no help at all. And of course, respect their confidences absolutely. If a person shares their feelings a few times but feels endangered by doing so, then he or she will surely close down again.

**Jealousy** is an immature emotion. Adults should have learned better but in many cases they haven’t. Jealousy is to consider another person as an object of possession, a person who has no right to make their own choices.

Yes, we all feel the sting of jealousy sometimes and we need to acknowledge and accept the emotion, and then release it as something that is simply not rational nor helpful to us. We need to put ourselves in the other person’s shoes and consider whether
we would appreciate the lack of trust that a person jealous of us is demonstrating, and their desire to manipulate and control our choices. Probably we wouldn’t. And most importantly, we need to spot the fears that underlie our jealous feelings and release them as well.

**Envy** is to wish one was the other person and is equally immature and unrealistic, but it doesn’t have the destructive effects that jealousy has on trust in a relationship - instead it is a lack of trust in oneself. Envy can be resolved when you give yourself permission to have the experience, thing or ability that another person has. Then you can acknowledge, accept and release the feeling of envy.

If you believe life ‘happens to you’ and if you believe you cannot create what you want, then you need to release aggressive emotions and reverse the beliefs that underlie them.

**I wish I hadn’t done that!**

We all do things we are not proud of, we wouldn’t be human if we didn’t. Something that affects others in a way that we would not be willing to experience ourselves. Sometimes we do something that we know at the time is wrong, but it seems like the best solution to our situation. Or maybe we are tempted to put our own interests first. Other times we may be carried away by emotions of anger or jealousy and do something out of spite we may later regret. Or we don’t do something, like helping a friend in need, that we know we really should have. Alternatively we may have the best of intentions but things go wrong, we make a mistake or realize something we have done was harmful, even though we didn’t mean it to be.

These sorts of actions can leave us feeling ashamed and depressed, and we can end up carrying our guilt for years, but if we want to live happy lives, we need to take responsibility for the consequences of our behavior and move on.

Feeling guilty should not be confused with taking responsibility for our past. Responsibility means that we make a concerted effort to change the behavior pattern that resulted in the wrong-doing, and the beliefs and feelings that empowered it. We need to move on by making peace with the past.

The natural tendency when we do something wrong is to try to justify our actions, to make ourselves right. Or we may say the action was not wrong, it was deserved, making the other person wrong. Both of these are avoiding the reality, by denying our own sense of right and wrong and our own responsibility for our actions. We avoid our feelings of guilt by pretending it was nothing wrong that we did, indeed it was right. We avoid our feelings of shame (feeling bad about how others perceive us) by pretending that it is the other who should be ashamed.

The problem is not the harmful action or making a mistake - that’s happened and can’t be undone. The problem is what we tell ourselves afterward. Whether we are honest or if we lie to ourselves. It is that lie which causes all the damage to our own integrity and to further relationships with the other we have wronged.
We need to drop our defenses, drop the lies we may have told ourselves to hide the truth, face up to the reality of our actions and their consequences - and forgive ourselves.

There is a big bonus to being realistic and truthful - we can learn the valuable lesson that the experience offers us. Indeed, it’s only when we have learned that lesson that we can let go of the past error and live our life as truly ourselves in the present.

So to forgive ourselves we need to learn the lesson. Let’s look at mistakes first. Mistakes are an essential part of learning. When we learn to drive a car, we crunch the gears and go backward instead of forward. But we learn and get better. Later on we may cross a red light and get stopped by the police and fined. Again, we can learn from that, to take more care when approaching crossroads. We then become a better driver. The next time you make a mistake say to yourself, ‘OK so that’s done; now, what can I learn from this?’ Instead of feeling depressed you will feel challenged and motivated.

But what if I had crossed the red light, run into a car and injured the driver badly. That’s not cool. I can say that it had only just changed to red so I didn’t really do anything wrong. I can blame the other driver for not checking anyone was still crossing before they moved off. Or I can accept it was a foolish action, a combination of a mistake but also recklessness. I was wrong, I did it. I’m sorry.

But real forgiveness has nothing to do with feeling sorry or apologizing, neither of which actually changes anything. Neither can forgiveness be given by another; it has to be granted by ourselves. Unless we can truly forgive ourselves, we can never really move on and be free of the past.

What gets in the way of this forgiveness is judgment, that I am a bad person. I need to separate my inherent worth from the wrong-doing. I am basically a loving being, I know that. We all are. Actually I am not even my thoughts and feelings. I create these and sometimes through ignorance or misguided I create them inappropriately, and my consequent actions can result in hurt for others. Then the best I can do is to learn from that so in future I can create more truly to my nature.

I need to realize that the wrong-doing was a result of my ignorance - I did not know what I can now see to be the lesson from the experience. I just wanted to get to my destination quickly. I didn’t think about the possible outcomes that could result from driving irresponsibly. I thought it was OK to cross a red light. So my basic motive wasn’t bad but I was operating on false information, I was misguided.

We can’t move on if we regret the past, nor if we have contempt for our selves. To feel like this implies that we view our past as meaningless and of no value, and our selves as no longer to be trusted. On the contrary, forgiving ourselves requires finding value in our experiences and in our selves. Instead of just writing off an experience as a painful episode and trying to forget it, we should try to learn from it whatever we can.
Life is a journey of learning and the most worthwhile learning is derived from our personal experiences. When things go right, because we have good information and appropriate beliefs, then our learning is reinforced by this positive feedback. When things go wrong, because we have faulty information and inappropriate beliefs, then we and those at the effect of our actions suffer. But here we have a chance to learn something new. Much of our new learning and personal growth does therefore come about as a result painful experiences; provided we are willing and open to learn those lessons.

If we wish to grow and to use our experiences beneficially, it is vital that we focus on what we can learn, rather than to resist the reality of what occurred.

Find something you did (or failed to do) that you still feel bad about, that you regret, that makes you feel ashamed. Now begin to take meaning and value out of this experience. Ask yourself: ‘What has this taught me - about myself, about others and about my life?’ Based on this lesson, work out what beliefs you need to change, what fixed ideas you can let go of, what assumptions you made that are no longer helpful.

Self-forgiveness recaptures the energy that you were giving away in guilt and resistance against the past. It frees you to be yourself again - a new, happier and wiser you.

**To be free of negative memories**

Since you are today, to a significant extent, what your memories have made you, it follows that you must take steps to prevent the creation of new negative memories that exert control over your life. You should know that:

- No one can effect you but your own thinking;
- It is your own mind that keeps you in bondage;
- No-one can ever make you angry but your own thoughts;
- All anguish is self-inflicted and self-imposed;
- No-one can make you worry but yourself.

It is impossible to do anything to you - the actual You - at any time; it is always your thought/consideration/decision/postulate, that affects you. Thus *only you* suffer from holding grudges, hatreds, resentments or revengefulness. No one has ever affected you but your own thoughts. No one has caused you to be frightened, angry, hurt or happy but your own mind, because if you didn’t identify in your own mind what was said or done to you, you would not have been affected in the least. This is one of the most difficult facets of existence to perceive, but once perceived, its worth becomes priceless. Understanding this is the way to ultimate freedom.

Go back into your past (use your Life Chart to guide you) and relive as many experiences as you can remember. Take each memory separately and see that it was your own thinking that caused you to feel hurt, happy, angry and so forth. Keep re-feeling the experience until you free everyone in the scene of guilt for affecting you.
Then reverse the process, and be sure that you yourself do not have guilt because in like manner, it was their identification in their mind with what you said or did that affected them and *not you*.

This is a profound technique. Its use will free you of guilt feelings or complexes, resentments, hostilities, inhibitions, submerged anger, repressed emotions, and organic diseases that have emotional causes.

The Gnosis or knowledge you release (for you always knew it) will not immediately make you more comfortable or secure. In fact, it is painful at times, because you will be aware of your false identities, your facades, your defense mechanisms, your silliness, your viciousness, and your primitive self, perhaps for the first time. But persist for you are recovering a genuine identity that no-one can take away from you. Your security and comfort will gradually be found in your change from a pseudo-self to a permanent harmonious Self that is objective and unlimited in scope. This is the way to higher consciousness and higher powers of mind.

**Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem is a way of being, thinking, feeling and acting that implies that you accept, trust and believe in yourself. When you accept yourself, you can live comfortably with both your personal strengths and weaknesses, without undue self-criticism. When you respect yourself, you acknowledge your own dignity and value as a unique human being. You treat yourself well, in much the same way that you would treat someone else who you respect. Self-trust means that your desires, beliefs, behaviors and feelings are consistent enough to give you an inner sense of continuity and coherence, despite changes and challenges in your circumstances. To believe in yourself means that you feel you deserve to succeed and - on the basis of past demonstrated competence and current resources - you have confidence that you can fulfill your deepest personal needs, aspirations and goals.

In my personal life, I used to be riddled with fears of what people thought of me and so on, that were based on my lack of self-esteem. This caused plenty of painful feelings in many circumstances and a very limited lifestyle. Releasing these emotions, re-evaluating the beliefs, confronting the original painful experiences from which the beliefs derived, and finally realizing that I can think, feel and create my life quite differently, was a transforming experience. Many students have described similar stories.

Emotions follow on from one’s thoughts, and behavior follows on from these emotions. Releasing of such emotions is fundamental to progress; one can then examine the underlying beliefs, understand from whence they derived, and so be prepared to Release the beliefs as well, which gives a full clearing in the area - one is then able to
look objectively in the present moment and feel and act accordingly, rather than being driven reactively by previous decisions and accompanying emotions.

A fundamental truth about self-esteem is that it needs to come from within. When self-esteem is low, the deficiency creates a feeling of emptiness that you may try to fill by latching on - often compulsively - to something or someone that provides a temporary sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. When this becomes desperate, repetitive or automatic, you have an addiction. Frequently this attachment substitutes for healthy human relationships. It may also substitute a feeling of control or power for a more lasting sense of inner confidence and strength.

What difference does self-esteem make? When we are high in self-esteem we feel good about ourselves. We feel in control of our life and are flexible and resourceful. We are able to make choices about how we run our life. We enjoy the challenges that life makes and are ready to take life head on. We feel powerful, creative and confident that we can ‘make things happen’ in our life.

We can realize our own potential by integrating all our abilities in a balanced and harmonious way. To each experience we bring our whole self and we integrate all our faculties. This ‘holistic’ approach describes us as existing simultaneously at the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical levels, and we bring all of these aspects to each of our experiences. For example, in meeting a new person, you bring the spiritual experience of your inner awareness, your connection with the life force that is you and your creative resources. Your mental energy brings understanding, empathy, perception and communication. Your emotional energy is expressed as feelings about what is going on and your physical energy enables you to actively participate.

As we all know, experiences can be subjectively good or bad. A good experience occurs when one has been creative - spiritual, mental, emotional and physical energies have been expressed in a balanced way - and this enhances self-esteem. You feel at ease and are able to ‘make things happen’. You express choice and create the experience and so feel in control of your destiny. You feel good!

A bad experience, in which one has suffered in some way, tends to reduce self-esteem. If you feel you have no choice, if you feel ‘trampled on’ or a victim, you feel uncomfortable and out of control in your life. Things ‘just happen’ to you (or don’t). So you feel bad.

When we respond to particular circumstances we can do so from a state of creative consciousness or from a state of victim consciousness. If you operate from a state of creative consciousness you are valuing yourself for what you are, right now, and not just for what you do or have done. Your sense of worth does not depend on having a high-profile job or having expensive possessions or being clever. Self worth has nothing to do with job status or IQ or never getting things wrong. In other words you are not worth less if you can’t do something or things go badly wrong. This idea of intrinsic self worth is the strength on which true self-esteem is based. Demonstrated
competence and praise enhances self-esteem but this needs to be based on an underlying foundation, where incompetence and criticism does not detract from intrinsic self worth.

This view of the world is one that allows for the creative experience of choice. We are free to initiate change and so can enjoy an action-based lifestyle in which we are able to communicate our needs clearly. Such behavior then reinforces our self-esteem.

Without a sense of intrinsic self worth you have a limited world view which provides you with little or no choice. This creates a reactive lifestyle in which you are always looking for the approval of others before you can act. Such a fear-based lifestyle results in unclear communication and consequent feelings of resentment, anger and blame. Hence the victim’s lack of self-esteem is reinforced.

Maybe you know how to ‘look inside’, feel relaxed and resourceful, but don’t know how to bring this experience into material reality. In other words you can connect with your inner self but can’t so easily act upon this connection - you can imagine and be inspired but can’t put this into effect.

Perhaps you can act in a fairly spontaneous way but do not feel there is any more to your life than that which appears before your eyes. In this case you are finding it difficult to connect to your real goals and aspirations.

You may be very emotionally aware and sensitive to other people’s feelings. If so, you are in touch with your feelings but does this gift work for you? Can you put your emotions into perspective so that you are able to think clearly and act appropriately?

Perhaps you are very good at understanding ideas and thinking rationally but your thoughts stay in your head and you aren’t able to act upon on them. Or perhaps you find it difficult to express your feelings clearly about those issues.

Proper balance of self-connection, thought, feeling and action is the key to living creatively and with full consciousness.

**Turning the Tide**

A person who feels they have no power or control in their life may use the tool of physical, mental or emotional or sexual abuse to regain some sense of power. The home and family is perceived as a ‘safe’ place for this, whereas at work they may feel impotent and manipulated themselves.

It is shocking that half of American women have suffered physical or sexual abuse in their lives - and 15% of men. One third of pregnant women are physically abused during their pregnancy, in the USA.

The issue of self-esteem and the effort to improve it through personal growth is not self-pandering or only interesting for wimps. It’s central to happiness for adults,
children and families. If people don’t feel good about themselves, if they can’t express their feelings and work toward accomplishing their real needs and goals, they will suffer and they will often make others suffer too.

Emotional charge builds until the point where control breaks down and irrational, non-compassionate behavior follows. Charge is emotional frustration, based on judgment of rightness, wrongness or appropriateness. It is resistance to what is, in other words a lack of acceptance. And the real, underlying factor is always fear: relating to basic needs for survival, safety, belonging, affection, control, certainty, achievement, respect, and so on.

The people on the receiving end of abuse may also have a big black hole of emotional need, so they accept the abuse. At least it is attention, at least it is a feeling. And to fill their unmet needs they turn to food and other addictions, drink, drugs, cigarettes, manipulative sex, etc. And they abuse others in turn, including the easiest victims, the kids, or others in their care.

People with destroyed self-esteem end up believing they deserve what they’re getting: they become brainwashed through intimidation, threats and invalidation. You see the same thing in the military, in cults, even in school.

We each have a personal responsibility to improve this state of affairs, starting with ourselves and our own families. There are some important aspects of behavior that you can teach your kids by example, that will be invaluable for their future lives.

What advantage is it to send a young person out into the world with a head full of knowledge but without the confidence to use it effectively, or the ability to grapple with life’s problems with that inner stability and optimism which alone can bring success?

The most important thing your child can learn is that you love them unconditionally, without judgment. That is the rock on which their self-assurance will be built. We need to demonstrate that love by listening, genuinely listening, to our children. By never imposing our own evaluations, instead asking appropriate questions to guide the child to see objectively for themselves. And never making the child wrong when they give their opinions or make mistakes, and try to discover their own unique identity.

Secondly, a child (and each of us) needs to learn that we create our emotional responses based on our interpretation of things. No one ‘makes me angry’ - I make myself angry based on the way I choose to look at things. That is usually highly influenced by the way I have been taught to look at things, especially by my parents, so if we hope for our children to be emotionally intelligent, we need to be ourselves, and we need to base
that intelligence on a world view that is open minded and flexible, based on facts and observation, not prejudice and our own cultural conditioning.

It takes time and experience for a child to learn to understand and control their emotions, and to take responsibility for their beliefs, their reactions and behaviors. For this they need guidance and a good example. You.

Adults are children with more experience. Children are adults with less experience. Both deserve respect accordingly.

**Creating self-esteem**

How would you describe yourself? The following is a list of adjectives - virtues, vices, strengths and weaknesses - that may or may not apply to you. Very many other qualities could be added to the list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>artistic</th>
<th>lighthearted</th>
<th>responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sarcastic</td>
<td>proud</td>
<td>useless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incapable</td>
<td>depressed</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kind</td>
<td>responsive</td>
<td>extravert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shy</td>
<td>aggressive</td>
<td>timid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overbearing</td>
<td>manipulative</td>
<td>loving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boring</td>
<td>sensitive</td>
<td>emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sloppy</td>
<td>stupid</td>
<td>enthusiastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modest</td>
<td>embarrassed</td>
<td>introverted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interesting</td>
<td>withdrawn</td>
<td>thoughtful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worried</td>
<td>afraid</td>
<td>creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-righteous</td>
<td>ashamed</td>
<td>confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ugly</td>
<td>lazy</td>
<td>supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unique</td>
<td>tolerant</td>
<td>flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clever</td>
<td>angry</td>
<td>passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demanding</td>
<td>happy</td>
<td>considerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>active</td>
<td>lovable</td>
<td>intelligent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inarticulate</td>
<td>intolerant</td>
<td>tactful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perceptive</td>
<td>uncertain</td>
<td>mistrusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worthless</td>
<td>unattractive</td>
<td>talented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are plenty more attributes. You could look at yourself in terms of how others see you, appearance, personal manner, performance at work, home life, relationships, social position, mental functioning, self-awareness and sexuality.

We are all of these some of the time of course. However, now make a list of all the qualities - from the above list or others that come to mind - that you think you are almost never: ‘I am almost never...’

Now list all those things that you believe you are almost always: ‘I am almost always...’

Which of these statements do you consider the most important, i.e. that are your underlying personal self-beliefs? How do you see yourself? Are your core beliefs appreciative or critical; are you high or low in self-esteem?

Look at all the critical statements you listed and imagine you were saying these things about someone else. Would you be so hard and judgmental with someone else? How would you feel if someone else described you this way?

If you recognize and are happy to be the person you have described, then fine. But ask yourself if this means keeping some area of yourself quiet, out of sight and so out of mind. If you suspect this to be true, try to look into what area that might be.

**Disarming the inner critic**

One at a time, take each negative statement from the previous exercise and check it for rationality against the following list:

- Has a general rule been made from one isolated example?
- Does it pay excessive attention to only small parts of your experience?
- Is it an exaggerated description instead of an accurate one?
- Is your critic thinking in terms of black and white? E.g. does it insist that everything you do has to be brilliant or else it regards it as rubbish?
- Does your critic expect you to take responsibility for events that are actually outside your control?
- Does your critic assume the whole world revolves around you and your interests?
- Have you been mind reading?
- Do you know for sure that other people don’t like you, are unforgiving of you, or don’t care about you?
- Does your critic assume that you have no responsibility or are a helpless victim?
- Is your inner critic being inappropriately emotional?

For each negative statement, see if you can contradict it with a more rational statement. E.g. ‘Like any normal person, I may occasionally misunderstand, but that doesn’t mean I’m stupid.’
For each weakness or negative trait find an exception or a corresponding strength.

Think about people who are your friends or who you like in spite of their unfortunate habits or undesirable traits. Try adopting the same attitude to your own traits - make friends with yourself!

**Changing your mind about yourself**

Should you or could you? The rationale that supports ‘I should’ (and ‘I should not’) allows us to hand over the responsibility for our lives to others. It is a childlike stance and gives the decision-making power to someone else. Believing the ‘should’ inhibits change, risk-taking and assertiveness. It is both comforting and severely limiting.

Whenever we question our basic beliefs we are also questioning our status quo - our safe solutions - and this can feel threatening. Personal growth is a courageous process - to provide that courage we need to recognize the benefits of opening up our options. We will reclaim our own life and be our true self - that’s really the only way to be genuinely and stably happy.

The first step is to identify the inner voices that tell you that you should do this and ought to be doing that. An inner voice that nags you in this way is likely to be an internalized parent or someone who is important to you, that you give authority, in the past or currently.

Some ‘shoulds’ and ‘oughts’ make sense of course, such as legitimate rules to live by, and if violated then harm results, to yourself or others. However many ‘shoulds’ and ‘oughts’ act to undermine the strength and directness of what you think and do.

Make a list of all the things you think that you should or ought to do, should or ought not to have, should or ought not to be.

Take each listed item read it out loud and then ask yourself, ‘Why should I?’

Here are some typical answers to the ‘Why should I?’ question: ‘Because everybody has to,’ ‘My father said I should,’ ‘What will happen to me if I don’t?’ ‘Otherwise people won’t like me anymore,’ ‘Because I’m too fat/ stupid/lazy/careless etc.’

The answers to ‘Why should I?’ questions demonstrate how we can limit ourselves by holding certain beliefs. Try ending an ‘I should...’ statement with, ‘because I really want to.’ The sentence doesn’t make sense because the word ‘should’ implies reluctance and feelings of guilt and fear. Do we really need to burden ourselves in this way? The word ‘should’, however, can be replaced by the word ‘could’ and this restores freedom of choice. So go through your list of shoulds and rephrase each item: ‘If I really wanted to, I could...’

Another approach is to ask the question, ‘Why should I?’ repeatedly until you genuinely and sincerely answer it with ‘Because I really want to.’ Or you decide to give it up because you really don’t want to!
Looked at this way, somehow things seem much more possible and at the same time you no longer feel you ‘have to.’ So give yourself permission to run your own life. You don’t need taped instructions from the past - right now you can make your own decisions and create your own experiences.

In practice, life for most of us falls far short of what it could be. We experience negative feelings and emotions - hate, pain, jealousy, grief. Our thinking can be distorted or even delusional, as when we grow paranoid about others’ intentions or attitudes, or overly pessimistic about our own abilities and worth. Also, our behavior can be destructive. Too often, in a fit of rage or despair, we say or do things we very soon come to regret. These unwanted aspects of life tend to fall in three categories:

- Negative feelings - inappropriate attitudes, emotions, sensations and pains.
- Distorted thinking - misconceptions, delusions and fixed ideas.
- Dysfunctional behavior - self-defeating compulsions or inhibitions.

Without these factors we would have a planet full of people who were basically happy, productive, and loving and helpful to one another; willing to give another their own space, to be tolerant of their differing views, beliefs and feelings. In the presence of these factors we have war, twisted relationships and broken dreams - in short, the human condition.

When a person adopts a safe solution to the problems he has achieving the survival, belonging and self-esteem needs of life, he clings to it as a new identity, and the ideas connected with this way of being become fixed. Because fixed ideas are not necessarily appropriate in changing circumstances, conflicts arise with others and mistakes and indiscretions occur about which the person feels guilt or shame. He may then seek to justify (rather than take responsibility for) these actions and so the ideas become further entrenched, causing long-standing problems and life stress, and greatly restricted tolerance and willingness to communicate with others. A person can become very out of touch, even with physical reality, and retreat into a schizophrenic unreality or depressive illness.

Sometimes past traumatic events are brought forward into the present by a similarity of circumstances. The excessive stimulation of the original event is regenerated by the current one. This activation can cause a reliving of the original emotional trauma and also the replaying of the negative decisions and conclusions that may have been made as a result of the original incident; again the identity of the time is acted out, in a fixed way that is regardless of the changing circumstances.

When you REACT you become a different person! You are taken over by a programmed identity/way of being, you are no longer objective nor truly sane.

A fixed idea may become an obsession, a compulsion or inhibition that is hard to keep at bay. This neurotic condition can deteriorate into psychosis if the individual is no
longer aware of the behavior problem, but is totally identified with the way of being that is unknowingly and reactively being played out. These are the things of life, and every approach to therapy and development has to deal with them to be effective.

**The Why & the Lie**

Most fixed ideas that we cling to - even though they don’t really hold up under rational inspection - were originally made for what seemed to be sensible reasons.

These are some general questions that can be used to weed out fixed ideas:

1. ‘What things do you say to put others in their place?’
2. ‘Do you have ways of dominating others?’
3. ‘Are there any ideas that make you feel safer?’
4. ‘Are there things about which you are sure you are right?’
5. ‘How do you prevent anybody else from getting the upper hand?’
6. ‘What ideas and beliefs do you firmly consider to be true?’
7. ‘What ideas are constantly with you in your life?’
8. ‘What things in your life would you not be willing to change?’
9. ‘What principles do you use in dealing with other people?’
10. ‘What are your principles for evaluating things?’
11. ‘What don’t you want to get involved in? Why?’
12. ‘What don’t you like? Why?’
13. ‘What is an acceptable level of activity? Why?’
14. ‘What bothers you about others? Why?’
15. ‘What routines do you follow in day to day life? Why?’
16. ‘Is there anything you do to prove you are better?’
17. ‘What do you use to make people feel sorry for you?’
18. ‘What weaknesses have you shown to get people to do things for you?’
19. ‘What must people think of you for you to feel alright about yourself?’
20. ‘What ways do you get people to pay attention to you?’

Some of the possible ‘Whys’ follow:

To solve a problem?  To inhibit?
To solve a conflict?  To invalidate?
To fill a scarcity?  To destroy?
To fulfill a need?  To escape?
To getting rid of something?  To enforce?
To suppress?  To influence?
To cover up?  To gain admiration?
To falsify?  To gain recognition?
To bypass?  To gain an acknowledgment?
To avoid?  To gain sympathy?
To make fail?  To obtain agreement?
To increase communication?  
To be able to understand?  
To please someone?  
To resolve confusing thoughts?  
To resolve a painful feeling?  
Because you couldn’t grasp something?  
Based on an earlier assumption?  
Based on a misunderstanding?  
Based on an uncertainty?  
Because of an injustice?  
Something that can’t be faced up to?  
Somebody else’s evaluation?  
Because of an invalidation?  
A failed effort to help?  
A failed attempt to control?  
An effort to resist change?  
As a withdrawal?  
Trying to give something up?  
Because of a something judged to be wrong?  
Because of something held back or kept secret?  
Because a justification was felt necessary?  
As a game?  
As a challenge?  
To get revenge?  
As punishment?  
Because it seemed a good idea?  
Because you went along with something?  
Because you noticed something?  
Because you accepted something?  
Something Else?

If you can clearly see a truth, then it no longer sticks in the mind. A fixed idea is based on some sort of untruth, something that’s not being seen clearly, some resistance. That which is resisted tends to persists, as attention sticks on it, even if subconsciously. So the next step in clearing fixed ideas is to locate the ‘Lie’ - what was untrue that resulted in the above Why being perceived? Was it based on one of the following factors?

Wrong evaluation? A changed sequence of events? Cross orders?
Wrong sequence? Copying another? Incorrectly included data?
Wrong time? Admiration for the originator? An assumption?
Omitted time? Sympathy with something? A presumption?
An over-generalization? Thinking ‘always’ or ‘never’?
Something inaccurate? A wrong source of information?
A misperception? A self-invalidation? A threat?
Omitted facts? An altered importance? A wrong target?
An added falsehood? Contrary facts? The wrong place identified?
Something Else?

The basic idea is that if one feels confused, then one will try to find an idea that helps to clarify things, so one can then move out of the confused state. But if one chooses a wrong explanation, because one hasn’t realized it has faulty logic, then the idea does not resolve the confusion. One holds on to it anyway as some sort of solution and continue to see the world through this distorted filter.
Try working through the Why and Lie lists above. Provide several examples - from your own experience or imagination - of each item in the lists. Then do this in combination, i.e. the why and then the lie. Also note that a further why and lie may undercut the first pair, i.e. these may go in chains.

Nobody said the mind wasn’t complicated. That’s why it sticks there - unraveling that labyrinth of lies helps you to see the underlying truth, which on the contrary is always simple and aligned with love, the nature of your being. Bon voyage!

**Why people behave as they do**

Here I’m going to summarize the way the mind works, so as to understand why people behave the way they do. If we understand that, then we can look at our own motives and start to see where we are coming from.

Actions felt to be wrong and the need to withhold knowledge of them from others, is the source of both guilt and hostility. If one has been unable to resolve a problem satisfactorily one may feel ‘forced’ to commit an action one feels badly about. We can become quite disturbed if we feel we have done something cruel or unfair to another, particularly if this is something we then have to hide, and even more so if someone nearly finds out about it. We are then likely to rationalize our action, to justify it and find reasons why the act was deserved and indeed not wrong after all.

We are being judgmental of ourselves (rather than learning the lessons of our experience) and then we project that, anticipating that others will be equally judgmental.

A satisfying relationship with another person requires good communication, mutual understanding and empathy. If there is a significant drop in one of these factors, e.g. we disagree and have an argument, then an upset ensues - we aren’t speaking to one another anymore. An upset occurs when there is a sudden departure from what is wanted or expected - an unwanted change or break in the relationship. Such upsets inevitably have emotional consequences; a poorer relationship causes a drop in emotional tone. People can equally have upsets with objects or situations if there is a reduction of control or understanding, e.g. I can get upset if my car breaks down or if I suddenly get ill.

Your feeling of control over situations may be disturbed if someone evaluates the circumstances differently from you, and particularly if they enforce that upon you, saying what you should or must do or not do. An invalidation of what you have done or of your capability, may equally cause disturbance.

Accompanying these factors are the decisions that have been made in the face of stressful situations and anxiety, and which have become fixed ideas and serve as defense mechanisms. It is emotional pain, or the threat of such pain, that holds distorted
ideas in place. It is at times of upset or disturbance that we particularly grasp hold of our fixed ideas and beliefs in order to protect ourselves, to justify our actions (even if we secretly feel bad about them), and to make ourselves feel OK. We may feel the need to make another wrong - to manipulate, or give our own evaluations and criticisms of the other person - in order to feel more right ourselves.

When a person does something he feels to be wrong, he can either take responsibility or - and this is the norm unfortunately - he can make himself right in the situation, rationalize to justify his action so that he begins to believe it wasn’t actually wrong but justified. Self right, the other wrong. It’s a human need ‘to be right’ but not a very aware one (the aware view is not to make right or wrong). This justification provides a motive for the action and is expressed most commonly as criticism of the one who was originally wronged. It is a ‘child’ viewpoint as opposed to a responsible ‘adult’ one.

Any person is of the opinion that he is ‘right’ in what he believes - otherwise he wouldn’t believe it. But he can have all sort of misconceptions, misinterpretations, false data and delusions, and be holding fast onto them in order to be right. The fundamental considerations of his belief system, the things that have made sense of past confusions for him, are not changeable by reasoning alone because they are held in place by force - by an unwillingness or inability to confront certain things.

All defense mechanisms are forms of lying. They misrepresent the truth, both to ourselves and others. Gurdjieff was insistent that most people lie, most of the time. That they do not know they are lying makes their situation even worse. When you know you are deliberately lying, your perception of reality is probably adequate. When you identify with the lying and experience the lie as truth, when you deceive yourself, your perception has become very distorted.

Frequently, we pretend to know a truth that we cannot know. People adopt the habit of speaking about things they cannot know, as though they know all about them, e.g. of what other people’s motivations and feelings are - in fact, much is imaginary. Man starts to imagine something in order to please himself, and very soon he begins to believe what he imagines, or at least some of it.

Sometimes we lie to avoid our more essential and higher natures. We may tell ourselves and others, ‘Everybody does it, it doesn’t mean anything’, when something in us knows quite well we have not lived up to our true nature: the integrity of our loving, and causative and responsible self.

Four manifestations demonstrate to man his mechanical nature, when they are reactively engaged in: lying, delusion, negative emotions and compulsive talking. They happen so quickly, so habitually and so imperceptibly, that one cannot notice them, and one does not want to notice them because they are defense mechanisms.

Suppression, invalidation and not acknowledging are self-lies, used to submerge the truth, to keep it subconscious, to maintain the status quo, to avoid confronting reality or one’s true feelings. They are defense mechanisms, used unconsciously, habitually,
automatically - attached to anything we don’t want to emerge, to look at or know about: the unacceptable. They may be feelings that are opposed or held down by our most strongly held convictions. If a feeling or desire is triggered that is too uncomfortable, then we distance ourselves from it, we disown it - ‘It wasn’t me, it wasn’t mine’ - we identify with some other aspect of ourselves, a sub-personality that daren’t have such feelings or desires.

Projection is another defense - when an unacceptable feeling or desire comes up, it is labeled ‘this is what someone else feels, needs or wants’, such as the person over there. It’s disowned and passed to the other person, unknowingly, due to reactive, subconscious suggestions from the past, which make the feeling unacceptable for oneself.

Rationalization is substituting a plausible and acceptable rationale for the unacceptable feeling. With this protective device, a lie is covered up with a reason. The mind rationalizes away failures, finds excuses why you should not do something. We lie to ourselves, and we have the audacity to believe it!

Rationalization frequently occurs when an action is felt to be wrong, either because it is not considered acceptable by others, or because we ourselves would not like to experience the effect that we caused. We cover up our feeling by intellect: we justify our action by finding a motive. Then our behavior becomes the other’s fault and instead of feeling affinity, we are now in opposition and may therefore withdraw. After this break in relations the motive may then be used to make ourselves right and the other wrong, and this ‘computation’ may become fixed in our mind as a way of handling people and the world - a defense mechanism used unconsciously (without inspection of the new reality) to aid survival.

In effect the lower state of being that is withdrawn to, becomes a safe solution - a way of continuing toward our original goals and survival, without having to face opposition previously encountered.

