INNER WORK

Resolving emotional triggers

ANDREW GAINES

May you be free of suffering
May you know the joy of your own true nature

INNER WORK

Resolving emotional triggers

ANDREW GAINES
with drawings by
QUENTIN MITCHELL

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ISBN: 978-0-244-83596-5

Contact Andrew Gaines for all permission requests:
E-mail: andrewgaines [@] andrewgaines.net

Introduction

I often experience *occasions of uncaused joy*… feelings of inner well-being and pleasure for no particular reason. I'm sure that in part this was a consequence of doing massive amounts of inner work.

My wish is that you and many others discover inner states of pleasurable well-being as well. Identifying and clearing unresolved emotional disturbances contribute to this.

Cultivating the capacity to experience well-being is valuable in itself, of course. It also is a contribution to our cultural evolution. The challenge of our time is to become the kind of people who can create and enjoy a life-affirming global culture.

My own story isn't particularly important, but it shows a possibility. Many years ago, I wasn't doing very well emotionally. Indeed, I thought that I had messed up my life. I decided that I would do inner work on the chance that it might give me a better start in my next life, if such there be. I am pleased that I got the results in this life.

Every life has suffering. The various techniques described in this book show how we can identify and eliminate much of our self-created suffering. Activating our Witness – the part of us that can observe what we are doing *without judgement* – is the first step, because it enables us to note occasions of upset. When we notice our part in stressful interactions, and resolve our own emotional triggers, our suffering reduces and there is more room for happiness.

However, in our present age there is more at stake than just our personal well-being.

We live in a time of increasing environmental degradation including ocean acidification, dropping water tables around the world, and of course the most prominent one: climate change … and there is still the threat of nuclear war and all that it entails. Some futurists believe unless we dramatically change the direction of society, it is unlikely that humanity will survive the end of the 21st century as a viable species.

We live in a 'domination-control' society, as futurist Riane Eisler puts it, with massive investments in the military and in surveillance. In contrast, a healthy society will care for nature and communities. For future generations to have a hope of inheriting a world worth living in, we must transition to a benign life affirming global culture rather than continuing on our present course of ecological self-destruction.

The good news is that a huge wave of positive change is underway. There are millions of groups working on different aspects of social and environmental well-being. Underneath the radar, we may hope that we are in a *Great Transition to a life-affirming global culture*.

For the Great Transition to succeed, positive psychological and social changes are as important as technical changes.

The task of our generation is to accelerate the Great Transition to a life-affirming culture. One aspect of this transition will be that more and more of us persevere in our own inner work to become more emotionally centred, creative and loving. Our unresolved inner emotional disturbances play out on the world stage in the form of excess consumption, callous environmental degradation and a heightened propensity to go to war. Conversely, as we become genuinely happier inside we are less prone to the blandishments of consumerism and war.

So we might raise the question: *how can we help our whole culture become more emotionally resilient, caring and compassionate?* How can we amplify the positive trend that is already underway?

My suggestion is that we become informal teachers… and encourage others to do so as well. I envision a Renaissance of informal learning carried out by those of us who are aware of humanity's existential threats, and who understand the value of inner work. GreatTransition.net is a platform to support such informal citizen education for transformative change. You might check it out.

There are many opportunities in life when we can introduce transformational ideas to people we know. I call this *workshops on the fly*. We introduce short awareness and creativity exercises while having coffee together, or during lunch with co-workers. Many of the techniques in this book can be introduced in under five minutes, and if people find them useful they will be grateful. These techniques open doors that can enrich everyone's life.

I would love to see a multitude of people introducing these techniques to their friends. I do this, and indeed I have introduced one of the more powerful techniques, EFT, to strangers on the train (which they found helpful).

But the first thing, of course, is to apply the techniques and see what value they create for you.

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1

The Witness

I want to introduce you to a very simple concept with profound implications. It is our capacity to *observe ourselves without judgement*. As the rest of this book will show, it is the gateway to many paths of self-development.

The Witness

The part of our psyche that enables us to observe ourselves might be called the Witness, or Observer Self. The label does not matter. What counts is our capacity for self-observation. So we might say that *our Witness is that part of ourselves that can see exactly what we do without judgement.*

Let's activate it.

> ***Witness exercise***
>
> Take a few moments to sit quietly and just be aware of the thoughts going through your mind.

Simple, eh? That is using your Witness function.

I like to say that *the Witness is right next door to the Critic, which sees the same thing and at times gives us holy hell for it!*

You may be very familiar with your Critic, even if you never labelled it as such. It can manifest as a voice in your head that says *You should've done this; You didn't do that right*, and the like.

One immediate benefit of activating our Witness is that we can observe the Critic in action. Whereas before we might have simply endured the Critic – and felt bad – observing the Critic creates a little distance. We may still hear the voice of the Critic in our head but we tend to believe it less. By simply observing the Critic we reduce its influence on us.

> *"I have this nagging feeling that my inner critic is not as good as everyone else's."*
>
> Swami Beyondananda

Our True Conscience

We have a *true conscience* that quietly calls our attention to things we are doing that are off. But the *Critic* is generally the internalised voice of our parents, the culture or whatever. It is not part of our authentic self. It nags, makes us feel guilty or even miserable.

So there is a difference between the voice of the Critic and our true conscience. The intent of the Critic is to control us. Our true conscience quietly calls attention to the fact that we may be doing something that is off; it does not harangue us. It is *our* decision about what we do.

We are meant to be masters of our own house. Ideally we behave ethically, not because we have been conditioned to do so, but because we *choose* to do so.

This choice is reflected in the following story.

> *A wise old chief said to his grandson, "There is a fight going on inside of me - and it is in every one of us."*

"It is between two wolves. One of them is greedy, self-seeking and aggressive. It harbours jealousy, resentment and pride. The other wolf is caring and compassionate. It harbours kindness, love, hope and humility. It wants the best for others."

The grandson asked eagerly, "Grandfather, grandfather, which one will win?"

"The one I feed."

Position

I was washing dishes in a farmhouse in Princeton, New Jersey with John Heider, a workshop leader from Esalen Institute in California. John said to me, "Andrew, ***position*** is *accepting yourself as you are* even if somebody criticises you for it. For example, if somebody says 'Andrew, you're picking your nose' – and you are, you just accept that as the fact of the matter at the moment. No need to defend or to deny."

That conversation only took a couple of minutes. It was a 'workshop on the fly'; I found it very useful.

Object Concentration Exercise

This Object Concentration exercise is an excellent way to practice using our Witness. It sharpens our perception, and thus works as a creativity exercise as well.

Object Concentration Exercise

Choose an attractive object to be your point of focus - e.g. a leaf, a flower, or an ornate old bell.

Observe your object for 4 minutes, following this internal instruction to yourself:

> *When my mind goes away I will notice that it has gone away and bring it back.*

Processing:

- What details did you notice towards the end that you didn't pick up at the beginning?
- Were you able to notice that your mind went away, and bring it back?

Here we pay attention to physical reality (and the operation of our own mind) as an exercise. In time paying attention can become a way of being in the world. This has many virtues, not least because the world itself is surprising in ways that can delight us. Thus I sometimes say tha *to see reality is a great creative act*, because the actual reality of things is often different than our preconceptions.

The Object Concentration Exercise gives us practice in actually using our Witness function. We notice that our mind has gone away… It can lead to surprising experiences, as in this story.

> *Often, after I demonstrate a technique in the course of teaching a class and then watch my students practice, I see them performing movements that are completely different from what I have shown them. They have not observed the subtle but essential difference between what they have seen before and what I have demonstrated. Learning to observe clearly and truly is not as easy as it may seem… a student's preconceptions can place blinders on his vision.*
>
> Mitsugi Saotome, *Aikido and the Harmony of Nature*

One spring morning I went to the roof of my apartment building overlooking San Francisco.

I decided that I would take the sunrise as my focus for the Object Concentration exercise.

So I sat and watched the changing light and clouds. When my mind wandered away, I brought it back. After about 40 minutes I went down, got breakfast, and caught a bus to San Francisco State College, where I was teaching.

When I got off the bus, it was amazing. The air was so substantial. It supported dust, feathers and seagulls; it was not merely 'empty space'.

I was teaching freshman English experimentally inside a gym. The gym had high horizontal windows. I could not actually see the sun, but I knew exactly where it was. I was connected. I owned that day.

By paying attention to our friends instead of letting our mind wander, we stay present with them. This opens up a deeper channel of communication, and greatly enhances relationships.

Introduce a friend to the Witness

The Witness is a very simple concept. You can easily introduce the idea of the Witness to a friend. If you do so appropriately, this may be a great service to them.

2

Creative Thinking Skills

Here are a few exercises that activate our creativity. Several of them increase our capacity to visualise and one, *Rich Associations*, increases our capacity to make creative connections. These exercises embody skills that can be useful for doing inner work, which we get to later.

Creativity is valuable in its own right, of course. I sometimes say that 'creativity is the springtime of the mind'.

Imagery Warm Up

Imagery gives us access to the intuitive part of our minds. Even in mathematics, supposedly the most rational of disciplines, research mathematicians routinely use imagery as part of their creative process.

Most people can visualise readily. But to be honest, when I first explored visual imagery I found it difficult. My images would flicker; I could not sustain them for very long. However, I persevered, and now I visualise readily and with pleasure.

You can think of things to visualise on your own. But perhaps it is more fun if you have a partner to suggest things to you.

Imagery warm up

Pairs. Invite your partner to close his or her eyes and imagine a butterfly. Give them perhaps half a minute – not too long – and invite them to open their eyes and come back to the room.

Then invite your partner to visualise a dolphin or another natural object. Finally, suggest yet a third thing for them to visualise, and then switch roles.

You can make your suggestions to your partner more fanciful.

E.g. Imagine a clown on a unicycle, juggling strawberry ice cream cones.

Identification

A step beyond visualisation is identification. You 'become' the object you are considering. My first experience with identification was completely spontaneous. I had never heard of it. Here is the story:

> *I was training to be a naval officer, and we were practicing landing in a landing barge. The edge of the barge was only slightly above the water, so I was looking at the choppy waves from close up. Not far away a seagull was gliding just above the surface of the water.*
>
> *I became the seagull. I could feel the changing pressure of the air under my outstretched wings, adjusting myself precisely to the rise and fall of the waves. After a short time, I flapped my wings, flying higher and far away. In due course, re-identifying with my human ego in the landing barge, I wondered why I was not tired. Perhaps, I thought, it was because I was free.*

Identification is used in many different disciplines. Zen artists will draw an object from the standpoint of their intuitive union with it. In method acting, one becomes the character one is playing. In Gestalt Therapy one might identify with a figure in one's dream, and speak from that standpoint. This often produces a new insight into the meaning of the dream and its relevance to one's life. Inventors use identification to gain a new perspective on their problem. And we have all heard the phrase *put yourself in somebody else's shoes*.

> *There was a child went forth every day*
>
> *And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became*
>
> *And that object became part of him for the day…*
>
> Walt Whitman

Identification

Close your eyes, and imagine a tree in a sunny field. See it in as much detail as possible. Note its leaves and branches, and any birds or other animals that may be nearby... Now *become* the tree. For a few moments, experience yourself from the standpoint of being the tree. Take as much time as you need, and when you are ready open your eyes and come back to the room.

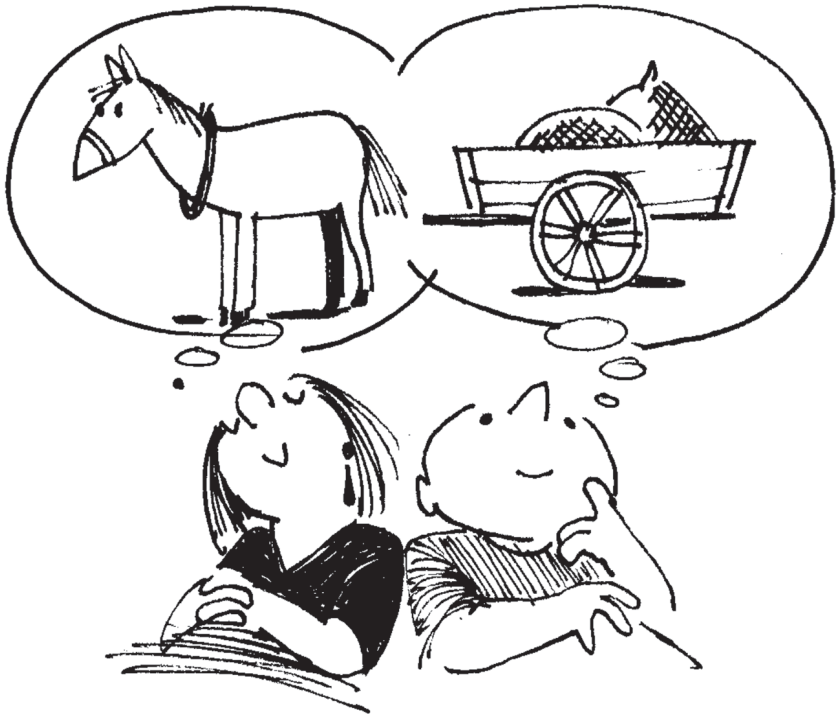
Two Person Fantasy

We can think with images as well as with words. Often our dreams are like movies.

