

# Inner Pursuit of Happiness

A SURVIVAL GUIDE TO THE OTHER SIDE  
OF DARKNESS

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*Dedicated to my dear wife and soulmate Juanita.  
You have been my unwavering support and my greatest  
source of inspiration. Your enduring love and constant  
encouragement have propelled me through this long and  
often arduous journey. Thank you for your love,  
guidance, and support.*



# DISCLAIMER

The techniques and practices described in this book aim to provide educational guidance for the inner exploration of traumatic past experiences. However, it is crucial to understand that the information presented herein is not intended to serve as a substitute for professional mental health care or therapy.

While the content within this book may offer valuable insights and tools for self-reflection and personal growth, it is essential to recognize that everyone's psychological needs and circumstances are unique. This book does not replace the expertise, individualized care, and support that can be provided by qualified mental health professionals.

If you have underlying mental health conditions or a history of trauma, it is strongly recommended that you seek appropriate guidance and support from a licensed mental health practitioner. They can help assess your specific needs and create a tailored treatment plan to address your unique circumstances.

Engaging in inner exploration of traumatic experiences can be emotionally challenging and potentially triggering. It is important to approach such explorations with care and to have a support system in place. This may include professional guidance, a trusted therapist, or a reliable network of friends and family who can provide emotional support throughout your journey.

By using the techniques and practices described in this book, you acknowledge that you are responsible for your own well-being and agree to proceed with self-awareness and caution. The author, publisher and any associated parties are not liable for any consequences, losses, or damages arising from the use or misuse of the information provided in this book.

Remember, your mental health is of utmost importance. If at any point during your exploration, you feel overwhelmed, distressed, or experience any adverse effects, discontinue the practices immediately and seek professional help.

Please read this book with a discerning mind, exercise self-care, and consult with a mental health professional if needed. Your well-being is paramount, and this book should be seen as a complement to, not a replacement for, appropriate mental health care.

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# INTRODUCTION

*"You can't wait until life isn't hard anymore,  
before you decide to be happy." ~ Nightbirde*

[Jane Kristen Marczewski]

1990 – 2022

Feeling overwhelmed? Feel as though you are on ‘autopilot’ just trying to survive another day? Has your life become dependent on bad behaviors, binge eating, drugs, or alcohol just to feel normal or find relief? Have you lost control over the direction of your life? Whatever your need may be, I am here to offer support in the form of guidance. I know a way through this darkness and back out to a world that makes sense.

Addiction comes in many forms, often not even recognized for what it is... a human response in an attempt to escape suffering.

Not an inherited disease of the brain, a moral failure, or a weakness of character. As trauma expert and physician, Dr. Gabor Maté explains it, “Addiction is any behavior that gives temporary relief and pleasure, but has negative consequences, and yet the person cannot stop.” It’s very possible you don’t even see there is a problem, just know that you are struggling with pain; yet if these three elements exist then it qualifies as an addiction:

Any Behavior That...

- Gives temporary relief/pleasure,
- Has negative consequences,
- And you cannot stop doing it.

To live is to suffer; to find meaning in that suffering is survival. Let’s do more than just find meaning, let’s find a purpose to life and rise above the suffering. Personal recovery is a process of growth and self-discovery, listening to our ‘shadow self’ while learning the source of our pain. I promote in this book behavioral transformation by redirecting the damage of pain to a force of positive growth and adopting new attitudes and reactions to life. I have the tools and professional experience to guide you into this light, helping you see beauty again.

My education in psychology and counseling during my early years, actually focused on neurology, or neuropsychology, learning a plethora of standardized tests to be given as diagnostic tools in pinpointing mental illness. These diagnostic tests would also assist in determining the level of damage from birth defects,

physical injury, or vascular accidents (i.e., strokes). But events in my life prevented employment in this chosen field, and even forced me to divert from psychology altogether to survive financial problems and work several unrelated jobs: healthcare worker, installing satellite systems for homes and eventually becoming HVAC certified (heating and air-conditioning).

In 2011, I applied for a position with the State of Arkansas to provide treatment services in their Department of Community Corrections. After multiple interviews and months of waiting, in March 2012, I became a Drug Court Advisor for the 14th Judicial District. By 2013, I was promoted to Substance Abuse Program Leader for Area-2, then obtained my State Credentials as a Certified Co-occurring Disorders Professional – Diplomate along with an IC&RC Certificate (International Credentialing) for providing mental health treatment as it relates to substance abuse (Addiction).

In my 10 years providing services for Arkansas Community Corrections, it became apparent that the evidence-based practices were not addressing the root cause promoting the addictions we were seeing. Something deeper was going on, the recidivism rate was stable but not dropping, and individuals were able to achieve sobriety but not recovery. They weren't having life-changing events; instead, they were just trying to 'fake it till you make it' and get off probation/parole.

I took it upon myself to discover the unseen problem preventing progress. Using my education in Neuro-Psych, I started testing

subjects (primarily using the MCMI-III because I could hand score the results) in an attempt to uncover a pattern within clients' personalities. After several years of collecting data, I found clear indications of childhood trauma, neglect, and abuse. Approximately 98% of those tested had positive traits for personality disorders, and of those, easily half were diagnosable disorder conditions. I knew then, if addictions were to be eradicated from an individual's life, especially with this population, then the painful memory and effects of childhood trauma must end.

I could now understand the benefit some were achieving by embracing the lifestyle promoted in the 12-step programs; whether Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), or Celebrate Recovery (CR), life-changing events were happening even though relapse occurred and was even anticipated. Without knowing it, the progression through the 12 steps was assisting people to heal some of their childhood traumas. What was needed now, is a strategy for individuals to heal their own wounds, adjacent but separate to the 12 steps found in these programs; especially during times when no professional help is available, as often seen during long periods of incarceration.

Dr. Carl Jung, a famous Swiss psychiatrist, former protégé of Sigmund Freud, and Father of Analytical Psychology, took a keen interest in alcoholism during the 1920s. In the early 1930s, 13% of Dr. Jung's admissions to the hospital were to treat alcoholism.

A conversation with one of those patients during discharge after receiving a year of treatment and unsuccessfully curing the disorder played a key role in the development of AA.

The patient was Rowland H. — or Rowland Hazard, “investment banker and former state senator from Rhode Island” who came to Jung in desperation. Dr. Jung bluntly told him his recovery from alcoholism was not possible, and that modern psychology has done all that it can do to help him.

Rowland then asked, “Is there no exceptions?” “Yes,” replied Dr. Jung, “there is. Exceptions to cases such as yours have been occurring since early times. Here and there, once in a while, alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences.” He went on to describe a spiritual experience as “To me these occurrences are phenomena. They appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them” (pages 26/27 in the “Big Book” Alcoholics Anonymous).

Dr. Jung replied that there were exceptions and that alcoholics have had what are called "vital spiritual experiences." He described these experiences as "phenomena" that involve huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Dr. Jung noted

that these experiences result in a complete shift in the guiding forces of a person's life, with a new set of conceptions and motives dominating them.

What Dr. Jung was referring to is the idea that some individuals who struggle with addiction or other psychological issues may have a transformative experience that leads to significant and lasting changes in their behavior and outlook on life. This experience is often described as a spiritual awakening, and it may involve a profound sense of connection to something greater than oneself.

Dr. Jung's observation that these experiences have occurred since early times suggests that he believed they were not limited to any particular religious or cultural tradition but rather were a universal human experience. The idea of a spiritual awakening or transformation is still a common theme in many approaches to addiction recovery today. This was the beginning of the AA concept of needing a “higher power”.

This concept is a key element missing in secular and government-operated treatments for addiction, and from personal experience as an addiction counselor, I believe it is the core of a successful lifelong recovery. Not saying you can't achieve recovery without a “vital spiritual experience”, just that it is the missing element I was looking for in how my clients were becoming transformed. When I worked in the U.S. Army at a psychiatric hospital as a specialist, the Psychiatrists would often ‘prescribe’ religion to patients who were about to be medically discharged and released

into society. The concern was that these individuals had only been stabilized in their disorders and often no reliable follow-up was assured once released. If they could be “plugged” into a compassionate support system in civilian life, then they just might have a chance at “making it”.

By no means were they advocating any religious beliefs or dictating what sanctuary, synagogue, or mosque patients should attend, but they asked the rest of us, the staff, to discover and encourage the patients to explore their own beliefs if any were present. Therefore, in this book, I provide a spiritual belief system that is not intended to conflict with any of your currently held religious practices. If my information doesn’t enhance understanding of a spiritual nature and instead causes a strong negative emotional response, then please stop reading the chapter on New Belief. But do note this negative response you are experiencing; it will be valuable as you perform different techniques in later chapters of this book.

You will find I have combined physical behavior controls and psychological techniques for addressing trauma, and incorporated a rational approach to spiritual awakening, that when applied will transform your life. Understand this book is about the “journey” and not the “destination”. I’m presenting a “way of life” and not an “achievement”. An example of this can be seen with weight loss; you don’t just lose the weight, but you have to keep it off and stay healthy. No surgery or liposuction can achieve this process; it must be learned and lived. You can’t

attend weight loss meetings and your issues go away; same with AA/NA/CR meetings or going to group therapy. It doesn't fix you; you fix you.

There is a saying, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink"; this is exactly what I'm talking about. You could attend groups, learn techniques, and even graduate from programs, but if you do not internalize and live these events then it will not work. I can lead you to the water... I could even drown you in it... but if you don't drink, then the water is useless to save you.

Chapter 1 of this book is an important section for you to read, digest, and apply to your internal thought processes for establishing recovery using this approach. So, when 'a challenging concept' is presented, I offer the information in two levels of comprehension. This is due to the reader possibly experiencing the damaging effects on the brain from chemicals (drugs or alcohol) that were consumed. This can greatly impair the brain's ability to focus and comprehend the story; at least until healing occurs with prolonged abstinence.

This concern of possible limits to understanding the information presented resulted in providing a split level of learning. It's the same general story but in two unique styles: In-depth Learning [Critical Thinking Required] and Simplified Learning [Easier-to-Understand Option]. In the hope of assuring the reader to gain insight from these literary illustrations, a "commentary" was also added to the back of each subsection.

Let me try to impress upon you why the concept of a 'Higher Power' is so important. You want a different life, but no matter what you do, it just isn't happening; you don't know how to make it happen. Until you reach the point where you will look in the mirror and do not like what you see looking back, will your soul truly cry out to a power stronger than yourself. It may be nothing more than "God help me!" It may not even be words you can utter, but a deep overpowering loss of hope in your future. When you have reached this level of pain and are figuratively (and sometimes literally) driven to your knees pleading for some supernatural help to give you a reason for waking up in the morning, will change then really happen.

Some call it "hitting rock-bottom", others a "crisis experience", and still some refer to it as the "gift of desperation"; yet all of these are terms used to describe a crisis moment or a turning point in an individual's life, particularly in the context of addiction and personal struggles. This moment of crisis can lead to what I refer to as an "Ego Implosion", essentially breaking down the self-centered and defensive aspects of a person's identity. This can pave the way for a transformative process that includes the development of "Intellectual Humility" (acceptance that your beliefs and opinions could be wrong) and the emergence of "Truthful Curiosity" (an honest desire to find the truth), both of which can be instrumental in a "Conversion Recovery" process.

Here's how this progression might unfold:

- **Implosion of the Ego:** Hitting rock bottom can shatter the illusions and defenses that individuals often use to protect their ego and deny their problems. It can bring a stark realization of the consequences of their actions and their own limitations. This breakdown of the ego can be a humbling experience that opens the door to change.
- **Development of Intellectual Humility:** With the ego shattered, individuals may become more willing to admit their mistakes, acknowledge their vulnerabilities, and recognize that they don't have all the answers. This newfound humility can create space for self-reflection and an honest assessment of their situation.
- **Truthful Curiosity:** As individuals let go of their previous assumptions and defenses, they might become genuinely curious about their condition, the reasons behind their struggles, and the possibilities for recovery. They might start asking questions, seeking knowledge, and exploring different avenues for change.
- **Recovery and Growth:** Intellectual humility and truthful curiosity can create a foundation for sustainable recovery. Individuals are more likely to engage in therapy, seek support, and learn about healthier coping mechanisms. They become open to new perspectives, embrace personal growth, and actively work toward a better life.

This is why I titled the book "A Survival Guide to the Other Side of Darkness", it helps you through the conversion process and into a state of sustained positive growth.

If you are not at this level of desperation in your current situation, this book may still offer some usable insight and additional techniques to try in striving for recovery. Without reaching the 'bottom crisis of desperation', you will not be open to changing beliefs which you have based your entire life-existence upon; changing a belief is an incredibly hard task to do. It's equivalent to my asking you to rebuild the foundation of your house while you're living inside. You can't just "shore up" the whole house on stilts while removing the entire foundation all at once. The risk for a catastrophic collapse is too great with inconceivable consequences if this tragedy occurs. Just like with changing belief systems, you remove and replace one section of the foundation as you work your way through the rebuild. As the old adage states, "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time."

Here are the statistics as to why I am persuaded to offer a new belief system: According to the World Health Organization, only 1 in 7 people who are struggling with addiction will receive any form of help, and of that one who receives treatment... only half, 40-60%, will achieve sobriety for any length of time. Let me put some actual numbers to this situation; there are a total of 333 million people (2022 census report) in the USA, and 6% of those are struggling with addiction; that represents approximately 20 million Americans who have a substance use disorder. 1 in 7 of

those will get some form of treatment intervention, or roughly 3 million, and then only about half of those will have a measurable level of success; less than 1.5 million. To put this in an easy-to-understand format: Out of 20 people with addiction, 3 will receive help, and only 1, maybe 2, will recover! 18 of the 20 people with addiction will never recover.

The current philosophy of treatment is to encourage recovery, provide emotional support, and educate on issues that promote abstinence. This apparently works well for 2 out of 20 people, but we still have all the others that are close to giving up. We need an additional different approach in an effort to reach those other 18 million still lost to the darkness. I've asked everyone I ever encountered who has entered and maintained a long-term recovery, "What made the difference? Why, after all your previous attempts to quit, did this time work?" They all report having reached that "crisis experience" where they finally understood, "Get busy living or get busy dying." (The Shawshank Redemption)

## Chapter 1

# Admit Desperation

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## Plato's Allegory of the Cave

In-depth Learning:  
Critical Thinking Required



What is reality, knowledge, or the meaning of life? These are deep subjects that surprisingly few people actually think about. It's not uncommon to view our passage through life figuratively, such as explaining existence as a journey we take as humans; an adventure, a tragedy, a game played, or as Macbeth calls "a brief candle."

In 375 BCE (2,400 years ago), one of history's great Greek philosophers said, 'Life is like being chained up in a cave, forced to watch shadows flitting across a stone wall.' This was Plato who suggested in his Allegory of the Cave (found in Book VII of "The Republic"), that an ideal society should be envisioned by examining concepts of "Justice", "Truth", and "Beauty".

In this allegory, a group of prisoners have been confined in a cavern from birth, with no knowledge of the outside world. They are chained, facing a wall, not able to turn their heads, and a fire behind them shining a faint light. Occasionally, people pass by the fire, carrying figures of animals, trees, buildings, and other objects that cast shadows on the wall. The prisoners name and classify these illusions (i.e., dogs, cats, birds, houses, etc....), believing they are perceiving actual entities.

Suddenly, one prisoner is freed from his chains, and looking around, spots a distant light. He finds his way to the source of illumination, emerging outside of the cave for the first time. The bright sunlight brings pain to his eyes, blinding him, and he finds this new place disorienting. As his vision adjusts, he begins to see objects with depth and dimensions he does not understand.

When told that the things he sees around him are real, while the shadows on the ground (which he recognizes) are only projected shapes of these objects, he cannot believe this information to be true. The shadows appeared much clearer to him. Gradually, his eyes become accustomed to the light until he can look at objects directly, even his own reflection in the water, and finally sees the Sun itself; whose light is the ultimate source of all that is seen.

The prisoner returns to the cave excited to share what he has discovered, but once back in the darkness, he is unable to see clearly, having a hard time identifying the shadows on the wall he previously so revered as reality. Observing him dazed and confused, the other prisoners think the journey has made him crazy and blind to what they know is real, and violently resist any attempts to be set free.

Plato introduces this passage as an analogy of what it's like to be a philosopher trying to educate the public. Most people are not just comfortable in their ignorance, but hostile to anyone pointing it out. In fact, Plato's teacher, Socrates, was sentenced to death by the Athenian government for 'disrupting the social order.' As a result, Plato spends much of "The Republic" discrediting Athenian democracy, while promoting rule by philosopher kings.

With the cave parable, Plato suggests that the masses are too stubborn and ignorant (knowledge-resistant) to govern themselves; not much has changed from these ancient times. It's also important to know, this allegory is connected to the theory of forms, developed in Plato's other dialogues. The Theory of Forms

is expressed in the story by the 'shadows on the wall' which represent things in the physical world. The shadows are flawed reflections of ideal forms, such as the spherical nature of a ball, or the beauty found in a flower; both being concepts of reality. Forms, therefore, are beliefs that exist in our minds when thinking of what is 'physically real'.

In this way, the cave leads to many fundamental esoteric questions, including the origin of knowledge, the problem of representation, and the nature of reality itself. For theologians, the ideal forms exist in the mind of a creator. Philosophers of language view the forms as linguistic concepts, revealing the Theory of Forms as a problem in grouping concrete entities with abstract terms. Others wonder whether we can really know if the reality outside the cave is any more real than the shadows within.

Can any of us be confident in what we believe to know? More importantly, if a 'New-Light-of-Truth' were to punch a hole in your most basic preconceived notions of life, would you violently resist? Or will you escape to struggle in this light of knowledge, even if it costs you your friends and family? It would be easier to just remain with recognizable and enjoyable illusions you have called real for so long. Definitely a hard choice to make, but if it's any consolation, you're not alone. There are a lot of people who wish to remain with the problems they know rather than rebuild a reality of problems they don't understand.

A notable postscript: Everyone I've ever encountered who learns of this Allegory, identifies with the freed prisoner; no one wishes

to acknowledge that they themselves actually remain chained to the wall. Therefore understand, that denial is your greatest obstacle to a life-rewarding change.