Adopting another identity, viewpoint, idealization or fixed idea for its survival value, its ability to make you right or OK and another wrong or not OK, are such safe solutions. They are a view of things that was at one time in the past, felt to be of service in survival. When the solution is used reactively, without inspection in the present time, it is unlikely to be based on the truth of a current situation, or to be fair or rational behavior, and this is extremely prevalent in all our transactions and thinking.

At any time your attention may become fixed on one of these factors: a disagreement or unacceptable reality, involving breakdowns in communication, understanding or empathy in your relationship with another; on a current problem and ‘ways to get around it’; on something you have done about which you feel shame or guilt and that you are afraid may be found out; on an evaluation someone is making affecting your free choice; on an invalidation you are receiving that affects you.
These are factors that cause compulsions and inhibitions, that prevent you from being stably in the present, living consciously. Life is serious, solid, heavy. Thinking is ‘them and us’, based on compulsive rightness of identity - safe solutions to irresolvable problems. Games are stuck and unknowing. One is unhappy and at effect, at least in the area of one’s true goals. One is stuck in fixed identities and failed purposes - one no longer knows who one is. And all of this is ‘normal’ for most of us.

However, it certainly is possible to regain causation in life. One is motivated to complete cycles of action because one has recovered one’s true identity and is aware of one’s own goals. What were previously heavy and serious problems are now games to enjoy. One is truly happy with renewed purposes in life. Others are not enemies but either team mates or competition, who make the game more interesting and from whom one can learn - from what they do right and what they do wrong. Without fixed ways of making yourself right, one too can learn both from things that do actually go right and from one’s mistakes. Life, love and truth become one’s operating basis.

Life is, to a significant degree, for learning - so when things don’t go right, when we do wrong, make mistakes, and when we do things right as well - these are all learning opportunities.

Learning can be positive, when an experience has been properly digested, so new skills, coping and mastery are developed - or learning can be negative, when the experience is perhaps overwhelming and has not been integrated and so future avoidance patterns become imprinted, what could be termed ‘unskills.’ So long as you eventually learn from it in a positive way, no experience is wasted.

Similarly there is positive and negative imprinting. If an untruth is imprinted into our unconscious, it becomes a limiting, negative influence. If a truth is imprinted, it will necessarily therefore be based on love and freedom of thought, being in the present moment, recognizing what is without judgment - then it is an empowering, positive influence, especially if it is made fully conscious.

When you’ve learned the lesson that experience offers then you can move on. Provided you have learned the lesson, and not got serious/solid/heavy about it and justified your Ego - otherwise it haunts you till you have really learned the lesson (which is Karma). Your actions remain to haunt you until you have learned their lesson.

One way to look at your situation is that ‘life is a game’ and if you can see it like that, then problems disappear - you’re left with challenges to meet, but not with the seriousness that causes stress and worry - you feel at cause rather than at effect. The stupidities of this world don’t go away but one can see them in a different light. And you are more powerful and effective to act.

I realize how frustrating it sometimes is when you are aware of the discrepancy of what you can be and what you are being (many people of course are not aware of that or hide
it from themselves). The answer for me, and the most workable answer that I am aware of, is to work on becoming more conscious in each moment of your day, to notice and revise your belief structure that causes this discrepancy. Your map of the world. It’s not easy but it is a game in itself and therefore can be immensely rewarding. In particular notice when you make yourself right or another wrong, as this kind of egotistic thinking is a flag for the deeper identity issues of your belief structure.

**Turning problems into challenges**

The mark of a successful individual is not whether or not they have problems, it is whether or not they have the same problems they had last year! In other words, do they understand problems? And are they solving them? Or are they just worrying and fretting and doing nothing?

Everybody has problems. Whenever we have a goal, there are barriers to achieving that goal - otherwise it would be too easy and no fun. The goal blocked by the barrier is a problem. Overcoming the barrier and attaining the goal is the game of life. This is also called problem solving. Without problems as challenges, life would be boring indeed! Problems are the essence of life. Difficulties arise when you are at the effect of a problem - when a problem has you, not when you have a problem. Then you experience stress and worry.

When a problem has you, you don’t realize that you are creating it. You don’t know that you, and only you, have to do something about the problem - that is, if you want to solve it. You are waiting for something to happen or someone else to solve the problem for you, or for it to fizzle out. You aren’t looking clearly, facing up to the reality, seeing the truth and therefore being able to solve the problem. And it isn’t fun. This is also called not taking responsibility and being at effect.

When you have a problem, you know that you made it because you wanted something - you have a goal - and there are always barriers to attaining every goal. So you have a goal opposed by a barrier - a problem! So you know you have to do something about the problem - to overcome the barriers and move forward toward the goal. And you have to do it (no one else can). And you are doing it! You are solving the problem. And it’s fun! This is also called taking responsibility and being at cause.

There are always problems in life. The question is are you going to have problems or are problems going to have you? Better to let your problems become challenges, a game you can enjoy.

First you need to identify the problems in your life and there are inevitably lots of them! The following technique will help you identify some problems that you may not even be aware of, perhaps because you have just got so accustomed to them...

Ask yourself the following questions:
1. ‘What are you doing in your life that you want to do?’

2. ‘What are you not-doing in your life that you want to do?’ In other words, what do you wish you were doing and are nevertheless not doing?

3. ‘What are you doing in your life that you do not want to be doing?’

4. ‘What are you not doing in your life that you indeed do not want to do?’

This question identifies those things that a person really does not want to do and therefore is not making a part of his life. For example, he does not want to work for somebody else, and in this way he limits his options.

Ask yourself these questions until you have run out of answers.

Now look at what you’ve got. The answers that you have written down for questions 2 and 3 are the problem areas of your life. Question 4 may also represent an unresolved problem. With this data - hopefully an increased clarity on your situation - you will be able to take action on the real underlying source of the problems.

Note: If lack of energy is a problem, realize that you can promote mental fitness by becoming physically fit, and exercise gives you more energy not less. Also, you can talk yourself into exhaustion; most people are about as tired as they make up their minds to be.

If you have practical problems, take action to resolve the problem, rather than worry and complain about things. Most problems have simple solutions: you can lose weight by eating less, you can stop smoking by simply stopping. Simple enough but not easy to do, otherwise you would have done it already.

To resolve the impasse you need to look at the counter-intention that is holding you back. I like eating and I like smoking, yes, but why? Normally the why is unmet needs, that the compulsion has become a substitute for. What is not being confronted here? Look for the real underlying problem and sort that out first. Try to gain more clarity about it, to identify your thought-distortions that have been making the problem seem more of a barrier than it actually is.

Then what is required is intentional daily effort, focused toward a goal that you genuinely feel is worthwhile. Observe yourself in the process and when you become distracted bring yourself back on task. Refocus and begin again.

When you are working toward a goal, something that you want to achieve, it helps greatly to do two things. Firstly, to get a very clear picture in your mind of where you are going, and what it will be like when you get there. Feel it with all your senses, as if you have already achieved it.

Secondly, measure your progress, not by how far you still have to go to reach that target, but instead, how far you have already come. Realize how important your first steps are. Keep doing that and you will get there.
**Difficult times**

When painful events happen in life, such as losing a job, breakdown of a relationship, illness or when one fails at an important task, this is naturally distressing. Like the pain we feel when we fall to the ground, it is a reality of life that we need to accept, then pick ourselves up and continue a little wiser.

Because of the pain, we may be tempted to avoid the reality of life through resistance and denial. Something bad happens, and we look the other way. We pretend that we don’t have a problem when we do: ‘It’s not my problem the sales figures have collapsed,’ ‘I’m not upset she’s left, good riddance.’ But the problem doesn’t just go away, and neither do our suppressed feelings - they build up and fester inside, causing anxiety, tension, depression, and a host of stress-related problems. The emotional energy these suppressed feelings create eventually drives you to behave in ways you don’t like or understand, and which you cannot control.

Another way of avoiding reality is through exaggeration. This is when you make the situation out to be worse than it is, to justify your resistance. Whenever anything mildly unpleasant happens, you start imagining all the bad possibilities of what may go wrong, as if they were real and already happening. So of course you cannot face up to this and you ‘blow up’ or lose your temper to relieve the pressure of the accumulated emotions. This can feel good because it puts the feeling into action - but it doesn’t change the reality of the situation that you are still not confronting.

A third common way to cope with feelings is by attempting to avoid the issue altogether by attending instead to distractions - by talking, watching TV, eating, smoking, drinking, taking drugs, having sex, etc. But despite our attempts to escape them, the real issue and our feelings about it are still there - and still take their toll in the form of stress.

But there is another option for handling a feeling - you can focus on it, fully experience it, and then let go of it: release it, discharge it, as we described earlier. Release requires acceptance; acceptance occurs when we no longer resist - no longer look at things in terms of black and white, no longer judge. When we tap into our capacity for unconditional love, including love for ourselves.

Whenever you are experiencing any kind of discomfort, you are resisting the fact that some person, situation, or thing is the way it is. You may be doing so unconsciously and automatically, but nonetheless, all suffering, all discomfort, all pain, comes from not allowing what is to be what it is. If you could be totally nonresistant to what is, life would flow easily and happily, without discomfort, no matter what the external circumstances.

This does not mean you can’t take action in order to make things different. It just means that when faced with something that is the way it is, and cannot be changed, you do not, as a result, suffer over it.
Do what you can to create what you want, but don’t become attached to the outcome; that way your level of well-being can remain the same, regardless of the outcome. Your happiness comes from inside, not from what does or does not happen around you.

When you want to change yourself or help others to change, you need to gather information, the noticeable parts of a problem, the symptoms one is uncomfortable with. This is the present state.

There will also be a desired state: an outcome that is the goal of change. There will be the resources that will help to achieve this outcome and also side effects to reaching it, for oneself and others. There will of course be the barriers and difficulties. But if it is a worrisome problem and not simply an interesting challenge, there will also be underlying reasons that create it as a problem: what does the person keep having to do that maintains the problem, and why? What is not being faced up to? These causes are inevitably to do with resistance, the denial or exaggeration of a reality, and the suppression of accompanying emotions.

The element of conflict is intrinsic to problems and the trick of solving them is to be able to spot the counter element to one’s own intention, and to recognize that one does indeed have a causative contribution to the situation, otherwise it would not be intention versus counter-intention - a problem! The ‘solution’ to the problem is simply a realization of the structure of the problem itself. To accept and no longer resist the honest truth of the reality of the situation. To recognize the denial or exaggeration that has been going on, and the emotional attachment to an outcome. The emotional charge or confusion of the problem will then drop away, and appropriate actions may be taken.

The amount a person suffers in their life is directly related to how much they are resisting the fact that ‘things are the way they are,’ because they are not as they are ‘supposed to be.’ Attachment to things being different than they are needs to be ‘upgraded’ to a preference. This means that when ‘what is’ is not what you want, you do not suffer over it (get angry, sad, fearful, anxious, and so on), and your happiness and peace are therefore not controlled by forces outside of your control. You then have the clarity needed to much better be able to actually improve the situation.

As you go about your day, notice when you are feeling resistance or feel that what is happening is not acceptable to you. Then switch your viewpoint to: ‘I’d prefer it to be different but I can accept this as a starting point, really it’s OK.’ See what you learn about yourself and if it actually empowers you to be both happier and more effective.

**Coping with and learning from a major loss in your life**

Most people are afraid of the unknown - of not knowing the outcome of an action, a relationship, or a decision - so they gravitate to what they already know and then cling to this apparently safe comfort zone. Many choose the same course of action repeatedly even though it has not brought the results they desire.
But times arrive in our lives when we have to face an abrupt reality, and we are forced to step out of our comfort zone. Unexpectedly, the experience can be liberating and life transforming, if we are willing to learn the lessons we had put off for so long. And as we are no longer bound by the old circumstances, new choices and opportunities arise.

At times of great loss, we grieve in the way that is most meaningful to us, and then we re-awaken to our lives. That is our chance, then, to move forward.

Grief is a natural reaction to the experience of loss - of loved friends and family, of treasured possessions, of self-esteem, of status and security, and of hopes, dreams and expectations. To let ourselves feel the sequence of emotions - anger, loss, despair, sadness, detachment and depression - is of course painful. But the grief process is not in itself harmful; it is when we do not allow the process to occur or to complete itself, that the suppressed emotions can cause stress and even illness months and years later.

The emotional process called grieving is to acknowledge, experience and release the powerful feelings that are part of it.

When adjustment to the loss is accomplished, a person begins to become involved in life again, usually incorporating a redefinition of how that life will be led: this may include finding new interests, developing new and old friendships, and starting new ventures.

**How to help a grieving person (you, a friend or child)**

First it is necessary of course to open up communication with the person and reflect back to them what they are feeling, as they may be denying their feeling of loss or sadness. Begin by asking how he or she is feeling. Then be prepared to follow up by saying, ‘How are you really feeling?’ or ‘I noticed how you looked when you cam in - how were you feeling then?’

Your job, through questioning and reflecting back what you hear, is to listen and let the person know how you understand and empathize with how they are feeling. Never try to evaluate nor to persuade the person to change their feelings. There needs to be an openness and honesty about what has happened and the feelings that come up (even if they seem contradictory), so that the fact of the loss can be faced head on.

One needs to be patient and allow the grieving process to take as long as it takes, without judgment. This can include answering questions and giving support and reassurance over and over again. Although loss has occurred in one area, point out other aspects of life that are still intact.

Do not suppress the person’s emotional expression, and encourage them to do the same, to bring all the tears and anger and so on to the surface. Be there for the person and respect their need to be alone or to be with you, whether talking or in silence.

Regardless of the intensity or cause of the grief, it still occurs in this natural sequence and needs to be allowed, supported and healed.
One may deny or refuse to accept the death or loss. One may feel personally at fault for what happened, such as feeling guilty that one is still OK others are not, or believing that one has caused the negative emotional reactions of family and friends.

One may feel anger, which generally results from something happening which you believe should not. There may be blame and resentment. There may be shock and panic if a world that seemed safe and secure has been shattered. And they may become loud, aggressive and physically hyperactive as their way of handling the powerful emotions that are pouring through them.

Because so many emotions and steps are involved in the grief process, healing after a loss can take a considerable period of time, but only emotions that are not moving through and being released are cause for concern.

**False beliefs**

When our minds immediately come up with negative or irrational thoughts in response to situations, and we then respond emotionally (often inappropriately and in a self-defeating way, were we to look objectively at the situation), these thoughts are based on deeper-lying beliefs or assumptions about ourselves, others, and situations. While growing up we learned these beliefs from our parents, teachers and peers, as well as from other authority figures, and we may have absorbed such beliefs from the conditioning of the media - TV and films, song lyrics, and so on. You may have been told ‘Big boys don’t cry,’ ‘Nice girls don’t get angry,’ or learned ‘It’s risky to trust people,’ ‘It’s very hard to be alone’... the possible list is endless.

You may have developed an attitude about yourself as a result of being frequently criticized (thus ‘I’m worthless’), ignored (thus ‘My needs don’t matter’), or rejected (thus ‘I’m not worthy of being loved.’) You may then ‘live out’ these false beliefs to the point where you act in ways that confirm them, and then others treat you accordingly. Like computers, individuals become ‘programmed’ and the false beliefs we hold become self-fulfilling prophecies.

The most powerful false beliefs are those we adopted as a result of some painful experience. Even if true for then, such beliefs become false in the present as our situation is different now and we have the power of choice we may not have felt we had then. If we expose and re-evaluate such beliefs then the power that past traumatic experiences hold over us will immediately dissipate.

Our core beliefs are typically so basic to our thinking that we do not recognize them as beliefs at all, we just take them for granted and assume them to reflect reality. They are our map of the world. We actually absorb such beliefs into our identity.

Based on false beliefs we may make ourselves anxious by anticipating the worst, we may put ourselves down, and try to meet unreasonable expectations. For example, if you assume ‘I must worry about a problem before there’s any chance of it being resolved’ then you’ll worry much more than another person who doesn’t hold that
assumption. If you believe ‘I’m nothing unless I succeed and others approve of me’ then you will feel less confident and secure. Or if you believe ‘I must do things perfectly or there’s no point in trying’ then you’ll get less done and be more stressed along the way.

Most of us have one or more core issues or challenges which surface repeatedly over the course of our lives. These issues are usually rooted in deep unexpressed fears and their associated false beliefs. Depending on your perspective, core issues either cause all sorts of problems, or present many opportunities for transformation. When you choose to look at core issues as an opportunity, you are much more likely to transform negative beliefs into positive affirmations which lead to a better life. The following are some common core issues, and their related fears and beliefs:

- Abandonment: Nobody cares about me. I’m all alone. I don’t matter.
- Arrogance: I’m better than everyone else. I must be right and others should be wrong.
- Damaged: Something is wrong with me. I’m a failure. I’m damaged.
- Inferiority: I’m not good enough. I’m stupid. I’m worthless. I’m boring. I’m unattractive.
- Rejection: I’m a burden. I’m unwanted. Nobody wants to spend time with me.
- Shame: I’m bad. I don’t deserve to be loved. There’s something wrong with me.

Our core issues often originate from childhood family scenarios. They can be a result of negative messages that were repeated many times to us by our parents or other significant people in our lives. Or one of these beliefs may have been driven deep into us during one or more traumatic experiences. Was one of the above statements drilled into you in your early years?

You may unconsciously be trying to compensate for your core issue. For example, someone with inferiority as a core issue might outwardly appear very macho or domineering but really, this is covering up a fear of being inferior. A person who feels deep-down shame may be overly nice and giving to cover up the fear that they are really bad.

Cultivate an awareness of how and when your core issue is triggered. Notice when you are telling yourself that same old story. Each time this happens, be open to shifting from your old, disempowering self-image into a new, fuller way of being. You can continually choose transformation by remembering to recognize fear as an invitation to growth.

Genuine fear warns and reminds us to stay alert and pay attention. But if a fear is irrational it threatens and jeopardizes so that we cannot do the things we want to do. It can become generalized so that we have an overriding feeling of fear with no real
focus. For this reason it is important to focus on and identify a fear clearly, so it can be seen in its true light and confronted realistically.

When looking at a somewhat frightening situation it is all too easy to exaggerate it, to over-generalize and assume the worst, or to be more negative than we need to be about our own capabilities and about the scale of the threat.

Each time we experience fear, we have a choice to either allow it to engulf us, or to release it and trust that things will work out for us. When we operate under the constraint of fear, we are guaranteed to create what we fear. A fear that is not faced grows as it cycles through us. Each time it resurfaces, we have a harsher experience, until it becomes a phobia and ruins our lives. The alternative is to confront the fear, to look at the circumstances objectively and rationally, and then its inherent lesson can be learned.

Accompanying every fear is a need that we feel is threatened. Therefore the different kinds of fear correspond to the fundamental needs that we all have:

**Fear of separation and loneliness**
This is the most basic fear and it includes fear of death. To be accepted by others is a fundamental human need, so loneliness and the fear of loneliness can be found at the root of many behavioral problems: ‘If I say that or do this, people might not like me and I’ll be on my own.’ ‘I had friends in the past but nobody likes me anymore.’

Recovering self-confidence and the sense of opportunity in the present is the way to move through loneliness: to recognize that the ‘all-alone feeling’ we label ‘loneliness’ is an opportunity to pause and take a breath between different experiences, relationships and activities.

**Fear of the unknown**
This fear accompanies change, growth and any new endeavor, such as going to a new school or making a new friend.

**Fear of pain**
Physical, mental, emotional or spiritual pain is experienced (or even just imagined) and then feared. Fear of experiencing the pain again keeps adults and children unnecessarily locked within self-imposed limits to their life experience.

**Fear of humiliation or being ‘made wrong’**
Teenagers in particular so fear the loss of their ‘image’ that they can succumb to peer pressure and act quite against their better judgment.

**Fear of rejection**
With this fear one avoids taking interpersonal risks, such as stating strong opinions that diverge from the group or family, or making decisions on one’s own.

**Fear of loss of control**
This fear may come up if one has been betrayed in the past, or if one has been persuaded or influenced to do inappropriate actions, or if one has been frustrated at being unable to complete a cycle of action, or if one has tried to communicate with an angry person who won’t listen, and so on.

And there are many more common fears. For all of them, the resolution is to perceive and accept the true reality of the situation and to trust that one’s needs will be met. The magic of the universe is that then, yes they will be.

The denial of feelings and true wishes or desires occurs because of the fear that acting on them or communicating them will bring failure and then scorn or ridicule - in short, will upset the apple cart. But to continue suppressing what one truly wants is to die inside, to lose integrity.

**Resolving Guilt**

Guilt is the feeling of self-reproach for believing one has done a wrong. Guilt usually involves a judgment we make about our character or behavior and it’s this that sticks and makes us feel bad afterwards. It’s not the answer to having done something wrong; the answer is to take responsibility for one’s actions and to learn whatever lessons are possible from the mistakes and errors of judgment involved.

The self-reproach is lessened by realizing that you don’t usually know you are making an error until you have made it and have a chance to realize in retrospect. Each of us can do our best and no more. If you did know your action was wrong, even before you did it, then you need to look at your motives and see where your judgment was going astray - since you realize it was a wrong act this should be quite apparent.

What was the valid or good motive for your behavior and what was the lie or misunderstanding that distorted the good into a bad action? This is the lesson you can learn, and you won’t learn that lesson by putting yourself down and refusing to look clearly at what was really going on for you.

One needs to be particularly careful when one realizes one has done something wrong. You are particularly vulnerable at this moment to fall into the trap of protecting your self-esteem and ‘rightness’ by finding some way to justify your actions, to pretend that your motive was correct, that the action was deserved. If you believe this lie then you are even farther from taking responsibility and learning a valuable lesson.

It’s a pretty reliable indication, that if someone is criticizing another with intolerance and lack of empathy and compassion, then he has previously wronged the other and has fallen into the trap of justifying his actions by rationalizing that the other is deserving of the wrongdoing. He then continues to find fault in the other, believing his own lie, and is that much more lacking in self-awareness.

The person who has done something wrong and realizes this, but has not communicated his responsibility to the persons involved, is in the precarious position of being afraid of being found out. He may feel the need to lie, which makes it worse. Every time he is
‘nearly found out’ he is highly stressed. The motto is, if there’s something you need to say, then for your own sake just say it - you’ll be so relieved. But the longer you leave it, or the more you lie to cover up your tracks, the worse it gets for you.

It’s very important, if someone is brave enough to own up to you - about something they’ve done (that they think you won’t like) or lies they’ve told - that you treat them with respect and compassion, and wipe the slate clean. Then it’s win-win: they will respect you and their own self, and you’ve just made a friend not an enemy.

Try completing the following sentences, with as much honesty and frankness as you can muster. Get it all out, then in each case look for the underlying belief that drives that feeling...

- I am a person who ...
- One of the things I’d like people to know about me is ...
- One of the things I don’t want people to know about me is ...
- One of the things I have to do to survive is ...
- All my life, I ...
- It isn’t easy for me to admit ...
- Sometimes I feel frustrated when ...
- If I didn’t care what people thought, I would ...
- Ever since I was a child, I ...
- If I knew I could not fail I would attempt to...
- If I were to communicate all this to my (partner/friend/family/colleague) then ...

Just recognizing your own particular false beliefs is the first and most important step toward letting go of them, to re-programming yourself: to recover your true potential as the meta-programmer. Next you need to re-evaluate your deeply-held belief and see if you’d like to revise it - you can use these questions:

- What is the evidence for this?
- Does this belief always hold true for me or just sometimes?
- Does this belief look at the whole picture, taking into account all of my life experience?
- Does this belief promote my well-being?
- Did I choose this belief on my own or did I adopt it because of another’s influence?
- Was it a particular experience that lead me to adopt this belief?
- What new belief can I adopt to better serve me?
By identifying and choosing to deal with our core issues, we transform our deepest fears and end up feeling more alive and more connected with ourselves and with those around us. Here are some affirmations to help you move forward:

Abandonment: I am worthy of love. I choose to connect with all around me.

Arrogance: I can learn from all around me. I can see goodness in everyone I meet.

Damaged – I am whole and complete just as I am. I can choose to love all of me.

Inferiority: I choose to be a good, valuable person. I can make meaningful contributions to the world. I am essentially a beautiful, loving being, a child of God.

Rejection: I choose to be an attractive, interesting person. People can enjoy getting to know me. Every person is unique and worthy of love.

Shame: I can learn from my mistakes and be a wiser person. I can be gentle with myself. I can hold the best intentions for all deep in my heart.

**The power of affirmations**

We frequently resolve to change our behavior for the better, to make a new start. We make affirmations: causative intentions. Here are some pointers about the limitations and potential power of affirmations...

Affirmations always work. Whatever you intend you will focus on and this attention passes a command from the conscious mind to the subconscious mind. The subconscious mind has the ability, in anything it accepts as true, to do whatever it takes to turn it into reality. The subconscious will gather relevant beliefs, experiences and feelings, and filter what it considers inappropriate beliefs, experiences and feelings, and in this way influence the conscious mindset accordingly.

For example: ‘I don’t want to be poor.’

Assumption: ‘I am poor.’

Focus: ‘Poverty.’

Result: Thinking about poverty, and being in the identity of a poor person. So the affirmation worked, but not in the way you intended.

Maybe this should be re-phrased in the positive? For example: ‘I want to be rich.’

Assumption: ‘I am not rich.’ Who wants what they already have? Want implies not having.

Focus: Poverty.

Result: Again, assuming the identity of a poor person.

So we have learned it is better to phrase in the present, not future. Don’t use ‘want’ and similar words. Perhaps this makes a better affirmation: ‘I am rich.’ But if you are rich,
then this does not work because if you are rich then of course you’ve already attained being rich. If you aren’t rich, it is a lie. Therefore, it doesn’t work. There’s got to be a better way...

How about: ‘I choose to be rich.’ Suppose you have everything that being rich means to you. Imagine that this is happening. See yourself in that situation. Then slip into that image of yourself and see and hear and feel what it is to experience being rich. Feels good, doesn’t it? So choose that to be a desirable state of being.

It works now, doesn’t it? It is true, it does not imply or state an undesirable state and it is in the present. At least in your imagination you are rich - you have felt what it is like to be in that wealthy identity and that is a resource you can apply. You’ve changed your frame of mind and your view of the world has altered for the better. When you have a positive vision that is real to you and genuinely something that you want and identify with, then creative energies naturally flow toward that vision. This is powerful stuff!

Everything in our lives is created newly every time we experience it. Even if it is something we barely notice. Yet we are not aware of making these creative affirmations. There are so many of them that we would be overwhelmed if we had to think of them all. If we wish to break down a wall with a sledge hammer, then we need to create the wall as well as the force to knock it down. We are creating a resistant wall and at the same time creating an opposing force. This may not be the wisest way to do things!

Using this as an analogy, when we are affirming something, even when we do so focusing on ability and being honest, we are making many other affirmations at the same time without being aware of them. We create a problem and try to create a strong enough force to overcome that problem - we can’t effectively use force to discover truth but we often try! We make an affirmation but subconsciously we are also creating hidden barriers or ‘counter-intentions’ to that affirmation.

This counter-intention is probably something that we thought in the past was a means to keep us safe, or otherwise make our lives better. It might even be a simple negative thought that we decided at a time of stress and keep thinking unconsciously. Such counter-intentions could be ideas that our parents or our culture bombarded us with as a child and then these became habitual and out of our awareness.

When you are affirming a positive intention it is therefore very helpful to recognize the counter-intentions or hidden barriers that you are creating at the same time. What is connected with your affirmation that you are resisting, suppressing or trying to forget?

When these negative thoughts and feelings are seen in a clear light, you can then re-evaluate them and let them go, and if necessary adjust your affirmation so there is no longer this inner conflict.

When affirming you should only use positive language and not (for example) ‘I will not overeat’ because the subconscious mind - particularly the right brain part of the
subconscious which thinks in pictures and feelings rather than logic and words - will simply get the picture and feeling of overeating and interpret that ‘positively’ and will focus on overeating. ‘I choose to eat moderate portions’ will be an effective affirmation.

Why, then, isn’t negative self-talk like ‘I will never succeed’ interpreted by the subconscious mind as ‘I will succeed’ - why this ‘double standard’?

The answer is rather complicated but worth understanding. The right brain, which determines our feelings and hence motivation and resulting action, interprets our thoughts in terms of the underlying (subconscious) true feelings and therefore doesn’t discriminate between conscious acceptance or resistance. It interprets based on actual beliefs (at the level of feelings) that are stimulated by the concept of what is being consciously thought - it picks up on what most closely corresponds to the subconscious belief/feeling.

‘I will not overeat’ is an affirmation based on the feeling that you really do want to overeat, so that’s how it’s interpreted. Similarly, ‘I will never succeed’ is based on the feeling that you really do not feel you will succeed - you have acceptance of failure even though your conscious mind (left brain) is resisting that. The feeling of failure is stimulated by the affirmation, so you’re more likely to set yourself up to fail. The same would apply if you made the affirmation ‘I will succeed’ but you actually felt at the same time that ‘I will never succeed’ - it is the true feeling that will be acted upon, not the intended affirmation.

Using an affirmation without first bringing to consciousness and re-evaluating an inner feeling that conflicts with it, will probably not be helpful because it is not really believed. ‘I choose to succeed’ would be more empowering, as it gives you the chance to affirm in the present moment that you prefer the feeling of success to that of failure and you can let go of the negative feeling of failure.

So the key issue is whether your affirmation is in alignment or conflicting with your deeply-held beliefs. That’s the reason why affirmations don’t necessarily help but may indeed increase inner conflict and serve to suppress the inner belief and its accompanying feelings rather than resolving it.

Affirmations don’t have to be repeated dozens of times when they are really believed and are truthful. When you have uncovered a conflicting inner belief and genuinely discovered it is false - i.e. it is not rational, helpful, true, or of your own making - then making a new positive affirmation can help to strengthen the revised belief that you have chosen, and that’s where affirmations are indeed very helpful.

**Finding your life’s purpose**

Self knowledge is the way for someone to start understanding who they are and their potential. The first thing you need to do is to really consider your life: is it pointed in the right direction? Are you doing what you’re doing because it’s aligned with your
own values, your own ideals, and your needs? We have needs for safety, we have needs for belonging, and to fit in and get on with others, and to feel competent and capable. These are things that we feel we should be doing, and we need to do them at a certain stage of our development. These things, they keep you alive, but they don’t make you happy.

To find your life purpose, you need to find within yourself the loving person - because that IS the real you - and the best way to do that is to cultivate acceptance and forgiveness, and that starts at home with oneself. Not to blame oneself or others, but to accept the reality, and to see one’s responsibility for it. One did make those choices that lead you to the present. But all choices are for what seems the best option at the time; now you may see a wiser view, that the choices were based on fear or greed or whatever... but have compassion for yourself at that time; be easy on yourself. And the same applies for others. You need not judge yourself or others, just accept, with love.

Finding your life purpose can help you to move with greater focus and clarity every day of your life. Pause for a moment and ask yourself:

What is the most important thing I want to achieve in my life?

How do I want to be remembered? What way can I best be of service?

Allow your own inner wisdom to help you with this. Give yourself time to explore the questions - ask them to yourself before you go to sleep - and make notes of what comes up. Find what touches and inspires you most deeply. Once you have some clear ideas, see how they might fit together to form a picture of your life’s purpose or purposes.

For each main purpose you have found for your life, also note your intentions: the actions that will start you moving in the direction of your purpose. Review your intentions every morning and see how you can incorporate them to move more effectively and powerfully through the day. In difficult situations, see if your life purpose or one of your intentions can give you direction to navigate through the stormy waters.

Remember that this is an evolving process. You may find new wording that better expresses what it is you really want deep down. As you become clearer on your life’s purposes and intentions, and act on them, your life is bound to move more powerfully in the direction you want it to go. Your life will become ever richer and fuller as you move with greater purpose, focus, and intention through each day.

Happiness comes from working towards goals that are truly your own, that are based on high ethical values - because you’ve thought about ethics, what’s right and wrong. Really it comes from an attitude, about flowing love and caring toward other people, to contribute and be of service to others. So this is getting beyond personal needs to
actually being an out-flowing person who has a bigger domain than just themselves. Not just themselves, their relationship and family, but to make a creative contribution to society and to be of value and of service on a broader level. That can really give you a fulfilling life. You don’t get that from being rich, or anything that comes toward you; it’s what you know of your own worth through being of value and service to others.

When you have a vision that is based on your true values, and that vision is not egotistical but based on the greater good, your love expressed unconditionally, then that will empower you to acquire all the skills and knowledge, and give you the courage to take the necessary actions, to progress toward your goals - and the world around you will naturally support that process.

What you give, you get back in satisfaction and the feeling of self worth. The value that you create will also naturally be rewarded by exchange, by greater wealth - wealth in terms of happiness and also wealth in terms of money and possessions. Those things naturally come to you because people want to give value back in exchange for value. But first of all you have to put the value out there. That’s what abundance is about, and making money. It’s not just because you want to be rich, it’s about what you can put out there that is valuable.