Two person fantasy

Pairs. Lie with your shoulders in contact.

Wait in silence. When one of you feels moved, start a narrative. Take turns back and forth, creating a story together.



Rich Associations

One of the keys to innovative thinking is using *Rich Associations*. Highly creative thinkers use rich associations in their thinking as a matter of course. Rich associations can make our conversations more vivid and exciting.

Let's consider associations to the word *cup*. At first we might come up with ordinary associations such as s*aucer, spoon, tea…* These associations stay close to the subject.

We go further afield with more complex associations such as *the Melbourne Cup race, the Holy Grail, the cup that Socrates drank hemlock from,* or *a Scots*

joke about selling thimbles to serve as whisky glasses for guests. These are rich associations.

An ordinary association stays with the familiar. A rich association goes beyond the familiar: it has texture, complexity, novelty, interest, and surprise – qualities that in themselves provide excitement to fuel the creative enterprise. Rich associations take our thinking out of narrow channels – an important part of creative problem solving – and provide many hooks for new ideas to coalesce around.

A rich association (in contrast to a fantasy) refers to something that exists either in the world of culture or in physical reality. Thus it could be a bit of scientific theory, a poem or song, or even a joke.

Take your time with the following exercise. Many of us are not used to generating rich associations; it is a new use of the mind. If you are introducing rich associations to a friend**,** prompting may be helpful.

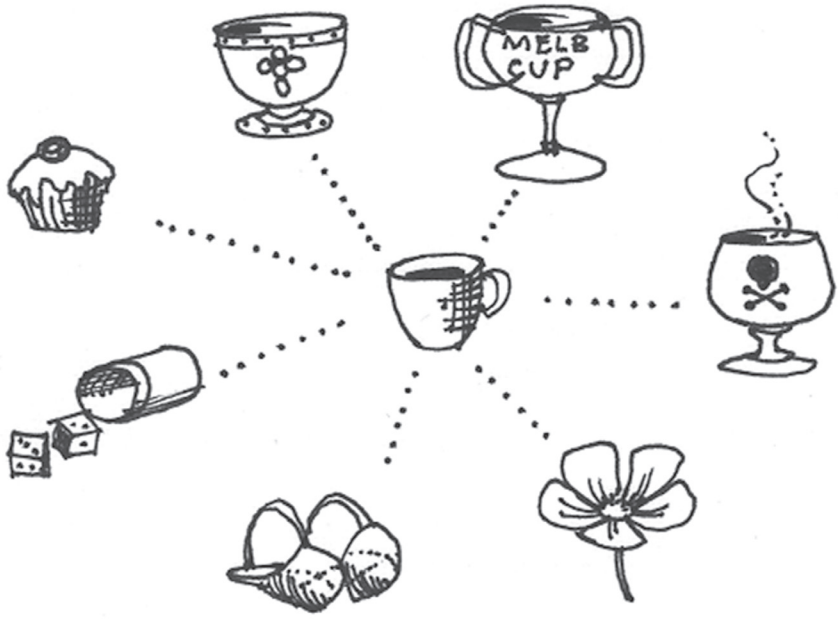
Here is an example:

> *Please give me a rich association to basketball.*
>
> Silence. Your friend seems a bit stymied, perhaps. You might prompt with *Can you think of something in the world of space that is like a basketball?*
>
> *Oh yes – the moon!*

Rich Associations

Player A offers a word.

Player B gives two rich associations.


MELB
CUP

3

Inner Work

Many of us have unresolved emotional issues. They may manifest as 'irrational' anger, fear, sadness, self-depreciation and the like. Subjectively, they may not feel irrational, but simply as 'that's how we are'. However, they cause us stress and pain, and they cut us off from the joy of our own true nature, as the Buddhists put it.

Unresolved emotional issues harm our relationships, and collectively they contribute to the madness of war and environmental destruction. We can contribute to the transition to a life-sustaining society by doing the inner work to resolve our own emotional issues. And we can introduce friends to some of the do-it-yourself techniques outlined here.

The rewards of persistently working to resolve the roots of our emotional disturbances cannot be imagined before you go on the journey. We may experience moments of uncaused joy, bliss and even ecstasy against a background of general ongoing inner pleasure and well-being. Our capacity for love, and for connected sex, increases.

Notice Occasions of Upset

There are various clues that suggest that we may have unresolved issues operating. These include irrational anger, handling situations in ways we do not feel good about, unrealistic fear, and self-doubt. Complaints

from other people – family, colleagues or subordinates – can also be an indication that our unresolved inner issues are having an outer effect. We will call such events *occasions of upset.*

The journey to resolve our unresolved issues begins with recognising an occasion of upset. Here is where our Witness comes into play. For example, it is one thing to be angry and act on it. It is another thing to be angry, notice that we are angry, and think that this reaction could interfere with our relationships, and may not serve us at all.

I am not suggesting that we should never be angry or have other strong emotions. There are occasions where displays of anger can be beneficial.

Here are two stories that illustrate the constructive use of anger.

> *For a time I worked as a stable hand at a horse farm in New Jersey. The boss acquired a horse that was a jumper. There is a difference between horses that jump and jumpers. Jumpers are like Olympic athletes.*
>
> *This horse had been mistreated, and we took care of it during the winter. In the spring the boss set up a high jump in the middle of the indoor ring, and hired Lisa, a skilled young local horsewoman, to take the horse over the jump.*
>
> *Lisa cantered the horse lightly around the outside of the ring to warm it up, and then took the horse straight towards the bars. As the horse took off I heard Lisa gasp. She knew that the horse wouldn't make it. It didn't. It knocked off the top two bars, and went crow-hopping down the other side, unhurt.*
>
> *Furious, the boss yelled, "Andrew, pull those broken bars aside, and put two new ones up. Lisa, you take that horse over those bars!" Quick smart, it happened.*

Charged by his anger, Lisa and the horse cleared the jump on the second go. I saw the boss go into his office, laughing. He knew how to use anger; he was an ex-Marine sergeant.

--

A friend of mine ordered just one Christmas present for his kids: a trampoline. Two days before Christmas it had not arrived, and he was informed that it would not arrive until after Christmas – disappointing for his kids. He would have none of that. He got on the phone and strongly threatened dire consequences if he did not have the trampoline by Christmas. It was delivered Christmas Eve.

So anger can be used to motivate or coerce people. More often it is simply hurtful, and has no constructive purpose. Perhaps this is not what we want to do in our relationships?

Every occasion of upset is an opportunity to do inner work. The more we do, the better we will feel.

Two of the most useful do-it-yourself psychological healing techniques that I know of are Emotional Freedom Techniques and the Saint Francis Process.

EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques)

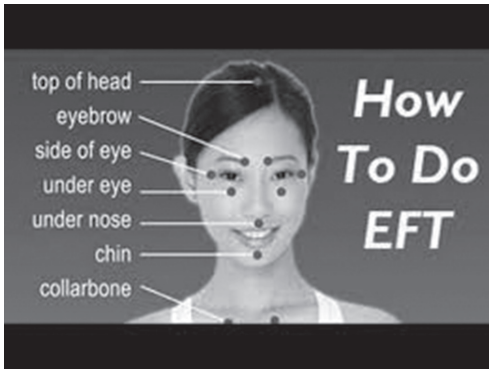
EFT is a surprisingly rapid method of resolving upsets by tapping with our fingers on a few acupressure points. The story of how it was developed is quite remarkable.

Roger Callahan, a psychologist in California, was working with a client who had a severe phobia around water. More than 2 inches of water in the bathtub, and she would freak. Nobody knew why, and after eighteen months of work they had not made much progress.

One day she came for yet another session, and remarked at the beginning that she had a bit of a stomach upset. Callahan knew something about acupressure points, so he tapped on the end of her stomach meridian in order to settle it. To his astonishment she looked up at him and said, "Dr Callahan, my phobia is gone!" She proved it by going to a nearby swimming pool and splashing in the water.

Callahan went on to develop a sophisticated, highly effective system for dealing with all sorts of emotional issues by tapping on acupressure points.

However, the system was complicated. Garry Craig, who had trained in engineering at Stanford University, worked out a way to simplify it. He called it Emotional Freedom Techniques, and published a manual for free on the web. An excellent training video, also for free, is available on his website.



The basic premise of EFT is that the emotional upset people feel when they have traumatic memories or other emotional provocations does not come from the memory itself, but from the fact that our *acupuncture energy flow goes out of balance in reaction to those memories*. By tapping with our fingertips on a few acupressure points we can rebalance the energy system and eliminate the adverse emotional reaction. Sometimes (although not always) the resolution can be astonishingly rapid, as witnessed by the story of the woman who was phobic about water.

The procedure is to identify the issue, and hold that issue in mind while tapping on a routine sequence of acupressure points. The issue could be

experienced as a memory, a feeling (such as fear, anger…), a physical sensation (such as nausea), or a physical pain. Thus we could have fear related to an upcoming exam or surgery, or feelings associated with the memories of past abuse, and so forth.

I heard about EFT through an on-line discussion group. One of the participants raved about how peaceful she felt after doing a weekend workshop. I downloaded the manual and tried it on myself. I felt a positive shift; it seemed to work.

Since then I have done a lot of work using EFT for myself and with clients. I have even been known to do it with complete strangers on the train. Here is a story.

> *A woman sitting next to me on the train from Sydney mentioned that she had been working behind the bar at the Sydney Cricket Ground, and she had a migraine coming on. Well, I know that migraines are horrible. So I gently asked if she would be willing to try this new technique.*
>
> *The first round of 'tapping' on her migraine took about a minute and a half. Literally. It was that quick. At the end I asked, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how intense is your headache?" "I think it is 1 - or maybe it is gone!"*
>
> *Excellent!*
>
> *So then I had her tap on the phrase, "Even though I have this fatigue, I deeply and completely accept myself." This took another one and a half minutes. At the end she said, "Thank you so much. Now I can go home and be with my family instead of being wiped out."*

This is what we call a 'one minute miracle' in EFT. But to be frank, the shifts are not always that quick. Often there are a number of aspects to a situation that must be dealt with. For example,

> *The wife of a friend of mine was applying for a senior job at a local council. She was experienced, but she wasn't fully qualified on paper. She had a very high level of anxiety about the coming interview. During our session we tapped on her anxiety about the fact that she was not fully qualified. We also tapped on put-downs she had gotten from her former husband, incidents in school, and issues from her childhood.*
>
> *The session took about an hour and a half. By the end her attitude had completely shifted, and she was looking forward to the job interview (and yes, she got the job.).*

Getting the full benefit of EFT for a particular issue is a matter of identifying and clearing all the different aspects that may trigger an unwanted emotional reaction. This story is a good example:

> *A woman in Canada had a severe automobile accident on a rainy night. For some years she had flashbacks. She had made improvement by tapping on aspects such as the wet road, skidding, the ambulance lights, and so forth. But still she had occasional flashbacks and panic.*
>
> *The flashbacks finally stopped when she got in touch with her resentment about her husband.*
>
> *I don't know the details, but the interesting thing was that her husband wasn't even in Canada at the time.*

It is important to realise that it can take some digging to find all the different aspects which trigger our emotional reactions.

EFT is easy to learn. The best place to do it is Gary Craig's own website. There you will find a free video tutorial. Gary is a very clear teacher, and a master of his own craft. You will find the relevant portions of the original EFT Manual in Appendix 1.

> Note: Gary has also introduced a refinement on EFT called Optimal EFT.

I suggest that you read through the manual, view the training videos, and try it on one of your own issues.

We may ask: How can EFT be faster than skilled therapy in many instances? The answer is simple, though novel. Instead of trying to gain insight into emotional upsets, or trying to express emotions, EFT resolves the *energetic imbalance* that underlies disturbed emotional reactions.

Resources:

http://www.emofree.com/eft-tutorial/tapping-basics/what-is-eft.html
http://www.emofree.com/eft-tapping.html

St Francis Process

The St Francis Process is a powerful quick process for meeting unknown parts of ourselves that may be sources of our occasions of upset.

It was developed by innovative psychologist Jean Houston. Jean turns the stories of how great people handled problems in their lives into exercises so that we might learn their strategies and apply them ourselves.

When he was young Francis was a wealthy playboy. By temperament he was a high sensate, and liked sensual pleasures. So the following story is especially poignant.

> *One day, as he was riding down the road outside Assisi, Francis' horse stopped beside a leper. Clearly young Francis had to deal with him. At this time in history lepers were shunned, and survived by begging. St. Francis reports that he saw the pain and anguish in the leper's eyes, and was moved* (as Jean puts it) *"to get off his high horse and kiss the leper."*

> *What happened next was extraordinary. When he kissed the leper – going beyond the revulsion that most people felt, and that he would have felt especially as a high sensate – St. Francis felt an astonishing feeling of sweetness come over him. "Dolce, dolce!" he exclaimed in Italian. Sweetness!*

Jean saw in this story a way that the rest of us could use to meet parts of ourselves that are phobic or prejudiced. So she turned it into an exercise. It goes like this.