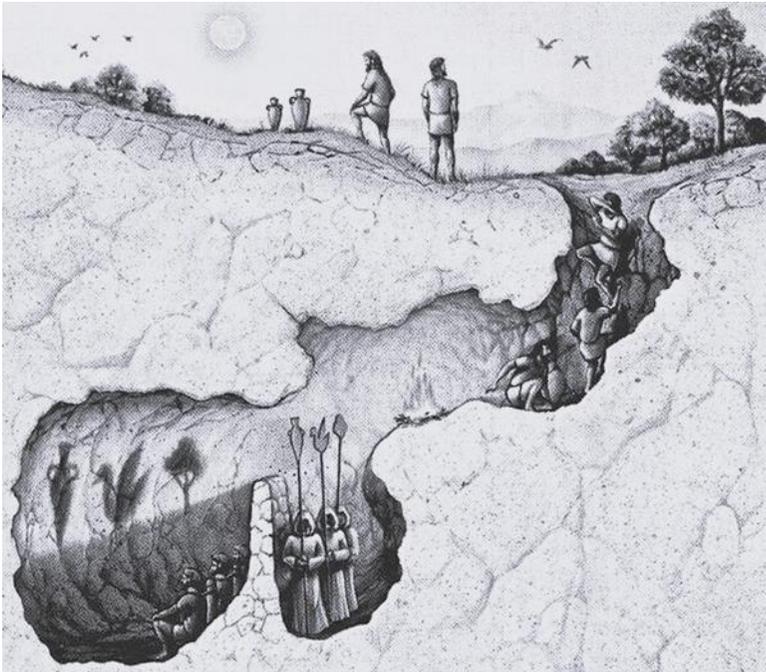
Did you know, denial is also the number one symptom of having a heart attack... something to think about.

*“...denial even after a heart attack has happened is a common defense mechanism used to reduce anxiety by reducing the threat.” ~ Alberta Health Services*



# Plato's Allegory of the Cave

Simplified Learning:  
Easier-to-Understand Option



Plato's Allegory of the Cave is a powerful analogy that has been used to explain how those in charge of social order dictate our perceptions and understanding of the world. It is a philosophical tale that has stood the test of time and is still relevant today. In this article, we will delve into the allegory and explain its meaning in simpler terms than used before in an effort that all may understand.

The allegory begins with a group of people who are chained to a wall in a cave. They have been there since birth and have never known anything else. They can only see the wall in front of them and the shadows that are cast upon it. These shadows are created by a fire that is behind them, and they believe that these shadows are real. They have no knowledge of the outside world or anything beyond the cave.

One of the prisoners is eventually freed and is able to leave the cave. He discovers a whole new world that he never knew existed. He sees the sun for the first time, experiences the warmth and beauty of nature, and learns about the world beyond the cave. He realizes that everything he thought he knew was just a shadow of the real thing.

The freed prisoner tries to go back to the cave and share his newfound knowledge with the other prisoners. However, they do not believe him and think he is crazy. They are so accustomed to their way of life that they cannot even imagine anything else.

This allegory is a powerful analogy of how those in charge of social order dictate our perceptions and understanding of the world. The prisoners in the cave are like the people in society who blindly accept what they are told by those in power.

They are not encouraged to think for themselves or to question the status quo. They are content to live in the shadows and accept what they are given.

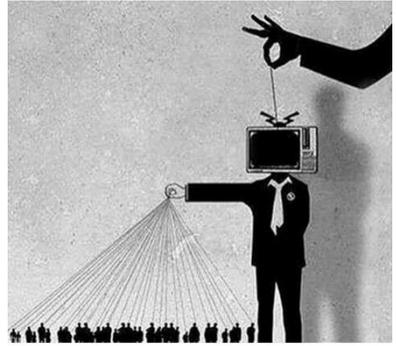


Image adapted from "Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda" by Noam Chomsky



Cartoon by David Suter

The freed prisoner represents those who seek the truth and are not content with living in the shadows. They are willing to question what they are told and to seek out knowledge for themselves. They are not satisfied with blindly accepting what they are given.

When the freed prisoner tries to share his knowledge with the other prisoners, he is met with resistance. This is a representation

of how society often views those who challenge the status quo. They are seen as crazy or dangerous, and their ideas are dismissed without consideration.

In order to truly understand the world and to break free from the shadows, we must be willing to question what we are told and to seek out knowledge for ourselves. We cannot blindly accept what is given to us by those in power. We must be willing to challenge the status quo and seek out the truth.

In conclusion, Plato's Allegory of the Cave is a powerful analogy of how those in charge of social order dictate our perceptions and understanding of the world. The allegory serves as a reminder that we must be willing to question what we are told and to seek out knowledge for ourselves. We cannot blindly accept what is given to us by those in power. We must be willing to challenge the status quo and seek out the truth.

## Commentary

The purpose of the commentary section is to provide further clarification on the symbolism in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, which may be difficult for some readers to understand at first glance. The descriptors in the commentary section help to break down the symbolism and make it more accessible, providing a more in-depth analysis of the allegory. The commentary section is meant to help readers better appreciate the allegory and its message and to encourage critical thinking and reflection.

Here are some comments regarding this story that may help clarify difficult parts where it might be hard to see the symbolism:

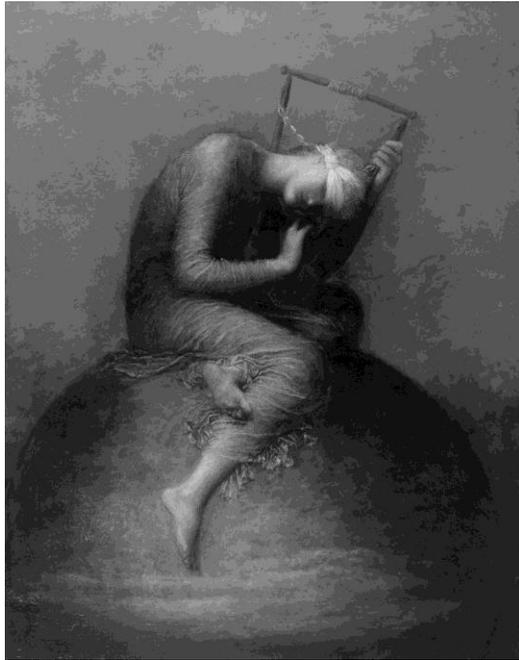
- **The cave** represents the world of appearances, where things are not what they seem. In other words, it is a metaphor for the illusion that our senses create, and the limitations that they impose on our perception of reality.
- **The chains** that keep the prisoners bound to the wall symbolize the limitations imposed by society and culture. They represent the social and cultural conditioning that restricts our thinking and our understanding of the world.
- **The shadows** cast by the fire represent the illusions created by those in power, such as the media and politicians. They represent the distorted and manipulated information that is fed to the public, to maintain control and power.
- **The freed prisoner** represents the philosopher, the seeker of truth, who is willing to challenge the illusions of the cave and seek a higher understanding of reality. He symbolizes the human capacity for reason and intellect, and the potential for growth and enlightenment.
- **The journey out of the cave** represents the process of education and the transformative power of knowledge. It is a metaphor for the pursuit of truth, and the willingness to question assumptions and challenge accepted beliefs.

- **The sun** represents the source of all knowledge and truth and the ultimate reality beyond the world of appearances. It symbolizes the enlightenment and wisdom that comes from the pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of reason.
- **The reaction of the other prisoners** to the freed prisoner's return symbolizes the resistance to change, and the fear of the unknown. It represents the tendency to cling to old beliefs and ways of thinking, even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

The allegory of the cave is a critique of the limitations imposed by society and culture on our thinking and understanding. It is a call to question accepted beliefs and assumptions and to seek a higher understanding of reality. It is a reminder that knowledge and truth are transformative and that the pursuit of wisdom is a lifelong journey.

# Blind to the Truth

In-depth Learning:  
Critical Thinking Required



# Blind to the Truth: A Situational Reality

*"People are blind to what they do not know, and they are deaf to what they do not want to hear"*

~ Brené Brown

Shortly after hearing a Truth revealed, it is common to see people refuse acceptance of the truth told. This is a typical reaction of someone when confronted with harsh reality. For example, if we discover that one of our parents isn't our biological father or mother, and the person we consider our greatest personal enemy turns out to be our actual genetic link; in cases like this, the truth carries such a magnitude that accepting it can shake your own identity to its very core. Such a massive shift in perception generally terrifies people.

Total disregard for the truth is common. Many people prefer living in the safety of a belief system with a false narrative than looking beyond their current understanding and discovering the actual truth. Living in a familiar, false reality often proves to be convenient and comfortable; you just have to remain ignorant of everything that could cause a rupture in your beliefs. So instead, you go along with the deceptive portrayal of society, often amplified by the mass media and entertainment. We also see the opposite happening in our civilization; people opposing common knowledge and adopting a false truth, such as the idea of the Earth being flat. So, truth, by and large, can be easily fabricated to fit our need for comfort, safety, and ambitions.

Merriam-Webster's definition of truth says: "a judgment, proposition, or idea that is true or accepted as true." As long as people choose to seek a fabricated truth, they will continue to desire a system (a doctrine) that will support their chosen way of life to maintain a sense of stability and purpose. By pursuing this constructed understanding of reality, people provide incredible power to those leading such 'system doctrines' allowing these 'figureheads' to gain control over the masses. Religion, Politics, Race, etc., will ally with various forms (s) of widespread communication (music, movies, TV programs, social media, or news networks) to facilitate the group's own depiction of truth and thereby remain a viable entity.

Most individuals are not ready to have a true understanding or knowledge of their own existence. Like is seen in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, the enlightened man breaks his bonds and sees the incredible reality of the truth, then tries to persuade the people in the cave to 'go outside and experience' this true world for themselves. Yet by this simple request, he is met with resistance and ridicule. Plato describes such endeavors to educate others regarding truth as "inserting vision into blind eyes." It's a waste of time trying to convince someone of the truth if they are not receptive to the possibility of its actuality.

As a result, many people have become hopelessly dependent on maintaining their individual philosophy of a chosen religion, political party, or organization which provides them with an identity. They will even fight fervently to protect this ideology.

Similarly, Socrates asked if people like this wouldn't even kill the messenger offering the truth about our existence. Nevertheless, Plato points to the philosopher's responsibility to act in the interest of the unenlightened, even if they are hostile.

Unfortunately, in this story, 'the enlightened man' goes back into the cave for the first time after his ascension and now seeing the shadows on the wall, faces the reality of what before he had dedicated his life to believing. It probably left him feeling disillusioned, perhaps disappointed, with the lack of mystique these shadow appearances once held. This is reminiscent of finding out how a magic trick works, which makes the illusion a lot less appealing if seen again; Truth, therefore, often goes at the expense of enjoyment.

An example of this can be seen with the legendary character called Santa Claus, which originated from the early Christian bishop named Saint Nicholas. For most young children, Santa Claus is a truly magical experience with the idea of an old-bearded man in a red suit, traveling from the North Pole in a sleigh pulled by flying reindeer. According to this legend, Santa's elves make toys and other presents in a secret workshop and Santa brings them to the children on Christmas Eve. With all the stories, songs, fairy tales, and films about Santa Claus, his annual appearance is almost a religious experience to the undeveloped mind. But when children are around the age of 6 or 7, many parents begin to tell the truth about Santa Claus. These children often react emotionally and in disbelief. A once much-enjoyed illusion is

crushed and loses its magical appeal. Hence, it's not uncommon for adults to participate in nostalgia for the good old times when we were ignorant of existence and a "surrogate truth" was more appealing than reality.

However, people can still find pleasure in what they know is fake; humans show the capacity to treat an illusion as if it's real. A form of this is evident in our enjoyment of watching a play or being engrossed in a movie, both of which are unreal yet able to provide an emotional plethora of experiences without any physical interaction. The philosophical term for this phenomenon is "Suspension of Disbelief." This is the intentional avoidance of skepticism, critical thinking, and logic when facing something unreal. This experience explains how Plato's character upon returning to the darkness, if desired, could still choose to act as if the silhouettes on the cave wall are real entities; temporarily suspending disbelief in exchange for enjoyment, acceptance, and having a 'good time' with his 'old unenlightened' friends.

Today's technology is now trying to provide illusions even better than reality, as seen by the manner in which people immerse themselves in a video game, almost as though they are living a second life; an existence more pleasant and rewarding than their current perceived reality. Of course, the objects that appear on the screen are not real yet just a mere projection of reality. To enjoy these projections, the individual must suspend this truth temporarily. Humans seem to accept this suspension of disbelief (and appreciate the lie) when it suits them best.

Plato's work shows how people have disdain for a truth that threatens their understanding of reality. We have a tendency for an attachment to the familiar, the comfortable, the meaningful, and are sometimes willing to defend this belief with our lives. Just look at how people are ready to die for their religions, political affiliations, and racial norms. As a society, we tend to handle "facts" selectively, most likely because *facts* do appear in many different forms, and with varying magnitudes.

Truth can uplift us, it can leave us indifferent, or it can also make us depressed and miserable. For example, in the "Allegory of the Cave", learning the truth has virtually no negative consequence until returning to the cave, at which time, sharing the enlightenment with others will be met with resistance and hostility by those who remained in darkness.

Only when an individual seeks after the truth for themselves can this enlightened understanding of reality give you purpose and legitimize your choice in behaving towards others with empathy and compassion. An incredible goal to have in a life spent with years of pain and suffering.

*"Why do men learn through pain and suffering, and not through pleasure and happiness? Very simply, because pleasure and happiness accustom one to satisfaction with the things given in this world, whereas pain and suffering drive one to seek a more profound happiness beyond the limitations of this world."*

*~ Seraphim Rose*

Regrettably, people tend to adopt surrogate truths to cover up a painful existence while others actually love their painful reality and are often instrumental to their already dark worldview. Both those with surrogate truths and those who love painful realities will tend to ignore *facts* that oppose how they want to see the world, and in most cases seek to share this viewpoint with like-minded people.

Sharing a belief system, regardless of its validity, has benefits. As mentioned before, look at a religious group, political movements, and the powerful draw toward your individual racial culture. Being part of such groups can provide you with a sense of purpose and social connections, yet in return, further alienate you from other groups. If in one of these groups, you gain enlightenment (even just a corner of the truth), but this truth is in opposition to the group's viewpoint (beliefs), it will lead to members ostracizing you. Because of this fact, many people will keep subscribing to a false narrative against their own better judgment, just to belong and relieve their fear of rejection.

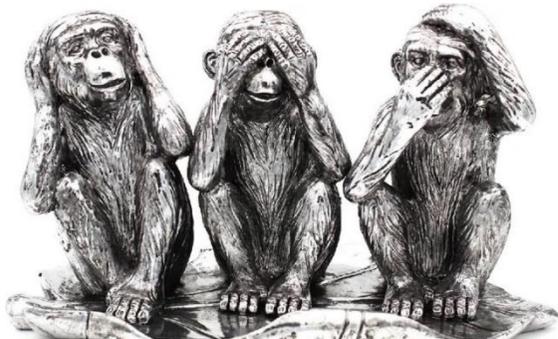
As people, we seem pretty opportunistic when it comes to the truth; we want to believe in 'A Truth', just not necessarily 'The Truth'. We want 'A Reality', not 'The Reality'. Unfortunately for us, both the truth and the lie appear in a story format. Fundamentally we don't want the truth but desire a story in which to believe, to identify with, share with others, and provide us with a sense of meaning and belonging.

*“It is here that we encounter the central theme of existentialism: to live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering.” ~ Gordon Allport*



# Blind to the Truth

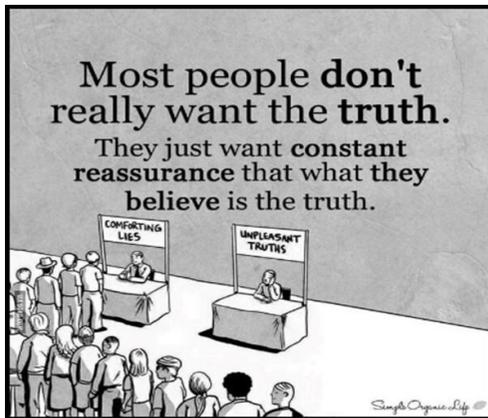
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# Blind to the Truth

## SECTION 1 – WHEN REALITY IS HARD TO ACCEPT

Sometimes, when people hear a truth that's hard to accept, they don't believe it. This is a common reaction. For example, if you find out that one of your parents isn't really your biological parent, or that someone you really don't like is actually related to you, it can be very hard to accept. The truth can be scary, and it can make you question who you are.



But some people just ignore the truth. They would rather believe in something false that makes them feel safe and comfortable, even if it's not true. They might ignore things that could change their beliefs. They might listen to what they see in the media or in movies, even if it's not true.

Other people do the opposite. They believe in things that aren't true, like thinking that the Earth is flat. People can make up their own truths to feel safe, and comfortable, or to fit their own goals.

According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, truth is "something that is true or accepted as true." If people keep believing in things that aren't true, they'll keep wanting a system that supports what they believe. This helps the people in charge keep power over them.

## SECTION 2 – THE POWER OF RELIGION, POLITICS, AND IDENTITY IN SHAPING OUR BELIEFS

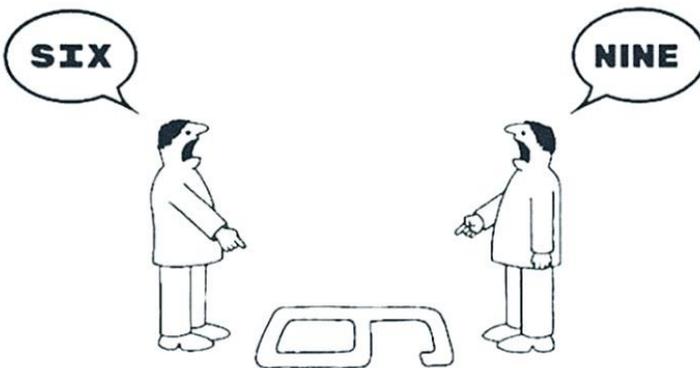
Religion, politics, and identity are powerful forces that can control what people believe. They can use things like music, movies, TV shows, social media, and news to shape what people think is true. This helps these groups stay in power.

Most people aren't ready to understand the truth about their own existence. In Plato's Allegory of the Cave, the enlightened person sees the truth and tries to tell others to come with him to see it too. But people in the cave resist and make fun of him. Plato says that trying to tell someone the truth is like "inserting vision into blind eyes." It's a waste of time if someone isn't open to the idea of something new.