By working through this part of the book, a Positive Approach, you have the tools to intelligently handle your emotions, to overcome negative and distorted thinking, to affirm powerful states of being, and to envision future goals that are true to your genuine desires... truly a positive way to approach your life. If you need, work through the exercises several times, until they are well integrated into your mind set and daily living. Now it’s time to put your new power and purpose into action, achieving goals and manifesting the future you desire!
Part Five:

ACHIEVING GOALS

Life works on a cycle of Identity -- Action -- Goal.

Identity

This of course is who you are, made up of your opinions, beliefs, attitudes, feelings and values. If you don’t change who you ARE, then nothing can change in terms of DO or HAVE. The same old ball game continues. This is the defining factor: who you are determines your ethics, your sense of right and wrong, your self-control and discipline, the strength of your personality. Strength comes from self-respect, from being true to one’s heart, from being courageous, from resolving inner conflicts and not hiding them away.

We need to break out of the confining box of our conditioning, but sensibly, not treading on others, and maintaining our social relationships of family, group and culture. Empathic communication is the key to achieve this. It’s no good working toward goals that break your existing responsibilities and agreements unless these can be re-arranged in a way that respects the rights of others. We are social creatures; we need each other. Sometimes we do need to stand alone but it’s much better if we can stand together, with a shared understanding.

Action

If you don’t change what you do then despite changing your identity, still nothing will actually change in terms of your results, what you achieve and have. To act effectively we often need to build up our capabilities: to increase our knowledge and to gain skills. If our goal is clear and worthwhile, this will be part of the fun.

How we act needs discernment too. We need to act toward others as we would wish others to behave toward ourselves; otherwise what we do will return to destroy us. Love is the guideline, accepting and working to improve our own weaknesses, and understanding and forgiving the weaknesses of others.

The pleasure of achievement is in the doing, not just the having at the end. Self esteem comes from demonstrated competence. Production equals morale. The problems that stand in the way should not be viewed as barriers to work around but as challenges to overcome. Life’s about enjoying ourselves in the process of learning and achievement.
We need to try hard but not be serious and solid about it; it’s like a game of football. We have opposition but after the game, the opponents remain friends.

If you don’t align your way of being and your actions with a goal or a vision that is inspiring and motivating, true to your own desires and ethical values, you won’t have the energy, inspiration and motivation to actually do and achieve anything. You need to perceive genuine value in what you produce. If you do create results that are valuable to others, wealth will naturally come to you in exchange. Not just in terms of money but in terms of happiness; fully expressing our capabilities and being of service to others creates happiness.

Making your vision a reality

A goal is a desire made specific and with a deadline. Setting and achieving goals that fulfill your needs is essential to health and happiness. Striving toward your goals is a statement that you are taking charge of your life, rather than life taking charge of you.

Visualizing a goal is more important than knowing every detail or even any details of how you will achieve it. The first step for a painter is to visualize the end result, at least in concept; the means of achieving that result are extremely variable - different materials and styles, for example - and some of the steps may require learning new skills or may depend on ideas and inspiration that the artist knows will arrive at the appropriate time - he doesn’t worry about them not being there at the beginning. However it turns out, it will express his feelings and spirit, and that is more than good enough.

Seeking visualized goals is a powerful, natural tendency - like the tendency of plants to seek the light - an insistent drive that can crack the hardest granite. If you don’t have a clear image of where you want to go, this creative urge will be frustrated and you may experience your life as meaningless or directionless. Then you may visualize negative goals for yourself - you may see yourself as incompetent, ill, in pain, a failure, and your creative power will tend to make these a reality.

The first step in goal setting is to get in touch with what you really want in life. Something that is truly inspiring for you, so you know it is ‘right.’ It should be what you really, really want, regardless of ‘what it takes.’ Not what other people want or what they expect of you, and not something to please others - to inspire you it must be true to your self, something that will really motivate you.

It may be a lifetime goal or one for a year, month or week ahead. Keep it clear and simple but don’t set out your goal in terms of generalities like ‘some’ or ‘more’ - be specific! Include tangible details of time, place, facts, figures, persons. Clarify exactly what the goal means in terms of specific changes in your life and a specific deadline for its achievement.
The goal should be achievable - maybe out of reach, for the moment, but not out of sight! It should also be something you believe in, that you feel is right, that is consistent with your values.

Then envision that situation in your mind as actually happening now. Express it as a statement of fact in the present tense, see yourself with the goal already accomplished. What are you doing? What are your surroundings? What are people saying to you? How are you feeling now that you have accomplished it? Get the feeling of that achievement in your heart and celebrate! That feeling will then stay with you and energize all your actions toward manifesting the goal.

Here are some examples of well expressed accomplishments: ‘I am going on a singles club outing once a week and meeting new people I get on really well with [the goal to make 5 new genuine friends].’ ‘I am swimming a mile three times a week and I feel stronger and more alive [the goal to get fit by swimming a mile three times a week].’ ‘I am living comfortably within my budget for food, clothing and entertainment; now I feel financially secure and in control of my spending [the goal to live within my budget by three months time].’ ‘Bob and I are understanding each other and really loving and trusting one another and we are having beautiful sex [the goal to improve the communication in our relationship so that our sex life is great again].’

Don’t use negatives such as ‘I am not over-eating.’ Think positive! Also negative goals, or not being able to see yourself actually achieving the goal, strongly indicate the likelihood of internal conflict taking place, in which case you need to handle this, to identify the limiting beliefs and revise them.

For example, you might learn that you are afraid of how others will respond if you achieve your goal, or that you are unable or unwilling at this time to perform the necessary steps to proceed, or that the goal is really meant to please another or match somebody else. In these cases, you first need to thoroughly grasp and accept the conflicting viewpoints and feelings involved and compare them to the current reality, your actual needs, and to realize any distorted thinking taking place. Then either the goal will be clarified and the problems drop away, or you will see that the goal is not genuine and choose another goal.

You then also need to work out an action plan, covering the steps you need to take in sequence to manifest your goal. What do you need to do, change, learn, or implement, to move your life from where it is now to where you want it to be?

To plot out your path, it is best to work backward from your vision of an accomplished goal - that way you ensure you stay on track, that what you plan leads to the goal and not some place else. What has to be done to enable you to finally achieve the goal? What has to be in place? Then you just proceed backward: what needed to be done one step earlier? Work back to the first steps you need to take. The first steps need to be things that you know you can do, so you can get going. Put this in writing and share your goal with those who will support you.
As you begin to act, identify your fears, accept and release them. Identify other things you are doing, perhaps habitually, that in fact make it difficult or even impossible to eventually achieve your goal, and stop doing those things. Identify and revise your limiting beliefs (including beliefs that you have been suppressing), and shift that energy into the love you have for your vision.

As you put your first steps into reality you will find yourself acting in ways compatible with creating your vision; ideas and resources will fall into place. Setbacks are inevitable but you can learn from them, then re-establish your vision and move on with greater confidence than before. Use all that you have learned to establish and boost your self-esteem - be your own greatest supporter. With self-confidence you’ll want to stretch yourself and try new things. And remember the reasons why you are doing what you are doing - this will help you do whatever it takes to reach your goal, to be patient when necessary, and to be persistent with your efforts.

It is equally important to focus also as ruthlessly and honestly as possible on the current reality. And this is key: measure your progress from where you started, not against how far you have to go. Each action in which you demonstrate your competence boosts your self-esteem; each development that you make happen boosts your morale.

By comparing your progress with the point at which you started out, you will be encouraged to continue. Goals are achieved step by step and each step needs to be validated - otherwise the goal may seem far away and it may feel you are making little progress, when really you are.

As you continue this process you will find yourself acting in ways compatible with creating your vision; ideas and resources will fall into place.

Then compare your current reality and state of progress with the final vision - the next steps will be clarified and you will be motivated to continue. This is an improvisatory process and cannot be entirely predicted at the outset. Since creating is improvisatory, the steps you planned to take and even the goal itself may be revised. Now you know yourself better you may discover that you actually want something very different from what you originally set out to get. This is, really, the fun and the game of life!

THE FUTURE EXISTS
FIRST IN IMAGINATION
THEN IN WILL
THEN IN REALITY
Body, mind and spirit

In order to create our reality - to make things happen in our experience of the world - we operate at all levels of our being: the spiritual, mental, emotional, physical. We do this 100% of the time whether we are aware of it or not. It is possible to improve our life experience by becoming more conscious of our creative process.

In Western culture, we are brought up to view our lives as primarily a physical manifestation: we go to work, produce things, get paid, survive, try to keep our bodies healthy, find a partner, make a family home. Talk of ‘creating our reality’ from a spiritual viewpoint seems out of touch with reality, maybe even a bit crazy. But if you follow it through - as I will try to explain - it does all tie together. The everyday life we experience is very much affected by our spiritual nature, our creative will. Then we manifest that ‘will’ according to the beliefs we hold, the feelings that result from those beliefs, and our resulting actions.

We can start living consciously by manifesting what we want right here and now, by putting into place our plans and dreams in the real world.

The first step is to become clear on what you want to create - to decide what you want.

The second step is to visualize, with emotion, it happening, until you get to a point where you know it already has happened and is on its way to you.

The third step is to be open for guidance, from the source of knowing that you are spiritually connected to and part of. Wait for spiritual guidance before taking action. If you take action before receiving guidance you may end up running into blocks or manifesting something other than what you really want. That’s the Ego’s way, when your behavior is reactive, without consciousness, and without connection with your Higher Self. Wait for God’s guidance, and it will always turn out perfectly, sometimes even in a better way than you first imagined it.

Then you act, according to your intuitive knowing. You can tell if that comes from Spirit because it will have the presence of Love. That means acceptance without judgment. And without negative emotions like fear or hatred, which are resistances against what exists - that which you are creating! You may be guided to sources of information to help you act more effectively.

So then do it, the first step, the first communication. Make the plunge, and then learn from your experiences in manifesting what you want. Spirit will offer these learning opportunities (sometimes they may appear as ‘mistakes’) as part of your ongoing connection with your true all-knowing Higher Self.

Here’s an imaginary example of how a man might learn to better his situation more consciously. Perhaps he wants to improve his relationship with his daughter as the two of them are frequently arguing and fighting. He loves her very much but most of the time she is obnoxious and rebellious.
He wants to turn this around, to create a better reality from all levels of his being. Before he felt it was all her doing, none of his responsibility. But this time he consults with his Higher Self. He is simply given the guidance to communicate with his daughter in a loving way. This is probably a bit of a shock because he likes to think he is ‘loving’ and he communicates well, but now he realizes that perhaps he has something to learn here. He does some reading and finds out it’s best not to invalidate what someone says or evaluate their view of things with your own interpretation, otherwise they will immediately go into resistance or feel distant and introverted - either way, not effective communication.

Let’s say the man in our example has acquired this information and wants to relate to his daughter more lovingly, according to his guidance, since he has realized that is good advice. He asks his daughter how she’s got on at school today and she replies, ‘It’s none of your business.’ Normally he would have ranted, ‘It’s very much my business,’ and been fairly angry, but this time he doesn’t invalidate her view or judge her to be wrong. He just says ‘OK, I understand.’ She looks surprised. His feeling is that he cares very much about her, so he tells her that, again having integrity to his inner truth. She looks a bit taken aback and says, ‘Oh, yeah?’ but a small breakthrough has been made. He keeps going on this path and gradually his relationship improves, and she seems much happier.

There are setbacks but he learns from them, so in their own way they are valuable. Really he learns about himself, about being able to respond as himself rather than reacting according to habitual learned patterns. About how to be truly ‘in the moment.’ But it is hard at times, like when she tells him she is jealous of his relationship with her mother. Instead of recognizing that as an honest and brave thing to say, he blows up and tells her not to be ridiculous. A step backward. Looking at what happened later, he realizes that actually he is rather jealous of the mother-daughter’s relationship, as they have always seemed to be much closer. That’s why it was such a button for him, her comments matched his own suppressed feelings, and they drove him to react in an unconscious way.

So what is the real issue? Insecurity in his relationship with his wife, perhaps. A belief leads to feeling a certain way, which then drives behavior, and this context then leads to further thoughts and interpretations and the situation spirals. The relationship with his daughter had deteriorated as a result of his own feelings of insecurity and jealousy of the mother-daughter closeness, something he hadn’t been conscious of before.

What belief was driving his feeling of insecurity? Such things tend to be pretty suppressed; we keep them hidden away to avoid confronting issues that we have long-since decided are too difficult to face. The crux of the matter was that the man believed that women were too emotionally unpredictable to trust. He had a couple of very painful experiences that led him to believe that, and he generalized the belief to apply to all women including his wife. Looking back now he can see that he actually created those earlier experiences too, and he found another belief that was behind that.
As he stripped down these beliefs, he found at the bottom some beautiful truths, simple as truths always are, about his basic loving nature. That is also the nature of each of us, our spirituality. Love expressed as creative will. That love becomes distorted by our mental structures and conflicts into the range of painful emotions and self-defeating behaviors that most people either experience frequently or cover up, and live within ‘safe’ boundaries so they’re not triggered. But really we create that experience and it mirrors what’s going on inside of us. On the scale of group consciousness this extends to world events.

With learning, obtained from consciously experiencing and being open to guidance from Spirit, one becomes more enlightened - then indeed magic can happen. With clarity, life becomes much more simple and open to your creative influence.

The ‘human identity’ experience that we are all so familiar with is in fact a veil, a projection, not a truth in any way. It is a habit that we acquire early in childhood. Certainly one can maximize the veil and have a ‘good life’ experience. And certainly one can decide that the veil represents a truth and deal with the resulting limitations. However, truth is that there is no separation and you do have conscious access to how you are creating your reality in every moment. That is the whole, the ‘human identity’ is a subset. One is only locked into that viewpoint if one chooses to be.

I’m sure that’s right; I also feel that we are here to experience life at the physical level and to understand ourselves from that viewpoint too. The human experience is not something to reject or lessen, it’s a great privilege. We are ‘the man in the heavens,’ there is no ‘up there’ and ‘down here’ - metaphysics and physics are one - we simply are all of it.

Spirit-mind-emotions-body-world: this is a circle, a wholeness. We are all connected. Because spirit is of the nature of information, not within the boundaries of space and time, the beliefs of a few conscious beings influence the group consciousness of Mankind - or perhaps I should say group unconsciousness, since relatively little conscious will is expressed here, but the unconscious still responds. I feel the recent war has been a wake-up call on this planet and things are changing; there could be an exponential increase in the expression of our true nature, of Love, in our world. It is up to each of us to play our part.

‘When we love, we are the universe and the universe lives in us’--O. Pirmez

**The spiritual element**

I take the view that there is indeed a spiritual element to take account of. We live our lives both on the material and on the spiritual level (to the degree that we are awakened spiritually); confusion between the two roles, however, usually abounds. The physical world is about effort, emotion, action, communication over distance, dualities that
separate out the playing field of the game of life. The spiritual life is about unity, oneness in communication, creative intent, and about qualities such as love that have no barriers nor dimension in space or time.

The material and spiritual can interplay since they are aspects of a greater whole, but they are not, by definition, the same aspects: one is real, the other is actual. A very realistic dream and the dreamer. We are in this dream, we can be grateful for being so and have a great time as a lucid dreamer. If we are lucid, even if it’s a nightmare we can turn it around.

So there is a divine element but that divinity is within each and every one of us; we are not separate from divinity. We are the channel for divine intervention, since if we ourselves are not willing to act, to manifest in the physical world, we are separating ourselves from the creative source and thereby remain at effect. If we do participate, then ‘magic’ can occur, such as telepathy of intention between ourselves and others, that come together to enhance our process of creating.

*A clear vision*

Obtaining a clear vision of what we desire, based on a loving creative intention - and not on a basis of fear or lack - and in the now, without considerations of time and distance, energizes us to reflect that spiritual vision in the material world. We’ve seen that picture in our mind’s eye, we’re delighted with it, and now we paint it onto the canvas, in our own unique way.

To use another analogy: we’ve planted the seed in healthy ground and it will grow, and the universe will support its growth. We just need to maintain the excitement of that vision and it will empower us and enable us to meet all challenges. The more it is a labor of love, of sharing and service, the more connected we will be with others - the law of attraction - and the more ‘magical’ synchronicities will further support us.

The best mindset is one of gratitude for what we already have, rather than one of need. Gratitude is an abundant and non-egocentric state of mind, that reaches out to connect. It says ‘having’ is not a problem. The desire is to create something worthwhile, not something to fulfill our base needs and attachments (those are about separateness and therefore won’t work). There’s no room for fears and doubts, if one is starting from a caring, sharing, non-judgmental and accepting place.

We should make the vision as real as possible in the mind’s eye, right now (not as something in the future), so that we become clear enough about its desirability that we can release our old ways of thinking, no longer identify with other people’s
reservations, and be highly motivated. The negative stuff is just not important anymore, if the vision is true to our real values.

Love, as always, is the guideline: ‘Am I doing this through love?’ The more tangible the vision, and the more truly valuable it is, to oneself and even more importantly to others, the more the energies will flow and align. And the more they do, the more exciting and happier your life will be.

**The Law of Attraction**

You envision the reality you want, as if it is in the now and even - or perhaps especially - be grateful for it! That’s creating from the God/Spirit level, the spark of God that you are. Yes, you start from lack (want) but you don’t move forward in lack. Many, many people have found this does make a difference in this material world... it’s not just wishful thinking.

Also this process gives the feeling that what you want is achievable, desirable. You feel abundant, and like attracts like, a kind of magic. The Law of Attraction: ‘like attracts like.’

Tom Montalk describes how the Law of Attraction operates:

While ‘opposites attract’ is a fundamental law of physics, as demonstrated by opposite electric or magnetic poles attracting, ‘like attracts like’ is another fundamental law as evidenced by like masses attracting each other gravitationally despite both having positive mass. Even in social dynamics, we have opposites attracting each other as in male/female or aggressor/victim, yet also likes attracting such as people with similar attitudes and interests coming together. As the saying goes, ‘birds of a feather flock together.’ Both laws exist, it’s just a question of which law is true in which case. The Law of Attraction refers to attraction of similar things through resonance or mutually congruent vibration. It is like two equal tuning forks, a vibration of one will subtly induce vibration in the other nearby and vice versa until both vibrate together in unison. Thoughts and feelings, beyond being biochemical impulses, are electromagnetic patterns of energy that will externally resonate and attract that which corresponds to it.

Opposites attract only to make a completed whole entity that needs both opposite parts to function. This is an example of the principle, ‘need attracts fulfillment.’ For example, man attracts woman in order to make a complete unit. Once the whole partnership is made, it then attracts other completed entities like itself. So we see that married couples tend to attract and associate with other couples who are like themselves, not opposite to themselves.
Similarly, it is a common observation that partners in a business frequently bring different personality traits to the business. But this is simply to make the business a complete entity, capable of surviving. Once the business entity is complete, it tends to attract others that have an affinity for the business, not those that feel the opposite.

As for cause and effect, remember that causality falls apart on the quantum level. Everything above the quantum level can be predicted mathematically because for every cause there is a calculable effect, but at the quantum level there is indeterminacy. This quantum uncertainty means the future is open to choice, for a freewill choice cannot be calculated in advance otherwise it would not be freewill. The tangible world we know sits atop a quantum foundation, the zero-point of spirituality, and although we see cause-effect all around us, sometimes cause itself is preceded by choice. It’s like a DVD collection of movies -- you cannot change the content of the movie at whim because it is final from beginning to end, but you can choose a different movie.

There is something more fundamental than physical causality, and it is consciousness, freewill, thoughts, and emotions working through the agent of unpredictable quantum fluctuations. Mind is active on the imaginary plane and shapes or gives rise to the real (physical) plane. That is a higher order causality, one where mind shapes matter. By guiding your thoughts and feelings, you are simply influencing which ‘DVDs’ (probable futures) are selected to be played next. Summary: consciousness shapes the statistical behavior of quantum systems.

Freewill is the only constraint upon the Law of Attraction. You cannot make another do what he or she chooses against. And you cannot always override some prior choice you made. That which your heart desires is most easy to manifest. That which your baser impulses or social programming desires will meet some resistance. This is because the Law of Attraction works through the higher part of you that chooses a certain ‘curriculum’ for how your life progresses, and any frivolous desires that interfere with this are minor attempts to violate your own higher freewill; that higher self does not have to stoop to the whims of your lower self. When people desire to be filthy rich or idolized pop stars, where is that impulse coming from? If from the heart, then it will fall into place. If not from the heart, then little chance of it working.

If freewill is respected all around, then your intent can manifest easily. Rather than forcing someone unwillingly to bend to the intent of another, the Law of Attraction works through anyone available who is in the position to assist and does not resist.
So it’s more a ‘call for volunteers’ than a forced manipulation of another, but with the huge complexity of our world and all the people in it, there is bound to be something, someone, somewhere that answers the call.

As a result of the Law of Attraction, magical results come about. Of course this ‘magic’ is not really magic; if it happens then there must be science to explain it, albeit not the orthodox. Metaphysics is a super-set of physics, not its enemy. Perhaps Sheldrake’s theories of information fields are the closest - I perceive it more in the order of information/thought than about energy/vibration - it’s in the zero-point, the implicit encoding of the holographic universe. But then they are two sides of the same coin anyway, as in the case of gravity; whether potential or energy, either way it has a field of influence.

The implicit, hidden world is that of creative potential, of Spirit, outside of space and time; the real world is its explicit manifestation through creativity; and the mind is the intermediary, interpreting intuitions and drawing up plans of action. Therefore, I think for most of us the Law of Attraction works at the mental/spiritual level, not the physical. But also Spirit has the power to align causes and effect sequences right down to the material level. Each person is an independent cause but also they are part of the universal Spirit or Source and in this respect they act as One too.

Telepathic influences on others and their resulting actions cause events to occur and things to appear as if by magic or synchronicity. But it’s not really magic, it’s cause and effect. Spirit works on matter through mind and actions. Real action needs to be taken to manifest real things... there are such solid agreements cementing the physical: a lifetime’s conditioning and learning to play ‘the game of life.’ It wouldn’t be much of a game if any of us could easily change the rules or alter the playing field! We have the potential of being games makers, and I believe we should rise to that, but when we play football that’s what we do.

Even if you discount the spiritual, I also think the Law of Attraction has a psychological basis. Your every thought and word is contributing to your life experience. Your thoughts produce your emotions that, in turn, result in how you feel about a particular event occurring in your life. It has always amazed me how people can walk around feeling a particular way and not understand that it is their own thoughts, or more accurately what they are telling themselves that is producing the feeling in the first place. This is why two people can look at the exact same event and have entirely different feelings about it.

You are creating your own subjective reality, moment by moment, with the thoughts you choose to think and what you say, both to yourself and others. And through the
power of spirit - the controversial bit - your subjective reality impinges on the physical reality.

With the blocks removed about considering it’s OK to be/døhave whatever, you can then more easily do what ever it takes to manifest it. It’s the creating principle that Robert Fritz has described: a crystal clear vision inspires and energizes the path of least resistance to your goal. Your current abilities and having are irrelevant to you being able to start creating; that’s where you’re going and you now - with that empowering vision - have the energy to work through any barriers, and acquire any necessary skills and resources along the way.

That’s why the vision has to be genuine, specific and what you truly want, and any blocks and conflicting beliefs that you may hold need to be exposed and released. Otherwise wishes and prayers can be, in effect, the avoidance of a reality that one is unwilling to confront. But if it’s genuinely your vision, and in accordance with the knowing of your Higher Self, it will happen, and you won’t be able to stop yourself running around like a wild thing making it happen - since YOU are the most important channel of your creative power, just as much as the world around you.

Many people sincerely wish for their life circumstances to be different, to win the lottery or to obtain promotion. Most of the time this doesn’t come about - ‘wishful thinking’ or desire doesn’t cut it and one suffers. What is needed is creative intention or will, not just a wish or desire. It’s the process of manifesting and it needs to be done without attachment, and it needs to be followed through with the correct attitude and actions.

When the Buddhists speak of desire as something to overcome, in order to prevent suffering, they mean the attachment to a possession or an outcome, such that you can’t be happily without it. Buddha was right, but it’s not desire itself that he was warning about, it’s attachment to the outcome or object of desire. So as a result you have a fear of not attaining it or of then losing it. So you put force and effort in there. Force results in counter-force, a reaction. That acts as a counter-intention and nullifies the intention. Nothing happens.

Manifesting intentions need to be effortless and without attachment to the outcome, i.e. with unconditional love and gratitude but not with fear or greed. That suffering one normally feels when your desires do not manifest is from an attachment of some sort, the source of the counter-intention. It was not a pure intention, it was undermined by counter-intentions, feelings that point in quite the other direction.

Subconscious forces, such as hidden conflicting beliefs and suppressed fears, are resolved only through deep introspective work on oneself. And one’s ethics neared to
be cleared, such that one feels more worthy of the exchange of wealth for value that you have created for others or services done. One also needs considerable emotional intelligence, intuition and creativity - because we have to clear our intentions, be open to guidance and play an active part in the manifestation process.

It’s not so much a ‘magical’ process as a way of being that is quite foreign to most people. The average guy just does not realize that he can change his actions, feelings, thoughts, beliefs and identity. Instead they are perceived as the result of influences upon him, so he feels molded and at effect, with few choices. Life just happens to him, and it’s all other people’s fault. The truth - that he is responsible for the quality of his life - is, in that context, a revelation. Because if he’s responsible then he can change things around.

**The Manifestation Process**

The number one thing that stops people from achieving their goals in life is fear. It’s stepping out of the comfort zone that we all create around ourselves, which is made up of all the solutions that we’ve found to make life easier to face up to. We stay as we are - even if we don’t have money and it may be physically uncomfortable. We’re not having to actually face up to our fears, and to that extent it’s comfortable.

Another factor, as you say, is our conditioning... all the influences around us pushing us to conform - in Freudian terms, the Superego and in Transactional Analysis terms it’s the Parent - the tapes that play in our head that tell us what we should be doing and ought to be doing. If we’re going to be successful we need to be creative, to think outside the box. To be creative we have to break free of this stuff, about what we should be doing and ought to be doing, and what might happen if we don’t.

The energy in the motivation, to achieve a goal, and to break through the barrier of fear and of conditioning, to ‘do it anyway,’ is derived from having a vision that’s really exciting, and is a reflection of our own true nature and desires. When that vision is really clear to us, then we can achieve anything. What you want, you energize, naturally. What before was a fear that you couldn’t confront, you can brush it out of the way now. What before was a kind of pressure on you to be a certain person who you have been before, you can brush that off. It’s like a coat you take off. You really want to get to this vision.

A classic vision is of a painter, painting a picture. They start with a white canvas and they get a picture in their head... maybe a beautiful scene of water and trees but painted in a special way that mixes colors up. Once you’ve got that picture in your head, nothing stops you until you’ve actually manifested that physically. You’ll learn what
you have to learn to do it, you’ll get the skills you need. Say if your vision is to create a
new type of bicycle, that is good for going up mountains, and you have some creative
idea about how to do it. But you need to learn about making plastics that are stronger
and you have no idea how to do that, so you can learn these things. And to use it you
need to be more physically fit, so you do it. But all the steps of the way you have the
vision that empowers you.

What tends to happen, even if you overcome the fears and you’ve got a good idea, and
you’re working toward the goal, half the time people stop then anyway, and they don’t
achieve the goal. They’ve stopped reminding themselves of the vision. They’ve stopped
remembering the reason for persisting on what may be quite a rigorous path. They
simply forget and drift on to easier targets. So it’s really important to keep reminding
yourself of the reason why and to get that picture as vividly as possible, and keep
putting it there every day - to keep renewing your purpose in the present moment. Ask
yourself, why do I want to do this, to achieve that? If you keep putting the reason why
there, each step becomes achievable.

You can have a why for each step toward the goal as well, not just the vision at the end
- how each step towards it will make a difference. So the reasons why are always the
thing to be aware of. If you’re losing interest, that is the cue for saying to yourself,
‘Hang on, I’ve got to sort this out! I had a fantastic vision that was really exciting and
I’ve lost the vision. So I’ve got to get that back and look at all the advantages and
benefits that will accrue if I do the next step.’

People start towards a goal, and they do some valid first steps towards the goal, then
they look at the vision for the end result and it still seems just as far away as when they
started. There may be a lot of things to do to reach a final goal. But the thing to do is
not to do that: you look at the final goal to give you a reason to continue, but to assess
what you have achieved you need to not measure the distance from where you are to
the final goal but the distance from where you are to where you started. It’s much more
encouraging to think, ‘Well I’ve laid all these plans, I’ve done all this training, I’m
doing well now and I’ve got the funds that I need. OK, I haven’t done all these other
things yet, they’re on the list, but there’s an awful lot I have done.’ And that will
validate your progress much more than looking at the road ahead, which may well be
long.

So there’s these two things to balance, to think of what the benefits are for the next step
towards the goal, and what the overall achievement is to date. Benefits for yourself and
your family and for others. This whole thing about motivation is so important. To be
workable it has to be built on a solid idea of who you are and what you want, because
to achieve a goal that isn’t actually yours but is your wife’s or your father’s or such like, is going to leave you as frustrated and unfulfilled as when you started.

There is also a spiritual element in the manifestation of our goals in life, and the achievement of our life’s purpose. To achieve anything meaningful, we need to put our heart and soul into the mix too... it’s not just have a good idea, and having the necessary skills or doing the courses to acquire those skills. It’s not just an intellectual and practical process, it’s also a process that must come from the heart and from the spirit. And it’s those last two factors that people are really talking about when they’re talking about manifestation. It’s not possible just to wave a magic wand and have what you want appear in the world... but that doesn’t mean to say that there isn’t a bit of magic in it.

Whether or not you consider there to be a spiritual element, and what you consider spirit to be - these are subjects that you can philosophize about. But really it’s down to identity, who you are, your way of being. When you are in touch with your true identity, that is your source of intuition and inner knowing of what you want. You could call this your spirit, your Higher Self.

The cycle of manifestation is Be - Do - Have. We first need to adopt the right way of being, and then our actions and achievement will follow. To manifest our will, we need to remove the barriers of time (by visualizing what we will as already come to pass, in the ever-present now), of conflict (by recognizing we fully deserve to have), and of disconnection (by gratefulness). And we need to act with integrity to our feelings, so that the levels of life can become integrated and the spiritual moves into the physical.

Creation occurs when we have a clear image of something that we desire to be. We trust that we can make it happen. If we can make it happen subjectively, in our imagination, and to visualize it, then generally we can make it happen in the physical world too. So motivation and the energy to create come from this desire; it’s a kind of tension between the current reality and the desired achievable reality, the vision. To be able manifest something and make something come about, the vision is critical.

The Manifestation Process
With the following Manifestation Process you create the best spiritual, mental and emotional way of being which will empower you to achieve your desires and attract the resources you need. These are the steps:

1. Define the Goal
It starts with defining the goal, the state desired, as we’ve been describing. And then you need to get your emotions into this...
2. What would it be like if you could...?
Say if the goal was to be a singer, what would it be like if you could get on stage and sing?

3. Expose resistances (irrational fears and limiting beliefs)
And then you want to bring up anything inside you that is saying, no. Like the fears or beliefs that I can’t do that, and people would think this, and so on. Expose all the resistances that you have, and then you can see, do they actually make sense? Is it somebody else saying this that I’m believing? Experience them to the degree that you realize that you create these; you can then change them or just let them go.

4. Pretend that you can...
Pretend, for example, that it is right now, you are singing - you are a singer, and people are listening and enjoying, and you’re singing what you want to sing too, and you’re singing well, like you know you can.

5. Establish the desire
Consider, what does it feel like to be doing this? Some people are moved by your singing, some are dancing... what does it feel like, in all your senses and emotions? Fully express in your emotions your enthusiasm for this outcome. Clearly establish your felt DESIRE for this scenario to take place and anticipate its manifestation with expectation. The desire should be from the heart, of outwardly flowing love and service; then there is no space for fear, lack and selfish needs.

6. Be thankful
Be thankful, already - though you haven’t done anything yet in the external world - that you can make it so in your subjective reality, feel gratitude that you already have what you are desiring, to be a singer in this example. You actually have it. As far as the subjective mind is concerned, there’s no difference between what you have in your mind and what you have in the real world. At the same time feel without attachment to what you’ve achieved, that it’s for the good of all that you can sing, but also that you could happily let go of the same thing. I’m thankful if I can be a singer and sing but it’s OK if I can’t. The attitude of gratefulness - of already feeling abundant rather than lacking - is key to this freedom.

You have to be able to let go too! There’s nothing wrong with desire, that’s what life’s all about; it is attachment that leads to suffering. People think Buddhists are saying that desire leads to suffering but that’s a misunderstanding, suffering occurs when you cannot let go. Attachment also leads to not having, as the jealous husband will tell you - if you attach and can’t let go it’s a pain to everyone else and your wife will not be happy at all about that control by her husband over her life and she’ll probably leave. The worst possible thing to do if you want something is to cling on to it.
7. Accept responsibility
Accept responsibility for being the agent, the one who will put into action and reality, all the actions and knowledge and wisdom and whatever else is required to manifest the state that is envisioned. One has to accept responsibility for being the agent, for that to happen. Not some other person delivering it to you on a plate. YOU are the channel for the manifestation of what you want to manifest. In spiritual terms, it’s because you and others are One anyway. If you and all are One and all that is One is God, and God is manifesting, then that means you! You’re not out of the equation. You can’t expect other people to manifest something for you if you’re not doing it yourself. That’s virtually like saying I don’t want it. You have to be responsible for making it happen.