> ***St Francis Process***
>
> Pick something you feel phobic or prejudiced about.
>
> Now sit, and begin to rock as though you were riding on a horse (this engages the body). Imagine that you are actually riding on a horse in medieval times – riding down a country road.
>
> Up ahead is a shadowy figure that represents the unknown part of yourself.
>
> It will be indistinct at first, but as you approach the figure, it becomes clearer. Stop in front of it. Look into its eyes, and see what you see there.
>
> Now shift perspective, and become that figure on the ground looking up at you. From here, do whatever seems appropriate.

In the workshop I picked something mild, and experienced a definite shift after doing the process.

At home, privately, I picked a more serious issue: the part of me that felt actively threatened by men. I sat down, imagined myself on a horse (and did the rocking, of course). After a minute or so the scene became vivid:

> *I was riding down a country road in the summer. The saddle of my horse was ornate. Up ahead was a shadowy figure wearing a hooded cloak by the side of the road. Drawing near, I saw a gaunt, adolescent figure inside the cloak. My horse stopped. Looking into its eyes, I saw enormous pain.*
>
> *Shifting perspective, I became the figure looking up at me on the horse. I watched the me on the horse get off, and come and cradle me in his arms ... at which point I broke into deep crying.*

That was it. My fear of men completely disappeared. The process took, say, 15 minutes.

For some months thereafter when things came up I did the St Francis Process. Many times it took me to young, even infantile, parts of myself. In my fantasy I was nursed, massaged, oiled… nourished. How good!

Now I rarely use the St Francis Process because I no longer feel the need.

These next two processes are best done with a partner. The first one, *Option Process*, is a quick enquiry into the roots of our upset.

The second one, *Talking to Subselves,* shows a way of working with parts of our psyche that may be trying to help us, but doing it in bizarre ways.

Option Process

Option Process is an inquiry into the roots of our discomfort. It is a way of revealing and dissolving the irrational underlying premises that cause some of our surface emotional upsets. It does this not through extended psychological analysis, but through questions that rapidly reach the levels of consciousness where disturbing irrational beliefs are held. Illuminating these beliefs often immediately frees us from their disturbing effects.

The process begins with recognising an *occasion of upset*. This could be experiencing a desire to do something, and feeling inhibited about actually doing it. Or some event might happen in our lives; we respond by feeling bad about it in some way. The process is done by asking a series of questions that reveal progressively deeper layers of our unexamined belief systems. If we do not have too much emotional energy invested in the beliefs, often simply recognising these irrational premises can free us.

Occasions of upset are expressed in statements like, "I want to take an acting class, but I would feel embarrassed", or, "I'm anxious about showing my report to the boss." Option Process questions to be used in exploring these situations would be, "What about the prospect of doing an acting class makes you feel embarrassed?" or "What about the prospect of showing your boss the report makes you anxious?"

Option Process questions are phrased in terms of an ***activity*** and **an *unwanted emotional reaction.***

What about __(disturbing situation or future prospect) __ makes you feel __ (negative feeling)__?

The mind will offer some answer, perhaps something like "People would laugh at me for being inept." The next question is based on this answer; thus, "What about the prospect of people seeing you as inept bothers you?"

Again the mind offers an answer. It might be something like, "Then they won't like me." Or it might be a memory of being ridiculed as a child for being inept. Bringing the childhood memory to mind may clear the way to

try new things as an adult, with the adult perspective that it is OK, indeed normal, to make mistakes in learning. Following the line of *they won't like me* may lead to fear of rejection, and then to terror of death. While such a terror may seem very real to a child who is dependent on his parents, it is absurd in the present-day context.

The process is complete when we see the absurdity or irrelevance of what has been driving us, and let it go. Sometimes we burst out laughing at this point; other times we simply make a choice to follow a different response pattern. Here is an example.

> *This client was a well-paid consultant who liked his job. He was really angry with his company, however, and was considering quitting. He had gotten sick, and had to miss several months of work. They refused to pay him sick leave, and on this account he felt they were treating him unfairly.*

The Option Process dialogue to deal with this was quite brief. It went something like this:

> AG: *What about them not paying you sick- leave (behavioural fact) makes you angry (negative feeling)?*
>
> CL: *They are treating me unfairly.*
>
> AG*: What about them treating you unfairly upsets you?*
>
> *As the client focused on this question, he got a faraway look in his eyes, and then said, "Hey, can I tell you something? Before I got this job I was out of work for several years, so of course my financial situation got worse and worse. I promised myself that I would recoup my losses rapidly. When I got sick again it interfered with my program. That's why I'm angry at the company. But in fact they never contracted with me to pay sick leave."*

> AG*: I see. You're about to lose a job you like because you're angry at the company for not keeping a promise they never made, when it was your agenda that you should come along faster than you can financially.*
>
> *CL*: *Yes! - and he laughed and let it go.*

This kind of 'faraway look' is one of the ways that Option Process reaches resolution. The person goes back to a memory that is the source of the issue, and sees the disconnect between that memory and their present circumstances.

To reach the irrational roots of an upset we usually have to go through a series of levels. In Option Process we don't try to explore each of these levels in detail. There is a much quicker way to proceed. To each Option Process question the client gives a succinct answer - a brief phrase, perhaps only one word. Each phrase represents a level of emotional meaning for the client. Once we understand the essence of the meaning of a given level, we go on to the next level by asking another question.

The answers are not always succinct. Sometimes some exploration is needed to clarify the meaning. Also, as we saw with the management consultant, when the client hits the level that carries the story of how the irrational belief got formed, he or she will often get a faraway look in the eyes, and say, "Can I tell you something?"...and then a story will come out.

The initial answers the client offers generally make sense in terms of the way things ordinarily work. But when we persevere with the questions, the answers typically make less and less sense, until finally the client sees that his or her concerns have nothing to do with present day circumstances.

Therefore it is important to persevere with the questioning even though the initial answers make rational sense, and perhaps seem compelling. Go deeper, and you will find the *irrational roots.* This is important, because finding these roots is an essential step in finding new options in an apparently intractable situation.

The following example illustrates the process in a fuller form. It doesn't end with insight; it ends with a *felt shift* – a shift in feeling as the client senses another possibility. This example illustrates how a series of questions can quickly take us to deeper levels without extensive analysis.

The client was a young masseur with a moderate practice. One day he got a cancellation, and felt very upset.

AG: What are you upset about?

CL: A client cancelled.

AG: What about the client cancelling upsets you?

CL: It means I'll lose my practice.

AG: What about the prospect of losing your practice upsets you?

CL: I won't have any money.

AG: What about the prospect of not having any money upsets you?

CL: Then I'll be dependent on people.

AG: What about the prospect of being dependent on people upsets you?

CL: I'll be tight and contracted in my body.

At this point the client spontaneously had a fantasy of being dependent on someone and actually enjoying it. With this changed perspective he relaxed and was able to go about his business.

Appendix 2 is a lengthy transcript of an Option Process session.

The way the first question is phrased is crucial to the process. Often the client (i.e. the person you are working with – it could be a friend) will express his or her upset through a story with a lot of detail. You want to pick out the essence of what is bothering them and the essence of their feeling response.

For example, we might have, "I am upset about the fight I had with my boss because it means I'll be fired". *I'll be fired* is the emotionally charged possibility the client is concerned about.

Upset expresses the client's feeling about this possibility. Therefore the first question in the Option Process dialogue would be, "What is it about the prospect of getting fired that upsets you?" The term *prospect* is semantically accurate; the client is upset about a possibility, not a current actuality.

Unless there is reason to change, the next question in the dialogue is based on the answer just given. We continue with the form, 'What is it about such and such that concerns you?' or, What about the prospect of such and such happening concerns you?' So our next question in this example might be, 'What about the prospect of being out of a job upsets you?'

Each question is asked freshly. While each question is built upon the previous answer, and often has the same form as the previous one, Option Process is not a mechanical procedure. It depends on each answer being understood, and each subsequent question being a real question. Very Zen, very present!

The combined attention of two people heightens the energy available for self-inquiry. In addition, careful listening can help the client clarify the essence of what he or she is thinking or feeling. Therefore the facilitator must do his or her best to understand each of the client's answers, and must stay with a given level until it does become clear. Sometimes this will require only a moment's non-verbal appreciation. At other times a given level must be discussed more fully in order to reach clarity.

When you feel that you have gotten down to the root belief, you may ask, "Do you really believe that?" This shouldn't be done too early. You may

reach levels where the answers do not make rational sense, but there are still unexplored layers of irrational feeling and belief underneath them. With experience you begin to develop a feel for when you are near the end of one of these explorations.

Option Process rarely proceeds smoothly. All self-exploration is a creative process, with many unexpected dilemmas that must be imaginatively dealt with. There are various ways the client can get stuck, and it is up to the facilitator to find a way to help the client get through a difficult layer and on to the next. Here are some possibilities.

The client may go into a loop. "I'm afraid of A because of B, afraid of B because of C, and afraid of C because of A," with A, B and C all at the same level. For example, "I'm angry about being treated unfairly because it is wrong, I'm angry about being treated wrongly because it is unjust, I am angry about being treated unjustly because it is not fair."

Such loops must be broken if you are to get to deeper levels. Sometimes you can do this by abandoning the form of Option Process and discussing some other aspect of the issue. This jogs the mind by expanding its perspective. Then you can return to Option Process questioning and go deeper.

Sometimes the loop will be an emotional loop: *If I do such and such, I'll be embarrassed*. To then ask. "What about the prospect of being embarrassed embarrasses you?" won't take you anywhere. There is no way out within this frame. But consider the structure of embarrassment. Embarrassment carries an expectation of someone's ridicule or disparagement – that is, a fear of how someone outside of ourselves will judge us as a consequence of what we do. So we can convert *I'll be ashamed* to *I'm afraid someone will disapprove of me*. Having made the structure of the situation clear, we can now proceed with, "What about the prospect of someone disapproving of you concerns you?"

Most shame is a reaction that has been induced from the outside as a means of social control. However, some shame is the effect of our authentic conscience. Questioning such shame would not be appropriate if the shame had to do with the prospect of the client violating his or her own ethics.

If the loop cannot be broken and you can't get to another level, it is all right to leave the process until another day. The client may not be ready to deal with deeper levels at this time. Later there may be some internal change which makes the deeper levels more available.

The client may offer two answers instead of one. At this point the process becomes a two-pronged inquiry. You can negotiate with the client to follow one of the possible paths (generally the one with the most emotional charge), and perhaps come back to the other path later.

Sometimes Option Process leads into other forms of working. For example, you may sense that you are dealing with a *subpersonality* (see below), and enter into dialogue with that subpersonality. Or it may be appropriate to clarify some point analytically, and then return to Option Process to complete a certain line of inquiry.

Doing Option Process on Yourself

You can work with yourself simply by writing the questions, and then listening inwardly for the answers. It may be helpful to write the questions in block capitals, and the answers in your ordinary handwriting. This keeps the questions separate from your responses. Writing out the dialogue enables you to keep track of where you are in the process, and helps you stay awake.

Option Process Summary

Start with an occasion of upset, and take the following steps:

1. Frame the first question in terms of an activity and an unwanted emotional reaction. Thus:

> "What about ___ makes you feel ___[*concerned, frightened, angry, depressed, etc.*]?"

e.g., "What about asking your boss for a raise upsets you?"

2. Your mind will come up with an answer.

e.g., "I'm afraid he will think I'm greedy".

3. Build your next question on this answer – provided it is a clear answer.

"What about the prospect of him thinking you are greedy frightens you?"

4. Your mind will come up with an answer from a somewhat deeper level.

e.g., 'He'll be angry at me".

5. Again, build your next question on this answer.

"What about the prospect of him getting angry with you frightens you?"

6. As you continue in this manner, the answers may at first make rational sense, but if you persevere they will seem less realistic. Therefore persevere – especially when you are first learning.

7. The process ends when you

a) Realise how absurd the root premise is, and laugh, or at least recognise that you do not believe it any more.
b) Recall the root situation that made the particular event an issue, and see how different present-day reality is, or

c) Experience a *felt shift* such that the issue no longer feels like an issue.

Barry Kaufman's *To Love is to be Happy With* is a manual of Option Process.

Working with Subselves

The idea that the human personality is ordinarily made up not of one unified personality, but of a number of subpersonalities, or subselves, is an extremely powerful concept in the psychology of personal development. It enables us to make precise discriminations among different forces operating within ourselves or another person. Through this precision we can make interventions that have lasting positive effects on our attitudes, feelings, and behaviour.

The concept of subselves appears in a number of different therapeutic systems, including Jungian analysis, Gestalt Therapy, Transactional Analysis and Voice Dialogue.

Subselves are personality elements formed in childhood that adversely affect adult functioning. They act as separate personalities that are somewhat independent of our adult ego. Jung called them *semi-autonomous personality elements*. Authentic subselves can be constructively influenced by talking with them.

Perceiving the personality in terms of subselves is one way of making order out of otherwise confusing information coming from the client. Our first example illustrates this.

> *Joan was struggling with making a decision about a relationship. For several sessions Joan oscillated from one feeling state to another. She experienced all of them as 'I'. Therefore it was impossible for her to decide 'what I think*

and feel' about this relationship. Her process was confusing to me as the therapist, because I was getting a large amount of data, but could not see a way of organising it. In particular, I had no sense of what she truly wanted.