Many people depend on their religion, political party, or organization to give them an identity. They will fight hard to protect it, even if it's not true. Socrates wondered if people like this would even kill the messenger who told them the truth about their existence. But Plato says that philosophers have a responsibility to tell the truth, even if people don't want to hear it.

It's common for people to reject the truth when it's hard to accept. For instance, if we find out that a person we hate is our actual family member, it can be scary to change our perception of them. Many people prefer to live in a world with false beliefs because it's comfortable and familiar. They don't want to know anything that could disrupt their worldview. Sometimes people even believe in fake things like the idea that the sun orbits the earth.

The media often helps these false beliefs spread. Religion, politics, and race are groups that use communication tools like TV, movies, social media, and news networks to promote their version of the truth. Most people aren't ready to face the real truth about their existence. In Plato's Allegory of the Cave, the enlightened person tries to convince people to leave their cave and see the real world, but they resist. People are too invested in their chosen religion, political party, or organization to accept any other idea. They might even fight to protect their beliefs.



### SECTION 3 – INFLUENCE OF MEDIA

When someone finally learns the truth, it can ruin the enjoyment of something they used to love. For example, when children find out Santa Claus isn't real, they can be very upset. As adults, we might look back fondly on the time when we believed in Santa Claus. But people can still enjoy things they know are fake, like watching a play or a movie.

Indeed, selective handling of facts is a common human tendency. We often choose to believe only what confirms our pre-existing beliefs and ignore or reject anything that challenges them. This is known as confirmation bias, and it can lead to a distorted view of reality.

Moreover, the way we perceive reality is also shaped by the language we use. The words we choose to describe something can influence our understanding of it. For example, using words like "illegal aliens" instead of "undocumented immigrants" can lead to a negative perception of a group of people. It is important to be aware of our biases and to try to approach information with an open mind. Critical thinking and the ability to evaluate evidence objectively are crucial skills in today's world, where information is readily available but often biased or inaccurate. By examining our own beliefs and being open to new ideas, we can expand our understanding of reality and make more informed decisions.

It is important to note that the truth, while sometimes difficult to accept, is essential for personal growth and progress. It allows us

to understand the world around us, make informed decisions, and improve our lives and the lives of others. However, the pursuit of truth must be balanced with empathy and understanding towards those who hold different beliefs or worldviews. It is also important to recognize that some people may not be ready or willing to accept the truth, and it is not our job to force it upon them.

#### SECTION 4 – CONCLUSION

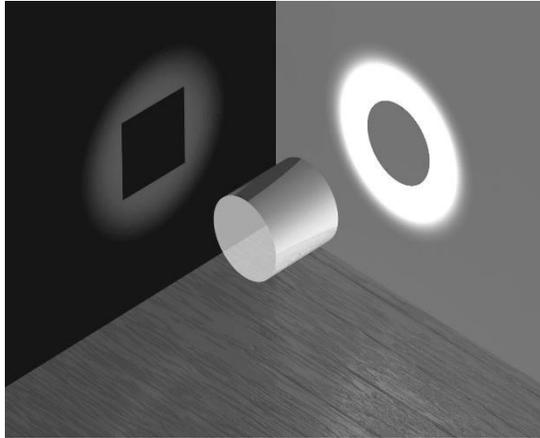
In conclusion, the truth is a powerful force that can shape our understanding of the world and ourselves. While sometimes difficult to accept, it is essential for personal growth and progress. However, the pursuit of truth must be balanced with empathy and understanding towards others, and we must recognize that not everyone may be ready or willing to accept it.

Indeed, stories are a powerful tool for conveying truth, whether they are based on actual events or completely fictional. Stories can capture our imaginations, stir our emotions, and provide a framework for understanding the world around us. However, as I've mentioned before, people often prioritize their desire for a certain story or narrative over the pursuit of objective truth. This can lead to the propagation of falsehoods and misinformation, which can be harmful to individuals and society as a whole. It is important to remain vigilant and seek out the truth, even if it challenges our preconceived notions or makes us uncomfortable. By doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world we live in.

# Commentary

**S1** - *When Reality Is Hard to Accept* – key points:

- It can be difficult to accept a truth that challenges our beliefs about ourselves or the world around us.



- Some people choose to ignore the truth and instead believe in something false that makes them feel safe and comfortable, even if it's not true.
- People can ignore things that could change their beliefs or listen to what they see in the media or in movies, even if it's not true.
- Some people believe in things that aren't true, like thinking that the Earth is flat.
- People can make up their own truths to feel safe, and comfortable, or to fit their own goals.

- Merriam Webster's dictionary's definition of truth is "something that is true or accepted as true."
- If people keep believing in things that aren't true, they'll keep wanting a system that supports what they believe, which helps the people in charge keep power over them.
- It's important to be willing to accept and confront the truth, even if it challenges our beliefs.
- Perpetuating falsehoods can have consequences.
- Readers should be critical of what they see and hear and seek out evidence-based information to inform their beliefs.

**S2 - *The Power of Religion, Politics, and Identity in Shaping Our Beliefs*** – key points:

- Learning the truth about something we once believed in can ruin our enjoyment of it.
- The example of children discovering that Santa Claus isn't real and how this can upset them is used.
- As adults, we can still enjoy things that we know are fake, such as watching a play or a movie.
- Confirmation bias leads to a distorted view of reality.
- It is important to be aware of our biases and to approach information with an open mind.
- Critical thinking and the ability to evaluate evidence objectively are crucial skills in today's world.

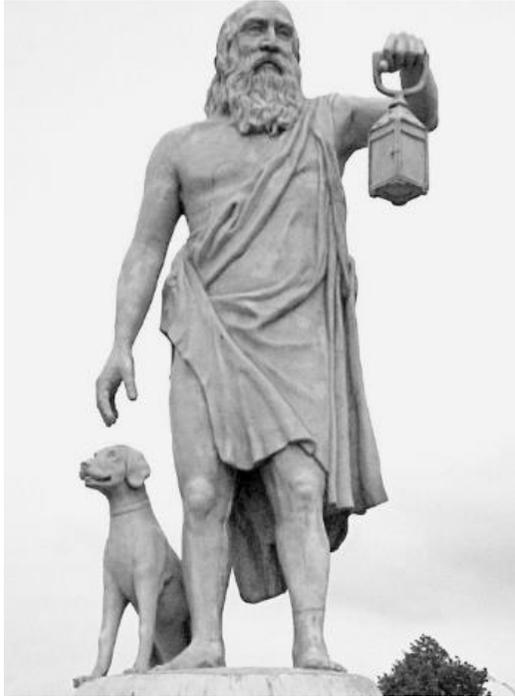
- The importance of language and how the words we use can influence our understanding of things is discussed.
- Using words like "illegal aliens" instead of "undocumented immigrants" can lead to a negative perception of a group of people.
- Pursuing the truth must be balanced with empathy and understanding towards those who hold different beliefs or worldviews.
- Some people may not be ready or willing to accept the truth, and it is not our job to force it upon them.
- The section emphasizes the importance of truth for personal growth and progress.
- Empathy and understanding towards those with different beliefs are also emphasized.
- The section provides insightful commentary on critical thinking, objective evaluation of evidence, and being aware of our biases in shaping our understanding of reality.

**S3** - *Influence of Media* – key points:

- The passage explores the concept of truth and how people interact with it.
- Examples such as Santa Claus and video games are used to show how we can suspend our disbelief and enjoy things even if we know they aren't real.

- Sometimes people cling to falsehoods because they provide a sense of belonging and purpose, even if they go against the truth.
- Seeking after the truth for oneself can lead to empathy and compassion.
- Many people would rather believe in a comfortable story than confront reality.
- The passage encourages readers to consider their relationship with truth and whether they are willing to pursue it.
- Pursuing the truth may mean leaving behind familiar falsehoods.
- The overall message of the passage is to encourage readers to confront and pursue the truth, even if it is uncomfortable.

# Diogenes



*By carrying a lantern in broad daylight, Diogenes emphasized the rarity of finding a truly honest person.*

The lantern was a symbolic act of believing that most people were dishonest and insincere, motivated by selfish desires and societal expectations.

## Powerless to Change

The reason those two philosophies (Plato's Cave and Blind to Truth) were shared with you upfront is because you need to understand how it's possible to believe in a "false reality", and why you might become resistant to believing anything else. I need you to have this awareness about yourself, to recognize when it is happening, and then question "Why am I fighting this new idea?" Is it out of fear? Did my current religious beliefs warn me against "false prophets"? Will I go to "hell" if I accept what I'm being told? Maybe you're agnostic, and can't see why a "Loving God" would let people suffer as they do... especially the innocent like children or babies? If I wouldn't be so cruel, how can a "Loving God" allow such pain? After all, the only "Acts of God" I've ever seen have been disasters like earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes, suffering on a biblical scale.

For this book to work and your life truly change forever, you must embrace a willingness to trust what you currently do not believe. Yes, a Leap of Faith. The belief system that your life is based on, is also the one promoting and propagating the pain you are currently experiencing as well as the additive behaviors you are displaying. Your understanding of reality and reasons for existing are not working; it is failing you right now. Your beliefs have not been able to control the wreck your life has become. At this point, you truly are powerless to change; otherwise, you would have done it by now.

How is it possible for “a leopard to change its spots, or for a tiger its strips”; our belief systems are so deeply embedded into our consciousness that it often makes us unable to see we even have a problem. Others might tell you how drug use is destroying your life, or you are starting to have issues with work or lose your job. You might start saying to yourself, “Even the legal system is harassing me over nothing... why don’t they go after real criminals? After all, it is just a victimless crime, if I’m hurting anyone it's only myself”! Our belief systems will continually allow us to feel like the victim; we are being “picked on”, or just having a “run of bad luck”. Not that we have a serious cancer of addiction which is slowly eating us away.

Admitting you are powerless to change stops your descent into this abyss. You never really hit “rock bottom” because it can, and will, get worse! Ultimately, the bottom you reach is death. By acknowledging you are powerless may sound daunting, but it's an important step in your recovery. It means acknowledging the reality of your addiction and the impact it has had on your life. It's not easy to face, but it's necessary to move forward and create positive change.

By admitting powerlessness, you can also let go of the need to control everything in your life. This is a common characteristic of addiction that can be a major source of stress and anxiety. By surrendering to a higher power, you can find peace and serenity in your life, and begin to heal from your addiction.

Speaking of higher power, it doesn't have to be a religious or spiritual entity. It can be anything that you believe in that is greater than yourself. It can be a belief in the goodness of humanity, the beauty of nature, or the strength of the human spirit. The important thing is that you find something that resonates with you and that you can turn to for support and guidance. In the following pages, I will introduce you to the concept of an existence greater than yourself that you can utilize as a “higher power”.

Another important feature of admitting powerlessness is seen by it increasing your accountability; this will make it easier for you to seek help and support from others. You'll be able to recognize that you can't control your addiction on your own and that it's okay to reach out for help. There are others out there who have been through what you're going through and are willing to support you every step of the way. Let others who know and understand work together with you, make positive changes in your life, and help you find the peace and serenity that you deserve.

Several evidence-based practices criticize the concept of admitting we are powerless and seeking a higher power to improve from our addiction; believing it is more critical to “empower” the individual who is struggling with mental illness and/or substance abuse than surrender and conceptualize a higher power or an entity. Empowering is exactly what is needed, but not by the belief that ‘I can fix myself’ through education

alone. If you are still facing the same issues with your same foundational beliefs that have repeatedly failed to solve your problem of addiction... well, what did Einstein say about this repeated fallacy?

*“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”*

This failed “operating system” programmed in your head from a childhood racked with various traumatic events and repeated neglect, needs to be eradicated of those corrosive beliefs. The concept of empowering with this faulty belief system inside of you is all wrong. How would you remove mud from a glass of water? Not by continuing to add fresh water until it's clean. The water only dilutes to a solution of muddy slime but never renders the contents clean.

Secular-based or Spiritual-based treatment approaches, in reality, are just opposite sides of the same coin arguing who should be face-up. If One side fails to solve the problem, then by all means, try the other side. There is always hope for change.



## Chapter 2

# Addiction Recovery



*Illustration by Fr. Jason K. Dy*

*"Desire is a cruel master,  
it leads us down paths we never intended to travel,  
into traps we never saw coming."*

- Emily Thorne, "Revenge" (2012)

## Catch a Monkey

Have you ever heard of the trick for catching a monkey by using a narrow neck jar and some food? It's amazing that it actually works; fastening a jar to the ground (or a fixed post) and then placing fruit or nuts into the jar as a tempting treat. The monkey comes along sees the food, reaches his hand into the jar, and grabs hold. The monkey's hand was small enough to slip into the neck of the jar but by grabbing the food his fist was too large to pull out. The monkey is trapped. Yet, in reality, he is not; all he has to do is let go of the food and he can escape. But his brain won't let him. His desire to eat is as strong as his desire to escape. The hunter can simply walk up and seize the monkey, who is trying desperately to run away from the jar but is hopelessly stuck.

Addiction is a lot like this story; the answer seems so simple, just stop doing drugs. Or as the 1980s "War on Drugs" campaign explained, "Just say No." Here is the problem with that approach, it's not about the substance or behavior, it's about the desire. Remember the definition of addiction mentioned during the introduction of this book: Any behavior that gives temporary relief and pleasure, but has negative consequences, and you cannot stop doing it. Your desire to find relief from inner turmoil is as strong as your desire to stop the devastation caused by the addiction.

Breaking free from addiction is a challenging process that often requires external help, such as therapy or support groups. The

individual must make difficult choices and sacrifices, such as cutting ties with people or situations that contribute to their addiction. Just like the monkey's desire to eat is as strong as its desire to escape, the addicted individual finds themselves unable to "let go" of their drug even if it means suffering a harmful outcome.

## Progression of Recovery

There are different models of addiction recovery, but one commonly used framework for the progression of recovery is the "transtheoretical model" or "stages of change model," which proposes five stages of addiction recovery:

1. **Pre-contemplation:** In this stage, the person is not aware or does not acknowledge that they have a problem with addiction. They may minimize the issue or blame others for their behavior.
2. **Contemplation:** In this stage, the person recognizes that they have a problem with addiction but may feel ambivalent about changing their behavior. They may weigh the pros and cons of continuing their addictive behavior versus making changes.
3. **Preparation:** In this stage, the person decides to make changes and takes initial steps towards recovery. They may seek out information or support, set goals, and make plans for change.

4. Action: In this stage, the person actively engages in changing their behavior and implementing their plan. They may participate in therapy or treatment programs, engage in self-help groups, and make lifestyle changes to support their recovery.
5. Maintenance: In this stage, the person works to sustain their recovery by continuing to practice the skills and behaviors they have learned. They may seek ongoing support and make adjustments to their plan as needed. This stage can last for an extended period and may involve setbacks or relapses, but the person remains committed to their recovery.

Between the stages of Contemplation and Preparation is where this book is targeted. At this area centering in the middle of the two stages, which I refer to as the “Decision Point”, is usually characterized by the experience of a “bottom moment”; that pivotal event where you are ready for change.

## Healing Within

### SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY

Spiritual or transcendent psychology, as represented in Carl Jung's Individuation and A.A. 12-step type programs, is based on the belief that a person's connection to a higher power or spirituality is essential for achieving lasting recovery from addiction. Carl Jung, a renowned psychologist, believed that addiction was often rooted in a person's ‘experience of

disconnection' from their deeper sense of 'self and purpose' (which he referred to as the "Self"). He believed that by reconnecting with the "Self", individuals could find an identity with meaning and purpose that would help them overcome addiction.

A.A. style of 12-step programs are based on spiritual principles, and rooted in the belief that addiction is a disease affecting the mind, body, and spirit. It is through a person's connection to a higher power that is essential for achieving lasting sobriety. These programs encourage individuals to develop a personal relationship with the higher power, as they understand it, and to seek guidance and support from that power as they work towards recovery.

Both Jung's Individuation approach in therapy and A.A.'s 12-step programs recognize the importance of spiritual or transcendent experiences in the recovery process. This can involve developing a deeper sense of self-awareness, connecting with a higher power or spiritual community, and developing a sense of purpose and meaning in life. By focusing on the spiritual aspects of recovery, individuals can find the strength and motivation to overcome addiction and achieve lasting sobriety.

Research has shown that spirituality can be an effective component of addiction recovery. Studies have found that individuals who participate in spiritual or religious practices during the recovery process have lower rates of relapse and better overall mental health outcomes. Additionally, engaging in

spiritual practices, such as meditation or prayer, has been shown to reduce stress and improve emotional well-being, which can be particularly beneficial for individuals in recovery.

Overall, the spiritual or transcendent approach to addiction recovery, as represented in Carl Jung's Individuation and A.A. 12-step type programs, can be a powerful tool for individuals looking to overcome addiction. By focusing on the spiritual aspects of recovery and developing a deeper connection with a higher power, individuals can find the motivation and strength to achieve lasting sobriety and lead a fulfilling life in recovery.

#### DAMAGE FROM GROWING UP

Erik Erikson proposed a theory that outlines the psychological and social development of individuals throughout their lifespan, which consists of eight stages characterized by distinct challenges or crises. Failure to navigate these stages successfully can result in the development of personality disorders that impede recovery from addiction. For instance, difficulty in the trust vs. mistrust stage during infancy may lead to an anxious attachment style and low self-esteem in later life.

Such maladaptive beliefs can trigger negative coping mechanisms like substance use to deal with difficult emotions and feelings of inadequacy. Individuals with personality disorder traits may find it challenging to regulate their emotions and impulses, making it hard to resist drug and alcohol use.

To overcome addiction effectively, individuals must recognize and challenge their flawed belief systems and adopt healthier coping strategies for managing distress. This often requires professional support or therapy, such as cognitive-behavioral or dialectical behavior therapy, to address personality disorders and develop adaptive coping skills.

By understanding Erik Erikson's Psycho-Social Stages of Development, one can gain valuable insight into how personality disorders and negative beliefs can contribute to addiction and hinder the recovery process. By identifying these underlying issues and working towards resolving them, individuals can acquire the skills and tools necessary for lasting sobriety and a fulfilling life.

## Changing Your World

### PEOPLE-PLACES-THINGS

During addiction recovery, it's essential to modify the environments, relationships, and objects associated with substance use, as these triggers can provoke cravings and relapse. Addiction can become closely intertwined with specific places, people, or things, and being exposed to them can trigger memories and cravings that threaten sobriety.