Feel this inspiring and motivating energy, your INTENTION. Really put that intention out there into the Universe. Be a joyful and enthusiastic player in the game of manifestation here on Earth. It’s not a click of the fingers as in a dream; manifesting in the real world requires your full-blooded participation. So determine your next steps in the game plan, what you can do now to get things moving, and begin.

And then, the magic happens. If you take responsibility for doing whatever is necessary to make this goal come true, using the old-fashioned goal setting and getting that we’ve been describing earlier, then the magic happens - you find that synchronicities occur, that information and assistance arrives at the right time to help you in the way that you need just at that moment.

It’s because there is this connection between all people. It’s not generally understood in our modern left-brained educated society, but you see it with animals. In the Tsunami tragedy, in Indonesia, before the wave came all the animals knew it was coming and they communicated to each other and fled up into the hills and after the tragedy there wasn’t one dead animal, except those that were tethered. And then they came back and some helped carry children to safety. So animals know and they live this connection. It’s a primitive kind of aspect of our abilities.

Modern education gives us the ability to make plans, to make philosophies, to make scientific developments, to have all kinds of ideas, write books and literature and lots of great things. But it tends to lose the right brain functions of our primitive nature and our spiritual connection with reality. We need to put back that connection.

So you accept responsibility for being a part of making happen what’s going to happen. And then it will communicate to others and they will support you to do - by the magic of the universal mind - what is necessary to make it happen.

You envision the reality you want, as if it is in the now and even - or perhaps especially - be grateful for it! That’s creating from the God/Spirit level, the spark of God that you
are. Yes, you start from lack (want), but you don’t move forward in lack. Many, many people have found this does make a difference in this material world... it isn’t just wishful thinking.

With the blocks removed about considering it’s OK to be/do/have whatever, you can then more easily do whatever it takes to manifest it. A crystal clear vision inspires and energizes the path of least resistance to your goal. Your current abilities and having are irrelevant to you being able to start creating; that’s where you’re going and you now - with that empowering vision - have the energy to work through any barriers, and acquire any necessary skills and resources along the way.

That’s why the vision has to be genuine, specific and what you truly want, and any blocks and conflicting beliefs that you may hold need to be exposed and released. Otherwise wishes and prayers can be, in effect, the avoidance of a reality that one is unwilling to confront. But if it’s genuinely your vision, and in accordance with the knowing of your Higher Self, it will happen, and you won’t be able to stop yourself running around like a wild thing making it happen - since YOU are the most important channel of your creative power, just as much as the world around you.

Then you act, according to your intuitive knowing. You can tell if that comes from Spirit because it will have the presence of Love. That means acceptance without judgment. And without negative emotions like fear or hatred, which are resistances against what exists - that which you are creating! You may be guided to sources of information to help you act more effectively.

So then do it, the first step, the first communication. Make the plunge, and then learn from your experiences in manifesting what you want. Spirit will offer these learning opportunities (sometimes they may appear as ‘mistakes’) as part of your ongoing connection with your true all-knowing Higher Self.
Part Six:

BACKGROUND PSYCHOLOGY II

An overview of the development of human personality will help to provide a context for more advanced work on self-development, leading into the transpersonal realm of enhanced spiritual awareness. The following analysis is based on the research of psychologists Timothy Leary, Jean Piaget, Gregory Mitchell and others.

We’ve become programmed, conditioned by our experiences and upbringing, and what we’ve learned or haven’t learned.

You could say that the brain is our computer hardware, the processor. The mind is the software that runs, i.e. the programs. And the programmer is the awakened true self, that realizes it actually creates the mind and has taken responsibility for its future direction.

We begin with a brief summary of the fundamental stages of development each person goes through, from infancy to adulthood, as they build up the programming of their personality...

1st comes the Bio-survival program, our need for survival. We start off intimately connected with our mother and then we crawl and venture into the world, and our personality begins to develop. We develop fears and ways in which we have found confidence.

2. The Emotional-territorial program, in which we find out what we can control, and who is dominant. Our Ego begins to take shape. This is the adapted child and the time when we get our sense of belonging, to a greater or lesser extent. Of course, we need loving parents for this to occur, and for many people the unfinished needs of childhood remain.

3. The Semantic program develops as we learn to talk, read and write. We learn to articulate our thoughts and we also start to build our belief system, all the things we’ve found out, and usually even more, all the things we’ve been told and accepted.

4. The Social-sexual program begins at puberty, at which point we recognize our gender and position in society, our peer group, about conforming or not, and the morality we’re expected to follow. The generation we belong to, in other words. It gets set in place particularly after our first sexual experience. Its principle function is to form an ‘adult’ personality - a parent, one who cares for and about the next generation of the species.

5. The Holistic program needs to be consciously developed or it doesn’t develop much at all. It’s not limited by the semantic left-brain mind, it’s an integrated left-right brain way of organizing ideas. It includes non-verbal and intuitive understanding. Because intuition is very much dependent on the messages of our core self that are transmitted...
through feelings, we need to be open to our feelings and to understand them and what’s going on. We need to be mindful and not impulsive, so as to be able to separate reactive emotional responses from the intuitive knowing of our core self.

It goes beyond that, to recognize and transcend the archetypes of our human-beingness, such as tribal or war-like ways, being a follower or ruler, a mother, father or priest or whatever - like the points in the Enneagram. We don’t want to get stuck in these limited ways of being.

We need to get free from the roles we play, like business man or video-game fanatic, or whatever. Not necessarily to reject these ways of being but to be conscious of them, and able to adopt new ones.

And we need to develop a truly open mind, free of fixed belief systems, like religious dogma, all the various kinds of prejudice and stereotypes, and other such limiting ideas. We need to be able to listen and to learn, not be stuck in our own rightness.

Too many of our beliefs are judgmental of ourselves and others, or say that we should or must or ought to do this or that, or can’t or mustn’t, or they direct others in such ways. Or they’re false assumptions, or based on information we’ve accepted but not tested for ourselves. Too many are not actually true. We need beliefs to function in the world, but they are best held in a provisional way, so that they can be revised when we learn new things and get new viewpoints.

To develop further we need to break through some of that conditioning, and find our true self. This is what I call the process of ‘meta-programming’ - to transcend or go beyond the programming of our early years and our culture; to become the programmer of our own mind.

Let’s look in more detail at the stages of development we all pass through in our upbringing, the stages of cognitive and intellectual development, and the further stages we can work toward in our personal and spiritual development.

Now we will examine the stages that an individual passes through as the mind develops its faculties of intelligence, from birth through to maturity. This will demonstrate the points at which development may become arrested, and also show the potential that exists in human beings for much greater cognitive and spiritual development than is customarily the case, given appropriate stimulation and training.

**Cognitive development**

The future prosperity of our society depends on the standard of education rising, to develop to a high level all the kinds of intelligence of which a person is capable - not just for children at school but as an ongoing lifetime process of adult development. In this way, we have the potential to create a much saner, happier and more exciting world to live in.
Jean Piaget, a child psychologist, traced four broad stages in the logical and cognitive
development of children, in his studies from the 1930s to the ‘70s. **The first stage,**
from birth to two years, is the stage of **sensori-motor intelligence:** the infant’s co-
ordination of reflexes and sensori-motor repetition, leading up to basic recall of absent
objects and to an experimental search for new means to achieve pleasurable ends,
bounded by what the child can physically perform and observe being performed.

During the course of a child’s cognitive development there are changes in the way that
the individual represents (i.e. stores and retrieves) information that is perceived through
the senses. A small infant is limited to the actions that it can make upon the immediate
world surrounding it, when it first learns to separate the world into ‘me’ and ‘not me’,
discovering its body schema. From then on its learning consists of developing and
revising that schema as it performs more operations on the outside world and learns
from the effects that result.

It is hard to imagine how a baby thinks. It cannot think in pictures of objects because it
has not really discovered what objects are yet, or what properties they have, in a real
enough way to picture them. Instead it remembers things as a kind of ‘muscle
memory’ (in the sensori-motor kinesthetic system) using an internal representation of
the ‘feel’ of things to code the information. Before 4 or 5 years of age traumatic
memories and their accompanying considerations and decisions that affect future
behavior, are not available to recall in the way that an adult recalls, like a full-
perception movie, but rather in terms of emotional body-centered feelings of needs and
wants, or fears and pains, although there will be an element of auditory and visual
imagery particularly accompanying poignant moments. There will be hardly any visual
representation of the first eighteen months, until the infant becomes ambulatory and
starts to walk and talk.

**The second stage,** of the toddler up to 5 years, is the stage of **pre-logical intuitive**
thought. This is a period of ‘magical thinking’ in the sense that he easily confuses
apparent or imagined events with real events. He would, if allowed, jump out of a
window expecting to fly, because he has seen birds fly. It is something of a ‘dream
world’; a toy car is very much the real thing to a toddler. This is a state commonly
regressed to by those on hallucinogenic drugs.

In normal development, at about the age of five, a relatively sudden transition occurs.
Control passes from the mammalian brain (with schemata based on classical
conditioning) to the fully human brain (a structure operating on associative, operant and
cognitive processes). After this transition, many lower order mechanisms become
inhibited and they are replaced by higher order cortical mechanisms, which operate
cognitively. As part of this transition, language begins to function as a vehicle for
logical thought at the concrete level, rather than solely a means to serve social and
emotional needs. The predominant mode of representation of the world has become
auditory, with memories featuring received commands.
The third stage, between 6 - 10, is **concrete operational** thought, when the child can symbolize (i.e. can make a concrete mental image of) operations, without having to do them physically. The child has developed realistic internal imaging of the world around him, so that by 7 or 8 years of age a concrete visual mode of representation has become the predominant way of thinking about and remembering experience, alongside kinesthetic and auditory representations. He learns to classify and relate, and to measure distances and quantities, and thereby performs constructive thinking. Contact with the environment is maintained during such mental operations, because by reversing them, a return to the perceived form is always possible. A child will build and knock down Lego constructions. Concrete operations are the foundation upon which more abstract intellectual operations can be built. Young children and those restricted to concrete operations tend to focus attention on only one salient aspect of an object, situation or problem at a time, to the exclusion of other potentially relevant aspects.

Pretty soon though, the child’s world widens further still, until it includes information that isn’t easily represented using pictures. (Try imaging a concept like ‘freedom’ or ‘fairness’). When this happens, the child becomes more likely to use symbolic representation, including inner speech, using words as formalized symbols that ‘stand for’ the concepts. This is the beginning of the conceptual, auditory digital stage of development. At this point the child’s own decisions and intentions may be expressed as inner speech, whereas before they were ‘felt’ intentions. This is the beginning of conceptual cognitive ability, which is developed through effective education.

The fourth stage, from age 10 to adulthood, is **formal operations**. This is a more objective way of perceiving the world with the ability to focus simultaneously on several aspects of a problem. Even adults, before they obtain the full abilities of formal operations - or if (as is common) they do not develop that far - continue with a single-minded point of view, intolerant of alternatives. This is the rule rather than the exception. The concrete operational person has tunnel vision when it comes to the world of ideas; a person who has truly obtained formal operations is open to considering new ideas from all directions.

Having a wealth of concrete information that he is unable to understand, the person attempts to rearrange this information in order to simplify it. He discovers he can do this by keeping some variables constant, while he experiments with the others. The person induces generalized laws that he can apply to data of the most diverse kinds. The person can think about thoughts, classify classifications, and ‘operate on operations’ and so conceive of general laws behind the array of particular instances. Hypotheses can be made and tested, and implications deduced, through scientific experiment.

To summarize, the baby’s mode of representation is primarily kinesthetic, at the sensori-motor stage of development. By 4 years of age, during the pre-logical stage, the predominant representation has become auditory. The child then develops realistic internal imaging of the world around him, so that by 7 or 8 years of age a concrete
visual mode of representation has become predominant. Conceptual thought as inner speech then develops and by 10 years of age the young person is ready, through schooling, to develop toward formal operations.

**The four languages of conscious thought**

You can consider your conscious thought processes - those which you can tune in to and observe as they happen - as being expressed in any or all of four thinking ‘languages’ or modalities, which are:

- **Kinesthetic** thought: *experiencing* bodily sensations, feelings and emotions, as reactions to a memory, immediate experience or imagined situation.
- **Auditory** thought: *hearing* others’ speech, natural sounds and music, which are recalled from memory or imagined.
- **Visual** thought: *seeing* mental pictures, which are often fuzzy and fragmentary and which are recalled from memory or imagined.
- **Verbal** thought: *speaking* in your mental voice, just as if you were expressing your mental processes aloud in words, phrases and sentences - this is ‘inner speech’.

For example you can think about your friend, lover or relative by saying that person’s name in your mind, by forming a mental picture of that person, by sensing the person’s tone of voice, or by tuning-in to the feeling response to the concept of that person. For much of your conscious thought, all four of these thinking languages come into play simultaneously. One may play a dominant role, since others may be suppressed, depending on your relationship to a particular subject (such as dislikes, fears, bad memories; or likes, compulsions, good memories).

Below the foreground of conscious thought is a continuous stream of pre-conscious unseen mental activity, which organizes mental contents and controls actions ‘without even thinking about it’, like turning the page of a book. The four thinking languages are the means by which you project snapshots of the rapidly moving preconscious processes onto the ‘screen’ of your immediate attention.

You can capture some of these fleeting thoughts and translate them into conscious form, but the vast majority of them flow on invisibly and reliably without your conscious attention. The left-brain level of preconscious thought is quite capable of making decisions, of reasoning logically, and of directing a large share of your moment-to-moment actions, usually in the form of pre-programmed habitual patterns of behavior. The right brain aspect of the preconscious is the basis for hunches, or intuitive thought processes, which seem to tell you what to do on a gut-feeling level, but offer no well worked-out verbal reasoning processes to substantiate the proposed course of action.

The preconscious thought stream, then, is the result of the conscious verbal left hemisphere and the nonverbal but aware right hemisphere, interfacing beneath the surface with the deeper sub-conscious and the still deeper unconscious processes of
both hemispheres. The preconscious emerges into consciousness in the form of the four thought languages: verbal, visual, auditory and kinesthetic. The content of the deeper subconscious may also erupt into consciousness, through the medium of a fifth language: that of metaphors and symbolic representations. This occurs most of all during dreaming, and twilight states of consciousness.

Suppression of the sub-conscious (and by extension, repression of the unconscious) has the effect of reducing the perception of smell and taste, because these two senses are mediated by the more primitive (sub-cortical) centers of the brain that are the seat of the unconscious.

However, for those who have developed a high level of integration between the hemispheres, integration of the sub-conscious has to a significant extent begun, so a further dimension of perception becomes apparent: the thought languages may be represented by taste, smell and color, blending together in a synesthesia. Improved integration, then, enlarges the spotlight of the conscious mind, so that neither irrational thoughts nor useful intuitions are likely to pass by unnoticed, and the full wealth of the experience of life becomes open to view and may be appreciated.

If an adult is ‘stuck’ in a predominantly kinesthetic, auditory or visual mode of representation, this is a case of arrested development - he is at the concrete operational level of development, or maybe lower. At the primary school level, the education of children is best tailored to a child’s major system of representation. However, to get a meaningful education at the secondary and tertiary level, an individual needs to be capable of a conceptual level of thinking, actively developing their Formal operations. Therefore the spoken and written modes of thinking should not be neglected in favor of the audio-visual methods of teaching, effective as they are; it should play an equal role through concentrated study and analysis of written materials and assignments involving creative writing and speaking.

Achieving individuation

Moving beyond the Formal Operational stage of cognitive development, requires the achievement of Individuation. According to Jung, humans are not merely shaped by past events but strive for personal development as well. Part of the nature of humans is to be constantly developing, growing, and moving toward a balanced and complete level of development. Our present personality is determined by both who and what we have been and by the person we hope to become. The process of self-actualization is oriented toward the future. Jung’s theory is based on the assumption that humans tend to move toward the fulfillment or realization of all their capabilities.

Achieving Individuation, or a fully harmonious and integrated personality, is a primary goal. To come to our full realization, we must become aware of and accept the full range of our being. This means that the public self that we present is only a small part of who and what we are. For Jung, both constructive and destructive forces exist in the human psyche, and to become integrated we must accept the dark side of our nature.
with our primitive impulses such as selfishness and greed. Acceptance of our ‘dark side’ or Shadow does not imply being dominated by this dimension of our being but simply recognizing that this is a part of our nature. At the end of the Individuation process, an individual is at least a 51% shareholder in his own mind. In that sense, he has integrated the Ego and the Shadow, and achieved sufficient Individuation to overcome the Superego, so he has majority control.

Jung says his method of active imagination involves a close attention to dream material and integration of the meanings they contain through some form of self-expression. Rigorous attention to, and integration of, unconscious material is the process by which adults begin to achieve Individuation. The process of using mind development techniques, such as facility with right brain mnemonics and creativity techniques, has a similar effect, because a student is continually drawing on the unconscious content of the right hemisphere and in the process discharging the energetic barrier that prevents integration.

Once a person has become a majority shareholder in his mind, then self-actualizing needs come to the fore: the student wonders about the remaining 49%. The inner-directed person does not derive his sense of value or identity solely from tradition nor from conformity to peer-group fashions, but from the resources of his own nature. This orientation can only be achieved by an individual who is in the process of developing his own character, of becoming ‘field-independent’, his or her volition self-determined (based on self-knowledge) rather than the effect of manipulation or propitiation. The most original, creative and outstanding men and women are invariably of this type, and yet it is no ‘elitist’ type, for it is available to all human beings with the courage of their convictions. It is the way of life that takes ‘individuation’ as its goal: to manifest one’s highest potential. To achieve Individuation and move beyond the stage of formal operations, the individual needs to become much more field-independent and inner-directed than is generally the case. There is a significant correlation between field-independence and IQ.

Field-dependents:

- Rely on the surrounding perceptual field.
- Have difficulty attending to, extracting, and using non-salient cues.
- Have difficulty providing structure to ambiguous information.
- Have difficulty restructuring new information and forging links with prior knowledge.
- Have difficulty retrieving information from long-term memory.
- Have a disposition to be other-directed.

Conversely, field-independents:

- Perceive objects as separate from the field.
- Can dis-embed relevant items from non-relevant items within the field.
- Provide structure when it is not inherent in the presented information.
Reorganize information to provide a context for prior knowledge.
Tend to be more efficient at retrieving items from memory.
Have a disposition to be inner-directed

Stages of Individuation parallel the stages of intellectual development, as described by Piaget and others. Achieving a substantial degree of Individuation and field-independence are necessary preconditions if one wishes to reach the Postformal Level of Operations and beyond.

**Postformal operations**

Fluid and Crystallized Intelligence are the factors that make up our general intelligence. Fluid Intelligence is our basic information processing. It has the ‘fluid’ quality of being applicable to almost any situation and gives the ability to find meaning in confusion and solve new problems. Crystallized Intelligence is one’s investment in particular areas of acquired knowledge, experience and practical skills; it also includes our language and social skills.

For most people Fluid Intelligence ceases to develop after the age of about twenty and starts to fall after the age of 25, unless an appropriate intervention is made to continue the mind’s active development. On the other hand, many dimensions of crystallized intelligence typically continue to develop throughout the life span, particularly in the individual’s chosen domain of work experience. But this can limit the individual to a perspective within narrow boundaries; creativity and wisdom demand a much wider perspective, in which a range of domains are interlinked.

By using techniques of mind development, the development of both fluid and crystallized intelligence can be restarted and accelerated or broadened, even if the individual is of middle age, so he or she can have the boundless energy of youth and achieve the wisdom of the aged.

Between the ages of 20 and 30, especially if he is in a stimulating environment such as a university, or if he has a demanding profession or absorbing interest in which an extensive knowledge structure is required, a person who has obtained true Formal thought may continue to develop his or her intellect at the **fifth stage** of development, that of Postformal Operations. With external help, such as specialized mind development courses, the natural processes of development can be restarted even if the individual is well over the age of 30. Changes in environmental demands during adulthood, such as retraining for vocational needs, may also stimulate renewed development. Development of crystallized intelligence over an increasingly broad range of life domains is then possible throughout life. This provides the contextual perspective from which original creativity and wisdom may arise, and maturity may also assist in the development of other kinds of intelligence, such as social, moral and emotional competence.
If an adult has completed the stage of formal operations and reached full formal thought, the development of knowledge structures and intellectual development will continue at the Postformal level. On the other hand, without appropriate mental stimuli, adult intellectual development may not even reach to the level of formal operations yet alone achieving Individuation and Postformal development. Even university students may not have attained true formal cognitive functionality and it appears the majority of the population function, most of the time, at the level of concrete operations. Furthermore, as we have seen with the description of many kinds of common thought distortions, many people do not have a reliable ability to make concrete operations in an objective manner that is inner-directed enough to be free from the influence of their environmental conditioning and peer pressures.

But if the final stage of true formal thought is reached, either naturally or through assisted intellectual development, there will be spontaneous attempts to increase mental capacity still further, to complete the process of maturation. This is Pierre de Chardin’s point of ignition; a point at which a person has become sufficiently self-aware to attempt to direct his own course of mental evolution. He has developed metacognitive intelligence, in which the person is aware and in control of his own thinking processes.

Postformal thinking requires the ability to hold in the mind a complex array of differing information and viewpoints, in order to synthesize an overview. A variety of research suggests that people have the potential to gradually reach higher levels of mental complexity throughout the course of their lifespan. The Mind Development Courses for which I am responsible, have the specific agenda of increasing the symbol space of the conscious mind as well as the speed at which it is accessed, in order to increase the capacity for cognitive complexity, with all the attendant benefits that ensue, including the increase of fluid intelligence.

Postformal thinking possesses an understanding of the relative, non-absolute nature of knowledge; it accepts contradiction as a basic aspect of reality; it includes the ability to focus simultaneously on several aspects of a problem, to see both sides and further implications and possibilities, and not to be identified in a solid way with only one point of view. This is a ‘broad perspective,’ metacognitive viewpoint. Postformal thinkers are aware of paradox; they are capable of dialectic reasoning and are able to synthesize contradictory thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

Formal operations of thought tend to overemphasize the power of pure logic in problem solving and underemphasize the pragmatic quality of real-life social or interpersonal situations. Formal thinking is therefore best suited for well-defined problems that call for scientific thinking and logical analysis and imply a single correct solution. It places a greater emphasis on problem solving than on analysis of situations and consequent discovery of problems.

Beyond the traditional formal operational level of intellectual development (which consists of symbol manipulation, reasoning, etc.), individuals can develop the ability to
reason in situations beyond just a right or wrong answer (for example, moral actions) and take into account different perspectives. Whilst formal thought perceives a system of organized complexity as being closed, simply reducible to its parts, postformal thought is aware of the open aspects of a system - that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

Postformal operations include the evaluation of the contextual relevance of emotional information when decision making. Along with the increase in metacognitive intelligence that accompanies postformal operations, there is an increased ability for introspection. Most people have some capacity for introspection, to look inward and reflect on one’s self and one’s own thoughts, but this capacity increases dramatically when a person attains the stages of formal and postformal operations.

In recent years, Gardner’s evaluation of multiple intelligences has identified (at least) seven specific intelligences linked to ways of learning, including spatial, body-kinesthetic, logical-mathematical and linguistic. Social and emotional intelligence have also been identified as critical factors in personal development. The question remains, how do people employ these many intelligences they may have in varying degrees? Whilst they may function on demand or at random, it is possible to develop a kind of meta-intelligence, by which a person rules over and helps to direct each specific capacity that they have. Meta-intelligence relates to awareness, adaptability, and the relative comparisons of different mental frameworks, models, and sets of behavior. Obtaining a meta-view of one’s own mental functions is a result of adult intellectual development. Ego strength and maturity enable an objective understanding of cause and effect that enhances the multiple intelligences that are not strictly cognitive.

The good news is that metacognitive growth continues after the age of twenty and certainly continues until, at least, the age of thirty. The bad news, however, is that it tends to become more domain specific during the adult phase of development. This is because the metacognitive processes, as they develop, are becoming progressively more dependent on long term memory and specialist knowledge. In short, an adult has a higher level of meta-intelligence than a teenager, but it tends to be in several specific domains rather than domain general. This can be countered by ongoing self-directed education and activities that develop mental skills.

An adult is rarely presented with a completely novel problem in the real world of academic or occupational endeavors. Rather, the problems that an adult is asked to solve almost inevitably draw greatly on his accumulated knowledge and skills. For an adult, intellect is better recognized by the range of tasks that the person can accomplish and the skills that he has developed, rather than by the abstract cognitive tasks typically included in IQ tests. He comes to increasingly rely on crystallized intelligence, thus the content of the intellect is at least as important as the processes of intellect in determining an adult’s real-world problem solving efficiency.
Postformal thought takes advantage of the individual’s full spectrum of knowledge, covering all the domains in which he has acquired knowledge, especially expert knowledge. He can synthesize new solutions drawing upon domain-general rather than domain-specific expertise - and predict interaction between the domains - within the boundaries of his knowledge network, which as an Open System may be expanded and revised, and incorporate the research and conclusions of others as an (almost unlimited) resource.

The nature of the Ego

A common misunderstanding is in place these days about the nature of Ego and the importance of its development. It is commonly misidentified with the concept of egocentrism: the selfish or ‘bigheaded’ personality, which is actually a trait of a person with a weak and undeveloped Ego. In fact this misunderstanding is the result of mistranslation. The definition of Ego in the west was set by Freud. If you read Freud in the original German, he calls the Ego the Ich (the German word for ‘I’). In Latin, the word Ego means ‘I’. Without an I you cannot be anything in the real world we live in.

There is no point in not having an I, as without an I there can be no awareness of oneself as a human being. The process of transcending the Ego, as described in Eastern and New Age philosophies, is often misinterpreted as meaning to erase the Ego but in fact the opposite is the case. To transcend does not mean to disappear, it means ‘to no longer be limited by,’ or ‘to grow beyond in an integrated way.’

The Conscious Ego is synonymous with the Conscious Mind, it is not something contained within the Conscious Mind, like a floating iceberg. If you knock out the Ego - this can be done by a surgical intervention - you have a state of No Mind. This means that you have no conscious mind.

The Ego is not bad; it is necessary for our healthy existence. In our understanding of eastern philosophy, that part of us that leads us to wrong doing has been translated as Ego by westerners, but it is not the ‘Ego’ that Freud defined. It would be better defined in the west by Freud’s Id, which is the animal nature. To understand the true role of the Ego in the structure of personality, it is necessary to be familiar with Freud’s terminology, which has remained widely accepted in modern psychology, beyond the boundaries of Freud’s original psychoanalytic methodology.

**Id:** In Freudian theory, the division of the psyche that is totally unconscious and serves as the source of instinctual impulses and demands for immediate satisfaction of primitive needs. Such needs seek satisfaction in accordance with the pleasure principle and are modified by the Ego and the Superego before they are given overt expression.

**Ego:** a concept referring to the conscious or pre-conscious (i.e. accessible) parts of the psychic apparatus. Part of the Ego organization, however, is in a state of becoming conscious and part remains unconscious. The Ego represents what seems subjectively to be reason and common sense. It is that part of the personality which is experienced
as being oneself, that which one recognizes as ‘I’, one’s face to the world, at a particular point in time. One of the fundamental functions of the Ego is Reality Testing - reaching into the real world to see if what is believed to be the case actually proves out - but this does not bear full fruit until the Ego has become Autonomous, thus substantially set free from inner conflicts between the Id and Superego.

Superego: that part of the personality that influences self-observation, self-criticism, and other reflective activities. The Superego differs from the Conscience in that: a) it belongs to a different frame of reference, i.e. morality not ethics (what one should do, rather than whether it is right or wrong); b) it includes unconscious elements; and c) injunctions and inhibitions emanating from it derive from the subject’s past and may be in conflict with his present ethical values. The Conscience may conventionally be considered to be contained within the Superego; however, when ethical awareness is developed beyond convention, the autonomous Conscience may then replace the installed morality of the Superego.

We are all born without any Ego strength. For that matter, we are all born without an Ego. Being born without any sense of Ego means that at first there is no ‘I,’ there is only enmeshment. We come into this world still attached and enmeshed with our mother and without the ability to distinguish ourselves from her. We develop more and more of a sense of self as we face reality. Gradually, as we grow and interact with the world, we work through the stages of Ego development. This is the process by which we become an autonomous, inner-directed human being... the process of Individuation.

The history of Western civilization is, with the Ego’s increasing capacity to reality test and therefore to reason and create, a story of progress from faith to reality testing. Man has gradually been discovering more about nature and how to control it. Through reality testing, for example, we no longer accept the idea that one becomes ill because of evil spirits. We have advanced to the point where we can often pinpoint the exact bacteria that are the cause of many diseases. Further, we know enough about science to prevent and cure many others. Additionally, we have had an explosion in technology that exemplifies our ability to bend nature to our will, making what had previously been fantasies into reality. These are examples of man’s direct control over our environment through scientific knowledge and our understanding of cause and effect, rather than illusory control through faith.

The Ego can only become truly Autonomous by overcoming the Superego. The Autonomous Ego, by and large, is free from the dictates of the Id and has outgrown the Superego. The Ego understands and integrates the energetic drives of the Id and sublimes them toward loving sexuality and creative activity. The Autonomous Ego creates his or her own moral code and relies on his or her own sense of right and wrong, based on rational and objective analysis.

Both Ego strength and independence from the Superego are essential for an individual to be truly creative, outside of the box of his upbringing and parental and peer
standards. The Superego stands in the way of major creativity by suppressing any thought or feeling that is too unconventional or that may be subject to external criticism, so it routinely censors anything truly creative. Freedom from the Superego is a necessary prerequisite, but creativity outside the boundaries of the ordinary also requires sufficient intelligence applied to an appropriate, wide-ranging database.

Creativity research has traditionally regarded the creative process as involving a full or partial regression of the Ego to a more primitive state of consciousness. While some playful and creative activities may be characterized by voluntary and/or involuntary regressions, more meaningful creativity requires access to the unconscious imagination without a corresponding loss of Ego functions. Creativity requires a relatively intact Ego; when the Ego deteriorates, so does the creative product. Combined with Ego strength, unconscious processes such as imagination and intuition become consciously directed and work in collaboration with the integrative functions of the Ego, such as logical thought, which are related to directed creative effort and implementation.

Integration is not only a normal function of the Ego but also a defense against disintegrative tendencies from the Id and Superego. Ego strength is necessary to empower creativity, which is essentially an integrative force based on love and the sublimation of aggression, energized by the Libido. Freud postulated that human beings are dominated by two basic instincts: Eros (the sexual drive or creative life force) and Thanatos (the death force or destructiveness), both forms of Libido energy. These instincts are also an aspect of what Jung termed the ‘Shadow’- an unconscious part of the Ego, and receptacle for that which we have for one reason or another disowned or wish to remain out of sight and those qualities that one would rather not see in oneself, as well as unrealized potentials. By illuminating the Shadow into consciousness, its energy becomes a resource for inner-directed positive action rather than other-directed destructive actions. We need to integrate the Shadow and achieve sufficient Individuation, in order to overcome the Superego and achieve Ego Autonomy.

Intelligence, which is essentially the ability to quickly establish new and multiple linkages between thoughts, ideas and feelings, is a necessary requisite of the creative synthesis. Freedom and mobility in the use of symbols is another requirement. True creativity does not stem from the Id; it is the result of a synthesis occurring in the unconscious Ego with conscious Ego direction. Its emergence into consciousness is prompted by relative freedom from repression and the dictates of the Superego. Creativity reduces instinctual tension, it fuses pleasure with reality, and satisfies the Libido.

However, a weak Ego run wild, out of the control of its Superego and driven by the Shadow, is not the means to valuable creativity; that is the route to hypomania, or even to mania and psychosis. This is also seen in some mystical and drug experiences, and even states of passionate love, if the Ego is unprepared to cope with such intense narcissistic and libidinal pressures, independent of guidance from the Superego.
Ego strength is the power, determination and ability to engage reality for whatever we find it to be - to accept what is as existing and to then use our cognitive-behavioral, emotional and relational skills to deal with such. Ego strength also refers to the inner personal strength by which we tolerate stress and frustration and to deal with reality without falling back to infantile defense mechanisms. A strong Ego can tolerate a difficult situation, can cope and then will look at it realistically and act on a solution. Ego strength, then, is our ability to play the Game of Life according to whatever curves life throws at us. The stronger our Ego grows, the more of a sense of self we develop and the greater our skills and resource to handle whatever comes.

The personality traits of a weak Ego include: authoritarianism, conformity, dogmatism, other-directedness, other-determinism, field-dependence, not tolerating uncertainty, low self esteem, and an Egocentric viewpoint. An egocentric person is self-centered, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one’s own.