It finally occurred to me that I was confused because she was shifting from subself to subself. So the next session I began to describe to her the different subselves I thought were operating – the Princess, the Mother Caretaker, the Dependent Little Girl. Suddenly, to my surprise, Joan herself became present in her adult self. The experience was similar to the way three-dimensional figures suddenly appear out of the background of computer-generated pictures.

Joan's adult presence had been missing in our earlier sessions. It is the adult self that should decide between the different claims of the various subselves – or take its own independent stance. By my describing the different subselves, Joan was able to dis-identify from them and experience herself as herself. This gave her the vantage point to think through her situation, and make a real choice about what to do.

You may recognise in this account the phenomenon of the Witness – that part of ourselves that can observe exactly what we are doing without judging. By describing Joan's subselves I provided the witness function that enabled Joan to wake up.

This example illustrates our first distinction: between the Adult self and one or more subselves. It also introduces the notion of *identification*. We can identify with our subselves – which is a common form of regression, or we can identify with our adult self. Here is an example of a person who identified with his child self in a professional situation.

The client was a well-trained professional who was getting coaching in working psychologically with people. His transcripts of sessions revealed many opportunities to go deeper with the people he was working with – which he never took. When he was queried about this he thought for

a moment (using his Witness), and said, "You know, I'm trying to do counselling from my four-year old." What an honest statement!

It was true: his four year old liked the attention, but knew he couldn't handle any real depth. Sorting out the distinction between the four year old and his adult self-freed this counsellor to use his excellent adult intellect and caring heart to really help people. It also enabled him to find other ways to give his four your old the attention he craved.

Subselves are often the centres of control for irrational behaviours that disturb us. Talking to them directly can at times bring about immediate changes.

This client was a high-level sociology researcher. She made one major trip to various cities each year to gather data. She arrived at my office just before one of these trips and announced, "I've lost my address book. I know when I do this my inner child is acting up."

'Great', I thought to myself. 'She's about to mess up her major trip of the year, and I've got one hour to help her sort it out. What do I do?' So I devised the most direct access I could think of. I said, 'I want to speak to your inner child.'

Her Child said, 'She won't give me anything."

It was true. My client made ample money, which she freely spent on her daughter, but never spent on herself. Not even an ice cream cone. Her lack of spending was controlled by a penurious subself which didn't believe in pleasure. But it did have the client's best interest at heart, as it conceived it. I handled the session by acting as a mediator. I got each subself to talk to me, and then got them to talk to each other. The session ended with her

> Child subself agreeing to not interfere with the trip, provided that her Penurious subself and her Adult self allowed her some pleasure at the end of the trip.

Here's what the client reported when she came back.

> *"The trip went fine. Near the end I was standing in a Post Office line in New York City. I happened to catch the eye of an attractive man, and I thought that if he approached me when I left the Post Office something would probably happen between us. It did. He took me home for the long weekend. It was wonderful. It didn't happen to be sexual, but it certainly was sensual. He absolutely pampered me. He treated me royally. I let myself feel luxurious and lazy. At the end he drove me all the way back home to Baltimore (a four-hour trip) on his way south to North Carolina."*
>
> *"I see," I said. "You kept your agreement." And of course she had. The Child didn't act up during the trip, and at the end she was given something quite nice.*

As the above example illustrates, we access a subself by talking directly to it. The experience may seem peculiar at first if you are in the client role. The facilitator asks a question, and you hear a voice respond from some region outside your ordinary ego.

The client will sometimes say, 'I feel as though I am making this up.' But the fittingness of the client's responses to their actual situation, and the positive life changes that ensue, lead me to believe that generally they are not 'making up' the responses, but hearing for the first time the voice of a personality element that has in fact been active for a long time

The subselves we just described were needy child parts of the personality. Other subselves may be protective. Subselves' way of protecting us is based on the knowledge and experience they/we had at the time they were formed. While we in our Adult self will have grown and developed new

competencies, the subselves remain totally unaware of this. Therefore they still try to protect us as though we were vulnerable children.

Subselves are on our side. They want to help us. Once a subself realises that its way of helping or protecting us actually causes us difficulty or pain, it will willingly change.

We achieve change through the following general steps:

1. Access the subself by saying something true about its mode of operating, and asking if it does that; this gets the conversation going.

2. Find out what it is on about. Why is it doing what it is doing?

3. Validate its positive intent.

4. Bring it up to date about the client's adult capabilities. Subselves learn nothing from the client's life experience after they have been formed. They are unaware that the client is now grown up and competent. But if you point this out to them, and ask if they can see it, they get it right away.

5. Point out how its way of protecting the client actually causes the client problems. Since the subself wants to help the client, this will be meaningful to it.

6. Ask it to change its mode of operating, either by relinquishing its protective role perhaps by assuming a 'watchdog' function (looking out for danger, but letting the Adult self be in charge). Sometimes a subself will recognise that its function is no longer needed, and volunteer to disappear. This is very poignant.

Here are two examples of how talking to protective subselves and bringing them up to date about the difference between the client's past and the present situation can bring about rapid change.

This first example is horrific:

> *As a child, Glenda had been severely abused and nearly killed by her father. Bleeding, weak, and in shock, she had been lying on a garage floor before being taken back to her house.*
>
> *She had done several years of intensive therapy recovering the memories and coming to terms with this experience.*
>
> *At one point she reported hearing a voice in her head that told her to go into the kitchen, get a butcher knife, and cut her wrists. This was a strong compulsion, and she dealt with it by piling chairs in front of the kitchen door to prevent herself from going in.*
>
> *I began the dialogue by asking permission to talk to the subself, and then I accessed the subself by saying, 'Is it true you told Glenda to go into the kitchen, get a knife and cut her wrists?'*
>
> *"Yes"*
>
> *"Why did you tell her to cut her wrists?"*
>
> *"I wanted to put her out of her misery."*
>
> *"I understand that."*

I felt that I did understand, given what I knew about Glenda's history. I then proceeded to ask the subself a series of questions to bring it up to date about Glenda's present capabilities. This is the heart of the change process.

> *"Are you aware that Glenda is grown up?"*

"'No."

"Well, she is. She is a grown-up woman who has long since left home, and now is quite competent to take care of herself in the world. Now that I point it out, can you see that this is true?"

"Yes."

"Do you have Glenda's best interests at heart?"

> I ask these questions to distinguish a *subself* from an *entity* – a hostile parasitic consciousness that is not an authentic part of the person and does not have the person's best interest at heart. We consider entities in the next section.

"Yes, I do have her best interests at heart."

"Are you aware that your way of trying to take care of her causes her great difficulty?"

"No."

"Well, it does. She is an adult woman who wants to live her life and be happy, and you want to put her out of her misery. Can you see that that stresses her?"

"Yes."

"What do you think you should do?"

"I think I should fade away and leave her alone."

"Will you do that?"

"Yes."

The next week Glenda reported that she no longer heard a voice telling her to cut her wrists – but she certainly felt highly irritable during the week. Perhaps this was the energy of the subself integrating into her larger personality.

Entities

Occasionally the dialogue with a subself might go like this:

> *Jim:" I hear a voice in my head that says, 'Jim, you are a shit'."*
>
> *"May I speak to it?"*
>
> *"Yes."*
>
> *"Why do you tell Jim that he is a shit?"*
>
> *"Because he is."*

Hmm. Where do we go from here? What I have worked out is this: true subselves have the person's best interest at heart. The voice such as Jim heard is not a subself, but a low-level psychic parasite. Some people call them *entities*.

Apparently entities are disincarnate forces that latch onto people at times when they are traumatised or vulnerable, and feed off of them.

But how do you tell the difference between a subself and an entity?

The first clue is the flat negativity of the voice. If I suspect that I am dealing with an entity, I asked three diagnostic questions:

1 Do you have the client's best interest at heart?

2 Are you an authentic part of the client?

3 Do you have a right to be here?

For reasons I do not fathom, it seems that entities are impelled to tell the truth. So when I ask:

Do you have Jim's best interest at heart?

the entity will frankly reply:

No.

However when I ask the third diagnostic question:

Do you have a right to be here?

sometimes the entity will say:

Well, I'm here aren't I?

This does not answer my question. So I simply ask it again:

Do you have a right to be here?

No.

Getting this clarity seems to loosen the entity's hold on the client. I then improvise a procedure to clear the entity. It might be a visualisation along the lines of:

> *Would you be open to going to some place where you are welcome? Yes? Good. Look around. Somewhere in Jim's aura you will see a portal of light. Go through that portal and you will be helped.*

And Jim visualises or senses the entity going through the portal. Afterwards he no longer hears the 'You are a shit' voice.

Are entities real? Who knows? People of all times and cultures believe they have experienced positive or negative beings – which in Western culture may be regarded as angels or devils. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, I choose to act as though they are real.

Entities that I have dealt with seem to be low-level psychic parasites. They do not seem to have a lot of power; they are just undermining and bothersome.

If entities are real, some may be very powerful – and dangerous. The Catholic Church and some healers have methods of exorcism. It may be appropriate to refer the person to such people.

And it could be that some 'voices in the head' are triggered by organic brain damage or toxins. In problematical areas like this we do well to respect our own limits, and not go where we are not qualified.

I include the idea of entities in this book because if you do talk to subselves (which may be a very appropriate thing to do) you could come across entities.

Trauma Release through Shaking

Shaking is a natural way for the nervous system to release trauma. If a gazelle is attacked by a lion, but somehow escapes, apparently it will shake for a moment and then go on about its business.

Humans can also release trauma by shaking. Psychologist David Berceli developed a system to train people to use shaking to release trauma on their own.

In my experience, sometimes shaking – ranging from subtle tremors to strong quivers – can arise spontaneously. If we notice tremors starting to occur, we can 'go with it' and allow the shaking to proceed in its own way. It won't go on forever. Occasionally when I have done EFT I have felt the urge to shake, and I just give over to it.

The beauty about shaking as a form of release is that it is not necessary to re-experience the trauma.

Interrupting Counter-Productive thought Patterns

I sometimes joke that I have a guru. He is a fairly well-known cult figure; you see his face on the cover of *Mad Magazine*. His motto is:

What, me worry?

Sometimes I notice my mind starting to go down a path that I know will not be useful for me. It might be the beginning of worry, for example. It could be a train of thought that leads to resentment. When I notice such a process starting, I simply give my head an abrupt shake. This interrupts the train of thought, and I can remain centred and clear.

Interrupting counter-productive thought patterns

1 Notice that your mind is going down a familiar unproductive path.

2 Give your head a quick side to side shake.

I once read an account of a staff member at a facility for adolescents. When a kid would be in a really out-of-control state, the staff member would grab their shoulders and give a quick shake. This had the same effect: the kid would 'snap out of it'.

Working with Dreams

Dreams are the daily newspaper from the unconscious. They come from various levels. Wandering incoherent dreams are back page stuff, but vivid clear dreams are headline stories from a part of the psyche that wants to help us. These are often the dreams we wake up with. They have striking imagery, and they come at the time when we are most likely to remember them. These dreams alert us to issues, inner and outer – that we need to deal with.

Dreams come from a source outside our conscious ego. That source, for the important dreams, appears to be highly intelligent, creative, wise, and favourably disposed towards us. It is also often humorous, as well as being indirect. It does not tell us things we already know. Nor does it overtly tell us things it might think we should know. It does not lecture, though it may send the same message over and over. It is respectful, like a good friend, and does not force itself upon us. Instead it drops clues – sometimes blatantly – and leaves it up to us to choose whether or not to decipher them.

Dreams communicate things we do not yet understand. They do so in a pictorial language whose meaning is not immediately obvious. Our dreams are always a little bit ahead of us, and it takes a bit of digging to unearth their meaning.

Perhaps this is just as well. If our dreams came in words, we might think we understand their message immediately, without really giving them the thought that would reveal their deeper significance for us.

In this section I describe non-interpretive methods you can use to find the meaning of your own dream. Using these methods will improve your communication with your unconscious, enhance your self-reliance, and develop your creativity. These methods all involve working directly with the productive unconscious. To prepare yourself, here are some observations about creativity and the unconscious.

Productive creativity – the kind that solves problems or initiates new understanding – is a combination of conscious and unconscious processes.

The conscious mind sets the direction, and the unconscious mind goes to work on it. A common experience of this is when people 'sleep on a problem,' and wake up with the answer in the morning.

The productive role of the unconscious is less recognised than it should be – and less cultivated – even though the literature of scientific creativity gives many examples of it. Thus there is a famous story of the chemist Kekulé trying to work out the structure of benzene. He knew the number of carbon and hydrogen atoms that were in a molecule of benzene, but he couldn't see how they fit together. He had a series of dreams on successive nights of snakes chasing their tails. At first he ignored these dreams. Then it occurred to him that they were relevant to his problem. Indeed they were: benzene has a circular structure, with the atoms linked in a chain that loops around and connects like a bracelet.