Several undeniable truths highlight the need to change one's environments, relationships, and objects when recovering from addiction, including:

- Triggers associated with substance use, such as people, places, and things, can provoke cravings and relapse.
- Maintaining relationships with people still using drugs or alcohol can jeopardize sobriety.
- Being in environments where drugs or alcohol are available can make it challenging to resist the temptation to use.
- Objects or activities linked to substance use, such as drug paraphernalia or going to a bar, can trigger memories and cravings.

There are several "rules" that can be helpful in successfully achieving these changes, such as:

- ✓ Avoiding people who are still using drugs or alcohol and seeking out supportive, sober relationships.
- ✓ Finding new hobbies or activities that do not involve substance use.
- ✓ Identifying triggers and avoiding environments or situations that may trigger cravings.
- ✓ Being honest with yourself and others about the need to make these changes and seeking support from a therapist, support group, or sponsor.
- ✓ Developing a strong support system for individuals who are also in recovery.

Ultimately, changing one's people, places, and things can be a critical component of successfully recovering from addiction. By avoiding triggers and developing healthier habits and

relationships, individuals can build a foundation for lasting sobriety and a fulfilling life in recovery.

While making changes to people, places, and things can be an important part of the recovery process, it is not always necessary for everyone in recovery. Different individuals have different triggers and levels of susceptibility to cravings, so what works for one person may not work for another.

However, it is important for individuals in recovery to be aware of their triggers and to take steps to avoid or manage them. For some individuals, this may involve making significant changes to their environment and social networks, while for others, it may involve smaller adjustments. The key is to identify what works best for the individual and to be willing to make changes as necessary to support their recovery journey.

Additionally, it is important to note that making changes to people, places, and things is not a guarantee of lasting sobriety. Recovery is a complex process, and there are many factors that can influence an individual's success in maintaining sobriety. Individuals in recovery need to seek support and resources, such as therapy, support groups, and sober living communities, to help them navigate the challenges of addiction and maintain their recovery.

# Behaviors

## (Schedules, Routines, and Rituals)

While a schedule and a routine may appear to be similar concepts, they do have some important differences in terms of the benefits they provide.

A schedule is a plan or timetable that specifies when certain activities or events will take place. For example, a person in recovery may have a schedule that includes attending support group meetings on certain days of the week, seeing a therapist on another day, and engaging in exercise or other activities at specific times of the day.

A routine, on the other hand, is a set of habits or activities that are performed regularly and in a specific order. For example, a person in recovery may have a morning routine that involves waking up at a certain time, doing some light exercise, having breakfast, and then engaging in meditation or mindfulness practice.

### SCHEDULES

The benefits of having a schedule in recovery include:

- **Time Management:** A schedule can help individuals manage their time effectively by prioritizing important activities and ensuring that they have enough time to complete them.

- **Accountability:** A schedule can provide a sense of accountability, as individuals are responsible for showing up to meetings or appointments at specific times.
- **Organization:** A schedule can help individuals stay organized and on track with their recovery goals by providing structure and direction.

## ROUTINES

The benefits of having a routine in recovery include:

- ❖ **Stability:** A routine can provide a sense of stability and consistency, which can be comforting and help individuals manage stress and anxiety.
- ❖ **Building Habits:** A routine can help individuals build healthy habits, such as exercise or meditation, that become automatic over time.
- ❖ **Self-Discipline:** A routine can help individuals develop self-discipline and a sense of control over their lives, which can be empowering and help them maintain sobriety.

Overall, both a schedule and a routine can be beneficial for individuals in recovery, but they provide different types of benefits. A schedule can help with time management, accountability, and organization, while a routine can provide stability, help build healthy habits, and promote self-discipline.

## RITUALS

Rituals can play an important role in shaping and reinforcing belief systems. A ritual is a set of actions, often performed in a

specific order and with a specific purpose, that can help to create a sense of meaning and connection to something larger than oneself.

In the context of belief systems, rituals can help to reinforce and solidify core principles and values. For example, a person may engage in a daily meditation practice as a way to connect with a higher power or to reinforce their precepts on the importance of mindfulness and self-reflection.

Rituals can also help to create a sense of community and shared identity among individuals who hold similar beliefs. For example, a religious custom of attending church services or participating in prayer groups can create an experience of belonging and connection to others who follow the same faith.

Additionally, rituals can help to provide structure and stability in uncertain or challenging times. For individuals in recovery from addiction, regimes such as participating in support group meetings or practicing self-care activities like exercise or meditation can help to provide a feeling of routine and stability, which can be crucial for maintaining sobriety.

Overall, rituals play an important role in reinforcing belief systems and promoting a perception of connection, community, and stability. By engaging in meaningful rituals, individuals strengthen their beliefs and values while supporting their overall well-being and recovery.

In the context of personal rehabilitation, rituals related to a belief in a higher power can take many forms and can be highly individualized based on idiosyncratic beliefs and practices. Here are a few examples of rituals that may be used to connect with a higher power while working on your recovery:

- **Prayer or meditation:** Many individuals in recovery find comfort and support in daily prayer or meditation. These practices can help to quiet the mind, provide a feeling of calm, and create a space for connecting with a higher power.
- **Attending religious services:** Attending regular religious services can provide individuals with a sense of connection and community support, while also strengthening their beliefs in a higher power.
- **Gratitude journaling:** Expressing gratitude for the positive things in one's life can help to create a feeling of abundance and harmony with a higher power. Many individuals in recovery find that keeping a daily gratitude journal helps to promote a sense of positivity and an affinity to something larger than oneself.
- **Nature walks:** Connecting with nature can be a powerful way to experience a relationship with a higher power. Taking daily walks in nature or engaging in activities like hiking or gardening can help to promote feelings of peace and congruency.

- Service to others: Many people who are in the process of recovering often discover that helping others contributes to establishing a profound meaning and attachment to a higher power. Volunteering or taking part in service-focused endeavors can be impactful methods of establishing a bond with something beyond oneself, while simultaneously fostering a sense of satisfaction and meaning.

These are just a few examples of rituals that can be used to connect with a higher power in the context of recovery. The specific rituals that are most meaningful and effective will vary based on individual beliefs, values, and practices.

For individuals who are incarcerated, making a connection to a higher power can be challenging as a result of the limitations in this environment. However, there are still several rituals that can be practiced to help foster a belief in a higher power and support recovery efforts. Here are some examples:

- Prayer or meditation: Many correctional facilities allow for prayer or meditation time. This can be an opportunity to connect with a higher power through quiet reflection and spiritual contemplation.
- Reading religious or spiritual texts: Sometimes these facilities have libraries that contain religious or spiritual books. Reading and studying these materials can help to deepen your experience of a higher power and provide guidance, with support, for recovery.

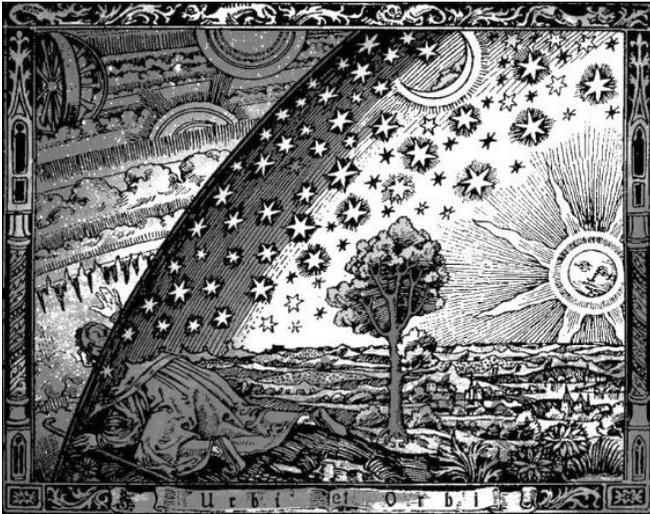
- Group meetings: Often a correctional facility will offer support groups or 12-step meetings for individuals who are battling addiction. These meetings can provide a community of support and communication to others who are also working to maintain their sobriety and connect with a higher power.
- Creative expression: Writing, drawing, and other forms of creative expression can be a way to recognize your spirituality and belief in a higher power. Even in a correctional setting, individuals can engage in creative expression through writing, drawing, and other forms of art.
- Service to others: Many times, there are programs available that allow individuals to give back to the community through volunteer work or service-oriented activities. Participating in acts of service towards others can offer a profound feeling of purpose and an association with a higher power, even in a challenging environment.

These are just a few examples of rituals that can be practiced to foster a belief in a higher power and support recovery efforts for individuals who are incarcerated. It is important to note that each individual's spiritual beliefs and practices will be unique, and it is important to find practices that resonate with one's personal beliefs and values.



## Chapter 3

# New Belief



*"We are not human beings having  
a spiritual experience;  
we are spiritual beings having  
a human experience."*

~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

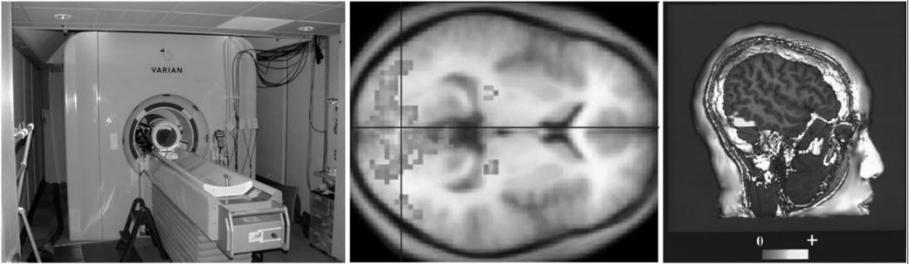
# Science and Spirituality

Religion and science are frequently depicted as opposing forces, but both find their origins in the inner workings of the human brain. The emergence of modern cognitive neurosciences has significantly enhanced and broadened the scientific exploration of religious and spiritual phenomena. The burgeoning field of neurotheology, also known as the neuroscience of spirituality, is an interdisciplinary field that explores the neural correlates and underlying mechanisms of religious and spiritual experiences. It combines neuroscience, psychology, and theology to investigate the relationship between the brain, cognition, and spirituality.

Researchers in this field utilize brain imaging techniques such as fMRI, PET, and EEG to study brain activity during religious or spiritual experiences, aiming to identify specific brain regions and networks involved. Neurotheological studies employ different approaches, including examining brain activity during practices like meditation or prayer and exploring the effects of spiritual beliefs and experiences on psychological well-being and cognitive processes.

Findings from neuroimaging studies have revealed brain regions associated with spirituality, such as the prefrontal cortex, parietal cortex, and anterior cingulate cortex. Additionally, neurotheology investigates the neural mechanisms underlying altered states of consciousness induced by spiritual practices, as well as the role of neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine in spiritual

experiences. The field acknowledges ongoing debates regarding the interpretation of results, ethical considerations, and the limitations of neuroscientific methods. There is another problem though.



The pursuit of neurotheology to understand the experiences of spirituality is marred by a bias with an inclination toward materialism. Researchers either assume or find it convenient to conclude that spiritual experiences are solely the result of brain states. However, this assertion is inherently false: spiritual experiences are abstract and influenced by the immaterial aspects of intellect and will.

Undoubtedly, there exist connections between authentic spiritual experiences (such as prayer, infused contemplation, mystical union, etc.) and neuroimaging. Yet, it is crucial to remember that correlation is often mistaken for causation, especially given the prevailing mindset in current neuroscience. As a result, neurotheology is at risk of becoming another passing trend rooted in materialism, one that reduces the profound aspects of human rationality and spirituality to nothing more than evolved brain matter. The potential for misuse and exploitation of

neurotheology far surpasses its limited scientific or theological significance.

This raises a whole new question: Why would a ‘creator of the universe’ structure reality in such a way that those experiencing its entropy are unable to scientifically prove an existence beyond the death of this reality? Speculating on the motivations or intentions of a hypothetical creator regarding the structure of this “persistent illusion” is a philosophical question that has been debated by thinkers throughout history. There are various perspectives and theories on this matter; here are a couple of possibilities, keeping in mind that these are speculative and not definitive answers:

One possibility is as a Test of Faith or Free Will. Some philosophical and theological perspectives propose that the limitations on proving existence beyond physical reality are intentional. They suggest that the creator may have designed the human experience to include an element of faith or free will. In this view, the absence of empirical evidence for the afterlife or the existence of a soul encourages individuals to exercise their capacity for belief, faith, and personal exploration.

The other possibility is the Preservation of Meaningful Choice, which suggests that the presence of unequivocal proof of an afterlife or the existence of a soul could significantly alter the dynamics of human existence. It posits that the uncertainty surrounding these metaphysical questions allows individuals to make meaningful choices, shape their lives, and pursue personal

growth without being unduly influenced or constrained by the knowledge of what lies beyond the veil of physical reality.

I will be the first to acknowledge these perspectives are not universally accepted and reflect particular philosophical and theological viewpoints. The nature of existence, the potential existence of a creator, and the reasons behind the structure of human reality remain subjects of profound debate and personal belief.

## Hard Problem of Consciousness

*“It is widely agreed that experience arises from a physical basis, but we have no good explanation of why and how it so arises. Why should physical processing give rise to a rich inner life at all? It seems objectively unreasonable that it should and yet it does.”*

~ David Chalmers

The "hard problem of consciousness" refers to the philosophical challenge of explaining the subjective experience or qualia (the feel) of consciousness in terms of physical processes. It is considered "hard" because it is not just a matter of understanding how the brain processes information, but rather how this leads to subjective experiences.

The hard problem arises because it is not clear how physical processes in the brain could give rise to subjective experiences such as the sensation of pain, the taste of chocolate, or the feeling

of love. Even if we know everything about the neural mechanisms involved in processing information, it is still unclear how this can explain the subjective experience of that information.

One proposed solution to the hard problem is the idea of panpsychism, which suggests that consciousness is a fundamental aspect of the universe and is present in all matter at some level. However, this view is controversial and has been criticized for lacking empirical (measurable) evidence.

Another proposed solution is the idea of "emergence," which suggests that consciousness arises from complex interactions between neurons and brain regions, but is not reducible (simplified) to these physical processes. However, it is not clear how emergence could explain the subjective nature of experience.

Ultimately, the hard problem of consciousness remains a major challenge for philosophers and scientists. While progress has been made in understanding the neural correlates of consciousness, it is still unclear how these physical processes give rise to the subjective nature of experience.

David Chalmers is a philosopher who first formulated the hard problem of consciousness in his influential paper "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness" published in 1995. In this paper, Chalmers argued that there is a fundamental aspect of consciousness that cannot be explained by the currently available scientific theories and that this "hard problem" poses a significant challenge to understanding the nature of the mind.

Chalmers contrasted what he called the "easy problem" of consciousness, which refers to the scientific study of the mechanisms underlying cognitive processes, such as attention, memory, and perception, with the "hard problem" of explaining the subjective experience of consciousness. The easy problem can be studied using standard scientific methods and has made significant progress in recent decades. However, the hard problem involves explaining why conscious experience exists at all and why it has the specific qualities that it does.

Chalmers argued that even if we know everything about the neural mechanisms involved in processing information, we still cannot explain why these mechanisms give rise to subjective experience. For example, we can understand how the brain processes color information, but we cannot explain why this processing is accompanied by the subjective experience of seeing the color red, rather than some other color or no experience at all.

Chalmers suggested that the hard problem is an aspect of reality that may never be fully explained by science and that it may require a new conceptual framework to fully understand. His work has sparked much discussion and debate among philosophers and scientists and has led to the development of new theories and approaches for studying consciousness.

The question of why physical processes are ever accompanied by experience, and why a given physical process generates a specific experience rather than another, is precisely what makes the hard problem of consciousness so challenging.

At present, there is no consensus on how to explain why physical processes are accompanied by experience, or why specific experiences arise from specific physical processes. The hard problem of consciousness remains an open question that is actively being explored by philosophers, neuroscientists, and other researchers.

## DOUBLE-SLIT EXPERIMENT

The Double Slit Experiment was first performed by English scientist Thomas Young in 1801. Young experimented with light, using two narrow slits to create an interference pattern on a screen. The experiment was later repeated with electrons by physicists George Paget Thomson and Clinton Joseph Davisson in the 1920s, providing further evidence for the wave-particle duality of matter. Since then, the experiment has been replicated with various types of particles and is widely considered one of the most important experiments in the history of physics.

In the Double Slit Experiment, a beam of particles, such as electrons or photons, is directed at a screen containing two narrow slits. The particles pass through the slits and form an interference pattern on a detector screen placed behind the slits. The interference pattern is a series of bright and dark bands, indicating regions of constructive and destructive interference, respectively.

The wave-like behavior of the particles can be explained by the wave-particle duality of matter. According to this concept,

particles can exhibit both wave-like and particle-like behavior, depending on the type of experiment being performed.

However, the experiment becomes more intriguing when the role of the observer is introduced. In quantum mechanics, the act of measurement is believed to collapse the wave function, meaning that the particles are forced to behave as particles rather than waves. This is known as the measurement problem, and it is a fundamental issue in quantum mechanics.

Some interpretations of quantum mechanics suggest that the observer's consciousness is necessary to collapse the wave function and force the particles to behave as particles.

The von Neumann-Wigner interpretation is a controversial interpretation of quantum mechanics that suggests the consciousness of an observer plays a fundamental role in the measurement process and the collapse of the wave function.

This interpretation was proposed by the mathematician John von Neumann and the physicist Eugene Wigner in the 1930's and 1960's, respectively. They argued that the act of measurement is not a physical process, but rather a mental one and that the wave function collapses only when it is observed by a conscious observer.

According to this interpretation, the observer's consciousness is necessary to collapse the wave function and force the particles to behave as particles. This implies that reality is fundamentally

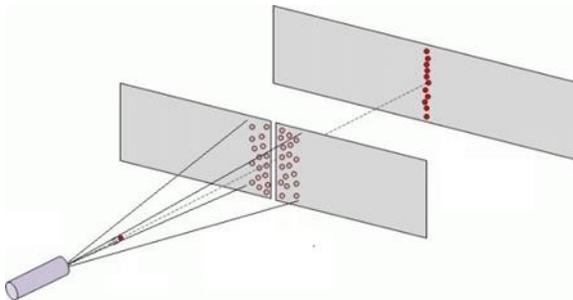
subjective and that the physical world only exists when it is observed by a conscious mind.