In comparison, the traits of a strong Ego include: strength of character, inner-directedness, self-determinism, field-independence, high self esteem, the acceptance of a plurality of ideas, and an idiocentric viewpoint. People who have an idiocentric value orientation tend to emphasize their own goals and needs over those of the groups to which they belong, and to be independent and self-reliant.

The weak Ego doesn’t easily face, take in, and cope with what is. Instead it fights reality, hates it, and wishes it otherwise. Expectations are unrealistic and based on inadequate understanding. Reality seems too big, too frightening, too overwhelming ... and so we avoid the encounter. We feel unresourceful, weak, fragile, unable to cope, etc. The weaker the Ego-strength, the less we will engage reality and the more we will flee to superstition, wishing rather than acting, and to addictions.

We need to be very much in touch with our feelings but still to remain intelligent about it - to remain in control, not driven by our emotions. We need a balance of left and right brain - rational mind and emotional mind, logic and feelings, intellect and intuition. This is where mindfulness and wisdom is found.

We tend to be too cut off from our feelings, in order to suppress painful ones - and this becomes a habit. Academic education reinforces this imbalance. And then we lose a lot of our creative and intuitive ability. At the same time, however, when those emotions ‘escape’ we tend to be driven by them, and think and act impulsively, without wisdom.

Deferred gratification or delayed gratification (as an aspect of emotional intelligence) is the ability of a person to wait for things they want. This trait is critical for life success. One often sees the lack of this ability with kids who act without thinking first, can’t wait their turn in line or in a game, blurt out answers in class, speak when they’re supposed to be quiet, maybe show aggressive behaviors, are often a little too loud, sometimes fight, and so on... they often get labeled with Attention Deficit Disorder. They impulsively say the wrong thing at the wrong time and then think, ‘Why did I say that?’ The other kids are asking, ‘Who is this guy?’ and often begin to avoid him.
Impulsive people are not learning from past mistakes, and they’re not listening. They haven’t picked up on those subtle social cues that everybody else has learned, and so they’re socially awkward and often don’t know why. And this applies to adults too of course.

Those with poor impulse control suffer from ‘weak Ego boundaries’; the term comes from Sigmund Freud’s theory of personality where the Id is the pleasure principle, the Superego is the morality or parent principle, and the Ego is the reality principle. The Ego’s job is to satisfy the needs of the Id while being conscious of other people’s needs.

Freud’s definition of the Ego has it representing reason and circumspection. Most people are unaware that Freud’s meaning of Ego is not some center of passion or self-serving desire - that is reserved, instead, for the Id. When we believe a person has a ‘big Ego’ we are really referring to the Id running rampant. A person with a weak Ego tends be infantile in their approach and more egocentric than a person with a developed Ego. The Ego’s job is to contain and direct the passions. It isn’t the Ego that makes us yield to temptation or puts the weapon of anger in our hand; in fact, it is the Ego that apologizes. We can think of the Ego as being more like Dr. Jekyll while the Id represents Mr. Hyde. It is far better to have a strong, well-developed Ego than to fall prey to the Mr. Hyde within us who wants to rule our lives making the Ego its servant.

Korzybski said that most people are to some degree impulsive, therefore there is a compulsion to act or break out in speech and this limits their intelligence. His advice - when you feel this coming on - is to stop for a count of ten to let your much slower cortex (thinking brain) catch up with the emotional limbic system, before you act or speak. He went on to say that many people have an under-aroused cortex and an over-aroused limbic system: they guess rather than work out the solution to a problem, or when they are making a decision they don’t work through a list of alternatives. A person in that state seeks immediate closure and cannot reject an immediate reward (immediate gratification) for a larger reward in the future, because he or she is acting impulsively - not being conscious of their choices. Acting in a more considered and intelligent way, on the other hand, will be much more true to the person’s real needs and purposes, and therefore to their heart.

**The remedy: mindfulness**

Mindfulness has to do with the ability to accept, in a non-evaluative and nonjudgmental fashion, both oneself and the current situation - and how one feels about it. Acceptance of reality is not necessarily approval of reality; it is simply not being blind to it, not resisting nor distorting it. Then we can see the truth.

Fixed beliefs are always a limitation and unnecessary - they cause all the types of harm that occurs in the world, especially when they are rigidly identified with or attached to, so that one cannot tolerate another having different beliefs or it is felt to be a threat if they do. Provisional beliefs are necessary, as one needs to make a map of the world, but they must always be open to revision. Be open to the opinions of another that provoke a
new view of things, or that seem to conflict with what you already know. It makes it easier to see the middle path, the shades of grey between the black and white of opposing viewpoints.

So, if you feel an impulsive reaction coming on - and you feel you are being driven rather than being the driver - then take a pause, breathe deeply for several seconds and look at your options, the pros and cons - BEFORE you say or do something that isn’t really congruent with your inner truth.

Intuition is not subjective truth or inner knowing if it is based on a reactive emotional response, whether a painful feeling or even a good one. How do you know if it’s reaction or a fast input? Emotional intelligence is about understanding emotions, not just accepting that whatever raises your heartbeat must be the way to go. Emotions always follow an interpretation. Reality testing is necessary, to see if there’s more to it and you need to look deeper, or if it’s an answer but in the wrong direction perhaps with thought distortions, or if it’s somebody else’s subjective truth rather than your own.

**The transpersonal: transcending the Ego**

While your ‘outer self’ - the daily waking consciousness of the Ego - is focused upon the external world, your inner being encompasses all aspects of your consciousness. Your inner being includes your outer self, your subconscious mind, the ‘unconscious’ parts of mind-body functioning, as well as the super-consciousness of the transpersonal realm. Your inner being is your complete consciousness. It is all of the ‘separate’ parts of your consciousness in one unified package. Your inner being is also the real you, the complete you. It is also been referred to as your ‘Higher Self.’ In a state of mindfulness, it may act as witness to the workings of the mind and the Ego.

Development away from faith and towards reality testing in the advanced societies, since the middle ages, has been the evolutionary unfolding of the successive stages of Ego development, the changes in technology this has brought about, and the change in character structure, from Tradition Directed to Inner Directed.

Faith in an outcome implies that one has no rational means to test if it is possible. Spirituality based on faith is therefore hollow; spirituality based on reality testing has genuine substance - it transcends (integrates and goes beyond) reality; it does not replace it. It is the spirituality of the Here & Now; its truths are observable, they are not beliefs nor hopes. It is also much needed.

With the development of the strong and educated Ego and accompanying scientific method, the cusp has more recently turned downward toward a materialist society that has a weak sense of self and is easily manipulated - a transition from Inner Directedness to Other Directedness and a decline in Ego Autonomy, especially for the masses. To continue in a direction of advancement, rather than a return to religious ritual, a new spiritual awareness based on objective and personal observation is required, with introspection balanced by reality testing. For this to be possible, sound education which
includes development of cognitive and emotional intelligence is required, to first establish Ego Autonomy, and then the balance can swing back from the consumer-oriented society toward a society with high ethical values and post-conventional spiritual intelligence; a way of life with genuine meaning and fulfillment.

The Ego is only a barrier to spiritual insight when it is weak and full of mental distortions and conflict - when it envelopes all the available attention so the inner being cannot function. Then there is the behavior that is commonly associated with Ego-centricism such as selfishness, arrogance or narcissism, or even psychoses such as schizophrenia. In fact these are the product of a weak and confused Ego, uncleared of false conceptions and internal conflict and so no clear sense of identity, with a fearful clinging to itself and no concept of an external viewpoint. Ego Autonomy is the precondition for successful work at the transpersonal Level.

Most psychologies and psychotherapies are interested just in the personality, although Freud himself actually wrote about the psyche in terms of the ‘soul,’ but his German was misguidedly translated into medical ‘scientific’ terms for the Anglo-American audience. It is only in recent years that a variety known as ‘transpersonal psychology’ has emerged, a psychology which transcends the personality. Transpersonal psychology combines the psychology of the personality with psychology of the soul - two disciplines and two concepts that have been firmly separated since behaviorist psychology became dominant in the Western world, but which used to go hand in hand. For instance, in early Christianity there was a collection of materials by different authors under the general name of Philokalia, describing the psychology of mystical enlightenment, and this knowledge was the basis of Gnostic initiation. The Gnostics claimed that their teaching was the original and true teaching of Jesus.

In ‘psychosynthesis,’ a set of transpersonal psychology techniques that Assagioli developed in the 1930s, it is said that a person has a personality and is a soul. However, personalities in the world are obvious to us all; souls are only present for those with eyes to see. Assagioli’s view of synthesis is of becoming more and more aware of soul, not only in oneself but also in others. His view, and the view of most spiritual disciplines, is that soul is basic and enduring, and that personality, though necessary for being in the world, is relatively superficial and changeable.

The soul is the context, the home, the ‘unmoved mover,’ the uncreated source of life; the personality is full of content, learned responses, and is dynamic. The soul may in many people never be recognized in any explicit way, and the nature of this barrier and how to remove it, to become ‘enlightened or to ‘awaken,’ is an area we will be examining later in this book.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, before Freud, and with the values of the Enlightenment and the idea of progress, it was assumed that the human being was becoming more and more rational and fully civilized. It was this assumption that Freud questioned, with his ability to discern the unconscious processes in people. He saw the
significance of dreams as a communication of the unconscious to the conscious; slips of
the tongue, mistakes, irrational emotion, inappropriate behavior and illnesses
manifested in ordinary living began to be acknowledged as effects of processes going
on beyond or beneath our consciousness. Many hitherto unexplained phenomena came
to be seen as symptoms of the conflict between the strong ‘Libido’ (sexual) forces of
the ‘Id’ (the drive or life force of the core Self) and the ‘Superego’ (the acquired
conscience and social rules), as perceived by the ‘Ego’ (that part of the Id that detaches
early in development to form an independent personality - the ‘face to the world’).

There are five main parts of our total psyche: **Higher consciousness** - that which is
aware of being aware; **Normal consciousness** - awareness in the everyday world -
being, perceiving, relating; and of the inner world - of thoughts, concepts, attitudes,
decisions, images, memories emotions, sensations and feelings. And the domains which
lie below normal consciousness: the **Pre-conscious** - an interface of the conscious mind
which, when it is evoked by interest and emotional commitment, goes searching for
relevant data in the sub-conscious; the **Sub-conscious** - contains the powerful drives of
love and fear, and the programs by which motives are decided and actions are carried
out; and the **Unconscious** - the core Self which contains a record of everything one has
felt and sensed since conception and of the evolutionary genetic-line before that. It also
consists of genetic programming, which empowers the deepest drives for survival,
attachment and expression common to mankind, which transmits the energy of
emotions, which controls the stream of Libido energies and the efforts involved in
moving and perceiving with the physical body.

**Higher consciousness** is the essential self, the Higher Self. It is our personal center of
awareness, which is developed through self-knowledge. The Higher Self is the
‘awareness of awareness’ of which the mental ‘I’ (or Ego) is a necessary but pale
reflection. There has been an acknowledgement throughout human history that a higher
awareness, beyond the normal conscious experience, is possible for the individual,
recognized through dreams, religious and psychic experience, insights and creativity of
every kind. It is usually frustratingly brief and infrequent but it is clear that with
appropriate study and practice, people can change and grow in awareness, whereby the
field of consciousness becomes more and more observed by the Higher Self who is no
longer ‘asleep’; then behavior is no longer determined only by conditioned responses.
The Being is aware of the difference between his own motivation and that which is
learned, acquired or imprinted in him, genetically or by social conditioning; he knows
what he is doing as he does it. The energy and attention tied up in the knots of
unconsciousness becomes conscious and freely available, as truth is validated and the
false discarded.

The second aspect of the psyche, **Normal consciousness**, is our everyday reality,
internally and externally - the incessant flow of sensations, images, thoughts, feelings,
desires and impulses that we can observe, analyze and judge. The less aware a person
is, the smaller this field of awareness will be and the more automatic his functioning.
The majority of people drift on the surface of this ‘mind stream’ and identify themselves with its successive waves, with the changing contents of their consciousness. So consciousness is often unreflective, not consciously noticed, determined by the many personal and social forces that have formed us, the cultural programming that moulds us into a ‘consensus trance’ state of automatic, robotized behavior. In this hypnotized, half-asleep state, possessed by the conditioning of our background, we seem almost entirely the product of our genetic heritage, our upbringing and education, our personal environment and the society we live in - in the grip of forces stronger than ourselves and which we don’t understand, be they biological, psychological or social.

The conscious mind contains all that one knows that is readily accessible. This information is relatively well organized and interconnected on a logical basis. The characteristics of this ‘analytical’ mind are invaluable for learning, putting things in order and testing ideas. On the other hand the conscious mind tends to be inhibited by the very quality that makes it so powerfully useful: it seeks to be right.

This part of the personality, the subject of cognitive and behavioral psychology, could easily, without reflection, be regarded as the whole, but the development of depth-psychology and the rediscovery of transpersonal psychology in this century has made it clear that this level of consciousness is only a part of the whole.

The third part, the Pre-conscious, is the ante-room of consciousness, where our various experiences are assimilated, our mental and imaginative activities are elaborated and developed in a sort of psychological gestation and interaction, before their birth into the light of consciousness. If consciousness is likened to a spotlight, the pre-conscious is everything within its range, but not illuminated at this moment. It is real to the person and accessible. It includes material from the sub-conscious that has been reactivated (stimulated and made active due to a similarity or relevance of present circumstances or thoughts). The pre-conscious mind is like a problem-oriented and independent file-clerk. It looks over the shoulder of the conscious mind: when a problem is being considered, it conducts a search into the sub-conscious mind for clues that it considers relevant.

Its criteria for relevance do not always seem logical to the conscious mind, and therefore the ‘file-clerk’ learns to censor certain kinds of information from the sub-conscious, preventing them from rising higher into full consciousness. This ‘censor’ is below consciousness; consequently you cannot open-up your mind to the sub-conscious simply by resolving not to block its signals; the defenses have first to be recognized, the reasons for them discovered and the pre-conscious censor re-programmed, before this is possible. This requires a procedure of concentrated introspection.

Interest, emotional commitment and the desire to solve a problem, cause the pre-conscious to work with the contents of the sub-conscious (and also through the sub-conscious to the unconscious) and the results eventually filter back into consciousness,
if they are not censored. Intuition is an early recognition, below the conscious level, that one is on the right track - this causes a felt signal or increase of emotional arousal which causes the conscious mind to pay attention to its periphery of consciousness, to dig a little and pull out the information. Because of the energy of this signal, it may also be registered on biofeedback devices such as a held pendulum or skin resistance galvanometer, which can be used as an aid to help the person recognize his intuition.

The **Sub-conscious**, is that part of his mind a person is unaware of, or which is out of his control, what Jung called the Shadow. The subconscious functions include vital background psychological activities such as the integration of new data and re-programming where necessary - a function which dreaming reflects - and it coordinates the carrying out of set patterns of behavior which can be safely left ‘on automatic’ by the conscious mind, freeing it to concentrate on the task in hand.

The sub-conscious contains all of the emotional and cognitive experience of a lifetime, whether pleasurable, ordinary or traumatic. Its contents are drawn upon by the pre-conscious when they seem relevant. It is a reservoir of information so vast and rich that it seems quite incredible to the conscious mind. Its contents are nevertheless consciously reachable by methods of psychological analysis (especially with the aid of biofeedback devices or hypnosis) which serves to resolve the defensive censorship of the preconscious.

The ‘Shadow’ aspect of the sub-conscious mind includes the roots of phobias, obsessions, compulsions and delusions and many complexes charged with intense emotion. These are developed in response to circumstances in the past and used in present time when reactivated by a similarity of circumstances; this occurs without conscious control, irrationally and without inspection - a ‘reactive’ mental process. Memory of the original, often dramatic circumstance and the accompanying fears and decisions is normally repressed, as it is hard to feel again and too painful to re-examine. Such experiences include painful losses, physical trauma, and one’s own actions and consequences of those actions that one would prefer had never happened.

The **Unconscious** contains the fundamental survival drives and primitive urges (including genetic and race memories) that empower the functioning of the mind as a whole. It contains the entire kinesthetic recordings of the body (all of its feelings, sensations and pains) and is integrally linked with the body (which it coordinates and controls) - it is the ‘body-mind.’ It also contains the deepest level of Self: the fundamental (primal) experiences, imprints and decisions of this lifetime, from the womb onwards. These only normally surface consciously in symbolic form, in the context of dreams and behavior patterns recognized in retrospect. The deepest forms of psychoanalytic work aim to uncover their content to the light of consciousness. Jung’s work on dreams and mythological symbols was instrumental in opening up the incredible world of the unconscious, and the existence of ‘archetypes’ - ways of being that are inherently programmed in the unconscious, making up the substance of the core Self - all the aspects of living that the individual works throughout his life to
actualize,’ or bring into existence at their fullest potential. His work also exposed the transpersonal dimension that lays beyond the racial stereotypes, but also the necessity of working through the primal and archetypal material, to differentiate and individuate the Higher Self - the spiritual, non-genetic, meta-self.

In both mystical and creative states one finds elements of joy, union, ecstasy, absorption, loss of self-consciousness, and loss of sense of time... a state of ‘flow.’ In such states one has split from the Superego. But one still has need of Ego as a controlling and integrating center of consciousness; indeed, the stronger the better, so that it may be serenely quiet in its presence and not intrude into the experience.

A ‘no mind state’ or a still and quiet mind as achieved by meditative practices as an aid to unitary perception may be achieved by either ‘switching off’ the Ego or by clearing the Ego of its anxieties and distortions. The former path is to go ‘out the bottom,’ to not exist, and the latter is to rise above, to exist in an expanded form, to realize that one further exists as a Higher Self, witness to the Ego and part of a greater whole - to embrace the physical, emotional and mental dimensions of humanness, for which the Ego is the appropriate vehicle, empowered by a higher source. As Ken Wilber puts it:

One of the many reasons we have trouble with the notion of ‘Egoless’ is that people want their ‘Egoless sages’ to fulfill all their fantasies of ‘saintly’ or ‘spiritual,’ which usually means dead from the neck down, without fleshy wants or desires, gently smiling all the time. All of the things that people typically have trouble with - money, food, sex, relationships, desire - they want their saints to be without. ‘Egoless sages’ who are ‘above all that’ is what people want. Talking heads is what they want. Religion, they believe, will simply get rid of all baser instincts, drives and relationships, and hence they look to religion, not for advice on how to live life with enthusiasm, but on how to avoid it, repress it, deny it, escape it... But ‘Egoless’ does not mean ‘less than personal,’ it means ‘more than personal.’ Not personal minus, but personal plus - all the normal personal qualities, plus some transpersonal ones.

Development at the transpersonal stage is a process of integration of identities, of unifying at a higher level - an integral process. Egolessness does not mean the absence of a functional self (that’s a psychotic, not a sage); it means that one is no longer exclusively identified with that self, the Ego, or its sub-personalities. The path to transcend the Ego is accompanied by cognitive, moral, Superego and spiritual development as described above; it is through strengthening the Ego and determining a truth within that includes all, that we are able to detach from the world of suffering, attachment and resistance. The way out is the way through.
Part Seven: GOING BEYOND

Towards the Real Self

In earlier chapters we improved our ability to handle our emotions intelligently and to think rationally in stressful circumstances. Work in these dimensions will significantly reduce background tension and the general disabilities arising from neurosis, and enhance the capacity for succeeding in life. Although this constitutes a very effective course, the new freedoms are freedoms within a reality bound by constricting belief systems. In short, one may become a better businessman, or a better housewife, but may still not have questioned the validity of these roles.

In contrast, work on the upper levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is concerned with shifting the paradigm and acquiring greater potential freedom within an unbounded reality. The aim is to achieve independence in the unified field of life, rather than dependence on it; to be knowing creator of one’s beliefs rather than unknowing effect of imposed beliefs (the cultural trance). It involves repairing the mind-body split - integrating the thinking, feeling, emoting, sensing and moving aspects of the Self.

This can be illustrated in the context of remembering a previous state of consciousness. If that previous state in a student’s past had permitted enhanced performance, and if it could be re-created, this would be a valuable resource. By remembering it fully, the original state can be rehabilitated.

For this to be meaningful and stable, however, the whole of the personality of that state needs to be contacted, re-experienced and re-installed in the present moment: the cognitive aspects (thoughts, attitudes, decisions, beliefs, motives, memories, imagination); the emotional aspects (emotions, felt needs and desires); and behavioral aspects (perceptions that are external - actions, communications and events of self and others, whether seen, heard, tasted, smelt or touched; and perceptions that are internal - kinesthetic body image, sensations, sexuality, tensions, pains, movement). When individuals have worked successfully on their personal development they will have this ability - what Gurdjieff called the ‘Self-Remembering Man’.

Having learnt to remember and fully integrate an Ego-state, the reader is prepared for the next major step in Transpersonal Psychology. This involves integrating the range of different Ego states, or ‘sub-personalities’ that relate to particular roles the person must play in life, in order to survive and prosper in different circumstances. To the extent that these roles are unknowingly enacted in reaction to differing circumstances or environmental ‘fields,’ the person is field-dependent, living in a bounded or blinkered reality.

In this book we have previously examined the process of ‘identification.’ For example,
a particular person can be any of the following at different times: a father, a stockbroker, a Londoner, a Roman Catholic, and so on. He may also introject behavior modeled on powerful figures from his childhood - such as his father, mother, teachers and peers. Every hero figure inspires imitation. Persons to whom sympathy was given or to whom wrong was done, become identified with. Plus there is the whole archetypal structure of the deep unconscious. The typical student therefore has a considerable number of Ego-states or sub-personalities, displaying considerable modifications of behavior, under the control of sub-conscious programs of great power. They may be unknown to each other or they may conflict or interact. Each may have their own separate memories and as a sub-personality have components of Parent, Adult and Child based on the life experience when they were created and when they have since been enacted. Some Ego-states may never get the chance to play at all, being blocked by the dictates of parental voices; and some may only speak indirectly through moods, dreams, illnesses and compulsions.

How does a sub-personality develop? As far as we know how to make any kind of tests, we find that babies are making sense of the world, not just responding to it blindly or automatically. In doing this, they soon find that certain ways of relating seem to work for them; they may be about getting what they want, or about how not to care if they don’t get it, and so on. As time goes on, the infant finds that it has to relate differently in different circumstances; what works with one person does not work with another, or in another setting. Meanwhile, processes of identification are going on - different approaches and ways of being are invented, imitated, instructed or instinctively enacted - and these are internalized in sub-compartments of the personality or ‘Persona.’ In all of this, there is a powerful element of fantasy - that of a panicky person with a rich imagination, very willing to make up stories and paint pictures, to exaggerate, ignore, make assumptions and pretend.

Karen Horney states that the major determining factor is our need for security - the first bio-survival program. The most basic sub-personalities are created early in childhood to serve security needs. Later we may press these sub-personalities into service to gain acceptance and self-esteem needs also, which may involve adopting various manipulative strategies, such as the exploitive use of eroticism, help-seeking, ingratiation and threats.

So by about four years old the child has made some very important decisions about the world and his relationships within it, and split off various regions within his Persona to deal with the people and situations that have been noticed. As Gurdjieff explained: ‘A man is divided into a multiplicity of small I’s, and each separate small I is able to call itself by the name of the man, to agree or disagree, to make promises or decisions, for which another 'small I' will have to take responsibility. This explains why people so seldom do as they have said.’ The degree of isolation between sub-personalities is directly related to the person’s field dependency.

We can start to see how our sub-personalities play into each other’s hands, and often
how little they know each other. Once they are identified and their motives are clear, they can no longer be enacted in a reactive, unknowing way. When light falls on the Shadow, it reveals new and valuable territory. There is also a great sense of relief; for example, if I say ‘I am jealous,’ that describes the whole of me, and that is overwhelming in its implications. But if I respect the plurality in myself and no longer see the jealous identity as the whole of me, then I have gained the distance I need to observe it and to see how the identity was acquired, and why it is still being used.

At this stage of mental development one is adopting a ‘Caretaker Self’ and this is used as a nodal point, or center of observation and control. Physiologically speaking, this involves creating a stable center in the forebrain that is capable of high arousal without anxiety or defenses being reactivated. This remains in charge of operations, but is continually modified and enlarged as more and more of the real Self becomes apparent, until eventually it becomes the real Self which encompasses all selves. As subpersonalities are viewed and charge falls away from them, there is a greater degree of cross-remembering between them, and they are more easily accessed by the Caretaker Self, instead of being field-dependent. Whereas before the individual may have been almost a number of separate people, now he is less likely to lose hold of the string that can jerk him back to the caretaker self - he is like an actor knowingly playing a number of different roles without totally identifying with them.

The core Self guides, unfolds and regulates our development. It knows, as does a seed, its eventual destiny. This is what is meant by individuation - growing into what we are meant to become. We define ‘who I am’ by our roles in life; yet even when we lose some of these roles as a result of changed circumstances, we still exist - we still are. This is the real Self. At times of great crisis in life - when a home is burnt down, loved ones are lost, or facing death - when our roles have disintegrated, this transformative realization can come upon us.

If there is this understanding about oneself, then perceiving others, one equally can see that an aspect of someone’s behavior is not the whole person. We are able to listen to one sub-personality and do justice to that, without being forced into a judgment that the person actually is that behavior. We can wait for the dialectical movement that brings the next sub-personality out into play - maybe a directly opposed one. This makes listening and understanding much easier, because we have not been given the impossible task of understanding a person better than the person themselves.

Whatever model of psychology we go in for, we almost always come across subpersonalities in some form or other. It may be Freud’s Ego, Id and Superego; or Jung’s complexes and archetypes; or Berne’s Parent, Adult and Child; or Perl’s top-dog and under-dog; or Klein’s internal objects; or Horney’s idealisms; or Leary’s circuits; or Hubbard’s sympathy identities and emotional tone scale; or Gurdjieff’s higher and lower centers; or the motivational states of Apter’s reversal theory; or Mumford’s identity structures. The names change but the reality remains the same. Even Skinner’s behaviorism has its version - ‘repertoires of behavior.’ The concept of roles that you
move in and out of freely, is familiar to everyone who identifies with characters in a film, play or movie, who sees a painting with the painter’s eyes, who takes the side of a sportsman, or who can see another’s point of view in a discussion: it’s a universal phenomenon - the game of life. In addressing sub-personalities we are uncovering character roles that became adopted insidiously and have become stuck - like an actor unknowingly continuing to dramatize previous roles he has played.

Now it often happens that one of these sub-personalities becomes a general functionary, and gets more and more jobs to do. This is usually the most highly socialized of the sub-personalities and is often closely tied with the male or female role - the one which most people in the person’s circle will call forth by their expectations, by rewards and punishments, by reference to cultural norms. It is probably the one identified with the fourth program of the socio-sexual system imprinted at late puberty, producing a characteristic sexual and social role. It is the Persona that we feel safest in, whoever we actually are in essence. When people praise us and try to raise our self-esteem, or when we try to please others, it is often this way of being and achieving that is boosted. At the same time there will be Shadow aspects to this substitute personality that we have not owned - they will be obvious to others but blind spots to the person.

The tragic thing is that we can easily be taken in by this, to think that this substitute identity is our real Self: it is what everybody knows and relates to, why shouldn’t it be who we really are? But it is for somebody else’s benefit and we survived better because we produced it. To the extent that we feel firmly identified with this false personality, it will be dangerous to entertain notions of self-actualization, for what that would mean is a form of Ego-boosting, an inflation of this identity. It will just magnify our existing faults and impose them more fully on other people. We are likely to have incredible difficulties reconciling our imagined sainthood with our humanity. As Fritz Perls said, it is the difference between self-actualization and self-image actualization. It will lead to the desperate straits of the man who says, ‘I think I’ve got this spiritual thing pretty good now, but I still can’t get on with the wife.’

This ‘Substitute Persona’ must be located and thoroughly discharged, and from this the real Self will emerge. The more we can work with the sub-personalities and get to know them, the easier it is to see that none of them are the real Self. And when at last we allow ourselves to get in touch with the real Self, we find that we don’t have to take any special measures to deal with our sub-personalities - they take care of themselves and just become colorful facets with a lot of light, but no harm in them. They become roles that we have or use, rather than be.

This may seem hard to believe, particularly because there are usually some that seem evil, destructive, black and horrible. This is the archetype of the Shadow, as Jung describes: ‘Unfortunately man is, in part, less good than he imagines or wants to be. Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual’s conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. If an identity is conscious, one always has the chance to correct it, but if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets
corrected. It is liable to burst forth in a moment of unawareness.’ But there is no need to
destroy it; it contains a great deal of locked-up energy and excitement, which when
released makes the person more alive and spontaneous. The is a lot of love and real
anger tied up in that congealed hate, and when it melts and starts to flow the results can
be incredibly beautiful.

The way we treat people in our environment is closely connected with the way in which
we treat our own sub-personalities. If one’s first reaction to a sub-personality judged to
be bad, is to ‘cut it out, destroy it,’ then this will perhaps be one’s attitude to social,
political or business enemies. Such reactions (to the recognition of one’s sub-
personalities) are closely related to the opposing factors that caused the identities to be
adopted in the first place, and have since been reactively introjected or projected as
defense mechanisms.

Ultimately we want all the sub-personalities to be merely seen as integrated filters to
the real Self. Using the term ‘real Self’ in this way suggests that the sub-personalities
are in some sense false; and in so far as they are independent, they are false. They are
not an adequate expression of ‘who I am.’ They are partial versions, scraped up to meet
a particular purpose, and resorted to in a panic of choice.

To become free of the hypnosis of external fields, power must be taken back by the
Self. When your identity is firmly established in the Self, you are no longer dependent
on the external world to determine who you are. But this is not a tyrannical power - it is
what Krishnamurti calls choiceless awareness: awareness without need. Without need,
our perception is clear and objective, there are no compulsions or fears. It is the power
of freedom. And it is the appropriate state of mind in which to transform towards a
Higher state of Self.

Awakening!

The principles described in this book, and my work in general, are really directed
toward Gnosis, which means intuitive knowledge of spiritual truths. There’s an
interesting history to this. It goes back to Egyptian times, when the people worshipped
Osiris, a man who found God within himself, was persecuted and suffered, and was
resurrected. It was the same as the Jesus story, and in fact a myth that reappeared over
and over in ancient Mediterranean cultures. That story was the external knowledge that
everyday people believed in and it gave hope to their lives. But for the priests it was a
metaphor, of the process of finding God within oneself, and they taught this inner
mystical knowledge only to initiates, the few who were inspired to look inside
themselves for truth.

Pythagoras visited Egypt for 20 years and underwent this initiation; then he returned to
Greece and a developed a similar religion and inner practice for initiates, this time
based around the Dionysius myth. As a result Greece became a highly evolved
civilization, upon which much of modern civilization is based. These are considered ‘pagan’ religions but actually they were highly evolved philosophies to which Aristotle, Plato and Socrates contributed; the knowledge was a threat to the later Christian establishment so they did their best to wipe it out from history, but it later emerged in the Renaissance.

Similarly, the earliest Christians had an inner Gnostic practice and an outer belief system for the everyman, the version of Christianity that was taken up by the decaying Roman Empire to establish the church we know today. Orthodox Christians insist that a chasm separates humanity from its creator; God is wholly other. But Gnostics who wrote the early gospels that were not included in the bible, such as the Gospel of Thomas, contradict this: self-knowledge is knowledge of God; the self and the divine are identical. To know oneself, at the deepest level, is simultaneously to know God; this is the secret of gnosis.

Many Gnostics insisted that ignorance, not sin, is what involves a person in suffering. The huge accumulation of ancient wisdom in the library of Alexandria was burned and the Gnostic practices were mostly wiped out, though a thread remained with the Cathars of southern France until the 1200’s, when they too were eliminated. We only know of the original Christian gospels now through the manuscripts discovered hidden in a cave near Nag Hammadi in Egypt. Some of this knowledge was also the basis for the initiations practiced by the Rosicrucians and Freemasons.

A similar history occurred with the Islamic religion, in which Sufism provides an inner spiritual practice, though this wasn’t brutally repressed by the outer orthodoxy. Gurdjieff played a major role in making this mystical approach known in the West.

The inner practice was always maintained openly in Eastern religions, however, and it is only quite recently that philosophers like Ken Wilber and psychologists like Maslow and Assagioli have tied all these ends together to reveal a non-dogmatic spiritual path of Gnosis that is not tied to myths or accepted beliefs, but is all about facilitating the unique individual process of finding spiritual truth within, through intuitive insight or gnosia. This is transpersonal psychology - the psychology of the spirit, which is the context and the foundation of our personality.

Gnosis is emancipation through the direct experience of knowledge, i.e. through insight. The knowledge that you will find within your self is all that is necessary for you to experience your own truth, your immortal identity, freedom from limitation, and genuine happiness.

Surely, you may say, we are in the midst of a ‘knowledge explosion’ today. But this has not eliminated war, fear, poverty, anxiety or Man’s daily inhumanity to man. Nor has it
given man any legitimate knowledge of his make-up. It has only been ‘knowing about’, not knowledge acquired from direct experience, from looking within.