Similarly, the mathematician Poincaré described a time when, as he was stepping onto a bus, the veil between his conscious mind and the creative working of his unconscious seemed to open, and he saw 'ideas proliferating and combining in all sorts of ways below the level of ordinary awareness.' This story is interesting because it shows that the veil between our conscious ego and our productive unconscious is permeable.

Most problem solving is done through purely conscious activity. If you have a stuck drawer, an upset child, or a car that won't start, you think about it, find the problem, and fix it. But occasionally there are problems that cannot be solved in such a straightforward way. These problems require that we mobilise more of our creative resources. In general terms, how this is done has been known for several decades. There is a sequence of steps that can be described as the 'creative process." I will outline this process, and then show how you can apply it when working on your dreams.

The first step is identifying the problem. The kinds of problems that require the creative process are problems that cannot be solved using your usual mode of thought. You know this by the fact that you work on the problem and you get stuck. Nevertheless, this initial working is an essential step in the creative process. It is direct work on the problem, and will take you

part way towards the solution. It also sets the direction for the unconscious, and prepares the way for what researchers on creativity have called the 'incubation' phase. Incubation occurs after you get stymied. At a certain point you become frustrated with your lack of progress on the problem, and you set it aside. Later, when you come back to the problem you find that you have a fresh insight into it, and make further progress, or even reach a solution.

Sometimes if the problem is particularly difficult you may go through several cycles of working on the problem, becoming frustrated, and leaving it aside only to return to it later. The pay-off for this can be wonderful. It frequently happens that in an off guard moment – such as Poincaré stepping on the bus– the solution pops into your head quite unexpectedly. With it comes a sense of elation – a rush of endorphins that is nature's reward for working so hard and persevering to success. This moment of illumination is called the 'Aha!' experience in the literature on creativity.

I once intentionally set out to create the 'Aha!' experience for myself. I got a book of geometry problems (Polya's *How to Solve It*) and went to work. I picked a set of problems that I thought were within my scope to solve, but which were too difficult for me to solve in one sitting. Schools rarely give students this sort of problem. Instead they give problems you can solve quickly, following a procedure they show you, and you are given poor marks if you don't solve them in the required time. So you never get the prolonged challenge that would activate your productive unconscious. I knew that in undertaking these problems I would become frustrated, but I was OK with that. Frustration is part of the creative process.

My experiment worked. I was taking a shower after having grappled with a particularly difficult problem, and suddenly the geometric pattern that was the key to the solution appeared as a spontaneous visualisation. With it came the elation that classically accompanies such an experience.

In this kind of 'Aha!' experience the creative process operates outside conscious awareness. But sometimes, if we use imagery and rich mental associations in our thinking process, the relationship between

the unconscious mind and the conscious mind becomes more like a dialogue. This is utilised in Synectics, one of the world's great problem solving techniques. Synectics was modelled on the thought processes of professional inventors. William Gordon, who formulated the technique, noted that inventors, after analysing their problem, would often go into a daydream – a kind of reverie in which they played with images and ideas apparently far removed from their initial problem. The fascinating thing was that these daydreams led to unique ideas that solved their problem. For example, Gordon recounts the story of an inventor who had a contract to design an improved altimeter during World War II:

> *The inventor noted that there was a cylinder with a flexible diaphragm in the old altimeter. That was essential, because this was the part that changed as the air pressure changed with altitude. He also noted that a coiled spring led from the diaphragm to a system of gears that translated the movement of the diaphragm into a dial on the pilot's console. The gears obviously didn't work properly at high speed, so the inventor threw them out. But the flat-coiled spring intrigued him, and the inventor went into a reverie on 'spring'. He didn't think about mechanical springs. He thought about his favourite season, with sunshine and blue sky, fresh green grass, and apple blossoms. His reverie led him to imagine a black cat resting on one of these boughs, being gently moved by the breeze.*
>
> *"Ah! What if I put a drop of ink on the spring? I bet the drop of ink will move in almost a straight line when the spring moves in response to the diaphragm." He tried it. It worked. "Great," he thought. "All I have to do is put a needle on the spring and my problem is solved!"*

Imagery, as dreams themselves show, is the natural language of the unconscious. If we play with imagery, we are using the language of the unconscious.

Let's see how these ideas come together. Here is a way to achieve direct recognition of the meaning of our dreams.

Working with dreams

1. Write down your dream, of course – otherwise you are likely to forget it.

2. Write down all the ideas, associations and feelings you have in response to the various element of the dream, and to the dream as a whole. This is the beginning of going into a state of reverie, much as the inventor did.

At first your associations may be close to your ordinary conscious thought. Some of them will probably relate to recent events or to something going on in your current life. Other associations may relate to earlier times in your life – things that partake in the same pattern. Some of the ideas and images that come may not be personal experiences at all, but they are still relevant somehow

3. Persevere with the process, and at a certain point there will be a shift in your consciousness. Something will open up in you, and you will experience ideas and images relevant to the dream – and to your life – welling up from inside of you like water rising in a spring. This is the illumination phase of the creative process. It comes, not as an idea out of the blue, but through a vivid line of imagery and associations that ultimately coalesce into a meaning for us that is *self-evident and compelling.*

As in Seeking Guidance, this meaning is not necessarily something that flatters us. It is likely to bring our attention to an area where we are out of balance. However, whatever it is, it is useful. It points the way to some inner choice or outer adjustment that will be valuable for us to make. And

because we have worked it out for ourselves, rather than being told by an external authority, we 'own the solution', and are more likely to actually make the relevant changes.

There is another valuable way of experientially getting to the meaning of dreams, which is to tell the dream from the standpoint of *being one of the figures in the dream*. The view here, popularised in Gestalt Therapy, is that each element of the dream represents an aspect of our own psyche, even if it seems to be about other people. By 'identifying' with that element we tap into the field of meaning that goes with it.

Another way to work with dreams is to tell the dream in the first person present, step by step, as though we were watching a movie, except we are *in* the movie. When we get to the point where the dream ended, we continue the movie as a fantasy. This is particularly good for dreams in which we are chased or frightened by something. Running from frightening figures in our dreams gives them power. We regain our strength – and establish appropriate mastery in the realm of our unconscious – by confronting such figures. This is especially valuable with repetitive dreams.

We have to mobilise our inner resources to confront the frightening figures. It is essential that we master these elements of our unconscious, and not let them master us. To this end we can recruit any resources we may need. We can enlist friends and allies, give ourselves special imaginary nets or weapons, and so forth.

However, it is valuable to note that using force is not the only way to achieve this. We can use friendly means as well. For example, if the frightening figure is a bear, we might imagine feeding the bear massive amounts of honey – whereupon it might spontaneously become friendly and docile.

Working experientially with dreams in these ways is similar to the St. Francis Process. The inner imagery takes on an autonomous life of its own. There is a constructive interaction between our conscious mind and the imagery that comes from unconscious sources. We work something through, and feel better for it.

However, some nightmares are so horrendous that it does not seem appropriate to apply any of the above techniques. For example, a friend of mine dreamed that a dog was paddling in a swimming pool, and a man jumped in and drowned it. Not having the heart to suggest identifying with the dog or the man, it occurred to me to ask if I might talk to the *source* of the dream directly. Permission was given, and I asked the source why this dream had manifested at this time. Haltingly, with great effort, as though from a distance, the source of the dream explained. My friend had two very young nieces staying with her. The source of the dream was saying that there was someone nearby who could be dangerous to the young nieces. My friend recognised who that person was, and she immediately saw the steps she could take to make sure the girls were safe.

There is no single right way to deal with dreams. Whichever ways we choose, working directly with our dreams can make our inner and outer lives richer and more fulfilled.

Working on oneself in the ways we have described enables us to gradually but steadily clear up distortions in our thinking and feeling based on past traumas and misconceptions. It also increases our range of creativity, because all the processes described are in fact creativity procedures. In talking to subselves we are doing a version of improvisational acting. With Option Process we are analytically getting to the depths of a problem. In the St. Francis Process and when identifying with figures in our dreams we are using visual imagery – the same imagery used in invention and storytelling.

Seeking Guidance

I believe that each of us has access to a source of wisdom that is separate from our conscious ego. Apparently some of our more powerful dreams come from that source of wisdom. The Quakers, who attend in silence during their meetings, call it 'the still small voice'.

Here I present a way of contacting our source of wisdom directly. It is called Seeking Guidance. It is useful to seek guidance about major personal decisions, inner conflicts, and interpersonal issues. Seeking guidance enables you to tap into an intuitive source of wisdom that often illuminates important aspects of the situation that you had overlooked in your conscious deliberations. It is not always complimentary towards your ego, but true guidance is always supportive in its spirit.

Here is an example:

> *A brilliant long-range policy planner kept stacks of clippings from newspapers and magazines, which she intended to 'sort through and organise' some day. Surely they would be useful to somebody, she thought. Having this undone homework was a significant drain on her energy, and her friends urged her to just throw the stack out. She never listened to them. But when she sought guidance about the issue her guidance said:*
>
> *Dear Maria,*
>
> *You are constipated and it is spoiling your life.*
>
> *The stack was half gone within a week, and totally cleared out by the end of the month.*

The process of seeking guidance has two steps. In the first step we *clarify* our own thinking about an issue. In the second step we *relinquish* our own viewpoint, and open ourselves to receiving guidance from a source of wisdom beyond ourselves.

The first step, clarifying our own position, is very important. It enables us to know where we stand in ourselves. This strengthens our ego, so that we can open to guidance without feeling helpless. Guidance is simply guidance, a viewpoint to be considered. It is up to us, in our adult self, to make the decisions about what we actually do with our lives. (There are people who totally surrender their lives to following the prompting of

spirit. While that is a path to be honoured, it is not for everybody, and it is not what is being suggested here.)

Seeking Guidance

1. Begin by writing down all your thoughts and feelings about the issue that concerns you. Note the main elements of the issue, and any relevant associations you may have. Consider whether there is any structure or pattern to them.

Now draw your own conclusion as to what you should do.

2. Let your mind go blank, as much as possible. Release whatever conclusion you have drawn, and pray to a higher source of wisdom for guidance about the issue. You might pray to God, or to your Higher Self. I write this prayer in the form of a letter:

> *Dear Higher Self,*
>
> *I am in this dilemma* (describing the dilemma). *I think I should do this* (giving the conclusion you just reached). *I ask for guidance about this issue.*

Having offered the prayer, relax and listen internally for a response. (For me the response usually comes as words forming in my mind, but it could come as feelings or as visual images.)

3. If your response comes through words, write them as though a letter were being dictated to you. If the response is feelings or images, attend to them until you are clear about their meaning.

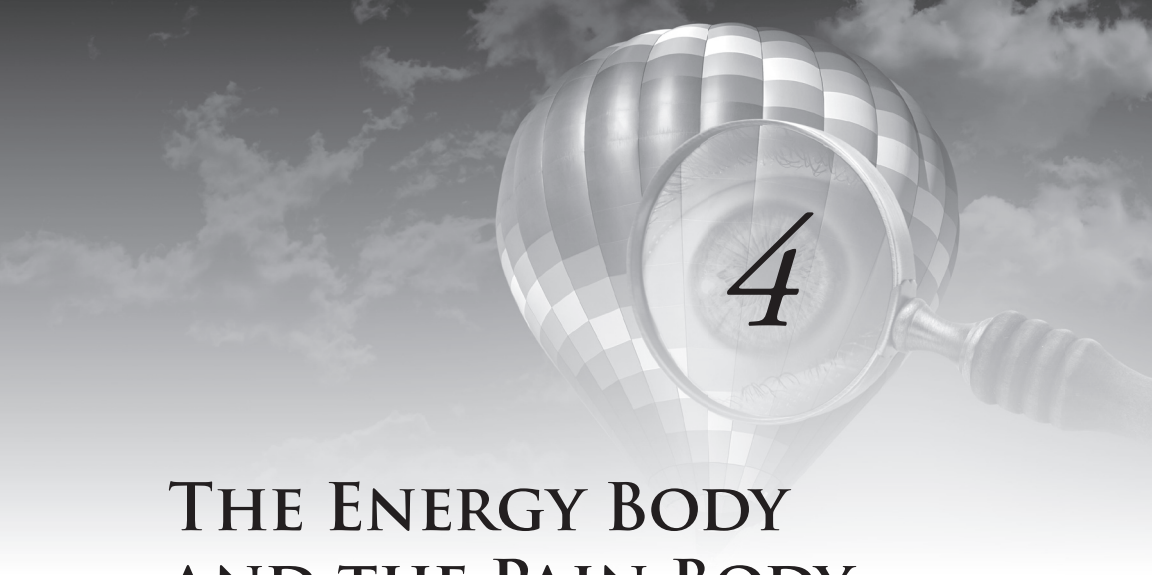
You can "prime the pump' by writing something you already know to be true about the situation. Once you start writing, keep going - a classic writer's technique.

4. Review your guidance, and then *make your own decision* as to what you are going to do.

When you open yourself to deeper intuitive levels of the psyche in this way, there is no guarantee that you will always open to positive layers of the psyche. If your intent is positive, you will generally reach a genuinely wise source. But sometimes as you write you may recognise that the level you have reached is negative or self-serving. Wise guidance may be confronting or embarrassing, but it always has a clear or sweet quality about it. It comes from a place of good will. The negative levels are not so sweet. It is not *bad* to contact negative levels; indeed it is good for us to recognise such levels in ourselves. Rather than edit out the negative as it comes through, simply mark it off in brackets as you write. Keep writing until the guidance becomes sweet and clear again. Continue until it feels finished.