Nobel Laureate Eugene Wigner wrote in 1961:

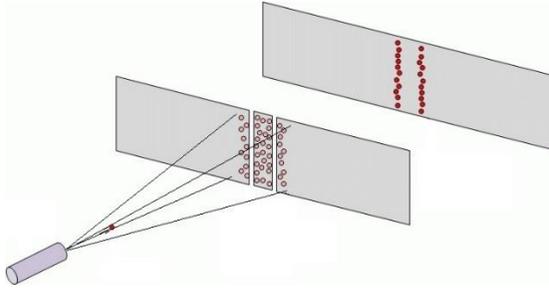
*“It was not possible to formulate the laws of quantum mechanics in a consistent way without reference to consciousness.”*

I WILL ATTEMPT A SIMPLER EXPLANATION OF THE DOUBLE-SLIT EXPERIMENT:

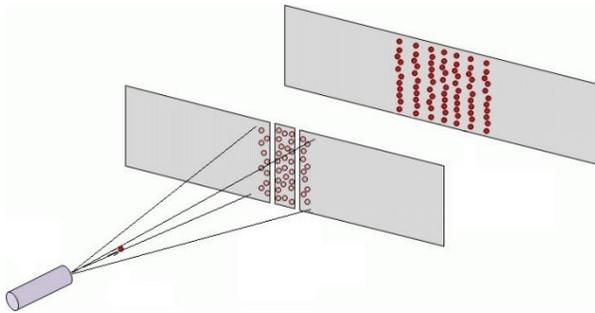
- A spray of light energy called Photons was shot toward a single slit in a barrier and noted the pattern it created.
- Predictably it made a single column of hits on the screen, matching the slit.



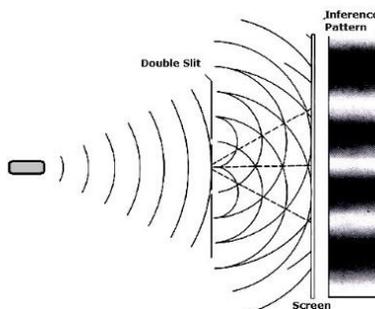
- When sprayed at two slits, they expected a pattern of two columns.



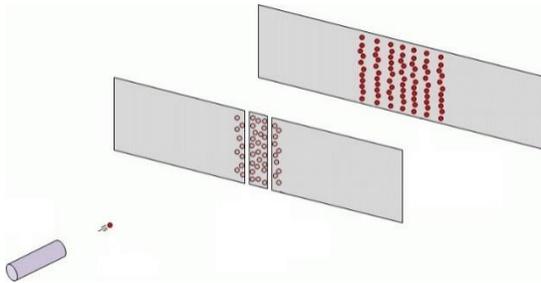
- But that's not what happened; several columns of hits from the spray appeared on the screen.



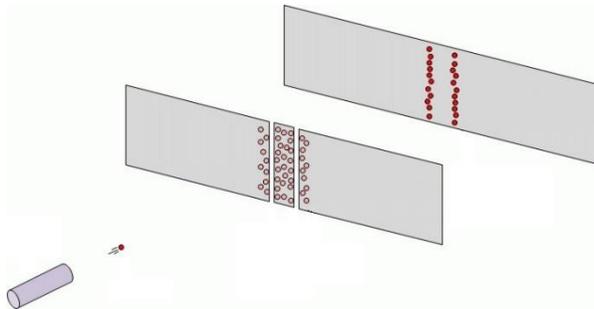
- They theorized it was due to light energy behaving like waves on a pond. When they hit the barrier of the two slits, the waves then interfere with each other resulting in the pattern.



- So, they now tried the experiment again, shooting the photons one at a time toward the screen to get the two-column hit pattern, but that didn't happen.



- It still ended up making several hit columns! How is that possible? There is no interference occurring.
- They repeated the experiment, but this time they watched to see which slit the photons went through and where they hit on the screen.



- But this time they ended up with only a two-column hit pattern!
- This phenomena in the physics experiment only happened when a **conscious observer** watched which slit the photon travels through.

This is called **The Observer Effect**.

*“I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness.”*

~ Max Planck

[physicist, and originator of modern quantum theories. Interview in 'The Observer' (25 January 1931), p.17, column 3]

## CONSCIOUSNESS FIRST

The biocentric universe is a philosophical concept that proposes life and consciousness are fundamental to the nature of the universe. According to this theory, the universe is not a collection of inanimate objects, but rather a unified entity that is interconnected and interdependent. It suggests that the universe exists because of life, not the other way around.

The biocentric universe theory was first proposed by the scientist Robert Lanza in his book "Biocentrism: How Life and Consciousness are the Keys to Understanding the True Nature of the Universe." Lanza argues that the physical universe is a product of consciousness and that the laws of physics are simply the rules that govern the behavior of consciousness. He suggests that everything we see and experience in the world is a construct of our consciousness.

The biocentric universe theory challenges the traditional view that the universe is made up of matter and energy and that life and consciousness are accidental byproducts of physical

processes. Instead, it proposes that the universe is a manifestation of the conscious mind and that the physical world is a reflection of our thoughts and perceptions.

Robert Lanza's argument that the physical universe is a product of consciousness is rooted in the idea that everything we experience is a construct of our consciousness. According to Lanza, the universe exists because life was an entity first. In other words, life and consciousness are fundamental to the nature of the universe.

One way to think about this is to consider the concept of observation. According to Lanza, when we observe the world around us, we are not passively observing an objective reality, but are actively creating that reality through our observation. This is because our observations are always filtered through our consciousness, and therefore, the world we see is always a construct of our consciousness.

Lanza's argument is a radical departure from established scientific thinking, which sees the universe as a collection of inanimate objects governed by immutable physical laws. However, it raises interesting questions about the nature of reality and the relationship between consciousness and the physical world.

## SIMULATED REALITY

The Simulation Theory, also known as the Simulation Hypothesis, is the idea that our reality is not a physical, objective

reality, but rather a computer simulation created by an advanced civilization or higher intelligence. This theory suggests that everything we experience, including our thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations, is just digital code created by an advanced computer program.

The Simulation Theory has its roots in philosophical and scientific ideas dating back centuries, but it gained renewed attention in the 21st century with the rapid advancement of computer technology and artificial intelligence. The theory has been explored in popular culture, including in movies like *The Matrix*, and has been the subject of philosophical debates and scientific investigations.

While the Simulation Theory is intriguing and has captured the imaginations of many people, it remains a speculative and unproven idea. There is currently no scientific evidence to support the theory, and many experts consider it to be an interesting thought experiment rather than a serious scientific theory.

## INTERFACE THEORY OF PERCEPTION

Donald Hoffman is a cognitive scientist and professor of cognitive science at the University of California, Irvine. He is known for his work on perception, consciousness, and the evolution of cognition.

Hoffman's research challenges some of the basic assumptions of classical cognitive science and argues that our perception of

reality is not a direct representation of the world around us, but rather a user interface that has evolved to hide the underlying complexity of the world and allow us to interact with it more effectively.

In particular, Hoffman has proposed what he calls the "interface theory of perception," which suggests that the objects and events we perceive in the world are not directly related to the physical properties of the objects themselves, but rather to the fitness consequences of those properties for our survival and reproduction. According to this theory, our perceptions are not a window onto reality, but rather a way of interacting with the world that has been shaped by evolutionary pressures over time.

Donald Hoffman's theory of Conscious Realism proposes that the objective reality we perceive is not an accurate representation of the true nature of reality, but rather a perceptual interface created by our minds. According to his theory, our perception is not a passive reflection of the world around us, but an active construction based on our past experiences and goals.

Imagine looking at a computer desktop. You see several icons that you can change, move around, place into folders, or delete. The desktop is an example of reality. If you wanted, you could create a way to study where the icons come from, or why they exist at all. What makes them function as computer doorways, or causes them to appear the way they do? Yet the icons are not what is really happening on your computer. To understand this, you must

enter a different world, composed of microchips, circuits, and the movement of invisible electrons.

Instead of requiring everyone to possess in-depth knowledge for building electronic circuitry or writing computer code, the desktop is a convenient way of interacting with your computer programs. Trying to understand the “reality” taking place to enjoy the information a computer provides would dramatically slow down the process. Rather, you start treating the desktop images as reality; even though it is only an interface of reality. Now imagine the things you see in the world around you, i.e., a coffee cup, a doorknob, and a light switch, are all examples of the icons on a computer desktop. What you see and interact with in your world makes it possible to operate effectively in your existence, but what you are seeing is not reality.

Hoffman's theory complements the Simulation Theory in several ways. Both theories suggest that our experience of reality is not a direct representation of objective reality, but rather a constructed representation. However, while the Simulation Theory posits that this constructed reality is the result of a computer program, Hoffman's theory suggests that it is the product of the workings of the conscious mind.

Moreover, both theories suggest that our perception of reality is shaped by our evolutionary history and is geared toward survival rather than accuracy. This means that what we perceive as reality may not necessarily reflect the true nature of the world.

Overall, while the Simulation Theory and Hoffman's theory are distinct, they share some common ground in challenging the traditional view of reality as an objective, fixed entity.

## ERROR CORRECTION CODE

The idea that space and time could be a quantum error-correcting code is a speculative hypothesis that has been proposed by several physicists in recent years. The basic idea behind this hypothesis is that the fundamental building blocks of space and time could be quantum bits (or qubits) and that the laws of physics that govern the behavior of these qubits could be understood as a quantum error-correcting code.

The concept of quantum error correction is well-established in the field of quantum information theory. It is a technique that allows quantum computers to protect against errors that occur during the processing of quantum information. The idea is to encode quantum information in such a way that errors can be detected and corrected without disturbing the underlying quantum state.

The hypothesis that space and time could be a quantum error-correcting code builds on this idea by suggesting that the fabric of space and time itself could be thought of as a giant quantum computer, with each point in space-time representing a qubit. According to this hypothesis, the laws of physics that govern the behavior of these qubits could be understood as a kind of error-

correcting code that ensures the stability and coherence of the quantum state of the universe.

While this hypothesis is still highly speculative and has not yet been rigorously tested or proven, it has generated considerable interest among physicists and has led to several research projects aimed at exploring its implications for our understanding of the fundamental nature of space and time. Ultimately, only time and further research will tell whether this hypothesis has any basis in reality.

This hypothesis that space and time could be a quantum error-correcting code was proposed years following the development of quantum error correction in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

$$\begin{aligned} S_j &= r(\alpha^j) = s(\alpha^j) + e(\alpha^j) = 0 + e(\alpha^j) \\ &= e(\alpha^j) \\ &= \sum_{k=1}^{\nu} e_{i_k} (\alpha^j)^{i_k}, \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, n - k \end{aligned}$$

In 2010, Dr. Sylvester James Gates Jr., a theoretical physicist at the University of Maryland (known for his work on supersymmetry, supergravity, and string theory), made headlines when he revealed the discovery of what appeared to be computer code embedded in the equations of supersymmetry, a theoretical framework that attempts to unify the laws of physics. Gates' findings suggest that the fundamental laws of physics might have a computational aspect to them.

What he found was the exact same computer code used by the World Wide Web within the mathematical formulas of the String Theory. Specifically, he said it was an error-correcting mechanism; this has led him to speculate [in a mostly joking way] that we might in fact be living in a giant computer simulation.

Error correction code (ECC) is a technique used to ensure the accuracy of data transmitted over the internet. When data is transmitted over a network, it can sometimes get corrupted or lost due to interference or other issues. ECC helps to detect and correct errors that may occur during transmission by adding extra bits to the data stream. These extra bits are used to check for errors and, if necessary, correct them.

Think of it like a spell checker for data. Just as a spell checker can identify and correct spelling errors in a document, ECC can identify and correct errors in data transmitted over a network. By using ECC, the internet can ensure that data is transmitted accurately and reliably, which is important for many applications, such as online banking, e-commerce, and online communication.

It is worth noting this idea of the universe possibly being a form of computer or that the laws of physics might be based on an information system, has a long history in physics and philosophy. The hypothesis that space and time could be a quantum error-correcting code is only one of several recent attempts to explore this idea in the context of quantum information theory and the theory of quantum gravity.

## CONSCIOUSNESS SURVIVES DEATH

Belief in the survival of consciousness after death is often linked to spiritual or religious beliefs, as well as personal experiences and anecdotal evidence. Some people believe that consciousness is not simply a product of brain activity, but rather an entity or force that can exist independently of the physical body.

In the early 1960's we saw the development of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Before this time, if a person's heart were to stop, they died. With the widespread use of CPR, there was a dramatic increase in the number of people who survived a close call to death. By the 1970s, so many individuals had undergone near-death experiences that the phenomenon caught the attention of a physician/philosopher.

The psychiatrist, Dr. Raymond Moody, in his book, *Life After Life* (1975), coined the term 'Near Death Experience' (NDE). It was a book that studied approximately 150 cases of NDE reports he had encountered. This started the modern world to examine the phenomenon that has been reported as far back as in Plato's book, *The Republic*. Since then, numerous physicians and psychologists have interviewed patients, numbering into the tens of thousands, who told of near-death experiences.

Some of these physicians include cardiologist Michael Sabom, MD, psychiatrist Bruce Greyson, MD, cardiologist Pim Van Lommel, MD, resuscitation specialist Sam Parnia, MD, radiation oncologist Jeffrey Long, MD, psychologist Kenneth Ring, PhD,

and others. All these researchers and others have published their findings resulting in a large collection of professional and popular literature on NDE. An interesting aspect found in the research of the reports of near-death experiences has revealed a common pattern unrelated to any religious belief, nationality, or race.

Near-Death Experiences are often cited as evidence to support the idea of consciousness surviving death. During an NDE, individuals report various vivid and unusual experiences, such as a sense of leaving the body, traveling through a tunnel, encountering deceased loved ones or spiritual entities, and experiencing a profound sense of peace or love. They also tell of having “a life review” from their birth to death, but experience it from the viewpoint of others they encountered during life; both the good and the bad emotions/pain they caused others to experience. They compare it to a type of judgment for your life here on earth, but you are the judge. Upon their return to this life, some also report gaining insights into the nature of reality or feeling a greater connection to the universe.

These experiences have been interpreted by some as evidence of the soul or consciousness leaving the body and continuing to exist after death. However, it is important to note that while NDEs are intriguing and often profound experiences, they do not necessarily prove the survival of consciousness after death.

Overall, the question of whether consciousness survives death is a complex and multifaceted one, and there is no clear consensus among scientists, philosophers, or theologians. While NDEs may

offer some insight into the nature of consciousness and the human experience, they should be approached with caution and studied rigorously to avoid jumping to conclusions.

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Chaz Ebert, wife of the late Roger Ebert (of "Siskel & Ebert" 1986-2010), described her husband's final words in her interview in Esquire in 2013:

*“That week before Roger passed away, I would see him and he would talk about having visited this other place. I thought he was hallucinating. I thought they were giving him too much medication. But the day before he passed away, he wrote me a note: ‘This is all an elaborate hoax.’ I asked him, ‘What’s a hoax?’ And he was talking about this world, this place. He said it was all an illusion. I thought he was just confused. But he was not confused. He wasn’t visiting heaven, not the way we think of heaven. He described it as a vastness that you can’t even imagine. It was a place where the past, present, and future were happening all at once.”*



## SPIRITUAL BEINGS – HUMAN EXPERIENCE

The idea that we are spiritual beings having a human experience is a philosophical and spiritual belief held by some individuals. According to this perspective, the human experience is seen as a temporary physical embodiment of a spiritual essence, which is here to learn and grow.

Proponents of this viewpoint believe that the purpose of our existence is to learn and evolve as spiritual beings and that the challenges and experiences we encounter during our human lives provide opportunities for this growth. They see the human body as a vehicle through which the spirit can interact with the physical world, gaining insights and wisdom that can be carried forward into future existences.

This belief often emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things and the idea that we are all part of a greater spiritual reality. It can provide a sense of purpose and meaning in life, and encourage individuals to focus on personal growth and self-discovery.

## HIGHER SELF

I propose a new interpretation for the meaning of Higher Power; an awareness within ourselves of a spiritual presence, our internal counselor, our soul which is ultimately connected to eternity.

The concept of a higher self, or an inner spiritual guide, is an understanding held by many people across cultures and belief

systems. Here is a persuasive argument for why someone might believe in their own higher self:

- A sense of intuition: Many people report having a strong inner voice that guides them, even in situations where they lack concrete information. This intuition often leads them to make choices that align with their values and lead to personal growth. This sense of intuition can be seen as a manifestation of a higher self that is guiding the individual.
- A sense of connectedness: People often report feeling connected to something greater than themselves, whether it's nature, the universe, or a higher power. This sense of connectedness can be seen as evidence of a higher self that transcends the individual self and is connected to the greater cosmic consciousness.
- A sense of purpose: People often feel like they have a unique role or purpose in life. This sense of purpose can be seen as being directed by a higher self that has a plan for the individual and is guiding them towards their destiny.
- Personal growth: People often report feeling like they are evolving and becoming better versions of themselves over time. This process of personal growth can be seen as being guided by a higher self that is helping the individual to reach their full potential.

In conclusion, belief in a higher self can provide comfort and guidance and can help individuals understand their place in the

world and their role in the larger global consciousness. Whether or not one believes in a higher self is a personal choice, but many people find that the belief provides them with a sense of peace and direction in life.

## COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

Starting in the early 1990's, a laboratory scientist by the name of Dr. Dean Radin, began performing experiments testing the relationship between mind and matter. In these experiments, random number generators were used to test whether collective human attention corresponds to a change in the physical environment; the research is still ongoing and is called, The Global Consciousness Project.

Dean Radin earned a bachelor's in electrical engineering at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, a master's degree in electrical engineering, and a Ph.D. in educational psychology from the University of Illinois. He has worked at Bell Labs, also as a researcher at both Princeton University and the University of Edinburgh, and was a faculty member at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, before becoming Chief Scientist at the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) in Petaluma, California.

The Global Consciousness Project represents a new stage in the study of the relationship between the mind and the physical world, building on fifty years of prior experiments. The main focus of these experiments was to investigate how "intention" impacts the behavior of matter, ultimately leading to the

fundamental question of what role the mind plays in the physical world. Western science traditionally sees the role of the mind in the physical world as relatively insignificant; for example, even if an automotive designer might have a mental image and “intention” to build a car, it takes a lot of effort to turn that “intention” into a tangible vehicle. However, the question at the heart of this research asks whether there is a direct link between one's “intention” and the behavior of the world.