Thus it is that man drifts aimlessly through a world seemingly without meaning or purpose - a world he created but over which he no longer exercises conscious control or power. Man today has lost his identity and his purpose for existing. He has lost his sense of the Game of Life. He is an unknowing and unwilling game-player. Never before has man been so much of a problem to himself.

**Sexual man**

One of the most important areas of mechanical behavior to observe in yourself is your sexual activity. Man is a sexual being; it is normal and natural for men and women of all ages to have sexual experiences covering a wide range of variation. However the Christian ethic has for centuries foisted a distorted sexual image upon man. It states: ‘Anything pleasurable is sinful.’ Sexual sensation being the most pleasurable sensation known to man at least at his present state of awareness, it naturally follows that sex should have the most stringent restraints, taboos and restrictions placed upon it by the Church. All of us, atheists included, have been born and reared in a basically Christian culture and its doctrinal anti-sexual (anti-life) attitudes are rooted deeply in our basic personality, if for no other reason than the ‘osmosis’ of race consciousness. This has caused more suffering, more misery, more inhibitions, more physical illness (due to repressed natural drives) and more insanity than any other teaching in history, and is linked to the other mistruths such as Original Sin and the Last Judgment, that have similarly caused such unnecessary consternation.

Strange as it may seem, true spirituality and sexuality are always inseparably related. It is impossible to evolve into higher consciousness without a true understanding and practice of authentic sexuality. For example, extra-sensory perception, intuition and creativity cannot function in individuals who are sexually inhibited. Unconsciously recognizing this fact, churches have for ages attempted to control and regulate the sexuality of their members.

What Christianity (the orthodox version) failed to understand is that love, not procreation, is the purpose of sex and that the production of offspring is incidental to love. Only animals use sex solely for procreation purposes. It is exclusively humans that experience the psycho-emotional pleasures and ecstasies of the sex act. By insisting procreation is the only valid purpose of the sex act, under the penalty of sin and Hell, Catholicism lowers man to the level of animals. This has caused untold numbers of men and women to experience guilt in their sexual contacts that were directed solely at bringing pleasure to each other, as an expression of love and intimacy.

All expressions of love are essentially sexual expressions. Sexual energy is not limited to the physical act of sex alone. The energy of sex is sublimated as creative energy at any and every level you find yourself in the universe. Energy travels between positive and negative poles. Indeed, every ascent of consciousness is, in this sense, a sexual
process. Sex and love are a fusion, a coming together of thought and feeling and body, the synthesis of masculine and feminine, and this is the essence of creativity. So any creative act is a sexual act - from the writing of a book to baking a cake, from designing a bridge to painting a picture, from a love affair to playing a musical instrument, from a discovery or invention to raising a beautiful family.

When all creative acts are interpreted as sexual, sex is no longer expressed at the expense of someone else but may uplift and illumine all concerned. Sex, then, is not necessarily limited to ‘genitals,’ despite appearances that we are living in a genital-oriented culture, but all creativity is essentially sexual expression at its highest level.

It is important to realize that as a human being you are sexual, and that your sexual activity, in whatever manner you find satisfying, is normal and natural for you. Sexual denials, shame, embarrassment, inhibition and guilt concerning your own body organs and various sexual acts probably causes the majority of stress and resulting problems. Fulfillment of the sex drive and sublimation of it through creative pursuits of all kinds, accompanied by self-knowledge, may then lead to uninhibited happiness and ecstatic satisfaction.

The mind’s eye

When you get a picture in your mind’s eye, like for example a green camel (there, you pictured it, didn’t you!), it may seem quite ethereal and lacking substance, drowned out by your normal perception. But this inner universe is just as ‘actual’ as the physical world we live in, it is the substance of the mind, and understanding how the imagination works explains a lot about our psychological functioning.

There’s a simple exercise you can do to demonstrate this mechanism of mind. Create an object in your mind, say a red sports car. Move it around, open the doors and sit inside it. Note that the more that you consider it to be in its own time stream, it persists. Think about something else, then go back to the car - it’s still there.

Now go back to the time - just be at the same causative point - when you first created that car in your mind and put it there again, just as before. You’ll find the car disappears - poof! Re-create the same time, space, form and event and things disappear, like they never were. (While you’re at it, disappear the green camel too!).

This alternative universe of your own may seem intangible, but if you were in a flotation tank, with external senses nulled, the mind’s creations would seem far more tangible, indeed as real as the physical universe, just as dreams seem completely real when you are immersed in them. Indeed, our physical reality may be considered a shared dream from which we have not yet awoken, but as inevitably as we awaken from sleep, we will awaken at the end of our life cycle, if not to some extent before - in the same way as we may sometimes become lucid in our dreams.
What is the significance of this? Our thoughts, decisions, intentions and so on are tangible in our mental environment and once created they persist unless viewed again exactly as is their true nature. If they are suppressed, for example because they conflict with other information or decisions that we have a vested interest in holding on to - because of needs and corresponding fears - this conflict continues, and although subconscious it holds some of our available attention.

You can try making an intention and then re-create it so it blows away. Or make a counter-intention - one that goes against the first - and notice that then they both persist. We all have a multitude of these intentions and counter-intentions, that layer and form structures. We may be happy enough, successful in life and healthy, but our true potential for awareness is limited by this smoke-screen of suppressed frustration - our self-knowledge is obscured by attachments to many conflicting views - and we may only vaguely realize this is going on.

Transpersonal consciousness

Each of us is 100% responsible for our subjective reality, i.e. our private mental and emotional space, our own universe. This includes our interpretations of events, based on our beliefs and memories, attachments and fears, and our corresponding emotional reactions.

The corollary is that we are certainly not at all responsible for another person’s subjective reality, i.e. their thoughts and feelings. And another person (or situations and events) cannot be at all responsible for our own thoughts and feelings.

This runs counter to our cultural programming, in which we are taught to blame others or situations for our upsets, not recognizing that we create our own beliefs, interpretations and emotional reactions. It’s built into common phrases, such as ‘He made me angry.’ By not realizing that we create our own emotions, we instead identify with them and feel we actually are them. We say, ‘I am angry.’

With identification there is no distance from which to view. Only by becoming the witness to our feelings can we adopt the responsible viewpoint, from which we can then release the emotion, to let it go when it no longer serves. Then you can change your mind - beliefs and decisions can be changed in an instant when you’ve released the emotional charge attached to them. This new understanding is well proven as the basis of successful modern psychological practice and therapy and applied in personal development.

Less identification leads us to gradually acquire a more spiritual viewpoint of our mind, emotions and body. We can be more stably happy, with less stress and conflict and with
a certainty of our own identity. We have started on our spiritual path and now we encounter a new hurdle...

An even greater jump in consciousness is required to encompass the transpersonal spiritual viewpoint in which we are no longer solely identified with our individual personality. It’s the ascension of one’s awareness above the customary limited human consciousness - and requires an open-mindedness to one’s part in the causation of the objective reality, the world around us.

This is the spiritual viewpoint of life in which one is at the same time both an individual living a life in this objective reality, and also one with God, the creator of this objective reality. As God, the Prime Creator, one is therefore 100% responsible for creation.

Fully grasping this, it then follows that each of us is 100% responsible for the objective reality - what we perceive and experience as the physical world. Everything in our reality is created by our own beliefs - and so our subjective reality in this way transfers into our objective world experience.

This is definitely the bird’s-eye-view of reality, rather than the one we generally have when involved in the game of life. You don’t think about unconditional love when playing football - you are concerned about how to win! But one needs to understand the ascended viewpoint, this spiritual or God-like aspect of our nature, as the two levels of consciousness interact. There’s a kind of magic that goes on here, where the world mirrors our inner view of the world and ourselves. People enlightened to this viewpoint have long found that life situations mirror the subjective issues that they are dealing with in their personal growth, and when these issues are cleared-up, situations ‘magically’ change.

Each of us, through God, creates our reality according to our beliefs. We are God’s contact and intermediary with the world; or if you like, a channel for expression of the universal mind. So nothing can be in your reality unless you create it. From this point of view, there are no accidents, and nothing happens by chance. Everything happens for a reason.

This can be hard to swallow as it is quite the opposite to the beliefs we are taught in our culture and especially by the Church. Normally all of this operates automatically and sub-consciously, but it is possible to awaken to our true power, to remember our higher nature, and to start to consciously influence our world. Since we create all, the dialectic qualities of good/bad, right/wrong and beautiful/ugly have little meaning.
It is only from this viewpoint, actually, that the non-judgmental qualities Jesus taught of acceptance, forgiveness and unconditional love can become a practical way of life. Emotional frustration, which drives less-than-conscious behavior - is caused by resistance. Resistance is feeling something is not OK the way it is (or was or will be). It is judgmental and taking sides, rather than understanding with compassion. Truth is always seeing things with love, as being an inseparable part of one’s higher consciousness.

**Finding the inner self**

All spiritual roads lead to that uncomfortable destination where the examination and acceptance of the inner self must take place. The first step is to realize our judgments and fears are self-created and limit our scope to deal with the present. They are the surface manifestations that capture our attention and keep us from focusing on the real blocks, deep in our psyche - the unconscious patterns.

So well have they been hidden, covered by justifications and illusory beliefs, that few have had the strength to break through them. They are the backbone of duality - the rigid ‘black and white’ thinking that makes understanding of holistic truth impossible. But we are oblivious to this situation because we have protective shields - we hold on to the past or hide in the future. We have consuming interests, worries about our status or our possessions. Such shields are both a great help and a great hindrance to us. They pacify us and at the same time fool us, giving us a false sense of security.

Wholeness, or being totally in the present, is dependant on breaking the patterns, of erasing their duality; only then can new states of consciousness become possible. It’s been known since ancient times in Eastern religions and philosophies and among some Western mystics, that one’s resistance to the events and forces of life lead to one’s imprisonment in a smaller viewpoint, an isolation from perception, participation and enjoyment of life.

It’s only when a person considers that he can’t safely experience something that he puts force out to stop it. That wouldn’t be so bad, but as time goes by, he forgets what exactly he was trying to avoid and begins to generalize it. Eventually this resistance is occurring on an undifferentiated basis, and his intentions form blocks against much of the life and flows of energy of others around him. He has locked himself into a cocoon of his own making.

Nearly all of Man’s thoughts, ideas, emotions, aspirations, words and moods are triggered by external influences. These trigger him automatically according to his previous conditioning, upbringing, education and experiences, and his innate human nature, instincts and drives. Creative work, the application of free will, is only possible if vision is unhindered by pre-conceived fixed ideas or reverence to singular ideologies.
Consensus trance is a difficult state. Too much of our essence, our deep feelings, desires and talent, was invalidated and twisted in the course of conditioning us to conform to the consensus of what is the accepted ‘normal’ - so the state is full of tensions and strains. In addition, the face a person chooses to present to the world, associated with restraint, politeness and compliance, is covering up the secondary layer of grotesque, dangerous and irrational impulses, fears and fantasies, the nightmare world of the Freudian unconscious - a second area of conflict with the essence. The strain is relieved by defense mechanisms to allow us, and the culture as a whole, to function smoothly. Yet the cost to the individual is very high. And often the tension and strain breaks through with highly inappropriate behavior, where this system breaks down and conflicts with reality. We have created and we maintain a world of stupidity and horrors.

Gurdjieff argued that we act far too much along patterns of fixed habit. We may think we are acting freely, consciously and intelligently, but much of the time we ‘run on automatic,’ not actually choosing our responses. In many respects we live as in a dream. Our concerns for what might or might not happen color our perceptions of the world, often leading us to see things very differently from how they really are.

To be truly awake in Gurdjieff’s sense, to be able to use all your abilities and intelligence to realistically assess situations you are in and act as purposefully as possible in the light of your genuine, unique values, requires that you do not become caught in any identity state, particularly one that interferes with your perception of reality. The solution requires a systematic self-discovery of identity states, how they inter-relate and how they are reactivated by the environment, so that bit by bit an aspect of consciousness is created that does not become identified with the particular contents of consciousness at any given time, and can see objectively what is going on. This true ‘I’ stays more and more in present time and objective, it has more and more integrity and empathy, and gradually full awakening can occur.

Empirically, your Higher Self exists. Its is the essential you - who you really are, and what you at root want - over and above the expectations and behavior patterns of the Ego-mind, forced on you by others or copied gladly by imitation. It underlies all your thoughts and words, all your emotions and actions. If you act in accord with your Higher Self, you will be self-accepting and at peace. But if you deny your Higher Self, if you lead not your own life but somebody else’s, you will suffer emotional distress. At the least you will be likely to be lonely, for no one is relating to the real you. You may often be bored, since you are not really interested in what you are doing.

The ‘spiritual’ nature of man is his awareness and manifestation of higher values: beauty, truth, love, compassion - the quality of LIFE. What does expressing your higher, spiritual Being mean in terms of actual behavior? Here are eight beginnings that Abraham Maslow has set forth:
• Devote yourself to experiencing one moment. Become totally absorbed in it, the way a child would. At such moments of intense concentration, the Self is actualized.

• Think of life as a presenting a continuous opportunity for creative choice, for deciding to progress rather than regress; to try new approaches instead of falling back on habit; to face up to reality and not retreat in fear.

• Listen to the ‘impulse voices’ inside yourself. Look within your Self for your tastes and decisions. Concentrate instead on how you actually feel about something, not how you think you are expected to feel.

• When in doubt, be honest rather than not. Most of us opt for diplomacy and discretion, rather than for honesty, when we’re in doubt about what to say. But if you are honest, you are looking to your Self for answers, and you are taking responsibility for what you find in yourself.

• Be courageous. Dare to be different. Risk making unpopular statements if they reflect what you feel.

• Find out what you really want to do, and work hard to do it well.

• Leave yourself open to peak experiences, those little moments of ecstasy, for they are fleeting moments of self-actualization.

• Identify your defensive behavior patterns and find the courage to give them up. This is painful but necessary, for repressing a problem won’t solve it.

Transformation occurs when existing solutions, assumed truths and past decisions are exposed as unrealistic or unnecessarily self-limiting. This new insight allows you to view your life from a more appropriate and empowering perspective.

Maslow believed that people are not merely controlled by their circumstances nor by their unconscious instinctual impulses. He preferred to focus on our potential for creativity, believing that humans strive to express their capabilities fully, that they need this expression, and that fulfilling this creative need is the basis for happiness.

Whatever our astrological sign, our cultural conditioning, our numerological disposition, our parents’ genes, our situation and circumstances, our education or lack of it... we may consider these as limitations, or we may be more open-minded. The truth is that these factors really don’t matter if we have a vision that inspires us enough and provides the energy we need to overcome any obstacles, so we can manifest our creation in the world we share.

For a vision or dream to be inspiring and energizing, it needs to be what we really want. Not something designed to please others or to fulfill their expectations.
The incredible thing here is that what we actually want, what is true to our highest aspirations, what is an expression of the true nature of our consciousness, is always an expression of unconditional love.

That is our highest, spiritual nature - the wonderful aspect that we each have as a human being. Yes, every single one of us, even our dotty neighbor and especially our rebellious child. And it is the challenge we each have, to rediscover and express our true self in this life. Only then will we die content.

**Our essential nature**

I have tremendous respect for those of you who are working to understand the true principles of the way life works and to implement them in your lives. I believe this process crosses all ethnic and religious barriers - what is true is true for Muslims, Christians and followers of all religions, and for people of all colors and races. For men and for women.

But what is true is not so just because I say it is, or because your teachers or leaders say it is; it is true only if and when you find that understanding within your own heart, and when it proves out in your daily life to enhance your awareness, your communication and your empathy with those around you. The best guideline is always the same; it is Love. The most fundamental truth, upon which all else is built, is simple: God is love, and God is within you. All religions, at their core, say this.

So what is Love? Love, as I see it, is unconditional acceptance. That quality is also our essential nature, who we really are. It is love of parents for child; also the non-possessive love of partners; also the caring love for all people that enables forgiveness. It is not the emotional lust of being ‘in love’ though that may well be in alignment with true love - or unaligned, as in jealousy. It’s above energy, though it may be expressed energetically; it’s Spirit itself, the nature of God, the quality we share with God; and it is the binding force of the Universe, necessary for all Creation.

The meaning of spirituality, to me, is not about the paranormal... It is the beauty of life that makes one forget the self and feel a sense of oneness. It’s perceived in the aesthetics of music, architecture, paintings and nature. Empathic literature. It’s felt when one perceives a person at their core: the vulnerability of the human heart laid open. It’s the honest and true essence of a person, their creative and ethical source-point. Our highest purpose in life is to realize and actualize this essential, Higher Self and then to go even beyond, to perceive its connection with all Spirit.
**Inner guidance**

On our path, we need our rationality and intelligence, but also our intuition and emotional intelligence in equal measure. We need to be aware of the guidance that our intuition provides, as expressed in our inner feelings and ideas emerging from the subconscious...

- Sometimes it’s the base instincts calling us, the drives to procreate or to destroy an enemy.
- Or messages for survival, which may be reactive emotions based on fear: the fight or flight response is necessary in certain situations but still, it is animal intuition.
- Our further fundamental needs make themselves felt: for belonging, for control of our lives and our curiosity for knowledge.
- There is the emergence of creative insight as a result of the workings of the mind that continue below the surface of consciousness, making connections and perceiving relations.
- And there is the knowing of the Higher Self, which encourages empathic and truthful communication toward understanding - the constituents of Love.

Discernment and mindfulness, then, are our allies on the spiritual path. We can recognize which are base instincts, reactive emotions, fundamental needs, creative insights, and the inner guidance of Spirit.

We need to be very much in touch with our heart, with our feelings, but still to remain intelligent about it - to remain in control, not driven by our emotions. We need a balance of left and right brain - rational mind and emotional mind, logic and feelings, intellect and intuition. This is where mindfulness and wisdom is found.

We tend to be too cut off from our feelings, in order to suppress painful ones - and this becomes a habit. Academic education reinforces this imbalance. And then we lose a lot of our creative and intuitionial ability. At the same time, however, when those emotions ‘escape’ we tend to be driven by them, and think and act impulsively, without wisdom.

You see this often with kids who act without thinking first, can’t wait their turn in line or in a game, blurt out answers in class, speak when they’re supposed to be quiet, maybe show aggressive behaviors, are often a little too loud, sometimes fight, and so on... they often get labeled with ADD. They impulsively say the wrong thing at the wrong time and then think, ‘Why did I say that?’ The other kids are asking, ‘Who is this guy?’ and often begin to avoid him. Impulsive people are not learning from past
mistakes, and they’re not listening. They haven’t picked up on those subtle social cues that everybody else has learned, and so they’re socially awkward and often don’t know why. And this applies to adults too of course.

Korzybski said that most people are to some degree impulsive, therefore there is a compulsion to act or break out in speech and this limits their intelligence. His advice - when you feel this coming on - is to stop for a count of ten to let your much slower cortex (thinking brain) catch up with the emotional limbic system, before you act or speak. He went on to say that many people have an under-aroused cortex and an over-aroused limbic system: they guess rather than work out the solution to a problem, or when they are making a decision they don’t work through a list of alternatives. A person in that state seeks immediate closure and cannot reject an immediate reward (immediate gratification) for a larger reward in the future, because he or she is acting impulsively - not being conscious of their choices. Acting in a more considered and intelligent way, on the other hand, will be much more true to the person’s real needs and purposes, and therefore to their heart.

Mindfulness has to do with the ability to accept, in a non-evaluative and nonjudgmental fashion, both oneself and the current situation - and how one feels about it. Acceptance of reality is not necessarily approval of reality; it is simply not being blind to it, not resisting nor distorting it. Then we can see the truth.

Fixed beliefs are always a limitation and unnecessary - they cause all the types of harm that occurs in the world, especially when they are rigidly identified with or attached to, so that one cannot tolerate another having different beliefs or it is felt to be a threat if they do. Provisional beliefs are necessary, as one needs to make a map of the world, but they must always be open to revision. Be open to the opinions of another that provoke a new view of things, or that seem to conflict with what you already know. It makes it easier to see the middle path, the shades of grey between the black and white of opposing viewpoints.

So, if you feel an impulsive reaction coming on - and you feel you are being driven rather than being the driver - then take a pause, breathe deeply for several seconds and look at your options, the pros and cons - BEFORE you say or do something that isn’t really congruent with your inner truth.

Intuition is not subjective truth or inner knowing if it is based on a reactive emotional response, whether a painful feeling or even a good one. How do you know if it’s reaction or a fast input? Heart intelligence is about understanding emotions, not just accepting that whatever raises your heartbeat must be the way to go. Emotions always follow an interpretation. Reality testing is necessary, to see if there’s more to it and you
need to look deeper, or if it’s an answer but in the wrong direction perhaps with thought distortions, or if it’s somebody else’s subjective truth rather than your own.

For most people, their mind moves rapidly from one thought to another, like a playful kitten, in constant motion. Learning mindfulness involves bringing the mind back to some detail of the present moment, acknowledging it, and accepting it. So ground yourself in the present and let your mind become still, by noticing everything you are perceiving, through all your senses. Practicing this regularly - in times of meditation and in times of stress - can help you keep your focus more and more in the present moment.

**Educating the will**

Will is the impelling factor, the directive intention, by which we get things done in life. It is the primary expression of our state of being, the source of our initiatives. The quality of the manifestation of our will is determined by our understanding - the “why?” and the “how?” - of the world around us.

Our will is manifested through the choices we make. Choice, therefore, is the pivotal factor in a self-controlled destiny. Choice begins from the moment we separate from the consciousness of our parents - choice of what we will do, wear, eat and feel begins from the moment we awaken each day. It is only through choice that we discover what works and what does not, and in this way we learn by experience.

When choice is consciously made, experience becomes Self-created. When we live without consciousness, our actions simply reflect our conditioned patterns of thought (habits, fixed ideas and accepted beliefs) or other people’s instructions, and we are no longer in charge of our own life experience.

Decisiveness is a great help to practical success as well as to strength and clarity of mind. For example, a distinguished man was asked to what he attributed his phenomenal success in life. His top recommendation was to make a list early each morning of the things that he wanted to do during the day. He said that with the aid of this practice he was able to do much more; not because he worked harder but because he had ceased to waste time in idle speculation as to what he should do next, and whether he should do it now or leave it to later or the next day. He discovered that these troublesome questions had the power to sap his strength and resolution, such that he got much less done before.

Wishing and willing are quite different things. Suppose I consider whether I will or will not pick up my pen. I cannot wish in this matter - I must decide either to pick it up or leave it where it is. Wishing is an acknowledgement of inability, a dependence upon
external events. Willing is the use of your own power. The person who has educated his will does not grumble about the things fortune brings to him through no apparent action of his own, but is content to make the fullest possible use of the opportunities that do prevail. He or she does not dwell again and again on the same thought or argument. If something does require to be thought over, it is brought forward and all the facts bearing upon it are considered, so that a clear conclusion is derived; and then the matter is dismissed from the mind.

The great Indian sage Sri Ramana Maharshi stated: “An average man’s mind is filled with countless thoughts, and therefore each individual one is extremely weak. When, instead of these many useless thoughts, there appears only one, it is a power in itself and has a wide influence.”

We know that many great scientists and inventors ascribed their unique discoveries to their ability for strong, focused, thinking. This was the case with Isaac Newton, Thomas Edison, Louis Pasteur and many others, who were conscious of and able to apply their extraordinary powers of concentration to exclude all else but the object of their investigations.

**The heart’s desire**

We are each a complex system of ways of being, attachments, habitual behaviors, and decisions we have made. If there is a conflict between what one part of us wants and what another part wants, we pull against ourselves in opposite directions. It is a structural conflict. This is why the long-term use of will power alone leads to failure. When we stop applying will power to override other parts of us, we naturally go back to the way we were. If you want one thing and at the same time you equally want another that is in conflict with the first, you will end up at square one.

For example, you may be trying to lose weight, so you determine not to eat the foods you have come to like best. You may feel you need to exercise more and so you force yourself to go to the gym, when you’d rather watch TV. You are using will power so that one desire wins over an opposing desire, to suppress the part of you that wants something different.

If you stop applying force and restraints on yourself, you naturally revert back to your original behavior - your goal to lose weight and get fit unfortunately fails. It’s like an elastic band: it’s stretched by willpower but then pulls back at the first opportunity. The use of will power alone - and positive thinking, affirmations, etc - in the context of structural conflict is why so many people fail to achieve their goals and life carries on the same.
Will power is essential to push through obstacles, but it isn’t the first priority - it doesn’t change who we are! If we want to achieve something, we first need to become the kind of person who has that in their life. We need to recognize and release the conflicting feelings and beliefs and ways of being that drive us in an opposing direction. When we remain with our true desire, we just naturally begin to achieve.

Often times there are many limiting beliefs, internal conflicts, destructive programming, etc. to sift through in order to change the structure of who we are (not just our behavior). However, the final result is always worth the effort. The final result reveals us at our purest and most beautiful level.

We adopt identities aligned with the goals we make for our life, the things we want to create and achieve. Some of these goals are original and personal, e.g. to help people through healing or to be a performer or inventor. Others we inherit from our cultural upbringing, e.g. the judgment of success as riches, the fashions of what beauty consists of. Some we bring from the unfinished business of childhood, e.g. to avoid the repetition of what was painful as a child, or to get vengeance. Some are basic human needs, for safety and survival, belonging and acceptance, self-expression, freedom and control of our lives, knowledge and self-realization. Goals may carry over from past lives, and we may have brought special purposes and talents with us into this life. Still more are part of the genetic, archetypal, mythological and informational collective consciousness of humankind, in which we are affected by each other’s thoughts and drives and the collective memories of the past. And then there are astrological and numerological influences. Much of this is blindly followed if we do not live with full consciousness. These goals and influences may be mutually reinforcing or conflicting.

A goal may start as one thing but as irresolvable barriers occur, the goal shifts to a compromised form, what seems to be a safer and more workable solution. For example, we may originate the goal to be an inventor but not being able to obtain the funding we may accept a more run of the mill career as a scientist. This cycle continues, perhaps over lifetimes, and passes through a reversal, so that one ends up with an identity, with respect to a particular original goal, which opposes that which originated the cycle. We may end up defending our interests by opposing innovators in our field of work. The original goal still remains active deep inside however. This causes confusion, indecision, stress and unease, and a sense of not knowing whom one is, what one really wants.

These kinds of goal conflict structures are at the root of our being, though they are normally largely unconscious, only part of the structure being apparent at any one time. The rest is suppressed but still active behind the scenes, affecting our feelings and
behavior profoundly. Normally this sort of structure only becomes unstuck if there is a surprising major success or failure that serves to end the cycle. For most of us, we’re stuck with them for life.

Similar structures work within cultures, civilizations and humanity as a whole. We have group goals that become compromised to the extent that we end up pointing in the opposite direction - look what we do to the environment or to our babies with vaccines. Great teachings become distorted through myth and eventually our understanding is the opposite of truth - look at how Jesus’ teachings were turned into the Inquisition. Ancient cultures practiced the sacrifice of the ego for achieving enlightenment; this was distorted over time until the Aztecs sacrificed bodies in their millions in their religious quest.

However we can rebuild the structures of our life. We can make every effort to recognize our feelings and to see where they come from, the roots of our identity. To drop the safe solutions of the past that our ways of being represent, to confront our fears and expand our boundaries. To find out whom we really are.

**Finding out who you are**

No doubt some times you have felt inspired to act - to make or say or do something. There is an extraordinary rush of energy and clarity that accompanies this. You feel excited, can’t wait to begin and everything seems possible. But putting the vision into effect can be a sobering process. Spirit meets the resistance of materiality and the vision fades. We may fall back into habitual, limiting thought and behavior patterns and the new perspective becomes obscured. But if we can hold on to the spiritual connection and integrate it with the mental, emotional and behavioral aspects of our self, we can ‘make things happen’ and experience our creative potential.

As we get to know and trust our inner intuitive awareness, this produces a clarity of thought which illuminates the areas where we have created blocks - it throws light on patterns of thought and behavior which are now seen as inappropriate. It becomes easier to make decisions and act spontaneously.

On the other hand, if we lose touch with the creative source that is our inner being, we identify with negative thoughts, emotions and behavior patterns. We can’t see them for what they are because we are being them. So at the other end of the spectrum we see self-conscious people with low self-esteem, hiding, either in frantic activity or in withdrawal. Imagine yourself in the following situations:

You are at a party and you don’t know anyone except for the host. You have returned an article of clothing that has split along the seam. The shop assistant tells you they have a ‘no returns’ policy. Your doctor is evasive about answering your questions properly.
In each case, what would you do? How would you feel? What would you be thinking (underlying your emotions)? And what would be your true desire in that situation?

When our true desires inform our thinking and our feelings then we are being true to ourselves and this enhances self-esteem. When our true desires are submerged by distorted thinking and painful emotions then the resulting behavior is in conflict and our self-esteem lowers.

Try to set aside some time, each day, to fulfill solely your own needs and for your own personal enjoyment. This may include doing this course or it may be with other people, but it is for you. The willingness to be self-nurturing plays a vital part in the development of your way of being. As you start looking at your own needs and stop playing the victim of other people’s demands you will be treated with more respect because you will gain more self respect.

You are ‘going inside yourself’ and this requires that you break your identification with worldly links - you are going beyond your thoughts, feelings and desires. You will have found that the mind keeps on chattering and trying to stop it doesn’t work, you have to become a detached observer of it, and then it starts to fade away. What you resist persists.

When we are truly being ourselves, without the barrier of mind chatter and negative emotions, it is easier to make direct connection between you, the spiritual being, and the world around you. This is an aesthetic experience, one of truth. Have you ever become totally absorbed by a project, a picture, a piece of music, a landscape? The mind becomes concentrated and still and you feel ‘at one’.

A shift in awareness - an awakening - can be triggered by such things as a dream, a memory, an evocative smell, falling in love, being afraid. It is only necessary for our defenses to be down (which means we are holding no preconceived ideas) in order that we can experience something more intensely, as if for the first time, in a new moment. Can you recall such an experience of connecting, and the feeling of it?

To experience connection rather than separation, we need to break all attachments with our thoughts and desires and so learn to suspend our judgment. It is possible to connect and experience your spiritual self at any time, whatever you are doing. With Gurdjieff’s technique of ‘self remembering’ we adopt the role of witness as we go about our everyday lives. The witness observes all your doings but is non-evaluative; it does not judge your actions (remember, you are not your actions). For example, you might eat a chocolate cake and then get annoyed with yourself for having eaten it. The witness (if and when it arrives) would note: ‘He is eating a cake; he is annoyed at himself for doing so’. The witness is dispassionate and does not care what you do, think and feel but simply notes it.

Of course, like stopping thoughts, this is easier said than done. You might be driving down the street and the witness notes that; you feel content and that is noted; then someone cuts right in front of you causing you to slam on the brakes. You forget about
witnessing and immediately identify with your emotions of anger or frustration. Only much later do you remember that you were attempting to witness! But with practice you find it is possible to ‘wake up’ in the middle of a drama and observe a part of yourself hooked by an emotion; to that degree you have then learned that you are not your emotions, you have differentiated your real self, the spiritual being that has intrinsic worth and cannot be judged in the same way that the inappropriate or self-defeating emotions and behaviors may be. And because you stop judging your self, you notice that the same applies to others, so you can cease judging them too.

You notice that as you dramatize various thoughts, emotions and behaviors it is as though you were different people at the time, other little personalities that come and go as appropriate, but usually reactively, according to patterns of behavior rather than consciously.

How many ‘yous’ are there inside you? Very many. By lunch time today you may have been thoughtful, serious, annoyed, lustful, tired, forgetful, and have had many fleeting intentions and purposes toward others or ideas about what you want or don’t want. You may have been acting like some person you admire or not like another who don’t want to be associated with. And many, many other ways of being. Each ‘sub-personality’ is all-consuming while it lasts, and some of these sub-personalities may play a major role in your make-up. Who you think you are may even actually be a sub-personality and not the real essence of you.

Gurdjieff points out that sometimes one ‘you’ does something for which every other ‘you’ must pay, maybe for the rest of your life. Our ‘yous’ are numerous and ephemeral and all are evaluative and judgmental, and have plenty of irrational thoughts and beliefs, harmful intentions and painful emotions attached to them. Each is actually a solution to past problems that is retained and replayed in the present. To break this ceaseless train of identifications with the technique of self remembering is to give ourselves some inner freedom.

The more you use this technique the more powerful it becomes. Each ‘you’ is a reflection of a link with a desire, feeling or thought - these are our links with the material world. By taking on the role of witness we can objectify these ‘yous’ and so break our identification with them.

When we experience our spirituality we recognize our true place in the world and we know that we have our own vital role to play. This feeling of truly belonging creates a sense of worthiness that enhances our self-esteem.

A person should not underestimate themselves. An individual person is like a flower, and other people are each flowers too, they’re different flowers but in the garden of life we are each of us incredible, beautiful flowers or human beings, who have their own value. There’s something to remember:
There’s no beauty that you could perceive or create if it were not already within you.