At the end, review the guidance. Whatever you receive needs to be reviewed rationally. Does it make sense? Does it seem right?

In my experience the guidance that comes through often brings in highly relevant aspects of the situation that I have not thought about. Some guidance simply orients us, or confirms us in our path. Other guidance may suggest definite action or steps to take.



4

The Energy Body and the Pain Body

I love this Buddhist prayer:

> *May you be free from suffering*
> *May you know the joy of your own true nature*
> *May you be happy*
> *May you be at peace*

There is a view common to many spiritual disciplines around the world that within each of us is a spark of the divine. One gateway to experiencing it is what spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle calls the 'energy body'.

Some years ago, presumably as a result of all the inner work I had done, I noticed that I was having times of 'un-caused joy'. I also noticed that when I sensed inside myself – perhaps when I was going to sleep – I would experience a sense of quiet pleasure or even bliss.

I think this is the 'energy body' and to me it corresponds with that line in the Buddhist prayer: *May you know the joy of your own true nature.*

So here is another use of our Witness: sensing within ourselves; attempting to become aware of our energy body. The experience will not be well-defined. It will be diffuse, but it can be quite vivid.

Experiencing the energy body is pleasurable in its own right, so it needs no justification.

However, the more grounded we are in our energy body the more emotionally resilient we are.

Sensing the energy body

Close your eyes and observe what you sense inside. In contrast to the sharp sensations that may accompany, say, abdominal pains, you may sense something that is diffuse and pleasurable. It could be a kind of tingling.

Some people sense the energy body right away. For others it is not so obvious at first.

The following Taoist exercise may increase your internal sensation sufficiently to bring the presence of the energy body into your awareness. It is called the Inner Smile.

Smiles have energy. A warm smile broadcasts good vibes, as they say. Just as we can send a smile externally, so we can also send the energy of a smile to ourselves.

The Inner Smile

Send a smile to your inside, and notice your response.

Sometimes when people do this they feel a heightened sense of pleasure inside. This is their energy body. It is really simple; nothing esoteric. When we send a smile to our insides we enliven ourselves.

Clearing the roots of our emotional disturbances using methods such as EFT is a direct approach to freeing ourselves from suffering. This makes experiencing 'the joy of our own true nature' more possible.

I do not think the process is necessarily linear. We can experience our energy body without having completely cleared all of our emotional stuff, and once we begin to sense our energy body we may well still have a great deal of inner clearing to do. However, it may be that the more grounded we are in the energy body – i.e. the more alive and pleasurable we feel inside – the less likely we are to become caught up in our pain body.

In any case, pausing throughout the day to tune into our energy body will strengthen our awareness of it, and contribute to our well-being.

Indeed, we can maintain some internal awareness of the energy body as we go about practical things such as driving or cooking – or even reading a book like this.

Tuning into our energy body

Throughout the day occasionally pause to sense your energy body.

There may be moments when you are spontaneously aware of the energy body. You may sense pleasurable excitement, joy or quiet bliss. Rather than pass over these moments, I suggest you give yourself time to savour them.

The Power of Now

As I have noted, Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now* has been extremely useful in my own journey.

At the beginning of *The Power of Now* Tolle describes how he fell into what I call 'accidental enlightenment'. Something happened internally. He was not seeking it, but as a result he ended up in a state of bliss that lasted for months.

When I first began to read *The Power of Now* I stopped after the first few pages. I stopped because I experienced what psychologist Eugene Gendlin calls a 'felt shift'. Something changed inside, and I felt somehow 'deeper' inside. This is woolly language, I know … but that is how it is when we are dealing with the energy body.

I think that it was not so much Tolle's language that affected me. His language is quite straightforward. Rather, I think it was the place he was coming from.

This happened three times. I read the first few pages, felt a shift in myself, a deepening, and stopped there. Finally I decided to go ahead and read the rest of the book.

Tolle is an astute observer of how the mind works; in philosophy he would be called a phenomenologist.

Tolle's theme is about being present in the moment, and how being present is a gateway to a deeper awareness of 'our own true nature', and the deeper Being that is the source of all.

This is 'mystical' language, not to everyone's taste.

Whether or not we accept the implied metaphysics does not matter. We are talking about a journey to inner peace, pleasure and well-being by clearing out our negativities, and enjoying the ensuing pleasure that can arise.

Inner Being and Outer Circumstance

Here is another valuable tip from Tolle: *despite whatever turmoil we may have in our outer lives, our inner Being is calm.*

I find that just commenting to myself, "That is external circumstance," often serves to cue me in to my energy body, and to the calm/pleasure that goes with it.

Awareness of Aliveness

Architect Christopher Alexander noted that some some forms of architecture make us feel more alive while others deaden us. He wrote a book, *A Pattern Language*, that articulates some of the design patterns that tend to promote the feeling of aliveness; for example, having windows on more than one wall. He notes that it is not a mechanical procedure, however. When his own buildings are being constructed, he goes on site to fine-tune the precise layout of walls and windows, in order to achieve the feeling of aliveness he is seeking.

Alexander was commissioned to design an inexpensive housing complex in Mexico. He incorporated motifs that were common in Mexican architecture into his design, along with his insights into designing for aliveness. The outcome was so effective that one worker commented "My wife and I used to go out drinking on Saturday nights. Now we like being in our house so much that we stay home and talk."

Not just architecture, but the design of implements and furniture, the stories we read and hear in the media, and the quality of conversation with our friends can tend to make us feel more alive or less alive. Although ideally we remain anchored in the pleasure of our energy body inside, in my experience these external circumstances make a difference.

If so, it makes sense to assess the quality of the field we are in, and gravitate towards and amplify those things that tend to make us feel more alive.

The Pain Body

It happens sometimes that a couple may be getting along amicably, even lovingly, and then out of the blue they have a fight. One person makes a sharp remark, the partner retorts in kind, the energy escalates – and before they know it they are in a full-on domestic conflict.

Nothing lasts forever, and eventually the energy runs down and they are back to normal. They may wonder 'What was that about?'

One view is that their 'pain bodies' were having a feed. The pain body, as described by Eckhart Tolle, is a kind of crude intelligence in the psyche that feeds on negativity. It is formed from unresolved trauma from the past.

So in our hypothetical example, the pain body of one of the couple was hungry. It initiated a provocation. The pain body of the other party responded, and the fight ensued. When both pain bodies were satiated, the fight stopped.

Tolle's advice, which I think is wise, is to be alert and catch the first stirring of the pain body – the beginnings of anger – and choose to not give it energy. By not allowing the energy of your pain body to run unchecked you starve it. In time its force within your psyche will diminish or disappear.

George Thompson made a remark that relates to this in his book, *Verbal Judo*. His advice to guys was: *If you do not learn to check your sharp retort you will end up sleeping in the truck – or getting divorced*.

It is truly valuable to free ourselves from the pain body. Self-observation and restraint can be and are powerful. Sometimes there is a faster way, and that is to use EFT. Here is my own story:

> *I was in a relationship where from my point of view out of the blue, my partner would begin to harangue me. I might stay centred for a little bit, but all too soon my anger would rise in response, and we would get into a shit fight. Frankly, I was as bad as she was.*

The thing was, I thought my anger was normal. After all, 'anybody' would respond with hostility to such attacks.

Nevertheless, one day I decided to tap on my anger. I had some time in the house by myself. So I tapped on the last time my partner had provoked me… and then on earlier incidents. I ended up tapping on things that occurred before I ever met her.

After about 40 minutes I felt that I had done as much as I could. I was curious to see what would happen next.

About ten days later my partner suddenly began to harangue me yet again. She was extremely vitriolic. For my part, I noticed that I was simply cheerful inside. Of course I was aware that she was haranguing me, but I had no anger reaction in response. It was quite natural for me to stay present with her.

After a time her anger ran out. To my surprise she commented, "You know, Andrew, I think this is not about you at all. I think that it's about my mother."

The Collective Pain Body

Can there be a collective pain body? I think that Goya's *Colossus* portrays the collective Spanish pain body of his time.

We see a giant figure crushing people in his hand. Down below, people, cattle and a covered oxcart are fleeing in panic.

In Goya's *The Executions of the Third of May, 1808* we see the collective pain body at work up close. An impersonal line of soldiers follows orders to shoot, impervious to the agonised appeals of those being shot.

The collective pain body has real-world effects. It is a force that wants to sabotage and hurt. It fosters wars, the atomic bomb, the use of depleted uranium in Afghanistan, the US refusal to allow medical supplies for children into Iraq, institutionalised climate change denial, American support for dictators, and much more.

What is the antidote to the pain body? At an individual level, it is to be alert to pain body impulses, and to choose to not give them energy … or better yet, to disarm the impulses through techniques such as EFT.

In terms of the collective pain body, the antidote starts at the personal level. We refuse to accede to either the blandishments or the fear fostered by those who would attempt to activate our pain bodies - by portraying other countries as evil demons, with ourselves as the 'good guys'. Not that countries cannot behave in evil ways.

In the long run the antidote to the collective pain body is to refuse to give energy to it. This means reducing and finally eliminating military budgets, breaking up the large impersonal corporate conglomerates, and electing political representatives who genuinely want to work for the common good.

5

Emotional disturbance and social action

There is a Quaker joke:

> One Friend says to another, "All the world is crazy except thee and me … and sometimes I'm not so sure about thee!"

Our actions can have more than one motivation. There can be a conscious positive intent combined with an unconscious emotional driver.

This story illustrates the principle:

> I was part of a study group in Washington DC where we explored the connections between the issues we were concerned about in the outer world and our own psychological dynamics.
>
> One of our members was a lawyer. Let's call her Sue. During one session Sue said that she was starting a legal initiative to help kids who had been abused. Something about the way she described the project moved one of

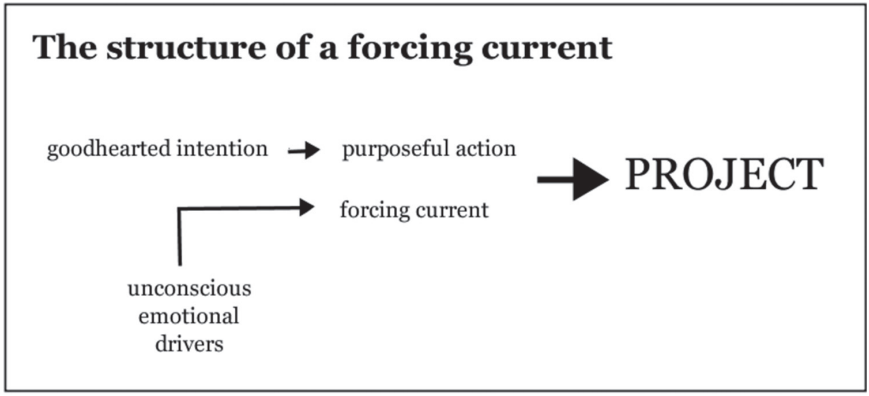
> our members to comment, "Sue, it sounds to me as though you have some 'forcing current' going on. There is something about the way you are talking about your project that suggests that you have more investment in it than just wanting to help kids. Would you be willing to explore this?"
>
> Well, Sue was willing, and what followed was a lengthy exploration that finally brought up a memory of Sue being hit when she was quite young. Sue was surprised by the memory, and when it popped up someone alertly commented, "Sue, that was child abuse!"
>
> Ah – the penny dropped. While Sue's project was valid in its own right – indeed, it was truly laudable – at another level *Sue was trying to make the world safe for her injured child of the past*. This was producing a certain unconscious insistence, a 'forcing current' that was bound to produce resistance in people. And of course such an unconscious project was inherently unfulfillable. No one can make the world safe for the child of their past, although we may make the world safer for children of the future.
>
> Becoming conscious of the unconscious motivation behind her agenda – and releasing it – left Sue free to pursue her project without past psychological stuff getting in the way.

A *forcing current* is a quality of insistence that is driven by unconscious factors. It is not easy to detect in ourselves, because to ourselves we simply seem to be passionate. And our passion is a good thing.

But others may sense it – or think that we sense it. I was active in a psychologically oriented spiritual community in Washington DC. We were all on a path of self-discovery, so it was appropriate confront each other if we felt that some kind of psychological distortion was operating.

But the fact that we think we see a distortion doesn't mean that we are necessarily correct. It could be our own projection. So the recommendation in our community when we were confronted was to *not* 'defend ourselves', but simply to *consider what truth, if any, is in the confrontation*. Of course it was up to us to decide what to do with any insights we may have gained.

The Structure of a Forcing Current



Indications of a Forcing Current

- Insisting that 'our' pet issue is more important than all other issues.
- Insisting that our point of view is the right point of view.
- And thus passionately arguing against other people's point of view without attempting to understand them.