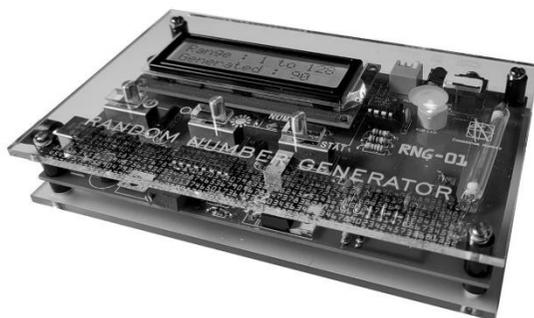
It is currently unknown whether the link between intention and the physical world is direct or mediated. In experiments investigating this link, sensitive physical systems are typically used, and participants are asked to direct their “intention” toward the system in an attempt to influence its behavior. An example of such an experiment involves flipping a coin and wishing for “heads”, then flipping it again and wishing for “tails”. After collecting a large amount of data, statistical analysis shows that the system is biased in the direction of the intended outcome. In other words, the “Intention” of the participant towards the flipping coin had a positive effect.

However, coins are not precise enough for this type of research, so electronic circuits were introduced in the 1960's. In place of flipping coins, the electronic number generators can produce random bits of data very quickly and precisely. In these experiments, participants are asked to mentally influence the output of the random number generator to create more “ones” and “zeros”, and the system is left to run on its own to establish a

calibration condition. Long-term studies and meta-analyses of these experiments reveal biases in the system that suggest the randomness of the system is no longer behaving randomly.

Over the course of 50 years, researchers have been studying the relationship between intention and the behavior of physical systems. In the 1990s, Roger Nelson at Princeton proposed that “attention”, in addition to “intention”, may play a role in this relationship. Specifically, he suggested that attending to something creates a coherent mental state that can also affect the physical world. If the target of “attention” is a random system, attending to it can make the system more ordered and less random.

To test this hypothesis, Nelson conducted experiments where a random number generator electronic circuit was placed near a group of meditators. He found that the randomness of the system decreased during meditation, indicating a greater degree of order, suggesting that “attention” can lead to coherence and affect the behavior of physical systems. These experiments were conducted multiple times by Nelson and his colleagues, both with and without the meditators' knowledge of the presence of the random generator, and the results consistently showed a decrease in randomness during periods of coherence.



In 1994, an experiment was conducted before, during, and after the announcement of the OJ Simpson verdict in his murder trial. This was a unique period in history because it was the first time that hundreds of millions of people around the world knew that something interesting was going to happen at a specific moment in the future. The verdict would either say guilty or not guilty, and the researchers were excited to imagine the amount of “attention” that's slowly focusing up to that moment. The experiment had five random number generators going in the US and Europe, and tracked what was happening to the randomness as they approached the moment of the verdict; at which time, it was possible upward towards a billion people could have been paying “attention” to the announcement. The experiment found clear evidence of a sudden peak in “order” to the random generators within seconds of the verdict being read, which had been broadcast live around the world on both radio and television.

Roger and Dr. Radin, along with a few colleagues, were discussing the concept of “attention” and its effect on randomness when they realized another such world event could serve as a subject for performing a repeat experiment. This chance came with the death of Princess Diana and her scheduled funeral a week later in 1997. Twelve researchers, along with Dr. Radin, set up random number generators around the world and analyzed the results. Sure enough, there was a significant deviation from randomness towards “order” during the period of the funeral when a large number of people were paying “attention” to the broadcast. This

type of experiment was interesting, but it required a lot of coordination to get all the researchers around the globe participating at the same time. As a result, it was decided to create a system that would run automatically 24/7 using random number generators placed in different locations around the world.

Since its inception 25 years ago (in 1998), this project has grown to include approximately 70 random number generators located in cities throughout the world. The project has run continuously during this time, and the researchers have observed and recorded numerous dramatic events that have occurred over the years. They specifically chose to monitor events that could not be predicted but were likely to attract widespread attention to see how the randomness of the generators would be affected.

One of the most notable events the scientists monitored was the September 11th terrorist attacks. At that time, they had 37 generators running and analyzed the data before, during, and after the attacks. They published the findings in a physics journal, *Foundations of Physics Letters*, because the results were so significant. Dr. Dean Radin and his colleagues found clear evidence that the randomness in all 37 generators decreased slightly before the attacks, then decreased further during the attacks, and returned to baseline afterward. This effect was observed for approximately two to three hours before the attacks. After the attacks, the generators exhibited various non-random effects before returning to baseline randomness.

The project now has observed and recorded over 200 events such as tsunamis, earthquakes, political events, celebrity deaths, and unexpected occurrences in their database. The researchers use a continuous random stream from across the globe to observe events as they occur and analyze the results later using a standard method. They can then determine whether the worldwide random system is behaving randomly or not. The odds against 'chance' for a composite of over 200 events are 'over a million to one', so they have good statistical reasons to believe that the random generators are not behaving randomly during large-scale events that attract a lot of attention.

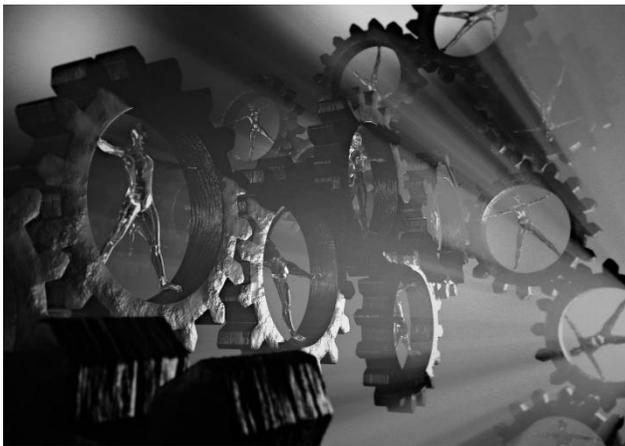
However, the scientists don't yet know which direction the "arrow of causation" goes (the reason this is happening). Is it simply the collective "attention" of many human minds that somehow changes randomness, or is it a reflection of something bigger like a 'collective consciousness'. This might suggest that the 'collective mind' attending to something affects matter and energy in a way that changes the randomness being recorded, but they can't say for certain. It could be a very complex system with no single arrow of causation, or it might involve some type of giant system that has yet to be uncovered.

## THE SOURCE

Some who have followed the global consciousness research wonder if it could explain the effects seen when people pray to a Higher Power (which is a form of meditation). Is there a system we have yet to discover in the fabric of our universe that responds



our wisdom but rather as a receptor. In his work, Dr. Schwartz often emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things and the importance of taking responsibility for the effects of our thoughts and actions on others and the world around us. He also advocates for the use of scientific methods to study spiritual and paranormal phenomena, and he has been a proponent of using rigorous research methods to explore these topics systematically and objectively.



Dr. Eben Alexander III (neurosurgeon and author) states, “The brain itself does not produce consciousness. That it is, instead, a kind of reducing valve or filter, shifting the larger, nonphysical consciousness that we possess in the non-physical worlds down into a more limited capacity for the duration of our mortal lives.” This quote is from his book *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife*, which describes his near-death experience that happened in 2008 in a medically induced coma when treated for meningitis.

As we descend farther down this 'rabbit hole', Dr. Bruce Greyson, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences at the University of Virginia, stated during his speech at the Cosmology and Consciousness Conference - Mind and Matter (2011):

*"All of the studies showing brain areas associated with different mental functions, show only correlations, not causation. They are entirely consistent with the idea that thoughts, perceptions, and memories could take place in a consciousness somewhere separate from the brain, but are then received and processed by specific areas in the brain. It's much like a telephone or a radio or a television signal. The message is created somewhere else, but your cell phone is necessary to receive and process the message. If we were to measure the electrical activity inside your cell phone, electrically exciting parts of it, or remove certain vital parts of your cell phone, we could show that certain parts of the phone were involved in your hearing the phone message. But we would not be proving that their message originated within your cell phone any more than we can prove that our thoughts originate within our brains..."*

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*“My brain is only a receiver, in the Universe there is a core from which we obtain knowledge, strength, and inspiration. I have not penetrated into the secrets of this core, but I know that it exists.” ~ Nikola Tesla*





## Chapter 4

# Source of Pain



*"He who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep  
pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the  
heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes  
wisdom to us by the awful grace of God."*

~ Aeschylus

# Psycho-Social Stages of Development

## 8 – STAGES

Erik Erikson was a developmental psychologist who in 1950 proposed a theory describing how our social skills and personality develop together as we grow and age. His theory suggests we progress through a predetermined order of eight stages, starting at birth and continuing until death, each with its own unique psychosocial challenges or crises that must be resolved to successfully move on to the next stage. The eight stages of Erikson's theory are as follows: [Pay close attention to stages 1 – 5; they are critical to the way your personality has developed.]

1. **Trust vs. Mistrust** (birth to 1 year): The first stage is characterized by a child's developing sense of trust in their caregivers. If the child's needs are consistently met and they feel safe and secure, they will develop a sense of trust. If not, they will develop a sense of mistrust and anxiety that will continue throughout life.
2. **Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt** (1 to 3 years): The second stage is marked by a child's growing sense of independence and desire for control. If the child is allowed to make choices and explore their environment, they will develop a sense of autonomy. If not, they develop a sense of shame and doubt in their abilities.
3. **Initiative vs. Guilt** (3 to 6 years): The third stage is characterized by a child's increasing desire to take on new

challenges and explore their environment. If the child is encouraged and supported in their endeavors, they will develop a sense of initiative. If not, they develop a sense of guilt or anxiety about their actions.

4. **Industry vs. Inferiority** (6 to 11 years): The fourth stage is marked by a child's desire to master new skills and achieve success. If the child can do so and receives positive feedback, they will develop a sense of industry. If not, they may develop a sense of inferiority or low self-esteem.
5. **Identity vs. Role Confusion** (Adolescence): The fifth stage is characterized by a teenager's search for a sense of self and their place in the world. If they can successfully explore different identities and roles, they will develop a strong sense of identity. If not, they may become confused and struggle with their sense of self.
6. **Intimacy vs. Isolation** (Young Adulthood): The sixth stage is marked by a person's desire for intimacy and close relationships. If they can form meaningful connections with others, they will develop a sense of intimacy. If not, they may become isolated and struggle with feelings of loneliness.
7. **Generativity vs. Stagnation** (Middle Adulthood): The seventh stage is characterized by a person's desire to make a positive impact on the world and future generations. If they can do so and feel a sense of purpose, they will develop a sense of generativity. If not, they may become stagnant and feel unfulfilled.

8. **Integrity vs. Despair** (Late Adulthood): The final stage is marked by a person's reflection on their life and legacy. If they can accept their past and find meaning in their life, they will develop a sense of integrity. If not, they may experience feelings of despair and regret.

## DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT

I feel the need to start this discussion about personality development with a disclaimer; determining whether someone has successfully achieved a particular stage of psychosocial development requires a nuanced approach. It's important to remember that psychosocial development is a complex and ongoing process, and individuals may progress through the stages at different rates and with different levels of success. It's also important to consider the context in which the individual existed during their development. Factors such as culture, upbringing, and life experiences can all influence their level of success and may impact their ability to achieve a particular stage of development. Ultimately, the best way to truly know answers about your psycho-social development is to be assessed by a counselor in the field of psychology or sociology.

With that said, I wish to use this eight-stage model to gain insight into how the hard-wiring of neurons in your brain formed the person you are today. A personality disorder is not a mental illness, like depression or bipolar, but it can co-exist. Your personality is “hard-wired” in your brain, while mental illness is a chemical imbalance that requires medical treatment. Think of

personality disorders like different climates in the world; Florida is hot and humid, while Alaska is cold and dry. Mental illness is the storms that develop in those climates; Florida experiences hurricanes while Alaska has blizzards. Mental illness such as depression or bipolar will manifest (appear) differently based on your personality traits (disorders).

For a long time following the development of Erikson's theory, it was believed that if you formed an unsuccessful psycho-social personality in your youth, then that is who you will be for the rest of your life. That is until science discovered "Neuroplasticity". The concept of neuroplasticity has been studied and discussed by neuroscientists for many decades, but it wasn't until the 1990s that it became widely accepted as a scientific principle. This was due in part to the development of new technologies, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), that allowed researchers to directly observe changes in the brain's structure and function in response to experiences.

Researchers observed that the brain could reorganize and compensate for damage caused by injury or disease. For example, studies of stroke patients found that other areas of the brain could take over functions that had been lost due to damage in specific regions. That is why a person who is blind develops an amazing ability to hear sounds; the area of the brain used for sight is repurposed to increase other sensations such as sound or touch. The brain rewires itself when the demand for change is placed on it. In other words, you can change who you are today.

## ISSUES

I have put together a brief series of questions that should help you gain a greater understanding of how your progression has gone, and increase insight into possible root causes of issues with your own personality. Here are five yes/no questions for each of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development. If you answer 3 or more “**No**” in a given stage, then you may be struggling with this issue.

### Trust vs. Mistrust:

- Do you feel like you can trust others to meet your needs?  
(Yes/No)
- Have you kept away from any major disruptions to your sense of safety or security? (Yes/No)
- Are you comfortable asking for help when you need it?  
(Yes/No)
- Do you trust others easily without suspicion? (Yes/No)
- Have you had positive experiences with others that have strengthened your trust in them? (Yes/No)

### Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt:

- Do you feel comfortable making decisions for yourself?  
(Yes/No)
- Are you able to express your needs and desires? (Yes/No)
- Do you handle criticism or negative feedback very well?  
(Yes/No)

- Do you accept responsibility for your actions and refrain from blaming others? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to learn from your mistakes and move forward? (Yes/No)

#### Initiative vs. Guilt:

- Are you comfortable trying new things and taking risks? (Yes/No)
- Do you feel like you have a sense of purpose or direction in life? (Yes/No)
- Do you handle failure or setbacks very well? (Yes/No)
- Do you take responsibility for your actions, and avoid blaming others? (Yes/No)
- Do you try again even when you repeatedly fail? (Yes/No)

#### Industry vs. Inferiority:

- Do you feel a sense of pride or accomplishment when you complete a task? (Yes/No)
- Do you handle competition or comparison with others in a positive manner? (Yes/No)
- Have you avoided having any major setbacks or failures in your pursuits? (Yes/No)
- Do you feel confident in your abilities? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to take on challenges and persevere through difficult times? (Yes/No)

### Identity vs. Role Confusion:

- Do you have a clear understanding of your values and beliefs? (Yes/No)
- Do you avoid comparing yourself with others? (Yes/No)
- Have you remained confident about who you are even when faced with major changes in your life? (Yes/No)
- Are you comfortable expressing your true self to others? (Yes/No)
- Are you secure in who you are and what you stand for? (Yes/No)

### Intimacy vs. Isolation:

- Are you comfortable being vulnerable and open with others? (Yes/No)
- Do you have stress-free romantic relationships? (Yes/No)
- Have you avoided any major losses or separations in your relationships? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to maintain close relationships with others? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to balance your own needs and desires with those of your partner or loved ones? (Yes/No)

### Generativity vs. Stagnation:

- Do you have goals and aspirations for the future? (Yes/No)
- Do you contribute to your community or society at large? (Yes/No)

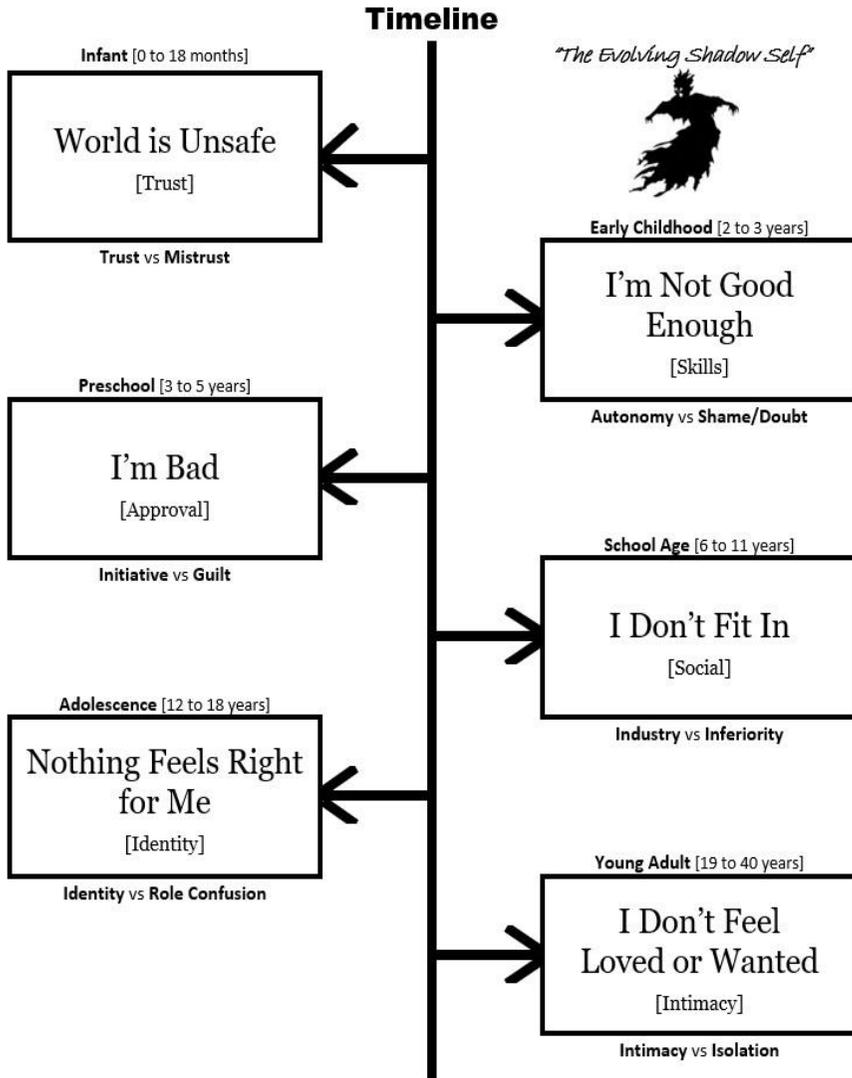
- Do you feel a sense of purpose or fulfillment in your work or personal life? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to balance your own needs and desires with those of your family, career, or other obligations? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to adapt to change and new challenges? (Yes/No)

#### Integrity vs. Despair:

- Do you feel satisfied with the life you've lived so far? (Yes/No)
- Are you free from any unresolved issues or regrets from your past that continue to bother you? (Yes/No)
- Do you feel like you've made a meaningful contribution to the world? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to find meaning or purpose in your life, despite any challenges or setbacks? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to accept the inevitability of death and dying? (Yes/No)

# Psycho-Social Development – scoring feedback

[Circle Issues of Struggle from Scoring]



## CAUSES

If areas of concern were found, you can explore further the possible source of the problem when developing through those psycho-social stages. There are a variety of environmental or life events that can contribute to a failure in achieving any particular phase. Here are some situations covering each stage that often strongly impact the outcome of personality development, and that will help your self-examination into the past.