This has a lot of implications. The most wonderful thing in the world that you could think of... you are actually as wonderful yourself, otherwise you wouldn’t be able to perceive and understand that it was that wonderful. People are incredible - you are, and each person reading this, most definitely is incredible. There’s nothing you can’t achieve.

**Habits to observe**

How do you become conscious of your Self - that is, your true or spiritual self, rather than just your inner speech and the voices in your head replayed from the past? Direct conscious effort is necessary. You become more conscious just by asking yourself, ‘What am I conscious of right now?’ Also, ‘What feelings am I creating right now?’ These expose that our actions, and the emotions that drive them, actually relate to self-talk, largely compulsive thinking, often just below the level of consciousness. The talk and belief system of the particular identity we are adopting.

Just asking these questions will make you temporarily conscious, but probably you will not be able to keep it going, your mind will become absorbed in something else and you will forget yourself. You must realize during your self-observation that you are present, that you are here, in the present moment. As you persist in self-remembering, your moments of consciousness as Self will become increasingly longer and you will forget your Self increasingly less.

What do you observe? Begin by watching your actions, reactions, responses and behavior. Be like ‘another person’ looking at your human mind in operation. At first this will be very difficult to do but as you practice, it will become progressively easier and eventually stable.

Continue by observing your posture, listening to your speech, observing how much you talk, listening to the tone of your voice, i.e. the ‘way’ you say something. Observe how you automatically assume certain attitudes with some people, and different attitudes with others, i.e. how you (normally) unconsciously switch identities and play different roles with different people. Watch all of your emotions, observe your mind wandering aimlessly in pure fantasy. Observe how certain words by certain people trigger reactions in you that you (normally) cannot control. Watch your defense mechanisms, your justifications, your rationalizations, your pet superstitions, your favorite criticisms, and so forth. You are now starting to become conscious of your unconsciousness, and thereby bringing it into consciousness.

Normally people erroneously assume that they are constantly one and the same person. However, as you begin to observe yourself, you find this is not true. You assume many different ‘I’s and each ‘I’ manifests itself as a role that you play corresponding to one
set of conditions, i.e. you assume different roles with different people and in different circumstances. One role with your parents, another with your children, a loved one, at the corner store, at the theater, in sports, under stress, when threatened, when praised, when jilted, and so on. You seldom, if ever, notice these differences or how you pass from one role to another. The change of roles or ‘personality masks’ is always controlled by circumstances, rather than you self-determinedly choosing an appropriate way of being. It is the unconscioness or compulsion that we are trying to expose. Freely adopting appropriate ways of being, for example, to match the reality of the people you are with or the game you are playing, is a necessary social skill and all part of the fun and variety of life.

The illusion of ‘oneness’ or belief that you are always the same is created by always having the sensation of one physical body, the same name, the same physical habits and so forth; and also by the illusion that each identity is right. After all, you are always ‘right’, aren’t you? And the same rightness - your safe solution to the circumstances you are in - gives the illusion of the same identity.

By self-observation, you will catch yourself lying. Lying occurs when you pretend to know something when in actuality you do not. People pretend to possess all kinds of knowledge: about themselves, about God, about life and death, about the universe, about evolution, about politics, about sex, about everything. In fact, people do not even know who or what they are. Even when he or she has no choice and is controlled in life like ‘a reed in the wind’, a person will lie to himself that he is self-willed, knows himself and is in control of his destiny. You imagine these things to please yourself, and shortly after you begin to believe them.

As you self-observe, you find that you identify with everything - you emotionalize 24 hours a day. Some people take pride in their irritability, anger or worry. It is extremely difficult to perceive that you actually enjoy negative emotions. Books, movies, TV and popular songs glorify negative emotions such as anger, fear, guilt, boredom, disgust, irritation, hatred, jealousy, suspicion, self-pity, sympathy, depression, etc. Many people are controlled by the expression of negative emotions. But negative emotions are purely mechanical - done without awareness or consciousness - and serve no useful purpose whatsoever. For example, it is hard to be angry or fearful when you are conscious, as to be conscious you naturally assume your true state of being, which is loving, without judgmental qualification.

Negative emotions and all habits require ‘identification’ or they cease to exist. Thus when you cease to identify, by self-remembering, your habits will drop away - they have been exposed. You have differentiated yourself from them. Habits cannot be stopped by willpower, they can only be erased by self-knowledge.

Religious doctrines like the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule are therefore quite impossible for the normal human being to follow. Mechanical habits will always cause people to violate codes of law and moral rules. Only self-knowledge can direct
you to living the ‘right life’ and you will not need written rules, codes or commandments, you will function intuitively and spontaneously, naturally from Love. This is true freedom without license.

A major self-imposed problem is to identify with objects (including people) and in turn become ‘possessed’ by them. Since things wear out, decay and die, a person becomes bereaved whenever he loses the objects of his affection. This goes further, he begins to regard himself as a ‘thing’ that must eventually wear out, decay and die.

Identification with people occurs when you constantly worry what people will think about you, if you are liked or disliked, what someone else will do or say in a given situation, and so on. This can quickly become an obsession of worry, doubt, suspicion, blame, resentment and guilt feelings. Emotion of this sort is the main factor that keeps the spiritual being attached and unaware in a fixed identification with the human body-mind.

A primary cause of identification occurs when a harmful action is deliberately or accidentally committed, or a good deed omitted, and the resulting sympathy causes an identification with the victim. The compulsion to make self right, then causes a reversal of this, sometimes almost immediately, and the victim is made wrong, and the act is considered deserved. But the sympathy identification, though suppressed, continues to have effect subconsciously. One is then caught in an internal conflict of identification.

The only reason we humans are not at peace within ourselves is because we’ve gotten caught up in the erroneous belief that things must be ‘right or wrong.’ This creates judgment, which creates guilt. The usual human response to guilt is projection - putting it onto the other - in an attempt to get rid of the guilt. This, of course, doesn’t work, but it does start wars and keeps people from feeling peaceful. If we stop seeing things through the eyes of the right versus wrong comparison, we stop judging and stop trying to justify our negative feelings and actions. We stop wars and feel peace.

You should know that: no-one can effect you but your own thinking; it is your own mind that keeps you in bondage; no-one can ever make you angry but your own thoughts; all anguish is self-inflicted and self-imposed; no-one can make you worry but yourself.

It is impossible to do anything to you - the actual You - at any time; it is always your beliefs and decisions that affect you. Thus only you suffer from holding grudges, hatreds, resentments or revengefulness. No one has ever affected you but your own thoughts. No-one has caused you to be frightened, angry, hurt or happy but your own mind, because if you didn’t identify in your own mind with what was said or done to you, you would not have been affected in the least. This is one of the most difficult facets of existence to perceive, but once perceived, its worth becomes priceless. Understanding this is the way to ultimate freedom.

Go back over today’s events and relive as many experiences as you can remember. Take each memory separately and see that it was your own thinking that caused
you to feel hurt, happy, angry and so forth. Keep re-feeling the experience until you free everyone in the scene of responsibility for affecting you. Then reverse the process, and be sure that you yourself do not assume responsibility for another’s feelings because in like manner, it was their identification in their mind with what you said or did that affected them and not you.

The Gnosis or knowledge you release (for you always knew it) will not immediately make you more comfortable or secure. In fact, it is painful at times, because you will be aware of your false identities, your facades, your defense mechanisms, your silliness, your viciousness, and your primitive self, perhaps for the first time. But persist for you are recovering a genuine identity that no-one can take away from you. Your security and comfort will gradually be found in your change from a pseudo-self to a permanent harmonious Self that is objective and unlimited in scope. This is the way to higher consciousness and higher powers of mind.

The following three exercises (devised by Gerald O’Donnell of The Academy of Remote Viewing) will help you to become more self-aware and to live more consciously...

**Exercise 1**

This first exercise is a pleasurable and powerful life changing tool. The effects of daily stress associated with materialistic obsession (and its by-products: anxiety, isolation, frustration, fear, anger and depression) can be dissolved by this technique. It is at the same time simple and very profound. It is the smile-at-the world exercise. It increases greatly the vibratory rate of your non-physical Higher Self. Its premise is ‘smile at the world and the world will smile back at you.’

As you go about your daily activities, from the moment you get up in the morning up to the time that you go back to sleep, constantly imagine that you are smiling inwardly at your outer reality as you go about your daily activities. Imagine that you are smiling from the deeper recesses of your mind, originating from within your heart area, and that you are projecting that happiness and smile outward through your eyes and expression. No matter what the circumstances are.

You will find that your eyes will be constantly smiling and so will your mouth, that will often curl up to a slight smile. Keep focusing constantly on that act until it becomes automatic and second nature to you.

At the same time imagine that your heart constantly expresses a great inward smile filled with pure joy of being alive, no matter what. Notice how people will seek your presence and ‘Inner Love.’

After 2 weeks or so, you will notice an incredible amount of changes, not only in the way you interact with the ‘outside’ world, but also in how the ‘world’ acts and projects reality toward you. Your fears will begin to abate and an inner feeling of peace and love
will emerge. Fear will stop having a grip upon you. Done for regular periods of 3 weeks at a time this exercise alone can change anyone’s life dramatically at all levels.

**Exercise 2**

The second exercise is titled the ‘going in and out of movies’ exercise. All you need to do is to choose a good suspenseful motion picture and go watch it, preferably on a big screen.

First, allow yourself to get immersed in the captivating story. As you forget about your identity and start becoming ‘within’ the plot of the scene, suddenly withdraw your awareness from the big screen (you may for the first time want to look a bit around you in the dark in order to remember ‘who you are’) and become the observer of reality again. Slowly reconnect to the plot, but this time, allow yourself to remain with the awareness of being yourself watching, as a spectator (observer), the reality projected in the movie. Keep this dual awareness for a moment and then let go and plunge within the movie action, forgetting your real inner self again. And then repeat the exercise over and over.

Keep on doing this mental withdrawal and then plunging in again, until you get to know intimately the feeling of withdrawing from ‘reality’ (aware of inner self) and diving back in it (aware of outer reality). Easy isn’t it? However, this simple exercise is very powerful.

As you get the knack of it try the same system as you go about your daily life. Use the same ‘mental trick’ when engaged in your daily activities, especially the very ones that captivate you and are often associated with fear and stress. Soon, you will become aware at all times of being the ‘observer’ (inner self) observing the observed (reality and outer self) and become quite detached about it, enjoying your ‘movie’ in a much more relaxed and calm atmosphere.

**Exercise 3**

Set aside 5 minutes at first (keep increasing by 2-3 minutes every other day until you reach 20 minutes) and close your eyes. Turn your attention inward and, from being a ‘thinking’ human being, start viewing your thoughts as an independent observer in a detached remote manner, almost as if your thoughts were to be ‘things’ or a spectacle to watch. Watch the train of your thoughts and images, the succession of often unrelated thoughts that appear to you. Don’t analyze anything.

For the next part of the exercise learn, as in the ‘movies’ exercise above, to switch from the perception of being ‘in’ your thoughts to withdrawing from them and becoming the detached totally passive observer of them. Get the feeling for the mental shift that occurs when doing so. Go within the thoughts and then withdraw to a more detached level. After a while of repeating this exercise you will notice that your thoughts become more isolated and that your inner mind starts taking a break.
Now, here is the third part of the exercise. As you watch your train of thought (visions or just thoughts), pick up one particular thought that you find interesting and ‘plunge into it’ with full concentration. Remain focused on that thought to the exclusion of others for as long as possible. If other thoughts interfere, do not push them away, but watch them pass by as if they were foreign ‘things’ in your consciousness. At first you might only be able to do this for maybe 1 minute or less. Slowly increase it up to 7 minutes.

The last part of the exercise consists of deciding to blank your thoughts out. This is done by deciding to concentrate on perceptually dark nothingness. If a thought comes in, imagine throwing white light on it. Imagine that the light dissolves that thought and that the screen then goes back to nothingness. Try to maintain that state up to 5 minutes. Start with 1-2 minutes.

### Look in the mirror

It is a psychological truth that we often see in others what we don’t like about ourselves. When there is an aspect of ourselves that we find unacceptable it is human nature to hide it from ourselves, even to pretend the opposite, and instead project those feelings we have about ourselves onto others. It is easier to think that a friend is lazy than to accept we are lazy ourselves. We may even assume that another person is lazy even if there is no objective evidence for that.

If you have the belief that who you are is not good enough in some way then the likelihood is you will put it off onto others, thinking they are not good enough, or feeling smug and believing you are better or smarter than they are, instead of doing the inner work you need to do and taking responsibility for it being YOUR issue. When you are willing to take responsibility for your issues, and own them, then you have the power to change them. Owning them does not mean judging them. Healing requires release of judgment.

We have much more power, in a spiritual sense, then is usually recognized. For example, if in your mind and heart you resolve an upset with a family member, e.g. you find understanding and acceptance where before you had none, that will be ‘picked up’ by the other person and he or she will likely write or phone you, even if they hadn’t for years before. They respond differently to you, not because they have changed, but because you have changed your outgoing vibration that attracts your experiences.

And negative things, too, are mirrored in this way. If you feel resentful much of the time for the hardships you have faced in life, you are likely to attract more reasons to be resentful. And you will attract other people who are resentful themselves, perhaps toward you. And you will see people being resentful even when in fact they are not.

What you focus on, even subconsciously, you create. You didn’t make that person resentful, angry, argumentative or whatever, they are responsible for themselves, but
you did ‘pull them in’ to your space. Like attracts like. In this way, life acts as a mirror to what is going on inside you.

The issues you have in life are never about another person, in truth they are about yourself. Think of all the troublesome people in your life - the ones who make you miserable - and create a one-word description for each of them. It might include words like ‘mean’ for your friend who refuses to lend his CDs, or ‘confrontational’ for your antagonistic colleague at work. You may think of ‘demanding’ for your perfectionist squash partner and ‘humorless’ for that frowning assistant at the computer shop.

Once you have your list of negative characteristics, give consideration to the possibility that these traits may actually be your own qualities, which are denied and rejected. Those around us may serve as mirrors for what we won’t accept. Just think about the ways in which you may be mean, and are you sometimes too confrontational? Can you also be demanding and show a lack of humor?

You can use this information to help you see yourself more objectively, to bring to the surface issues that you have previously buried.

It’s important to recognize that the opposite is true as well, so repeat the above exercise with the people in your life whom you admire and create a list of your positive characteristics. People also reflect our positive aspects that we may not recognize or acknowledge in ourselves.

The beliefs and resulting feelings you have, whether conscious or suppressed and denied, map out the course of your life. This includes the relationships you find yourself attracting into your life. Can you look back at some of your most significant relationships and see patterns? Many times we attract the same type of person over and over again because of our unconscious need to work out past emotional issues. Each person serves as a mirror, a reflection of the energy we emit into the world.

To move forward we need to change the energy we put out so that we attract the people and circumstances that match our true goals, our true self, rather than the suppressed and unfinished business of childhood or the decisions we made as a result of painful past experiences. Placing blame on others only sets the stage for that situation to reappear until we acknowledge the life lesson and evolve as a person. Healing comes from taking responsibility and changing our perception of the event or person.

Until we become spiritually and emotionally (fully) conscious, we will attract conditions that feel familiar, even if they are destructive to ourselves. The key is to recognize the lessons that the situations of our life are mirroring to us, so we can become conscious of our hidden erroneous beliefs and feelings, primarily about ourselves, and then move forward from that stage. If we grow to genuinely love and value ourselves, that will be the energy we put out into the world and it will be reflected back accordingly.
Power is recognizing that you are the source of your life - that you create in your subjective reality (your beliefs) and this is mirrored in the physical world through the power of God, of which we are each a part. The vibration and energy of God’s power is Love. If our creation is not of love then it comes back and hits us in the face and from that we learn. That’s Karma.

There are times when we face a frustrating situation - perhaps a person is just not listening or getting the point, or events are proving hard to control, or there is some kind of conflict. This is a turning point in which we can go in two directions:

**Acceptance towards Light – Resistance towards Darkness**

We have a choice. This is also the test, of whether we are unburdening our Karma or increasing it.

We can confront the situation, accept the reality that exists and work to improve it in a proactive, conscious way - with enthusiasm applying communication, understanding and empathy, bringing light to ourselves and others. This is the path of gratitude, forgiveness and love.

Or we can resist the situation, refuse to accept the reality that exists and instead apply inappropriate fixed solutions in a reactive, unconscious way - with consequent negative emotions, on a slide into darkness through antagonism, anger, fear, grief and apathy. This is the path of ingratitude, resentment and hatred. We have the choice.

To be able to create with the vibration of unconditional love, we need to be clear in the area in our minds. If you attempt to manifest a belief that is not entirely congruent in your belief system, i.e. you have suppressed counter-beliefs and identities, then this can lead to a dissociation from reality - an upset with the world that it is not following one’s wishes. One can become confused as to what is mental and subjective, and what is objective physical reality.

Effective and soundly-based techniques are needed to obtain a truly congruent and clear mind from which to create ‘at source’ - connected and one with God. This is a tricky area as the concepts of creating reality are a high-level spiritual viewpoint and at odds with the way our culture has taught us to think. At source one simply ‘knows,’ whereas from a viewpoint within the game of life one ‘wishes’ or ‘wants’ or very often ‘needs’ and ‘fears.’

As a part of God one is responsible for all that is; as an individual person one is responsible simply for one’s self and for behaving in an ethical way that does not harm the freedoms and rights of others. One is also responsible for fulfilling one’s agreements and obligations - for this reason it is important to make these consciously so that one is happy to do one’s part.
So we are both a Games-Maker and a Games-Player and I feel it is important to recognize these complementary but differing aspects of our being - the spiritual Higher Self and the human being (physical body-mind personality) identified with and intimately involved with the game of life.

What we can best do is live more consciously. For example, when a person does something that harms others, whether deliberately or in error, he can either take responsibility or he can make himself right in the situation, rationalize to justify his action so that it wasn’t actually wrong but justified. Self right, the other wrong. It’s a human need ‘to be right’ but not a very aware one. This justification provides a motive for the action and is expressed most commonly as criticism of the one who was originally wronged. It is a ‘child’ viewpoint as opposed to a responsible ‘adult’ one.

Criticism and gossip is nearly always a projection of suppressed guilt or shame. Therefore it very often occurs that one is criticized and that criticism is not accurate. Maybe the criticism is too generalized, maybe it is partly true and partly false, or maybe completely wrong but rather it’s how the other person sees things through a fixed idea of their own (such as resulting from justifications of their own actions). But anyway, the criticism causes one to compulsively introspect and wonder - could that be true? Is there something to that? In doing so it may press a button, some insecurity or fear, and maybe re-stimulate a past painful experience that has similarities to the present situation or in which a similar criticism was made (maybe one that in different circumstances was accurate).

So, the criticism has pressed some buttons for you and these are indeed things you can learn from. But it is important not to identify with the criticism and you need to separate that from the actual facts of the matter, i.e. what is going on for this person, his or her actions, thoughts, feelings and further actions. And what is the right thing for you to say and do in response.

If you are clear within yourself about what is right, and you are not taking on board the other person’s projection as if it were your own, then you can relax and deal with it from a viewpoint of love and compassion - which is certainly not the same as to be soft or irrational. Heart and mind work together, they need each other, in order to get things done - the right things - effectively.

Often there are conflicts between people. Remember the conflict - for you - is only one if you make it so. The other has a different view from you. OK, maybe you can introduce him to a different view, maybe not. He may see it as a conflict but you don’t have to. As long as you do, probably he will too. So the goal is for you to have acceptance of his different point of view - not to agree with it necessarily but to grant it the right to exist. There’s room in the universe for all points of view.

If you don’t feel you can have compassion for the other, consider: what threat does he pose to you? Why do you feel a lack in that area? What need corresponds to that lack?
What belief underlies this and where does it come from? Can you change it to a better one?

Often we have to deal with frustration - all that love we’ve flowed and that’s built up like a big wall because it hasn’t been received. Relationships deteriorate when communication breaks down - when viewpoints are withheld because of fear about what the other will think. This is frustrating and the charge (which is always frustration of love not received) builds up and is suppressed, but is still there like a wall between you. Only realization that we create the wall can bring it down and only honest communication can restore the relationship.

Again we may feel an obligation to help another who has wounds to be healed. This is a belief that needs clearing, because it leads to a co-dependent relationship and that’s good for neither you nor the other. We need to be clear, that our feelings about the other person are not colored by our feelings about ourselves (projection). And also to discriminate between a loving empathy for the other person and his feelings (that are the result of his own frustrations and distorted beliefs) and sympathy, which is usually an identification with the other that is of no help to either person. The only person who can heal another is that person him/herself. We can be of assistance if that person wants and requests it, but that’s all, and if they don’t want that then that’s very much their right.

The suffering that is ingrained in our hearts and minds from earlier times is not actually a barrier to the resolution of our conflicting beliefs in the present. It’s only still felt now because it’s being continually recreated in the present, subconsciously (somehow it must represent a safe solution to us, a justification or explanation of our problems). When we finally learn the lessons of our past experience - now - and release the beliefs that are not really our own, that’s the end of ties to the past, because we will no longer be recreating that stuff. It’s conscious now and we don’t consciously create anything that’s bad for us.

**Creating your reality**

There is a confusion commonly in place between the spiritual being that creates its reality, and that part of the being’s mind that you can label the ‘Ego.’ From the spiritual plane, a being could simply not consider that the universe exists and it would have no reality for that being. But just by nature of having a viewpoint located here in the physical universe, identified with a body, the being has accepted the existence of the universe, as it is, including the parts of the universe unperceived from that located viewpoint.

The being’s mind has created the Ego, which is a personality, a face to the world, containing a system of beliefs and solutions to the problems of survival as a human being. That belief system has a map of the world that may only approximate to the reality, and be full of delusions. It is the colored glasses the person views the world through.
The reality is only an illusion (not a delusion) with respect to the Higher Self, that spiritual part of the person that remains in the spiritual plane while its viewpoint located in the physical universe is identified with a body, to experience the physical dimension and learn the lessons that offers.

I believe that the sound in the forest happens whether or not anyone perceives it. Is the clock ticking in the next room? I believe so, since when I go there the clock tells the predicted correct time. I think this is a common error new age philosophers make in failing to differentiate the spiritual and physical dimensions or planes of existence.

Similarly the aliens (and life forms on other planets) that may be living in this same physical plane would perceive the same universe as us - though it may look quite different through their eyes and other senses, it would be the same objectively. We haven’t found alien life forms yet because we don’t have the technology to look very far. But they are perceivable from the spiritual dimension and life pervades the universe. (Some would say there is physical evidence but it’s suppressed for political reasons.)

It is sometimes hard to reconcile the physical realities of life with the high-level spiritual truth that you create your own reality. I think we need to look at it this way. Life is a game, and games necessarily have these elements: freedoms (to choose and act), barriers (to define the field of play) and problems (challenges to overcome). The wholeness is broken up - we move from knowing to not knowing - in order to become whole again. There are three types of game that each of us plays here in our lives:

**Physical Game:**
Within the fixed boundaries of physics, a reality we share with everyone else, we can create by moving, building, touching, and so on. As far as the body is concerned, it’s a survival game, a playing field of eating, sex, emotion and effort. Here we need to illustrate and obtain agreement about changes we want to make, or we can expect to find opposition.

**Mental Game:**
We create our own reality in our minds through our interpretation of events, based on beliefs that we have learned through negative and positive learning experiences. Our world view is through this colored filter, that is different for each person. It may be under our control or reactive and irrational. We also may adopt many different identities, and accompanying filters, according to the various situations and relationships in our lives.

**Spiritual Game:**
We only occasionally awaken to this level, which is the viewpoint of pure will, determined by unlimited communication, understanding and empathy. This is what
we might call God’s love, of which we all are essentially an integral part. There are no physical barriers from this view, and the game is one of reconnecting with the benefit of shared experience. This is the source that is ultimately responsible for creation.

We play at all levels simultaneously, and they each have truths that appear to contradict but actually are complementary, when seen like this. In practice, the physical and spiritual are intertwined and so all the confusions occur. Our spirituality does have a profound influence on our physical experience, due the spiritual aspect of our make-up that is retained as human beings. It provides an inner knowing of truth, if we are open to it, through intuitive connection with our Higher Self. There is interconnection between all human beings as well, due to our common spirituality. We can also have a direct influence on the physical plane by creative intention on the part of the Higher Self, itself connected and part of the energetic force (that one can consider essentially an expression of Love) that creates the physical universe and other planes.

If we are all One, as we are told, why then do we have individual souls? The Oneness is one fundamental state of being that expresses itself through the countless viewpoints making up All That Is. Like the ocean and the drops within it. Without individual souls there would be no communication, understanding or empathy - which requires some separation. So it’s go apart, come together, experiencing, interacting.

The spirit, the Higher Self, remains exterior to the physical universe but attaches a remote, located viewpoint to the energy field of the human body, which works (intentions are passed) via the pineal gland and the right brain’s intuitive faculty, then interpreted by the left brain consciously. A connection is made soon after conception and the consciousness is identified more and more with the baby as it develops, so that after birth the experience is very much ‘in the body’ rather than that of the Higher Self with a remote viewpoint. There is previous and ongoing communication with the parents to determine the appropriateness of the family, and often there are arrangements for incarnation to continue ongoing relationships and learning paths.

Why does spirit attach to a body, why not a stone or a tree? Spirit can do that, and has and is doing so, but ‘high vibration’ spirit needs the flexibility of communication to express its qualities. Spirit learns and evolves to higher vibrations, though this can go backward or take eons.

What is the point of this? If the soul is eternal and the physical plane is only a temporary visit before we go home, then what use is this experience back in the soul plane?

It’s because the physical experience is unique, it’s not etheric and dreamlike, so we have to learn to play games within fixed boundaries, to deal with a body-mind and Ego, and so on. We create the reality from our spiritual level of consciousness but then at the same time as human beings we experience and play games within it, and any game
requires unknowns, the duality of the ‘other side.’ Our life here offers opportunities to experience and learn about emotions in a very physical way that is just not possible otherwise. It’s also the opportunity to be part of the whole creation. It’s God fully experiencing itself through playing the game of life. It’s a privilege, not a prison sentence. When we’re enlightened we realize this, and our vibration rises so that we don’t need this stage in our spiritual evolution anymore, then we can move on. Most people are far away from that but more are closer to it now than since a long time. In history there have been cycles of raised and lowered vibration.

Some feel the purity of spiritual realization requires us not to be ‘interested in the things of the world’ - that manifesting our desires is a low state of being. I feel this is mixed up, almost like a death wish, and it assumes all desires come from Ego attachment. We are spiritual beings, and we’re here for the physical experience, to enjoy and learn from the game of life in a world of dualities.

I feel that we are the creative expression of God in this world, we are part of God, through our Higher Selves. God creates through us. Yes, we can and should ask for guidance and help, and that comes from God through our Higher Selves. We (and our free will) are part of the process, not just at the receiving end.

Our life on Earth is about experiencing from the physical viewpoint; at the same time we give more meaning to our lives by recognizing we each have a spiritual viewpoint too, from which we create our reality 100% - but it’s best to differentiate the two so as not to be confused. Though in truth the two are not really separate but aspects of the one. It’s two sides of the same coin, both are true at once. When we are observing from within the physical world, through our eyes, a singular object remains there whether we or not our eyes are open. The quantum phenomena of particles only appearing when observed is related to creation from the spiritual viewpoint. The ‘zero point’ of the atom is spiritual in nature: a place where metaphysics and physics combine.

How then do we agree with others that we are observing the same matter, for example a cat, if we are creating our own separate illusion? Communication, observation and more communication. We live in the same world, we have a shared objective reality (it’s only an illusion from the spiritual viewpoint), but we see it through different colored glasses, due to our subconscious beliefs and fixed ideas. We each have different subjective realities that overlap with the objective reality (and other people’s subjective realities) to a greater or lesser degree. The path of growth is to make those beliefs conscious and reassess them, and to open our minds to new ideas based on observation in the present time and other people’s contributions to our map of reality. To take off the glasses. To live consciously rather than being automatons (a product of our conditioning and the safe solutions of our Egos).

**Learning from our experience**

Current events have demonstrated a tremendous desire, on the behalf of perhaps the majority of people in the world, for peace in their lives. They are no longer satisfied
with the mentality of political conflict, which endangers economic progress and human rights and freedoms. But most importantly, I feel that many people are now aware that if we want peace in the world, first we need to make peace with our own lives. It is human nature that needs to change, and we are capable of making such a transformation.

Our experience in the world reflects our inner state - yes, this is a kind of magic but that is the reality, the world is miraculous. I have seen so much evidence of this when I - or a student or client - have made a genuine shift in our belief system that resolves an inner conflict, then very soon our real-world circumstances change accordingly. We mirror our internal state - our resistance/fear and acceptance/love - in our personal life experience. As a group we mirror our consciousness in world events. It is our personal responsibility to become aware of our contribution to the group consciousness, to help create a world with more opportunities for ourselves and our loved ones - which ultimately means for everyone.

So what wars do we wage inside? The purposes and goals that we hold dearly - some we may have brought into this life or felt most strongly as a child or young person - are often compromised in the face of problems that we discover in trying to achieve them, and we may forget about them (actually suppress them) and opt for safer solutions. Playing the safe game is a sad conflict with the game we really (still) want to play. We have become someone else, a substitute for our true self. Reinforcing this position are the attachments we have come to cling on to, the fears we may have of losing control of our safe space, the resistance we feel against elements of change, and the judgments we make that prevent acceptance of what is.

To better our position, to be able to open up our space and express our true desires, we first need to come to terms with our situation. Our true nature is an expression of love and that is the quality that we need first to rediscover in our consciousness.

Before we can contribute, through our consciousness, toward peace in the world we need to make peace with ourselves. Before we can love others unconditionally we need to be able to genuinely love ourselves. Before we can forgive and cease making judgments of others we need to learn how to forgive ourselves and warmly accept ourselves just as we are.

If we can forgive ourselves then we can more easily forgive others. If we do not feel able to forgive others then we clearly have not learned to love ourselves. And the irony is, when we do truly love ourselves, we and others will not even need any forgiveness, because we are able to accept the past, present and future as it is, without judgment. Our creation. Discrimination - of good/bad, right/wrong, ugly/beautiful - is not part of the vocabulary of love.
Are we all born equal?

The short answer: yes, but not the same, not by a long chalk.

All persons have the same qualitative make-up; we are born equal in this respect, as recognized in the values of ‘Equality, Fraternity & Brotherhood.’ All human beings have the same reflexes, instincts, drives, needs, capacities, and rights; all have the same powers of perception, discrimination, attentiveness, retentiveness, reasoning, and so forth.

The differences between persons are quantitative rather than qualitative. ‘Equality’ is to do with our qualities, that we all share, but not the degree to which they are developed.

Behavioral psychology has installed the idea that we inherit all of our traits, and besides the modifying effects of cultural conditioning that we stay basically the same as our genetic hard-wiring dictates. That’s true if you don’t do anything about making positive change, if you don’t recognize the aspects of yourself that are more than animal. Recently many have recognized this possibility and they are looking for valid information that can help them make positive changes.

We each differ in the degree of our various spiritual, mental, emotional and physical abilities, and in the manner in which the amounts of the various traits combine in our individuality. A wide range of aptitude, personality, learning and intelligence tests will show differences as high as 25:1 from person to person, with a characteristic bell-shaped distribution curve, in much the same way as physical characteristics are varied.

It is these quantities, which are such an important factor in personal competence, creativity and ultimately our success in life, that personal development aims to increase. It is through our differences that we are able to express our individuality and achieve unique goals.

Fortunately it is possible to develop our skills, talents, maturity and intelligence to high degrees, using appropriate techniques. For example, there are effective mind development courses available to develop the faculties of vision, communication, concentration and will, learning and reading skills, logic, memory, intuition and creativity.

I feel that it is a mistake to belittle the differences between individuals due to a fear of being seen as judgmental or non-accepting of a person who has little of certain qualities. It is much better to be realistic (which is truly to be non-judgmental and accepting) and recognize the strength and weakness of our various qualities. Then we can take advantage of the opportunities that are available to develop and improve ourselves, toward the goal of fulfilling our potential.
**Freedom to change**

Implicit in any concept of learning is the notion of change. If we open our minds to discovering and learning new information, we change some part of ourselves: our attitude, behavior, values, assumptions, or perhaps the amount of knowledge we have. The change may mean a rejection or an alteration of previously accepted beliefs or behavior, or it may mean an expansion or extension of them.

Change is often perceived as frightening as it threatens to rob us of the safety and legitimacy of our personal, often cherished, position and boundaries - especially since maintaining this safe space has helped us to survive as well as we have up to now (even if that’s not as well as we could do).

When change is demanded by another person or new circumstances, we tend to feel threatened, defensive and perhaps rushed. The new learning is not perceived as something desirable and of our own choosing. Pressure to change, without an opportunity for exploration and choice, seldom results in experiences of joy and excitement in learning.

To turn this around, we need to be proactive in our learning, to expand our knowledge and abilities in advance of forced changes of circumstance. If there’s one thing guaranteed in our lives it is that change will be upon us, sooner or later; usually sooner. If we are open to change, and are willing to learn whatever is necessary to predict and adapt to it, we can even become its master and control its direction. Self-directed learning is therefore key to mastery over life and to the creation of the life that we want.