Dealing with Our Own Forcing Current

The first step would be to note your own quality of insistence – your own forcing current. At first sight this forcing current might simply seem to be passion to you. Perhaps it is. But if you conclude that you do have a

forcing current going on, then you might be able to resolve it by reflecting to see if you can discover the childhood basis for your attachment. This is not necessarily easy.

Another approach is to do EFT (the tapping technique mentioned above) on your forcing current, or to use the St. Francis Process to meet the unknown part of you that carries the forcing current.

Resolving your forcing current will not make you less passionate, because it does not diminish the real value of the project you are passionate about. Rather, you will be more resilient and adaptable in how you pursue it.

If you are inexperienced in exploring your own psychological drivers, it could be helpful to work with a psychotherapist or energy psychology practitioner for a time. You would gain experience in doing 'inner work'; this will equip you to work on your own later.

The Tail Wagging the Dog

I am the instigator of the Great Transition Initiative – a citizen-led educational initiative for transformational social change.

My view about social change is that we must *change all the major drivers that make global warming and other environmental and social issues worse*. I call this a 'whole system change' to a life-affirming global culture. There are no silver bullets; there is no one single factor that will make things come right.

Sometimes when people hear about the Great Transition Initiative their forcing current kicks in. They get excited because they think that the Great Transition Initiative will be a vehicle to pursue their own special agenda. They think that their special agenda should become the entirety of what the Great Transition Initiative is about. I call this 'the tail wagging the dog'.

If a person is deeply attached to the view that *their thing* should become the *whole thing*, then there is no basis for us to collaborate. I find this regrettable, because the issues such people care about are important – they are part of the change we need – but only a part.

6

Using attention to improve performance

We all function in the world. How accurately do we see it, though? Things may seem fresh and new the first time we see them. But the mind can quickly habituate, and many of us have been taught to see in stereotyped ways. That is why I say:

To see reality is a great creative act.

Otherwise we see what we *expect* to see, and miss the nuances.

My teacher Moshe Feldenkrais commented that if we know what we are doing, we have the possibility of improving it. Observing carefully how we do what we do is another use of our Witness function. We can become aware of faults or glitches in our performance. And by paying close attention to exactly *how* we produce those glitches, we can identify what we need to change.

In what follows I will give several examples of how accurate perception can improve our performance.

Awareness through Movement

Feldenkrais Awareness through Movement lessons are designed to enable us to pay close attention to how we move – and to make discoveries that improve our coordination.

I recommend doing a series of say, five Awareness Through Movement lessons with a Feldenkrais practitioner. This will transform your appreciation of your own body, and greatly heighten your capacity for self-observation.

Paying Close Attention can Improve Any Skill

I used to regularly go to a local park to do Tai Chi. Almost every time I would make some new discovery. One time it might be sensing how the ball of my foot supported me during a turn. Another time it might be sensing the alignment of the top of my head. I was able to integrate these discoveries, so that the quality of a Tai Chi form improved over time.

This idea is certainly not unique to me. Skilled musicians know that practising *routinely* will not take them very far. Rather, they practice with awareness, paying close attention to their execution and what the music itself requires. Thus they can improve their performance.

Know thine Enemy

Near the end of the Harry Potter series (I'm an unabashed fan), Dumbledore, the powerful 'good' wizard and Headmaster of Hogwarts, announces that he will give Harry personal instruction.

"Wow," exclaims Hermione. "I wonder what he will teach you? Really advanced defensive magic, probably…"

Clearly Dumbledore wants to prepare Harry to deal with Voldemort, the evil wizard who is determined to kill Harry. So of course powerful spells with which to fight Voldemort would seem to be in order.

But Dumbledore does not teach Harry defensive spells. Instead, Dumbledore takes him through a series of memories acquired from various people which enable Harry to *understand how Voldemort thinks*. At the end, after Dumbledore has died, this proves crucial, because Harry has to find and destroy powerful magical objects that Voldemort has hidden if he is to be able to defeat Voldemort himself.

Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin worked in a print shop in Philadelphia. His employer was often contemptuous of him, and did not treat Franklin well. However, Franklin went to England and learned the latest printing techniques in London. When he returned, he was again hired by the same employer. However this time is employer was surprisingly friendly. He asked Franklin to teach his staff what he had learned.

Franklin did this. But he put two and two together and worked out that once the staff was trained up, the employer would fire him. Just before this happened, Franklin resigned. He took half the staff with him and set up his own printing business.

Paying Attention to How People Think

These stories exemplify another important use of our capacity to pay attention: not just observing what people do, but working out *how they think*.

Here is another story that illustrates this approach:

> *I once tutored a bright student who used to get excellent grades in mathematics. But now he wasn't doing so well.*

My way of exploring what was going on was to ask him to do this fantasy:

> Imagine that you are walking down the hall towards the examination room. You sit down. The test is about to start. Tell me each thing that you do from there on…

I had no idea what the outcome of this would be. But it was useful. It turned out that the student had developed the habit of doing the problems in his head to keep himself from being bored during maths classes. But now the problems were too complicated to solve in his head.

It became obvious to him that he should break down the problems and work them through step-by-step. Doubtless his teachers had told him to do that. Now he could see the necessity for himself.

Here is a darker story:

A US Secretary of State once said, "Why should I try to understand the Russians?"

Regrettable! By choosing not to understand the Russians, America was able to maintain the stance that Russia was America's enemy.

After the collapse of the USSR there was the opportunity for a 'peace dividend' with far less money going into armaments. But in fact America increased its arms budget, and ignored Russian overtures towards rapprochement. What is the thinking in back of this?

Currently (in 2017) Russia, China and the United States all have missiles that are so fast and manoeuvrable that they are literally unstoppable. If it came to war, each could take out the other's capital cities, and nuclear war would be probable. So one may wonder, *what is the thinking that leads*

the United States to station missiles in Europe within striking distance of St Petersburg, and to conduct large-scale NATO military exercises in Poland on the Russian border?

We need not try to answer that here. It is sufficient to know that it is demented, and that the nuclear winter following a nuclear war would wipe out most of the large animals on earth, including humans.

Thinking to Improve Thinking

The Feldenkrais method enables people to move with greater ease and less pain. It is based on the insight that movement is self-taught. We each work out how to move, and often the ways we work out are inefficient. This inefficiency can result in pain, or at least awkwardness. However, our coordination can be improved.

Feldenkrais practitioners are trained to observe precisely how a person organises their movement to create the difficulties they experience. Here is a simple example.

> *At a garden party in Tel Aviv a little girl is sitting on the ground trying to catch a ball. It is a very light ball – like a small balloon – and the adults throw it to her gently. However, it hits her in the face every time and she cries. But she wants to play.*
>
> *The adults can see that something is wrong. But they do not see exactly what is wrong. Except for one. Moshe Feldenkrais carefully observes how she goes about trying to catch the ball. He notices that as the ball comes in she opens her arms wide. Obviously this does not work.*
>
> *Compassionately, Feldenkrais sits on the ground behind her. As the ball comes in he gently closes her arms. Ah! After a few trials she gets the idea and does it herself.*

In the story, Feldenkrais didn't just observe that 'something was wrong'. He worked out *precisely what she was doing that created the difficulty* (this is what I did with the bright student who had trouble with math). However, Feldenkrais did not stop with the analysis. He went on to *improve her understanding* of how to actually catch the ball.

As a Feldenkrais practitioner, if somebody comes to me complaining about pain in their right knee, I do not try to fix the right knee. Instead, I look to see what they are doing with their whole body that puts stress on their right knee, but not on their left. Perhaps it has something to do with the way they organise their feet, hips, shoulders or neck. The body works as a whole, and imbalance in one part of the body can induce stress in another.

So I do a *systems analysis.* The great Feldenkrais question is: *How is this system organised to make the symptoms we don't want worse?* Asking this question shifts our perception from the symptom to the larger system. We then know what to change to get a permanent improvement. In our next section we will see how this idea applies to global social change.

From Symptom to System

Globally, massive fires and floods are increasing, and many people recognise that there is a connection with global warming (as do meteorological organisations and all the major scientific bodies in the world). But relatively few see global warming as a symptom of a larger system. They may say that we should 'stop global warming', or 'get out of fossil fuels', but few say that we should change the whole system that makes global warming worse.

If we ask *What makes global warming worse?* it becomes evident that there are no silver bullets or simple solutions. There are a number of major factors that make global warming worse. They include inefficient industrial design, industrial agriculture, deforestation, the large trade

agreements … and public ignorance of the consequences of current trends.

Solving global warming requires changing all of these factors – a whole system change. To what? To a life-affirming global culture, rather than continuing on our current path of sure ecological self-destruction.

7

Workshops on the Fly

While I hope that you will find the ideas in this book very useful for your own development, this book is written in a larger context. We live in an environmentally self-destructing culture, and we need to turn things around.

Technological changes, such as renewable energy, are part of what is needed. However, much more is involved. We must become the kind of people who can create and enjoy a life-sustaining society. This means that we must open up our creativity, resolve our emotional baggage, think more deeply, celebrate our joy in life, and take personal responsibility for the well-being of our communities – and now the whole planet.

Put another way, we must mature as a species. We currently act as irresponsible adolescents, distracted by entertainment and readily beguiled into war.

Of course this description does not apply to all of us. For decades a wonderful human potential movement has been under way. Millions of us are involved in meditation, mindful self-compassion, psychotherapy, yoga, Feldenkrais, and martial arts such as Aikido. All of these are aspects of healthy cultural evolution, and we need to speed it up.

You can contribute to this by offering 'workshops on the fly' to your friends and business colleagues. Workshops on the fly are short exercises

that introduce people to new skills that they may find valuable. This book has many such exercises, starting with introducing people to the idea of the Witness.

Other sources of exercises include:

Creative Conversations

> A manual of games and exercises that introduce playful thinking and communication skills used by great innovators

Kitchen Table Conversations

> A set of teaching modules to enable people to grasp why we need transformative system change, and how we can accomplish it.

Well, there can *seem* to be a reason not to do this. Offering to teach somebody something new does not fit into normal social conventions. We could feel awkward in even suggesting such a thing. However, if it is the case that rapid social evolution is necessary to have a hope a positive future, then we need to go past such inhibitions.

Let's embrace a big vision! Let's catalyse a new renaissance of learning and personal development. Let's make creative playfulness, thoughtful conversations, and commitment to cultural transformation an accepted – indeed celebrated – way of relating in our time. This in fact was the norm when Greek civilisation was at its peak (at least for upper-class men).

Cities such as Berlin, London, Paris and Warsaw have all fostered an active cafe life involving intellectuals and artists. Now, as many things are becoming 'democratised' – available to all of us – let us democratise the brilliant use of our creativity, intellect and sense of social responsibility.

8

Concluding Remarks

In the *Object Concentration* exercise we gave ourselves the instruction:

> *When my mind goes away, I will notice that it has gone away, and bring it back.*

The habit of being present to our energy body, witnessing our thoughts and emotional reactions, and paying close attention to people and the natural world can yield many rewards:

> Neurologically, paying close attention directly cultivates *emotional resilience*. It strengthens the circuit between the forebrain and the emotional brain. We become less prone to being overwhelmed by emotional reactions.
>
> Paying close attention when we are talking with friends – or anyone – opens a *channel of communication*. Our open regard literally makes it easier for our friends to talk to us. Perhaps it also makes us more likely to pick up the clues when someone is trying to con us.
>
> Using our Witness also makes us more attuned to *noting 'occasions of upset'* – and this is the first step to resolving them. If we do not attend to our occasions of upset we are

likely to repeat them over and over, with the energy drain and misery that goes with them.

I wish you well on your journey. The happier we personally become, the better it is for those around us, because we all affect each other for better or for worse. An old song goes, "When you're smilin', keep on smilin'; the whole world smiles with you…"

And if perhaps you go further, and introduce friends to the concept of the Witness and to some of the tools in this book, you are contributing to the cultural evolution towards sanity and goodwill that is essential for humanity to pull out of our current ecological nosedive, reverse warmongering, and transition to a future worth living for coming generations. I would like to think that you will do this.

Andrew Gaines
+61 2 8005-8382
Skype: andrewgoodhumour
andrew.gaines@inspiringtransition.net
www.inspiringtransition.net
Accelerating the Great Transition to a life-sustaining society!

Appendix 1

Option Process Transcript

The following session transcript covers several pages. You will see a client going into a 'loop', and how trying a different tack helps her go beyond the loop. At the end the client is supported in forming a constructive relationship with her inner child.

Transcript

Janet is the 16-year-old daughter of a friend of mine.

AG: Can you think of an occasion of upset that you would like to explore?

Janet: Yes. I went to a social gathering with some friends in Sydney, and felt really intimidated by the people that were there. I felt looked down upon, and that I had to prove myself. I was really annoyed and angry, that they prejudged me.

AG: What about them prejudging you didn't you like?

Janet: They knew nothing about me. They judged me on the fact that I came from Newcastle and therefore must be inferior.

AG: So it's the experience of being judged – judged as inferior.

Janet: Yeah.

AG: What about being judged as inferior makes you uncomfortable?

Janet: Because I don't feel that I am inferior to them. I think that was wrong, a misjudgement.

> [At this point Janet is in a loop – (I don't like being judged because the judgement is wrong – and she is unable to go deeper.]

AG: Let's presume that it was wrong.