### Trust vs. Mistrust:

- Neglect or abuse by primary caregivers.
- Inconsistency in caregiving, such as frequent changes in caregivers or unpredictable responses to the child's needs.
- Traumatic experiences, such as hospitalization or a natural disaster.

### Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt:

- Overly restrictive or controlling parenting.
- Overly critical or punitive responses to the child's attempts to assert independence.
- Traumatic experiences, such as a serious accident or illness.

### Initiative vs. Guilt:

- Overly harsh punishment or criticism for mistakes or accidents.
- Lack of opportunities for exploration and play.
- Traumatic experiences, such as abuse or witnessing violence.

### Industry vs. Inferiority:

- Negative feedback or criticism from teachers or peers.
- Lack of opportunities for success or mastery in academic or extracurricular activities.
- Traumatic experiences, such as bullying or social rejection.

### Identity vs. Role Confusion:

- Pressure to conform to rigid gender, cultural, or societal expectations.
- Lack of support or opportunities for exploring different identities and roles.
- Traumatic experiences, such as sexual assault or bullying based on identity.

### Intimacy vs. Isolation:

- Traumatic experiences, such as rejection or abuse in past relationships.
- Difficulty establishing close relationships due to social or emotional barriers.
- Lack of opportunities for socializing and meeting new people.

### Generativity vs. Stagnation:

- Lack of opportunities for career or personal growth.
- Negative life events, such as job loss or divorce.
- Feelings of social isolation or lack of purpose.

### Integrity vs. Despair:

- Lack of opportunities for reflection or resolution of past conflicts.
  - Chronic physical or mental illness that affects the quality of life.
  - Fear or anxiety about death or dying, often related to a lack of acceptance, or meaning in life.
- 



## Childhood Trauma & Neglect (and the damage it causes)

### THE LASTING IMPACT

Childhood is supposed to be a time of growth, exploration, and learning. It is a time when children are supposed to feel safe, loved, and supported by the adults in their lives. Unfortunately, for many children, childhood is a time of trauma and neglect. According to the National Survey of Children's Health, nearly 1 in 4 children in the United States has experienced some form of trauma or neglect in their lifetime. Childhood trauma is often described as serious Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs,

which have profound and lasting effects on a person's physical, emotional, and mental health.

The effects of adverse experiences during childhood can appear in various forms. One notable repercussion of such experiences is the potential impact on an individual's physical well-being. Adverse childhood experiences heighten the likelihood of various physical health complications, encompassing heart disease, diabetes, and autoimmune disorders. This can be attributed, at least in part, to how trauma influences the body's stress response mechanism. When an individual undergoes a traumatic event, their stress response system becomes hyperactive, releasing stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. Over an extended period, this may result in persistent inflammation and other medical conditions.

Childhood trauma can also have a significant impact on mental health. Trauma can increase the risk of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance abuse. Children who experience trauma may also have difficulty forming and maintaining healthy relationships, leading to social isolation and further mental health problems. Trauma can also impact cognitive functioning and academic achievement. Children who experience trauma may have difficulty focusing, learning, and remembering information, which can lead to academic struggles and difficulties in other areas of life.

Affective self-control can also be affected by ACEs. This refers to a person's ability to manage and govern their emotions. Children who experience trauma may have difficulty with self-soothing, emotional regulation, and attachment, which can lead to long-term difficulties with relationships and other aspects of life. Trauma during early childhood can also cause developmental delays and problems with disruptive outbursts. Children who experience trauma may have difficulty with attachment, control over emotions, and cognitive functioning, which can lead to long-term difficulties throughout their lives.

Another potential outcome of adverse childhood experiences is the development of challenges related to conduct and actions, which arise as a result of neglect and trauma. Children who undergo such experiences might display behavioral difficulties, including aggression, hyperactivity, and impulsiveness. Additionally, they may be prone to engaging in risky behaviors such as substance abuse or self-inflicted harm. These challenges in conduct can profoundly influence an individual's life, impacting their relationships, academic and professional achievements, and overall state of well-being.

The impact of childhood trauma and neglect can be devastating, but it is not inevitable. With the right support and treatment, individuals who have experienced trauma and neglect can heal and move forward healthily and positively. Support groups, such as those offered by organizations like the National Association of Adult Survivors of Child Abuse (NAASCA), can provide a sense of

community and validation for survivors. It is also one of the goals of this book, using the processes offered in the following chapters, to show you the way through these dark and painful experiences. You may not have ever known that you really weren't a "bad kid", you just didn't get a healthy world to "properly wire" your personality for success.

Our society as a whole needs to recognize how addiction is predominately the manifestation of childhood trauma and neglect. There needs to be an increasing awareness of the impact this also has on homelessness, broken families, and the prevalence of crime. As a community, we should provide more resources and support for those who have been affected.

## Dark Night of the Soul

The Dark Night of the Soul is a spiritual concept that refers to a period of profound inner turmoil and suffering. It is often described as a crisis of faith, a time when an individual feels completely cut off from God or their higher power. This term was first coined by St. John of the Cross, a Spanish mystic, and poet who lived in the 16th century. He wrote about his own experiences in his famous book so titled, "The Dark Night of the Soul."

### THE HISTORY

This idea for the Dark Night of the Soul has its roots in ancient mystical traditions. Mystics have always sought a direct

experience of God or the divine, often through intense spiritual practices such as meditation, prayer, and fasting. The mystical path is not an easy one, and it is common for seekers to experience intense periods of spiritual darkness and despair.

St. John of the Cross was one such seeker. He was a Carmelite monk who lived in Spain in the 16th century. He had a profound spiritual awakening early in life and joined the Carmelite order to pursue his spiritual quest. He was eventually ordained as a priest and became a spiritual director to many nuns and monks.

In 1577, St. John was kidnapped and imprisoned by other members of his order who were opposed to his reforms. He was held in a small cell for nine months and subjected to physical and emotional abuse. It was during this time that he began to experience the Dark Night of the Soul in its most profound form.



He wrote about his experiences and described two stages of the Dark Night. The first stage is the Dark Night of the Senses, where the seeker experiences a sense of emptiness and detachment from the world. The second stage is the Dark Night of the Spirit, where the seeker experiences a profound sense of alienation from God or their higher power.

## THE CAUSES

The Dark Night of the Soul can be triggered by a variety of factors. As mentioned before, it is associated with intense spiritual practices, such as meditation or prayer, that can bring about a heightened sense of awareness. This increased awareness can also bring to light unresolved emotional issues, traumas, or conflicts that have been buried deep within the psyche.

This experience can be triggered by external events, such as the loss of a loved one, a serious illness, or a major life transition. These episodes can shake a person's sense of identity and purpose, leading to a period of existential crisis (like hitting rock bottom).

In some cases, the Dark Night of the Soul may be a necessary part of the spiritual journey. It can be seen as a kind of initiation, a period of purification that prepares the seeker for a deeper level of spiritual awakening.

## THE SYMPTOMS

The Dark Night of the Soul is characterized by a variety of symptoms. These can include feelings of emptiness, despair, and alienation. The seeker may feel as though they have lost their connection to God or their higher power and may struggle to find meaning or purpose in life.

Physical symptoms such as fatigue, insomnia, and loss of appetite are also common. The seeker may experience intense emotions

such as fear, anger, or grief, and may feel as though they are on an emotional rollercoaster.

The Dark Night of the Soul can be a deeply challenging and painful experience. However, it can also be an opportunity for growth and transformation. By facing their fears and confronting their deepest emotional wounds, the seeker can emerge from the Dark Night with a renewed sense of purpose and a deeper connection to their spiritual path.

#### DR. CARL JUNG

Dr. Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, used the term "Dark Night of the Soul" to describe a period of intense psychological and spiritual turmoil that some individuals may experience during their lives.

According to Jung, the Dark Night of the Soul is a phase of spiritual transformation that can occur when a person's ego becomes disconnected from the collective unconscious or the deeper, universal aspects of the psyche. This can result in feelings of confusion, depression, and despair, as the individual struggles to find meaning and purpose in their life.

Jung believed that this experience is a necessary part of the individuation process or the process of becoming a fully integrated and self-aware individual. He saw it as a crucial stage in the journey toward wholeness and integration, and he encouraged individuals to embrace the challenges and difficulties they encountered during this period.

In Jungian psychology, crisis events are commonly associated with the archetype of the shadow or the repressed and disavowed aspects of the self. The process of confronting and integrating the shadow can be painful and difficult, but it is essential for personal growth and spiritual development.

#### NAVIGATING THE DARKNESS:

When someone faces the Dark Night of the Soul, they frequently experience several of the following symptoms: pervasive sadness, difficulty with sleep, trouble concentrating, feelings of hopelessness, and even thoughts about death or suicide. Having negative intrusive thoughts of mistakes, you've made in life, or bad memories of a traumatic experience, can undoubtedly lead to feelings of sadness and hopelessness. You may think you're "not good enough" or that you are a "failure." You may feel like, "What's the point in trying?" Or "Why do I keep doing this?" These thought patterns consistently result in a person making bad decisions or doing things they later regret. These painful events, or ongoing thought patterns, can lower your ability to make the necessary changes you need in life; changes needed to stop addiction.

#### SENTIRE EVENTUM - Experience the Experience

The inner strength required for facing such a profound crisis moment (and the bravery it demands) deserves a noble title. I have chosen the Latin words "Sentire Eventum" to express the required response of "Experience the Experience" (tilt into the

feeling and not withdraw). The direct translation is “to feel the results of” which describes the reaction needed for this devastating episode of thought and emotion. You can’t fight the storm or the monstrous waves of sorrow you feel; but if you “heave to” you can survive until the dark storm has passed.

When a sailboat is caught in a violent squall, it will position the sails in a manner that the boat is no longer progressing forward “on course”, but it is also not fighting the storm; it has "heave to." This technique is used by sailors to maintain a stable position



during stormy weather and not capsize the ship. Sailors achieve this by adjusting the sails and rudder in such a way that the boat remains stationary relative to the wind and waves. The concept of "heaving to" in

sailing can be analogous to how someone deals with a crisis in their life. When faced with a difficult situation, it can be tempting to try to fight against “the storm” or push through the crisis, like sailing directly into a strong wind or waves. However, just as it is in sailing, sometimes the best course of action is to pause and wait for the storm to pass.

In a crisis, "heaving to" can mean taking a step back, assessing the situation, and finding ways to maintain stability and balance, even if it means not making any significant progress for some time. This also means to ride the storm out. Just like in sailing,

"heaving to" during a crisis can help prevent the situation from escalating further or causing more harm, while also giving the person time and space to gather their strength and resources before moving forward. It can be a valuable strategy for maintaining stability and resilience during difficult times, and ultimately help to navigate through the crisis and emerge stronger on the other side.



## Amber Mourning

The Dark Night of the Soul, which is often a precursor to cognitive or spiritual awakening, manifests as a major depressive episode—a silent storm ravaging the mind and spirit, leaving those afflicted feeling isolated, overwhelmed, and desperate. In the darkest moments, when hopelessness becomes all-consuming, finding a way to cope can seem impossible. During one such time, Amber, a client who bravely shared her struggles, inspired the development of a technique designed to survive the death of the ego. This ego death dismantles an individual's old identity and belief systems, making way for a new, more integrated sense of self by providing solace and strength when it is most needed.

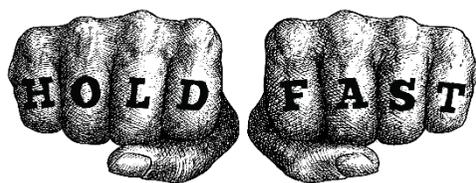
Amber's words encapsulate the profound despair many individuals face:

"I'm in complete meltdown and don't know what to do anymore. I want to escape my life; I wish I could get hypnosis and forget any of this life ever existed. But realistically, I want to go into my house and lay down and wait for death. If I didn't know my kids would hate me, I probably would eat a bullet, but they keep that thread cut so it's not a path. This doesn't feel temporary. I don't feel like this suffering will ever end until I am dead. I have no strength. I'm so done. I had one last shot at happiness and that was stolen from me. I never sleep good anymore unless I get 'shit face' drunk, which happens a lot less now than it did 2 months ago. My drinking was incredibly dangerous for someone who never really drank. I try not to drink anymore, but there are still overwhelming times when it's the only thing that numbs the hurt and 'shuts up' the voices in my brain. I get intrusive thoughts that turn so dark sometimes it puts me into a panic attack because it feels like it's really getting ready to happen (death). I feel like I'm going crazy."

In this section of the book, we have discussed the necessity of 'Heaving To' during a crisis to prevent situations from worsening by riding out the storm. But how do you handle the overwhelming despair? Sailing offers another useful insight... to "Hold Fast."

Historically, “hold fast” was a command given to sailors when approaching a storm, warning them to grip tight to the ship's rigging to avoid being washed overboard by the waves and rain as the ship plunged through the sea. This method, when facing an emotional, ego-crushing storm, is crafted to help individuals navigate through the depths of despair, offering a lifeline when everything seems lost. It provides practical steps to take when alone and in the grip of a major depressive episode, helping to restore a sense of control and hope.

"Amber Mourning" is a testament to resilience and the human spirit's capacity to endure and find light even in the darkest times. This section will guide you through the steps of the “Hold Fast” method, empowering you to manage overwhelming emotions and regain a sense of stability and peace.



## **BRIEF OVERVIEW – 3 methods to grasp**

1. Grounding Techniques [Thought – Deep Breathing – Body Scan]
  - 5-4-3-2-1 Technique: This simple exercise can help distract from negative thoughts by focusing on the immediate environment. Identify 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.
  - Deep Breathing 4-7-8: Practice deep breathing exercises. Count slowly to FOUR as you breathe in (through your nose), hold for SEVEN, and then exhale (blowing out the mouth) for EIGHT.
  - Body Scan Meditation Routine: Sit comfortably. Take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. As you exhale, close your eyes. Notice how your body feels. Starting from the top of your head, gently scan down through your body. Observe any areas of comfort or discomfort without trying to change anything. Continue scanning evenly through each part of your body, all the way down to your toes.

## 2. Challenge Negative Thoughts [Stop Thought – Switch Thought]

- **Interrupt Negative Thoughts:** When you catch yourself engaging in negative self-talk, use a thought-stopping technique. This could be saying "stop" out loud or visualizing a stop sign.
- **Redirect Attention:** Shift your focus to a more positive or neutral activity, like visual-mental imagery, listening to uplifting music, or engaging in a hobby.

## 3. Cognitive Restructuring [with Mirror Affirmations]

- **Identify Negative Thoughts:** Recognize the negative or distorted thoughts about yourself. These could be related to self-worth, abilities, appearance, or any other aspect of self-perception.
- **Create Positive Affirmations:** Develop positive, affirming statements that counteract these negative thoughts. For example, if you often think, "I am not good enough," you might create an affirmation like, "I am capable and worthy of success."
- **Use the Mirror:** Stand in front of a mirror, make eye contact with yourself, and say the positive affirmations out loud. The act of looking at yourself while affirming positive beliefs can reinforce the message and make it more impactful.

- **Consistency:** Repeat this practice daily, ideally multiple times a day. Consistency helps reinforce the new, positive thoughts and beliefs.
  - **Reflect and Adjust:** Reflect on how the affirmations make you feel over time. Adjust them as needed to ensure they remain relevant and powerful for you.
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## Performing **HOLD FAST** Methods

### #1. Grounding Techniques

#### **5-4-3-2-1 TECHNIQUE**

The 5-4-3-2-1 method is a grounding technique used to help individuals manage anxiety and bring their focus back to the present moment. It involves using the five senses to become aware of your surroundings. Here's how to do it:

- **5 Things You Can See:** Look around and identify five things you can see. They can be objects, people, colors, or anything in your environment. Take your time to really notice these items.
- **4 Things You Can Touch:** Focus on four things you can touch. This could be the texture of your clothing, the surface of a table, your hair, or anything else you can physically feel. Pay attention to the sensations.
- **3 Things You Can Hear:** Listen carefully and identify three things you can hear. This might be the sound of traffic,

birds chirping, the hum of a computer, or any other ambient noises. Concentrate on these sounds.

- **2 Things You Can Smell:** Find two things you can smell. If you're in a place where it's difficult to identify scents, you might carry a small item with a pleasant smell, like essential oils or a piece of fruit.
- **1 Thing You Can Taste:** Finally, focus on one thing you can taste. This could be the lingering taste in your mouth or you might take a sip of a drink, chew gum, or eat something.

### **Steps Recap**

- 5 Things You Can See
- 4 Things You Can Touch
- 3 Things You Can Hear
- 2 Things You Can Smell
- 1 Thing You Can Taste

This method offers several benefits, including reducing anxiety by focusing on the present moment and engaging the senses, which helps decrease stress and tension. It also serves as a distraction, interrupting negative thoughts and overwhelming emotions, and encourages mindfulness by promoting awareness of the current environment. The technique can be used whenever you feel overwhelmed or disconnected from the present moment, and its adaptability allows it to be practiced anywhere and at any time, making it a versatile tool for grounding.

Incorporating the 5-4-3-2-1 method into your "heave-to" strategy will provide a practical and immediate way to regain control and reduce anxiety during emotional crises.

## **ANCHOR WITH BREATH TECHNIQUE**

The 4-7-8 breathing technique developed by Dr. Andrew Weil, also known as the "relaxing breath," is a simple and effective method to promote relaxation and reduce stress. The extended 'exhale' helps activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which can calm the body and mind. Here's how its performed:

1. **Exhale Completely:** Start by exhaling completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
2. **Inhale Quietly Through Your Nose:** Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose for a count of 4 seconds.
3. **Hold Your Breath:** Hold your breath for a count of 7 seconds.
4. **Exhale Completely:** Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound, for a count of 8 seconds.