Many people had bad experiences at school and perhaps later in life, when attempting to study a new subject. It is easy to quickly get bogged down with new terminology, and often new concepts and procedures seem unclear. This situation can quickly get out of hand as the student gets left behind and the subject either becomes an ongoing struggle or it is abandoned. But none of that is necessary; it is possible to succeed with the study of any subject in the situation of ongoing self-directed education, in which you are in control of the whole process, and you can readily obtain the necessary auxiliary mental skills to learn effectively, such as with my own Mind Development courses for reading, concentration, memory and so on.

**Memory and identity**

Without a large body of certain data, individuals frequently have identity problems. Global structures of meaning probably play a primary role in the cognitive processes behind discourse. Furthermore, long term memory content, to a great extent, plays the primary role in creating our identity. In short, without the capital of stable data standing
behind us, in everything we are and do, we have a shaky sense of our identity and very little certainty.

‘Who am I, if not my memories?’ –William Calvin

According to Hunter in his classic book on memory, people with a poor long-term memory are very easily socially conditioned. In modern terms, they are Field Dependent and Other Directed. To be Self Directed one needs a strong sense of identity and memory is a crucial factor in this. We need to remember our beliefs and values; our methods for doing many tasks and learned solutions; our likes and dislikes; who we know and what we think of them; our personal history; and our learning of all subjects including our career skills. So a person’s entire knowledge net is largely the structure of their character.

All memory is important, especially long-term memory, and the most important part of long term memory is our knowledge net. Our knowledge net starts to expand from shortly after birth and in ideal cases continues to expand until shortly before death. An evolved knowledge net is a context in which all new information can be compared and evaluated and hence valued and understood. Wisdom and charisma, through insight and certainty, result.

A minimal knowledge net results in a person who is like reeds in the wind, swaying in whatever directions the influences upon him dictate. Without our knowledge net, we would be like a goldfish; we would be nothing. Almost every facet of personality and consciousness stems from our knowledge net. Our character, the capacity to keep our head in a sea of troubles, the capacity to express ourselves and understand language, our identity and the well springs of Ego itself stem from the knowledge net.

Most systems of brainwashing work at trying to break down this structure, so a person loses sight of whom he is. A person with a poorly formed knowledge net, with only a limited content, has a weak Ego. He lacks presence and charisma. This may call to mind the type of schoolteacher who tries to give a lecture whilst he faces towards the blackboard. People with a limited database are often full of opinions but unfounded ones, because they lack stable and well-connected data. An extreme example is that of a famous Idiot Savant who was taken to see a play. He was able to count the number of words spoken but the play went straight over his head. Without a significant and relevant database he was unable to relate to the content of the play.
**Self-directed education**

Before Malcolm X went into prison he was street-wise and a natural leader. However as he began to write letters to a wide variety of people he became frustrated with the fact that he could not communicate with them as he wanted to. ‘It was because of these letters that I happened to stumble upon starting to acquire some kind of homemade education.’ He was frustrated because he had been the most articulate hustler on the streets of Harlem, and could get anyone’s attention with his words. He was not used to being ignored but now it was hard for him to communicate.

It was equally hard for him to keep up with events because he could never fully understand what he was reading. So he decided that he needed to learn how to read and write properly and that the best way to go about it would be to get a hold of a copy of a dictionary and study it. He decided that the best place to start would be at the beginning, with the A’s. So he just started copying. He copied every word and punctuation mark on the first page. It took him the entire day, and when he finished he read aloud what he had written over and over again. The next day he woke up thinking about the words that he had written and to his surprise he even remembered what some of them meant. As his word-base broadened he was able to pick up a book and read it all the way through.

He went on to spend all of his free time reading, and acquired a much wider knowledge base. As he later said, ‘I had never been so truly free in my life.’ As a result he also became an articulate writer and was able to obtain a much greater world-wide influence, even from within prison, as a result of his own writing.

About sixty years ago educators came to the conclusion that rote learning was not a very efficient way of instructing a student. Rote learning was phased out and replaced with the modern method of instruction. Since the middle ages until about 1945, education was near synonymous with rote learning. Students may have gained something from the modern liberal approach, if they are fortunate to have excellent teachers, but all too often they have also lost something important, because the modern methods usually do not include adequate means for clarifying and memorizing information - all to often it is half understood and almost immediately (post the exam) forgotten.

Many of our parents went through the earlier strict type of education. As adults, they were able to quote verbatim from the Iliad, American and British Literature, History, Geography and General Science. This gave them in many cases a certain charisma; they could speak and write with impact and most importantly they had a sense of certainty in a troubled and changing world. Later generations, to a significant extent, have lost this
sense of certainty, achieved through having a wide and well-connected structure of knowledge.

My father, for example, even in old age, was able to remember the history he had learned at school and built upon further throughout his life; and he could define any word based on its Greek, Latin, German or French roots. He could make sense of modern politics and world events, and the happenings in his life and of the family, and as a result had a wisdom and charisma in his being that impressed all who met him; he was articulate but humble too, and remained open-minded. I think he would agree that was largely the result of his early education, that was continued and developed throughout his life.

By the mid-twentieth century, scientific and technological knowledge far outstripped the ability of most people, even the moderately well informed, to comprehend it. The aim of most specialists is to know ever more about their own specific niche. However the corollary to a small minority knowing more and more about less and less is a large majority knowing less and less about more and more. It becomes overwhelming to the average person and even the specialist may know little about his own colleagues’ work. To turn this around we need an ongoing self-directed education, not attempting to know everything but to understand very clearly the basic principles of a wide range of subjects, so that the detailed information can be placed in a reasonable context.

It is only in the context of a wide knowledge net that intelligent and creative connections may be made between disparate information, and so we have the challenge of developing an encyclopedic knowledge that covers enough bases with sufficient depth to be able to make sense of new information and to perceive the opportunities that arise thereby. The immense and ever-growing resources of literature and the Internet are only valuable to the degree that their data can be related to the knowledge net that already exists within our own minds.

The human brain has immense capacity for interconnectedness, far more than any supercomputer. It’s pattern recognition capability enables us to perceive the connections between ideas, people and events - all the contents of our knowledge net - to be able to know what is relevant and important in any particular context. That process however depends on our ability to remember.

Through the use of mnemonics technology (devices for assisting the memory) in conjunction with a couple or three years of part-time study, we can gain the sort of database enjoyed by our forefathers, in an expanded and modern context, and along with it a greater sense of certainty and a greater security in our identity.
The key is the use of visual images in an ordered, spatial arrangement that relate to the abstract ideas and enable us to remember them. Human memory recalls concrete images far more easily than abstract ideas, especially images with an emotional charge, and it remembers an ordered chain of associations more accurately than a random assortment. By the use of mnemonics - using chains of association to connect one memory with another - new information is encoded in such a way that it is connected to previously stored data, so that it is not easily forgotten.

The wider the existing knowledge net, the easier it is to find such useful connections, so the process is cumulative and accelerating. However modern mnemonics technology works so much better than the old ways of rote memorization, that even a little experience with these techniques can make a startling difference. One is on the way to acquiring an excellent memory.

Extensive practice and application of mnemonic techniques, induces an altered and enhanced state of consciousness. The right brain becomes more dominant, there is access to an enhanced associative mode of thinking and divergent thinking starts to play a major role as a mental process; mnemonics require inventiveness. Increased right brain dominance facilitates visualization, an associative mode of thinking is more conducive to intuition, and divergent thinking is one of the corner stones of creativity.

*Knowledge and enlightenment*

As we gain more knowledge, there are more things we can base our reasoning on. The mind becomes more informed. Indeed, there are whole libraries of knowledge, some of which is contradictory - so how can we absorb and make sense of it all? Does knowledge enlighten or confuse the mind with facts, or take it in circles with more falsehoods? Is there an underlying truth, and if so, is it simple or complex?

From any basic principle you can derive more and more complexity. From simple geometry you can derive complex theorems that are the basis for building cities and microchips. In the mind, one belief leads to another, truths are combined with false and acquired information, mistakes and painful experiences occur and the resulting safe solutions are retained, until a complex belief system is built - a labyrinth really, when it comes to sorting out what is one’s own truth.

If you start at the other end, not knowing the basic principle, just seeing the complexity, you can take forever trying to understand that complexity, to get back to the basic principle, if you ever do. There may be many false turnings, you may get to know massive amounts that actually are not of much help in your understanding, and you
may think you’ve ‘got it’ when you haven’t. Any workable path will need to provide valid guidelines.

Finding the truth is a bit like standing on the surface of the Earth, which is a mass of complexity and illusions - it’s all derived from truth but altered in one way or another, so it persists. A clear view of the way ahead can help lead you to the original true understanding of what is (the whole picture) if interpreted correctly. In this analogy, the truth is found at the top of only the highest mountain, which has a clear and wide view from the top. To find that mountain you have to travel wide and far, to learn from your experiences with a humble and open mind, and to have the required motivation and not be distracted - and not to give up either, even after disappointments. Without help and guidance, good intent and trust, you may never get there.

At the top of the mountain, the view is illuminating, you can see why all the complexity wasn’t actually a true picture of the whole, that in fact the truth is so simple yet powerful it cannot be expressed in words - it’s WHAT IS (the view) rather than a convoluted description or map representing the reality. The jigsaw puzzle of life now makes sense.

You cannot go back and ‘tell’ the other seekers what that picture is, as your description would have little reality for them - their view is much more limited. And many are not seekers at all so what you tell them would appear crazy or simplistic. Plato’s story of a group of people who have lived their whole life in a cave is relevant here. When the stone at the entrance is moved and light is revealed to them, they turn their backs in fear and disbelief.

You can best guide other seekers in the direction of this mountain and give them information that helps them make sense of the terrain, so they can travel their own path of understanding towards enlightenment: the clear and beautiful wholeness that awaits them when they reach the top, that they have known all along but not seen from that illuminating viewpoint.

Psychology is a complex picture because the mind, as it normally develops in a person’s life, becomes a complex organization. Sometimes we need this kind of analysis to help resolve issues in psychology that make a real difference to our happiness.

Other kinds of information are ‘higher level’, a view from the top of the mountain. This kind of information may seems crazy or simplistic to some, but seekers - those approaching the mountain or well on the way - will recognize it leads the way to the top.
**The positive approach**

I have taken to heart the following three quotes as the basis for my thoughts and intentions at this time, regarding personal and world events. I feel this positive approach is empowered by the love that is the nature of our being, and is effective in creating peace and happiness. The alternative - applying resistance, judgment, antagonism and hatred - is to be ruled by fear, which is to deny one’s essence, and has the effect of empowering that which one opposes.

Peace Pilgrim states...

‘In my work I have chosen the positive approach. I never think of myself as protesting against something, but rather as witnessing for harmonious living. Those who witness for, present solutions. Those who witness against, usually do not - they dwell on what is wrong, resorting to judgment and criticism and sometimes even name-calling. Naturally, the negative approach has a detrimental effect on the person who uses it, while the positive approach has a good effect.

‘When an evil is attacked, the evil mobilizes, although it may have been weak and unorganized before, and therefore the attack gives it validity and strength. When there is no attack, but instead good influences are brought to bear upon the situation, not only does the evil tend to fade away, but the evildoer tends to be transformed. The positive approach inspires; the negative approach makes angry.

‘When you make people angry, they act in accordance with their baser instincts, often violently and irrationally. When you inspire people, they act in accordance with their higher instincts, sensibly and rationally. Also, anger is transient, whereas inspiration sometimes has a life-long effect.’

Behind the apparent reality of war and violence the higher reality is love and peace. The energy of love comes from all our hearts but is misdirected if we have attention on our fears, which occurs if we resist the reality of what appears to us and our own part in creating that reality. For we do indeed create our life experience. That is a high-level spiritual viewpoint, the viewpoint of God, but if we accept that we are individual lamps of God-light, to manifest God in our lives we need to recognize our causation and incorporate that knowledge into our world view and understanding of events.

“If there is light in the soul,
There will be beauty in the person.
If there is beauty in the person,
There will be harmony in the house.
If there is harmony in the house,
There will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation,
There will be peace in the world.” ~Chinese Proverb
We all face the issue of how best to go about integrating a spiritual viewpoint into our daily lives. The everyday game of life appears very different from the view of the angels. Many things happen that we do not consciously initiate. We have friends and enemies, loves and hates. Some are on our side, others against us. The spiritual, birds-eye view however - the conscious view - is that this game of our lives is something we continuously create, in order to teach ourselves experiential lessons. We reflect our state of being in our surroundings, so they act as a mirror. This is God experiencing His/Her creation to the full. We are also engaged in raising the vibration of Earth energies towards a higher dimension, closer to our source, the creative power behind all. We are not just individual islands, our purpose really extends to a universal scale.

So we need to live our human lives but instead of making the world increasingly solid (and our fears and resistances increasingly strong) we need to step back and remember that each one of us is actually creating the reality we experience, through the power of our higher selves, at one with God. Then step back in and encompass all with our presence. Reality is lighter than we may think, and we can change our life experience by adjusting our viewpoints and beliefs to become closer to our true nature - which is in every case loving and non-judgmental.

The personal insights that I have discovered bear out the truth of this spiritual viewpoint, that we do indeed create our lives and situation, based on our beliefs. Often it is particularly the subconscious and suppressed beliefs that determine our internal conflicts and fears, and cause us to lose sight of our essential being. There are ways and means of uncovering this stuff and of realizing our essence - that is there all along - so we can knowingly create our reality in accordance with our loving nature.

Human beings in the last 2000 years have progressed little (in terms of human nature) but times are changing. Personal growth tools help us to learn faster and more effectively from our experience and so enhance the quality of the further experiences we will create. We also aspire to discover our spiritual nature and again we haven’t made a lot of progress unaided (and religion hasn’t been a great help). But now better tools are available. For example, modern techniques help a person to achieve in a few years what Buddhist monks take many lifetimes learning.

“Evil (ignorance) is like a shadow - it has no real substance of its own, it is simply a lack of light. You cannot cause a shadow to disappear by trying to fight it, stamp on it, by railing against it, or any other form of emotional or physical resistance. In order to cause a shadow to disappear, you must shine light on it.” --Shakti Gawain

Actually the process is simply stated: we need to look afresh, in the present moment, and clear away our false assumptions and fixed ideas by shining a light of objectivity and honesty. To learn about what exists, with neither resistance nor prejudice, to accept that is what and how it is, and to work to improve and develop positively the conditions that we find exist, for the benefit of all. Our guidance in this process is our inner...
essential nature: love, in service, without judgment or precondition. We can all do this and play our part. The time is right.

**The way forward**

The years 2007-2012 have been prophesied since ancient times as a turning point in the consciousness of humanity. Many expect great things to happen, to come upon us as if ‘from above’ like an act of God. However, I feel this is an unenlightened view of the nature of God and of ourselves. God is love and God lives within us, each and every single one of us. The turn-around in consciousness - a Spiritual Awakening - will need to come from within us; it is a change that we are creating - and it is that which has been correctly prophesied. The situation and the potential for creative action are right. This is the time.

We are the channel for the action of God. If we don’t act, nothing will happen. No one will be any the wiser; we will just have missed the opportunity of hundreds of lifetimes.

In order to create our reality - to make things happen in our experience of the world - we operate at all levels of our being: the spiritual, mental, emotional, physical. We do this 100% of the time whether we are aware of it or not. It is possible to improve our life experience by becoming more conscious of our creative process.

In Western culture, we are brought up to view our lives primarily as a physical manifestation: we go to work, produce things, get paid, survive, try to keep our bodies healthy, find a partner, make a family home. Talk of ‘creating our reality’ from a spiritual viewpoint seems out of touch with reality, maybe even a bit crazy. But if you follow it through - as I will try to explain - it does all tie together. The everyday life we experience is very much affected by our spiritual nature, our creative will. Then we manifest that ‘will’ according to the beliefs we hold, the feelings that result from those beliefs, and our resulting actions. We can start living consciously by manifesting what we want right here and now by putting into place our plans and dreams in the real world.

I believe in a multi-domain approach. We are not just one with God; nor just angelic beings; nor just a witnessing consciousness; nor just a creative mind; nor just a scheming Ego; nor just a social being struggling to survive; nor just a lover, parent or friend; nor just a creature programmed by genes; nor just one with the super energies of the planet and the Universe. We are all of these things at the same time. A unified field.

Manifestation, as described in The Secret, is a spiritually powered process. With the right spiritual, mental, and emotion preparation, things seem to ‘just happen’ or fall into our lap. While this may sometimes be the appearance, in practice it isn’t the whole picture. The other domains of our being play at least an equal part. Although opportunities may arise that seem magical - synchronicities, because we are connected beings, the unified field again - and like-minded people will naturally identify with our desire (law of attraction) and share their resources, the primary channel of achievement.
of what we desire is provided by ourselves, our own actions and communications and mental resources, such as intellect, creativity and intuition.

As a result of the Law of Attraction, magical results come about. Of course this ‘magic’ isn’t really magic; if it happens then there must be science to explain it, albeit not the orthodox. Metaphysics is a super-set of physics, not its enemy. Perhaps Sheldrake’s theories of information fields are the closest - I perceive it more in the order of information/thought than about energy/vibration – it is in the zero-point, the implicit encoding of the holographic universe. But then they are two sides of the same coin anyway, as in the case of gravity; whether potential or energy, either way it has a field of influence.

The implicit, hidden world is that of creative potential, of Spirit, outside of space and time; the real world is its explicit manifestation through creativity; and the mind is the intermediary, interpreting intuitions and drawing up plans of action. Therefore, I think for most of us the Law of Attraction works at the mental/spiritual level, not the physical. But also Spirit has the power to align causes and effect sequences right down to the material level. Each person is an independent cause, but also they are part of the universal Spirit or Source, and in this respect they also act as One.

Telepathic influences on others and their resulting actions cause events to occur and things to appear as if by magic or synchronicity. But it isn’t really magic, it’s cause and effect. Spirit works on matter through mind and actions. Real action needs to be taken to manifest real things... there are such solid agreements cementing the physical: a lifetime’s conditioning and learning to play ‘the game of life.’ It wouldn’t be much of a game if any of us could easily change the rules or alter the playing field! We have the potential of being games makers, and I believe we should rise to that, but when we play football that’s what we do. Good old ‘goal setting and getting’ is as important as ever. That’s practical, ‘get down to it’ psychology. Our knowledge base and mind development and social skills (concentration, study, communication, memory, creativity, intuition, leadership, etc.) are as important as ever. These are our cognitive contributions. Vital if we want to make a difference: to think and live outside of the box of our cultural norm. In addition, to achieve anything meaningful we need to put our heart and soul into the mix too.

Many people sincerely wish for their life circumstances to be different, to win the lottery or to obtain promotion. Most of the time this doesn’t come about - ‘wishful thinking’ or desire doesn’t cut it and one suffers. What is needed is creative intention or will, not just a wish or desire. It’s the process of manifesting and it needs to be done without attachment, and it needs to be followed through with the correct attitude and actions.

When the Buddhists speak of desire as something to overcome in order to prevent suffering, they mean the attachment to a possession or an outcome, such that you can’t be happily without it. Buddha was right, but it isn’t desire itself that he was warning
about, it’s attachment to the outcome or object of desire. So as a result you have a fear of not attaining it or of then losing it. So you put force and effort in there. Force results in counter-force, a reaction. That acts as a counter-intention and nullifies the intention. Nothing happens.

Manifesting intentions need to be effortless and without attachment to the outcome, i.e. with unconditional love and gratitude, but not with fear or greed. That suffering one normally feels when your desires don’t manifest is from an attachment of some sort, the source of the counter-intention. It wasn’t a pure intention, it was undermined by counter-intentions, feelings that point in quite the other direction.

Subconscious forces, such as hidden conflicting beliefs and suppressed fears, are resolved only through deep introspective work on oneself. And one’s ethics need to be cleared, such that one feels more worthy of the exchange of wealth for value that you have created for others or services done. One also needs considerable emotional intelligence, intuition, and creativity because we have to clear our intentions, be open to guidance and play an active part in the manifestation process.

Your every thought and word is contributing to your life experience. Your thoughts produce your emotions that, in turn, result in how you feel about a particular event occurring in your life. This is why two people can look at the exact same event and have opposite feelings about it. You are creating your own subjective reality, moment by moment, with the thoughts you choose to think and what you say, both to yourself and others. And through the power of Spirit your subjective reality impinges on the physical reality.

It isn’t so much a ‘magical’ process as a way of being that is quite foreign to most people. The average guy just does not realize that he can change his actions, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and identity. Instead they are perceived as the result of influences upon him, so he feels molded and in effect, with few choices. Life just happens to him, and it’s all other people’s fault. The truth - that he is responsible for the quality of his life - is, in that context, a revelation. Because if he’s responsible then he can change things around.

This is the reason Trans4mind.com exists - to help people in the process of improving their lives. All the products we recommend support an improved ability to manifest your dreams - to take your life to a new conscious level.

Current events have demonstrated a tremendous desire on the behalf of perhaps the majority of people in the world for peace in their lives. They are no longer satisfied with the mentality of political conflict, which endangers economic progress and human rights and freedoms. But most importantly, I feel that many people are now aware that if we want peace in the world, first we need to make peace with our own lives. It’s human nature that needs to change, and we are capable of making such a transformation.
Our experience in the world reflects our inner state - yes, this is a kind of magic, but that is the reality, the world is miraculous. I have seen so much evidence of this when I - or a student or client - have made a genuine shift in our belief system that resolves an inner conflict, then very soon our real-world circumstances change accordingly. We mirror our internal state - our resistance/fear and acceptance/love - in our personal life experience. As a group we mirror our consciousness in world events. It is our personal responsibility to become aware of our contribution to the group consciousness, to help create a world with more opportunities for ourselves and our loved ones - which ultimately means for everyone.

So what wars do we wage inside? The purposes and goals that we hold dearly - some we may have brought into this life or felt most strongly as a child or young person - are often compromised in the face of problems that we discover in trying to achieve them, and we may forget about them (actually suppress them) and opt for safer solutions. Playing the safe game is a sad conflict with the game we really (still) want to play. We have become someone else, a substitute for our true self. Reinforcing this position are the attachments we have come to cling on to, the fears we may have of losing control of our safe space, the resistance we feel against elements of change, and the judgments we make that prevent acceptance of what is.

To better our position, to be able to open up our space and express our true desires, we first need to come to terms with our situation. Our true nature is an expression of love and that is the quality that we need first to rediscover in our consciousness.

There’s no beauty that you could perceive or create if it weren’t already within you.

Before we can contribute through our consciousness toward peace in the world, we need to make peace with ourselves. Before we can love others unconditionally, we need to be able to genuinely love ourselves. Before we can forgive and cease making judgments of others, we need to learn how to forgive ourselves and warmly accept ourselves just as we are. So let’s look at how to do that...

We all do things we aren’t proud of, we wouldn’t be human if we didn’t. Something that affects others in a way that we wouldn’t be willing to experience ourselves. Sometimes we chose to act in a way that we know at the time isn’t being true to ourselves, but it seems like a solution to our situation. Or maybe we are tempted to put our own interests first. Other times we may be carried away by emotions of anger or jealousy and do something out of spite we may later regret.

Or we don’t do something, like helping a friend in need, that we know we really wanted to. Alternatively we may have the best of intentions, but things don’t go as predicted, we make a mistake or realize something we have done was harmful, even though we didn’t mean it to be.

These sorts of actions can leave us feeling ashamed and depressed, and we can end up carrying our guilt for years, but if we want to live happy lives, we need to take responsibility for the consequences of our behavior and move on. Feeling guilty
shouldn’t be confused with taking responsibility for our past. Responsibility means that we make a concerted effort to change the behavior pattern that resulted in the mistaken choice, and the beliefs and feelings that empowered it. We need to move on by making peace with the past. The natural tendency when we do something without integrity is to try to justify our actions, to make ourselves right. Or we may say the action was deserved, making the other person wrong. Both of these are avoiding the reality, by denying our own sense of truth and our own responsibility for our actions. We avoid our feelings of guilt by pretending it wasn’t a mistake or misconceived choice that we acted on, indeed it was ‘right.’ We avoid our feelings of shame (feeling bad about how others perceive us) by pretending that it is the other who should be ashamed.

The problem isn’t the harmful action or making a mistake - that’s happened and can’t be undone. The problem is what we tell ourselves afterward. Whether we are honest or if we lie to ourselves. It is that lie which causes all the damage to our own integrity and to further relationships with the other we have wronged. We need to drop our defenses, drop the lies we may have told ourselves to hide the truth, face up to the reality of our actions and their consequences - and forgive ourselves.

There is a big bonus to being realistic and truthful - we can learn the valuable lesson that the experience offers us. Indeed, it’s only when we have learned that lesson that we can let go of the past error and live our life as truly ourselves in the present. To forgive ourselves we need to learn the lesson. Forgiveness has nothing to do with feeling sorry or apologizing, neither of which actually changes anything. From a higher perspective there is no right or wrong. There are choices and experiences. There is cause and effect. And neither can forgiveness be given by another; it has to be granted by ourselves. Unless we can truly forgive ourselves, we can never really move on and be free of the past. What gets in the way of this forgiveness is judgment that I am a bad person. I need to separate my inherent worth from my actions. I am basically a loving being, I know that. We all are. Actually I am not even my thoughts and feelings. I create these and sometimes, through ignorance or misguided, I create them inappropriately and my consequent actions can result in hurt for others. Then the best I can do is to learn from that so in the future I can create more truly to my nature.

I need to realize that my choice was a result of my ignorance - I didn’t know what I can now see to be the lesson from the experience. I just wanted to get to my destination quickly. I didn’t think about the possible outcomes that could result from driving irresponsibly, I thought it was OK to cross a red light. So my basic motive wasn’t bad, but I was operating on false information, I was misguided. We can’t move on if we regret the past, nor if we have contempt for ourselves. To feel like this implies that we view our past as meaningless and of no value, and ourselves as no longer to be trusted. On the contrary, forgiving ourselves requires finding value in our experiences and in ourselves. Instead of just writing off an experience as a painful episode and trying to forget it, we should try to learn whatever we can from it.
Life is a journey of learning and the most worthwhile learning is derived from our personal experiences. When things go as we want, because we have good information and appropriate beliefs, then our learning is reinforced by this positive feedback. When things go astray, because we have faulty information and inappropriate beliefs, then we and those at the effect of our actions suffer. But here we have a chance to learn something new. Much of our new learning and personal growth does therefore come about as a result of painful experiences; provided we are willing and open to learn those lessons.

If we wish to grow and to use our experiences beneficially, it is vital that we focus on what we can learn rather than resisting the reality of what occurred. Find something you did (or failed to do) that you still feel bad about, that you regret, or that makes you feel ashamed. Now begin to take meaning and value out of this experience. Ask yourself: ‘What has this taught me about myself, about others, and about my life?’ Based on this lesson, work out what beliefs you need to change, what fixed ideas you can let go of, what assumptions you made that are no longer helpful.

Self-forgiveness recaptures the energy that you were giving away in guilt and resistance against the past. It frees you to be yourself again - a new, happier and wiser you.

If we can forgive ourselves, then we can more easily forgive others. If we don’t feel able to forgive others, then we clearly haven’t learned to love ourselves. And the irony is, when we do truly love ourselves, we and others will not even need any forgiveness because we are able to accept the past, present, and future as it is, without judgment.

Our creation. Discrimination - of good/bad, right/wrong, ugly/beautiful - is not part of the vocabulary of love.

I feel a positive approach is the way to go. An approach to life empowered by the love that is the nature of our being, and is effective in creating peace and happiness. The alternative - applying resistance, judgment, antagonism and hatred - is to be ruled by fear, which is to deny one’s essence, and has the effect of empowering that which one opposes.

Behind the apparent reality of war and violence, the higher reality is love and peace. The energy of love comes from all our hearts, but is misdirected if we have attention on our fears, which occurs if we resist the reality of what appears to us and our own part in creating that reality. For we do indeed create our life experience. That is a high-level spiritual viewpoint, the viewpoint of God, but if we accept that we are individual lamps of God-light, to manifest God in our lives we need to recognize our causation and incorporate that knowledge into our world view and understanding of events.

We all face the issue of how best to go about integrating a spiritual viewpoint into our daily lives. The everyday game of life appears very different from the view of the angels. Many things happen that we do not consciously initiate. We have friends and enemies, loves and hates. Some are on our side, others against us. The spiritual, bird’s-eye view however - the conscious view - is that this game of our lives is something we
continuously create in order to teach ourselves experiential lessons. We reflect our state of being in our surroundings so they act as a mirror. This is God experiencing His/Her creation to the full. We are also engaged in raising the vibration of Earth energies towards a higher dimension, closer to our source, the creative power behind all. We aren’t just individual islands, our purpose really extends to a universal scale.

So we need to live our human lives; but instead of making the world increasingly solid (and our fears and resistances increasingly strong), we need to step back and remember that each one of us is actually creating the reality we experience through the power of our higher selves, at one with God. Then step back in and encompass all with our presence. Reality is lighter than we may think, and we can change our life experience by adjusting our viewpoints and beliefs to become closer to our true nature - which is in every case loving and non-judgmental. The personal insights that I have discovered bear out the truth of this spiritual viewpoint, that we do indeed create our lives and situation based on our beliefs.

Often it is particularly the subconscious and suppressed beliefs that determine our internal conflicts and fears, and cause us to lose sight of our essential being. There are ways and means of uncovering this stuff and of realizing our essence - that is there all along - so we can knowingly create our reality in accordance with our loving nature.

Human beings in the last 2000 years have progressed little (in terms of human nature), but times are changing. Personal growth tools help us to learn faster and more effectively from our experience and so enhance the quality of the further experiences we will create. We also aspire to discover our spiritual nature and again, we haven’t made a lot of progress unaided (and religion hasn’t been a great help). But that is the past and now is a new time, the right time to take advantage of the opportunities we have for positive change. Opportunities that lie in our own hands.

We all have a belief system full of ideas imprinted by our culture and upbringing, and as the effect of earlier traumatic experiences, and even influences we are born with. They are here with us all the time in the present and affect our view of things and our interpretation of events, so that we are not really free to be ourselves, and to know our true selves, our true goals, and purposes in life. As we unlayer these beliefs, we find at the bottom some beautiful truths, simple as truths always are, about our basic loving nature. That is also the nature of each of us, our spirituality. Love expressed as creative will. That love becomes distorted by our mental structures and conflicts into the range of painful emotions and self-defeating behavior that most people either experience frequently or cover up, and live within ‘safe’ boundaries so they aren’t triggered. But really we create that experience and it mirrors what’s going on inside of us. On the scale of group consciousness, this extends to world events.

With learning, obtained from consciously experiencing and being open to guidance from Spirit, one becomes more enlightened - then indeed magic can happen. With clarity, life becomes much more simple and open to your creative influence.
The ‘human identity’ experience that we are all so familiar with is in fact a veil, a projection, not a truth in any way. It is a habit that we acquire early in childhood. Certainly one can maximize the veil and have a ‘good life’ experience. And certainly one can decide that the veil represents a truth and deal with the resulting limitations. However, the truth is that there is no separation and you do have conscious access to how you are creating your reality in every moment. That is the whole, the ‘human identity’ is a subset. One is only locked into that viewpoint if one chooses to be.

At the same time, I also feel that we are here to experience life at the physical level and to understand ourselves from that viewpoint too. The human experience is not something to reject or lessen, it’s a great privilege. We are ‘the man in the heavens,’ there is no ‘up there’ and ‘down here’ - metaphysics and physics are one - we simply are all of it.

Spirit-mind-emotions-body-the world: this is a circle, a wholeness. We are all connected. Because spirit is of the nature of information, not within the boundaries of space and time, the beliefs of a few conscious beings influence the group consciousness of Mankind - or perhaps I should say group unconsciousness, since relatively little conscious will is expressed here, but the unconscious still responds.

Many people have expressed the feeling that a wake-up call is sounding on this planet and politically, economically, socially and ecologically major currents are moving. What is most needed is a corresponding awakening of consciousness, a desperately needed evolution in human nature itself. With will, there could be an exponential increase in the expression of our true, so long hidden nature, which is love, in our world.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


‘I’m OK - You’re OK’ by Thomas A. Harris, MD (1973, Pan Books ISBN: 0 330 23543 5) on basic principles of Transactional Analysis.


‘Bioenergetics’ by Alexander Lowen (1975, Coward, McCann & Geoghegen).

‘Gestalt Therapy’ by Frederick Perls &ors(1951, Julian Press).


‘Archetype - A Natural History of the Self’ by Anthony Stevens (1982, Routledge), a
synthesis of Jungian psychology with the discoveries of sociobiology.

‘Mind Games - the guide to inner space’ by R.E.L. Masters & Jean Houston (1989, Routledge), techniques for mind expansion without the use of drugs.


‘Beyond the Brain - Birth, Death & Transcendence in Psychotherapy’ by Stanislav Grof (1985, State University of NY).


‘The Spectrum of Consciousness’ by Ken Wilber (1977, Quest).