Janet (laughs): I should hope so!

AG: This may seem like a funny question. See what answer comes to your mind when I ask it. What about the experience of being judged wrongly, as inferior, makes you uncomfortable?

Janet expresses puzzlement.

AG: Well there is something about it you don't like.

Janet: Yeah. It's the fact that I don't think I am inferior, and they are judging me as inferior. And the assumption that they must be better than me, because they come from Sydney, and I come from Newcastle.

> [We are still in the loop.]

AG: I understand the structure of the situation. It's the big city/small town syndrome, eh?

Janet: Yeah.

AG: And there is no question that you were angry about being treated in this way.

Janet: I felt uncomfortable too because I was conscious, and I felt like I had to prove to them that just because I was from Newcastle didn't mean that I was inferior.

AG: And what if you didn't prove it to them?

Janet: Then they are going to keep thinking that I am inferior.

AG: Yes ... and what's wrong with them thinking like that?

Janet: Because it's wrong. I don't agree with it. But if I was really so confident I suppose I wouldn't care what they thought.

Here Janet begins to break out of the loop and go deeper.

AG: That's a possible position, isn't it?

Janet: Yeah.

AG: Recognising that, we see that at the time it did bother you. So it would be nice if you could come to a state where whatever they thought, it wouldn't bother you.

> [Setting a positive goal for the session.]

Janet: That would be nice!

AG: If they thought you were inferior, I presume you felt less acceptable to them.

> [Here I attempt to break the loop by finding a slightly different language for the same situation.]

Janet: I don't know. Maybe.

AG: It sounds like it was to some degree important to you that they be wrong (in their judgement of her). Was that the case?

Janet: Not necessarily. I didn't like the fact that they didn't know me – and judged me. If they decided after they had gotten to know me they didn't like me, I'd just accept it ... tough luck.

AG: But they decided before they met you - a form of prejudice.

AG: You already told me the answer to this, but I didn't get it. What about them being prejudiced towards you makes you angry?

Janet: That it is wrong to judge people before you know them.

AG: What about it being wrong bothers you?

Janet: Because it is preconceived thought or opinion that hasn't been investigated or backed up. It's like racism...

AG: Yes. So you were experiencing being the victim of racist attitudes

Janet: Yeah.

AG: Sometimes the things that make us upset have what I call 'irrational' roots. They are not exactly fitting to the situation.

Janet: Do you mean like me being a bit insecure to begin with?

AG: Yes.

Janet (laughs): That's probably true, too.

AG (laughs with her): Tell me about that.

Janet: Well, I think if I was more confident in myself, and less insecure, even if that was the case I would be able to ignore it, or overlook it, or – as you said – even laugh at it.

AG: So, at one level, I think there is something healthy in your response. No one wants to be the victim of racism. There can be a righteous anger that is part of our spiritual heritage. But you've also said, 'Well, there may be a little bit of insecurity in there'. So ... what about being judged unfairly makes you feel insecure?

Janet: I have been judged unfairly.

AG: That sounds like an echo of some insecurity which you have.

Janet (nervous laugh): Yeah, probably. I don't like going into a big group of people and not knowing them to begin with. That makes me feel uncomfortable to begin with.

AG: Let's explore that uncomfortableness, shall we?

Janet: Yes.

AG: As I ask the questions, just let whatever answer comes into your mind just come out.... What about the prospect of being in a larger group makes you feel uncomfortable?

Janet: Feeling scared that I won't fit in, I guess.

AG: What about the anticipation of not fitting in makes you feel uncomfortable?

Janet: I don't like being disliked or looked upon as a misfit.

AG: So you *expect* that you might be looked upon as a misfit.

Janet: I don't expect it, but it is always a possibility.

AG: So you fear it.

Janet: Yes.

AG: What about the prospect of being seen as a misfit frightens you?

Janet: I don't know.

AG: Let me just ask the question again, and see what happens. What about the prospect of being seen as a misfit frightens you?

Janet: Because I don't think I am one?

AG: Now that's the defensive answer.

Janet (laughing): All right, all right. If you are a misfit, you are usually very much alone. It's loneliness, maybe.

AG: What about the prospect of being alone makes you feel uncomfortable?

Janet: It is not so much being alone, as being lonely.

AG: So what about the prospect of being lonely makes you uncomfortable?

Janet: I don't know. I don't like being lonely.

AG: Being lonely is the experience of wanting to be with some people.

> [My tactic here was like what I do with 'shame'. Structurally, loneliness implies relationship – or lack of relationship – with other people. So we expand the field of consideration to include the other people.]

Janet: Yes.

AG: Being accepted by them.

Janet: Yeah.

AG: So what we've got so far is that the little funny feeling you get when meeting a large group of people has underneath it this fear of not being accepted so you will feel lonely.

Janet: Yeah.

AG: What about the prospect of having the experience of being lonely bothers you?

Janet: Because I don't like pain.

AG: There are certain kinds of pain you can tolerate – having your hair combed, for example.

Janet: You mean like physical pain, as compared with emotional pain.

AG: Yes. You can take a little bit of physical pain, but this kind of emotional pain is harder for you.

Janet: Yeah.

AG: Why?

Janet: Because when you are combing your hair, you can remove the comb. It is harder to remove this kind of emotional pain.

AG: They are actually quite different kinds of solutions. You can make the comb stop, but you can't necessarily make somebody appear who will accept you and make the loneliness stop. So there is no guarantee the loneliness will stop.

Janet: I guess there are solutions. Like if you were feeling lonely, you could ring up a friend with whom you had already established a relationship.

AG: I would guess that you probably have more than one such friend.

Janet: Yeah. But sometimes what will happen is you will ring up people, but they won't be there. And then you feel really lonely, because you can't even get in touch with them.

AG: So it's like there is a set of feelings inside of you – a general region of loneliness – which you can get out of if your friends are there. But if they are not there, then it is troublesome.

> [I conceive the structure of the psyche as a set of regions with different qualities which we identify with from time to time. In a moment we will make this general idea more precise and personified, and begin to talk to Janet's inner child.]

Janet: Yeah. A lot of the time. Sometimes I can deal with it, sometimes I don't deal with it very well at all.

AG: Let's suppose for a moment that the region of loneliness is actually like a child inside. Does that make sense?

Janet: Mm.

AG: I'd like to speak to the child for a moment.

Janet: Ok.

AG (to child): I understand at times you feel quite lonely. Is that correct?

> [Often the best way to begin a dialogue with a subself is to say something true and relevant to it.]

Janet (as Child): Yes.

AG: And I'm guessing that when you feel lonely you almost think it won't ever stop. But your experience is that sometimes it does stop, because there are people who like you.

Child: Yep.

AG: But even though there are people who like you, still sometimes you almost forget that.

Janet (laughs): Yes.

AG: It gets a bit more complicated because – this is a guess – maybe you don't always feel that you like yourself.

> [Here I do not *interpret* Janet by saying, 'You don't like yourself' as though it were a fact. Instead, I offer a *hypothesis* – a tentative suggestion about what might be going on – for Janet to consider.]

Janet (now she is back in her adult self): That's probably true. Most of the time I do like myself, but when I'm already feeling lonely, and I try to get in contact with someone and I can't, it just builds up, and then I don't like myself.

AG: And you may have concluded that because you are lonely you are not likeable.

Janet: Hm. I didn't think of it like that.

AG: Now that you have thought it, do you think that it is true: that because you are lonely you are not likeable?

Janet: That is how I would probably look at it from my point of view, but it's not necessarily true. It would seem true at the time, but once I'd gotten over the loneliness and looked back at it, I'd probably go 'how silly!'

AG: Would you tell your own inner child that just because you are lonely doesn't mean you are not likeable – and see what happens.

Janet: Out loud?

AG: You can either do it out loud or inside, as you choose.

Janet (out loud): Just because you are lonely doesn't mean that you are not likeable.

AG: See what response you get.

[This is crucial: listening for the response from the subself.]

Janet (laughter, reporting): Why don't you think like that more often!

AG: So she approves of this line, eh?

Janet: Yeah.

AG: Tell her that it never occurred to you before now, but you are glad to have started. Is that true, by the way?

[I put words into my client's mouth, but hopefully only words consistent with the values of their authentic self. I check this out if I have any doubt, and I encourage the client to find their own words once they get the idea of what we are doing here.]

Janet: Yeah, that's true. (To inner child): I'm glad I've started.

AG: What does she say?

Janet: She says 'Good. Wake up fool, it's about time!'

AG: Cheeky little child, isn't she?

Janet: Yeah!

AG: Tell her that you are willing to wake up, and you would like to have more communication with her.

Janet: I'm willing to wake up, and I'd like to have more communication with you.

Child: All right then.

Now we do a bit of functional thinking: finding a way to shift from the 'good idea' of having more communication with her inner child to the practicality of actually doing it.

AG: Now, the thing we need to do is to work out how you can establish communication with the Child. It is actually very easy. All you have to do is to sit down quietly some time and say 'Child, I'm here. What's going on with you?' just the way you would start any conversation where you wanted to know what was going on with someone.

Janet: That seems pretty straightforward.

AG: Now, would you be willing for the child to call your attention to it?

Janet: Yeah.

AG: Would you tell her that and ask her what she thinks would be a good way to get your attention. How would she do it? Does she know how to do it? Does she ever try?

Janet: Through my mind. It's like my subconscious coming through and saying 'Stop thinking so negatively', or warning me. I often don't listen to it.

AG: So maybe when you hear those warnings you could sit down and consider those warnings. You wouldn't necessarily think those warnings are always correct. But you can take the time to converse with her and sort it out. You might conclude 'Yeah, that's a good warning, and I'm glad I got it.' Or you might think 'No, there's something about it you didn't understand, Child', and help her develop a better view.

All right. Let's go back to our starting place. Having gone through all of this, how would you now feel about the prospect of going to meet a different group of strangers?

Janet: I'd feel much better. I'd feel more comfortable because I would have the Child with me (laughter). I wouldn't feel alone – I'd have some good company.

AG: Ok. That's far enough to take it. Thank you very much.

Janet: Thank you.

Looking at the larger pattern of this session, it moved from exploring to get at the roots of the problem to finding new attitudes and modes of behaviour to deal with the problem.

Appendix 2

Introducing the Witness to a friend

Here is a procedure for introducing the concept of the Witness to a friend as a workshop on the fly.

> *I am going to introduce a concept. I would be curious to know whether it is familiar to you, or relatively new.*
>
> *We have a part of our psyche that can be called the Witness, or Observer Self. The label doesn't matter, it is just a reference term. The Witness is that part of ourselves that can observe exactly what we are doing without judgement. It is right next door to the Critic. The Critic is the part of us that sees what we do and often gets on our case about it.*
>
> *Have you come across this idea in some form before?*

That's it! In 30 seconds people have a new conceptual tool that may be very useful to them.

Many people have found being able to distinguish their Witness from their Critic helpful, because the very act of observing the Critic reduces its power. We do not automatically buy into what the Critic is saying.

We do have a true conscience that calls our attention to things we are doing that are inappropriate. But the Critic per se is generally the internalised voice of our parents, the culture or whatever. It is not our authentic self. It nags and makes us feel guilty.

Practising Using the Witness Function

While introducing the concept of the Witness is helpful, it is even more powerful if we enable our friend to add using their Witness into their repertoire of skills.

The simplest way to do this is to invite your friend to pause for a moment and pay attention to their thoughts. In doing so they are using their Witness.

The following Object Concentration Exercise provides sustained practice in both using the Witness and being present. Through it people discover that paying attention to physical reality can open up surprising and delightful perceptions; this is a valuable creative thinking skill.

Object Concentration Exercise

Choose an attractive object to be your point of focus - for example a leaf, a flower, or ornate old bell.

Observe your object for say, 4 minutes, following this internal instruction to yourself:

> *When my mind goes away I will notice that it has gone away, and bring it back.*

Processing:

What details did you notice near the end that you didn't pick up at the beginning?

> Were you able to notice that you mind went away, and bring it back?"

Introducing the Witness can be a door opener for people. It opens up possibilities which would never have occurred to them otherwise.

Appendix 3

Resources

Inner Work

- EFT training
  Free tutorial: *https://www.emofree.com/new-to-eft.html*

- Option Process
  Barry Kaufman *To Love is to be Happy With*

- Trauma release through shaking
  Video: https://vimeo.com/103209258

- The Energy Body and the Pain Body
  Eckhart Tolle *The Power of Now*

Using Attention to Improve Performance

Moshe Feldenkrais *Awareness Through Movement*
Josh Waitzkin *The Art of Learning*

Workshops on the fly

Andrew Gaines *Creative Conversations*
Andrew Gaines *Kitchen Table Conversations Manual*

Concluding remarks

The Great Transition Initiative www.inspiringtransition.net

The Witness

From time to time we all experience occasions of upset. As we resolve them, one by one, we create the conditions for inner joy and truly loving relationships.

Buddhists believe that to be loving is our own true nature – but often we do not show up that way. By activating our Witness or Observer Self, we can identify and resolve the emotional triggers that sour both our mood and our relationships.

This book is not about advice. It is about techniques for actually doing the work. They are teachable.