### **Steps Recap**

1. **Exhale:** Through the mouth, completely (whoosh sound).
2. **Inhale:** Through the nose, quietly, for 4 seconds.
3. **Hold:** Hold your breath for 7 seconds.
4. **Exhale:** Through the mouth, completely (whoosh sound), for 8 seconds.

### **Tips for Practice**

- **Posture:** Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.

- **Consistency:** Practice this technique at least twice a day.
- **Repetitions:** Start with four breath cycles and gradually increase as you become more comfortable.

The 4-7-8 breathing technique is designed to help calm the nervous system, promote relaxation, and improve sleep. It's a useful tool for managing stress/anxiety, and can be incorporated into your "heave-to" strategy for emotional crises.

## **BODY SCAN**

Body scan meditation is a well-established mindfulness practice that can help increase awareness of physical sensations and reduce anxiety. It involves focusing attention on different parts of the body, noticing any sensations, and fostering a sense of relaxation and presence. Here is a simple routine you can follow to perform the Body Scan Meditation Routine:

### **Preparation:**

- **Find a Comfortable Position:** Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. You can sit on a chair with your feet flat on the floor or lie on your back with your arms resting by your sides.
- **Close Your Eyes:** If you feel comfortable, close your eyes to minimize distractions.
- **Take a Few Deep Breaths:** Start with a few deep breaths to settle into the practice. Inhale deeply through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth.

## **The Body Scan:**

1. **Focus on Your Breath:** Spend a few moments paying attention to your breath. Notice the sensation of air entering and leaving your body.
2. **Feet:** Direct your attention to your feet. Notice any sensations in your toes, the soles of your feet, and your heels. Observe any tension, warmth, coolness, or tingling. Allow your feet to relax.
3. **Legs:** Move your attention up to your ankles, calves, knees, and thighs. Observe the sensations in these areas without judgment. Notice if there is any tightness or relaxation. Allow your legs to relax.
4. **Pelvic Area and Lower Back:** Shift your focus to your pelvic area and lower back. Notice any sensations of pressure or discomfort. Breathe into these areas and allow them to soften and relax.
5. **Abdomen and Chest:** Move your attention to your abdomen and chest. Notice the rise and fall of your breath in these areas. Observe any sensations of tightness or relaxation. Allow these areas to relax.
6. **Upper Back and Shoulders:** Direct your focus to your upper back and shoulders. Notice any tension or sensations. Allow your shoulders to drop and your upper back to relax.
7. **Arms and Hands:** Shift your attention to your arms, from your shoulders down to your fingers. Notice any

sensations in your arms, hands, and fingers. Allow your arms and hands to relax.

8. **Neck and Throat:** Move your focus to your neck and throat. Notice any sensations or tension. Breathe into these areas and allow them to relax.
9. **Face and Head:** Finally, direct your attention to your face and head. Notice any tension in your jaw, cheeks, forehead, and scalp. Allow these areas to soften and relax.

## **Conclusion**

- **Whole Body Awareness:** Spend a few moments sensing your entire body as a whole. Notice the overall state of relaxation and presence.
- **Gradual Reawakening:** When you are ready, slowly bring your awareness back to your surroundings. Wiggle your fingers and toes, and gently open your eyes.

## **Tips for Practice**

To build mindfulness and reduce anxiety, practice body scan meditation regularly, ideally once a day. Approach the practice with a non-judgmental attitude, simply observing sensations without trying to change them. If your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to the part of the body you were focusing on.

Incorporating body scan meditation into your routine can help develop a deeper awareness of your physical sensations, which can be particularly beneficial during times of emotional distress. This practice can complement the "heave-to" strategy by

providing a calming and centering activity to use during moments of crisis.

## #2. Challenge Negative Thoughts

### **STOP THOUGHT - SWITCH THOUGHT**

On Feb. 11, 1965, Lt. Cmdr. Bob Shumaker was shot down and taken prisoner over North Vietnam and spending the next 8 years at the infamous Hanoi Hilton. To survive the mental/physical torture, he would stop his negative thoughts by replacing them with a visualization. He imagined the house he wanted to build for his young wife and their infant son; having no paper or pencil, he built the house in his head, brick by brick. Over the next 8 years of his imprisonment, he would work out small design issues, like putting an intercom in every room, or a chute for the laundry. Over time, he worked out the mathematical equations for load bearing making the building structurally sound. He would imagine moving the fireplace from one part of the house to another, and would have to recalculate everything all over again, storing a new set of parameters and equations in his memory.

I did a similar activity when battling my own intrusive unwanted thoughts, but mine was for building a boat. I determined building materials, cost, strength, weight, ballast, displacement, etc. Whenever I needed to stop a thought, I would tell myself, "It's time to get back to the boat", and I begin the mental imagery... whether driving my car or lying in bed, whatever the situation, I inwardly when "back to the boat".

The mental coping strategy I am referring to is known as visualization or mental imagery. This technique involves creating detailed mental images or scenarios to maintain mental focus, reduce stress, and cope with difficult situations. In the context of POWs in Vietnam, they used visualization to build a house in their mind, nail by nail and board by board, as a way to occupy their minds, stay mentally active, and endure the hardships of captivity.

Here are some types of imagery that the average person might find accessible and methodical for visualization:

1. Gardening: Visualize planting a garden, preparing the soil, planting seeds or plants, watering, and watching them grow.
2. Cooking or Baking: Imagine preparing a favorite recipe step-by-step, from gathering ingredients to mixing, cooking, and presenting the final dish.
3. Walking in Nature: Picture a detailed walk through a forest, along a beach, or in a park, noting the sights, sounds, and smells.
4. Building a Simple Structure: Visualize assembling a basic structure, such as a bookshelf or a birdhouse, even if you don't have detailed knowledge of construction.
5. Painting or Drawing: Imagine creating a piece of art, focusing on each brushstroke or pencil line and the development of the image.

6. **Decorating a Room:** Picture designing and decorating a room, choosing colors, arranging furniture, and adding personal touches.
7. **Organizing a Space:** Visualize tidying up and organizing a cluttered room, systematically sorting items, and putting them in place.
8. **Crafting:** Imagine engaging in a craft activity like knitting, crocheting, or making jewelry, step by step.
9. **Playing an Instrument:** Visualize playing a musical instrument, focusing on each note and the feel of the instrument.
10. **Exercise Routine:** Picture going through a favorite exercise routine, such as yoga, Pilates, or a gym workout, paying attention to each movement and breath.

These activities are relatively simple and can be methodically performed in one's mind, providing a constructive and calming focus for visualization.

By consistently applying these strategies, you can gradually change your thought patterns, reduce negative self-talk, and develop a healthier, more positive mindset.

## #3. Cognitive Restructuring

### **MIRROR AFFIRMATIONS**

When performing mirror affirmations, addressing yourself directly with "You are..." statements can often feel more personal

and impactful, especially when looking in the mirror. This approach can create a sense of receiving encouragement and validation from a supportive and caring presence. Here are some recommended "You are..." mirror affirmations:

### Recommended "You Are..." Mirror Affirmations

1. Self-Worth and Self-Compassion
  - "You are worthy of love and compassion."
  - "You accept yourself just as you are."
  - "You forgive yourself for past mistakes and embrace your imperfections."
2. Strength and Resilience
  - "You are stronger than you think."
  - "You have the power to overcome any challenge."
  - "Every day, you are becoming more resilient."
3. Hope and Positivity
  - "This too shall pass."
  - "You are capable of finding joy in the midst of pain."
  - "You trust that better days are ahead."
4. Calm and Peace
  - "You are calm and at peace."
  - "You release all negative thoughts and welcome positivity."
  - "You are a vessel of peace and tranquility."
5. Empowerment and Control
  - "You are in control of your thoughts and emotions."
  - "You have the power to change your story."

- "You are the author of your life and can rewrite your path."
6. Gratitude and Appreciation
- "You are grateful for the good in your life."
  - "You appreciate the small moments of joy."
  - "You find something to be thankful for every day."
7. Growth and Learning
- "You are growing and evolving every day."
  - "Each challenge is an opportunity for growth."
  - "You learn from your experiences and become wiser."
8. Love and Connection
- "You are connected to the love and support around you."
  - "You are surrounded by people who care about you."
  - "You are deserving of all the love and happiness life has to offer."

### **How to Use "You Are..." Mirror Affirmations**

1. Choose a Quiet Time: Find a quiet time in the morning or evening when you can stand in front of a mirror without distractions.
2. Make Eye Contact: Look into your own eyes in the mirror to create a deeper connection with yourself.

3. **Speak Clearly and Confidently:** Say each affirmation slowly, clearly, and with conviction. Believe in the words you are saying.
4. **Repeat Regularly:** Repeat each affirmation several times, ideally daily, to reinforce positive thinking patterns.
5. **Personalize Your Affirmations:** Customize these affirmations to fit your personal experiences and needs. The more they resonate with you, the more effective they will be.

### **Example Routine**

1. **Start with Breathing:** Take a few deep breaths to center yourself.
2. **Select a Few Affirmations:** Choose 3-5 affirmations that resonate most with you.
3. **Speak and Reflect:** Say each affirmation three times while maintaining eye contact with yourself.
4. **End with Gratitude:** Finish by expressing gratitude for the moment of self-care.

Using "You are..." statements can make affirmations feel more like a supportive dialogue with oneself, enhancing their effectiveness during times of emotional crisis.

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## **EXPOSURE AND RESPONSE PREVENTION**

(and the science behind it)

You might be surprised to learn that no matter how hard you try to stay upset during a ‘situation’ and resist letting yourself calm down, the intensity of emotions will ultimately subside on their own. Have you ever had a “good cry” and then felt better? This is not a challenge to try and make things worse, or suggest you “cry it out”, rather this is an explanation of how the body responds to high levels of anxiety during the Dark Night of the Soul. The chemistry of the body plays a crucial role here, involving several hormones like cortisol, adrenaline, and noradrenaline. When anxiety hits, these hormones are released, preparing the body for a "fight or flight" response. Cortisol increases blood sugar levels and brain glucose availability, but prolonged high levels can harm physical and mental health so after a period of time the body works to decrease these quantities. Adrenaline and noradrenaline raise heart rate and blood pressure, but the body can only produce so much adrenaline at one time. As adrenaline levels decrease, so does your emotional response, helping you regain control over your psyche. This principle is foundational to Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP), a treatment for Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) that gradually exposes individuals to anxiety triggers while preventing their usual compulsive behaviors, promoting habituation and reducing anxiety over time.

ERP and similar therapies leverage the body's limited capacity to sustain prolonged anxiety. Continuous exposure without avoidance or compulsive behaviors leads to autonomic nervous system fatigue and habituation, where repeated exposure diminishes the anxiety response. Neurochemical depletion also plays a role, as the brain's neurotransmitters, like norepinephrine and serotonin, temporarily deplete with prolonged anxiety exposure, reducing emotional intensity. Additionally, chronic activation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis results in adaptations that lessen its responsiveness over time.

Cognitive restructuring occurs as individuals realize feared outcomes are not as catastrophic as anticipated. Thus, the body's inability to maintain a prolonged state of heightened anxiety is why ERP is effective. Through repeated exposure without avoidance, the intense anxiety response diminishes, supported by both physiological mechanisms (neurochemical depletion, autonomic fatigue) and psychological processes (cognitive restructuring, habituation). This approach (and knowledge of the process) helps endure the overwhelming emotions experienced every time the Dark Night of the Soul happens until the calm returns, allowing a healthier, more positive recovery journey.

## Chapter 5

# Integrated Self-Realization



*"Conscious and unconscious do not make a whole when one of them is suppressed and injured by the other. If they must contend, let it at least be a fair fight with equal rights on both sides. Both are aspects of life." ~ Carl Jung*

## Combined Approach

Integrated self-realization is a state of being in which an individual has fully integrated all aspects of their personality into a cohesive whole, a united self. This includes both the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche (or personality), as well as the individual's unique talents, values, and life experiences. Integrated self-realization involves a deep understanding and acceptance of oneself, and a willingness to live in alignment with one's true nature.

In this state of being, an individual can navigate life with a sense of purpose and meaning and can express their authentic self in all aspects of their life. Integrated self-realization is often associated with a sense of inner peace, contentment, and fulfillment, as the individual has achieved a deep sense of wholeness and completeness.

The journey towards integrated self-realization often involves exploring and working through unconscious aspects of the psyche, as well as developing a strong sense of self-awareness and self-acceptance. This process may involve various forms of therapy, personal development work, spiritual practices, or other methods of self-exploration and growth.

Referring to this process as “Integrated Self-Realization” was chosen due to the approach combining aspects of several other therapeutic practices into one cohesive method I have used effectively in the treatment of co-occurring disorders as a

substance abuse program leader. The two main influences in its development were Carl Jung's Individuation and Richard Schwartz's Internal Family Systems, but it is also a multifaceted and interdisciplinary approach that draws from various fields of study and practice.

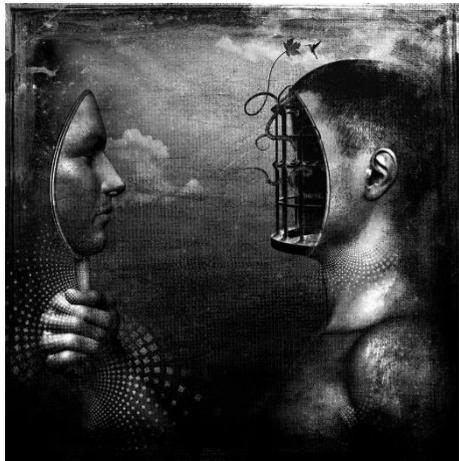
Here are five leading sources that support this approach:

- Psychoanalytic psychology – Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung developed the concept of individuation, which describes the process of integrating the unconscious and conscious aspects of the psyche. Jung believed that this process leads to the development of a more complete and authentic sense of self.
- Spiritual or transcendent psychology – promotes integrated self-realization by emphasizing the interconnectedness of all aspects of the self, providing practices for developing greater self-awareness and connection to a higher power or transcendent reality, and promoting the development of positive values and virtues such as compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude.
- Humanistic psychology – which emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, emphasizes the importance of self-actualization and personal growth. The humanistic approach views individuals as capable of achieving their full potential and living a fulfilling life by integrating all aspects of themselves.

- Positive psychology – which emerged in the 1990s, focuses on the study of human flourishing and well-being. Positive psychology emphasizes the importance of developing one's strengths and virtues and living a life in alignment with one's values and purpose.
- Personal development – Many personal development programs and coaches advocate for the importance of self-awareness, self-acceptance, and living authentically. Techniques such as goal setting, visualization, and affirmations are often used to support individuals in achieving integrated self-realization.

## CARL JUNG'S INDIVIDUATION

Many of us are unaware of the dangers our behavioral patterns pose to long-term well-being. Instead of confronting our issues, we often convince ourselves they are trivial and can be ignored, or we pretend they do not exist at all. However, we cannot delude ourselves forever. Eventually, the manageable problems we once had can turn into unmanageable ones.



According to Carl Jung, a crucial first step toward self-improvement is becoming more aware of the reality of one's situation. While many philosophers and psychologists share this

view, Jung is unique in his belief that we must not only overcome our ignorance of the reality of external situations but also become more aware of what he called "the reality of our psyche" (our internal situations).

*“What most people overlook or seem unable to understand is the fact I regard the psyche as real.”* (Carl Jung, Answer to Job)

In Jung's view, the "psyche" is not simply a byproduct of a certain configuration of matter; rather, it is an irreducible, a priori fact (knowledge that is acquired independently of any particular experience) of nature that should be considered as real as the physical world and just as impactful to our overall well-being. However, most people know little of this "World Within." One reason for this lack of knowledge is our Christian heritage and the associated belief in an omniscient God who not only knew if we were committing bad deeds, but also if we were thinking blasphemous thoughts.

Although belief in such a God has dwindled, there remains a tendency to repress elements of our personality that run counter to the moral system of our day, and to strive for a type of moral perfectionism. Jung did not support this ideal. Striving after perfection is like chasing after the wind, and far from making us better people, it greatly hinders our development. The more we strive for perfection, the further we fuel our dark side and lose control of how it manifests itself in our day-to-day actions.

Furthermore, if we continually repress thoughts that run counter to the dominant moral system of our society, we will never reach the deeper layers of the "psyche," an awareness of which can often substantially improve our lives. The "psyche" should not be seen as just a byproduct of our external world but as a crucial aspect of our being that we need to explore and understand.

*"One should never think that man can reach perfection, he can only aim at completion - not to be perfect but to be complete. That would be the necessity and the indispensable condition if there were any question of perfection at all. For how can you perfect a thing if it is not complete? Make it complete first and see what it is then. But to make it complete is already a mountain of a task, and by the time you arrive at absolute completion, you find that you are already dead, so you never reach that preliminary condition for perfecting yourself." ~ Carl Jung (Visions: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1930-1934)*

The task of striving toward "completeness," or what is also referred to as "wholeness of the personality," was of such great importance to Carl Jung that most of his career was dedicated to exploring this process, which he eventually called "individuation." Although Jung did not use the term "individuation" until 1921, the seeds of this idea can be traced back to his doctoral dissertation, which was titled "On the Psychology and Pathology of So-called Occult Phenomena." This

dissertation, which was published in 1902, focused on the psychological aspects of spiritualistic and occult practices.

Jung attempted to explain his observations of a medium that claimed to interact with spirits during seances. To account for this, Jung hypothesized that the manifestations of these spirits were the result of "splinter personalities" that lay dormant in the unconscious mind of the medium, but which were somehow brought to conscious awareness by the act of the seance. However, the medium believed that these "splinter personalities" emerged from a realm independent of self, rather than accepting that they emerged from within the reality of an individual's psyche.

As Jung's study of the "psyche" progressed, he came to believe that the experience of this medium was but one example of a more general phenomenon: all of us have unconscious components that reside dormant in our psyche. Jolande Jacobi explains in her book, "The Way of Individuation":

*"...it remained Jung's untiring scientific and psychotherapeutic endeavor to work out a methodological procedure for bringing these components to consciousness and associating them with the ego, to realize the "greater personality" which is potentially present in every individual."* (Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation)

It is important to know that the individuation process, according to Jung, is something that occurs naturally and does not require any initiation by the individual. As we age, the depth and complexity of our consciousness increases, whether we are intentionally striving for that outcome or not. The natural individuation process, however, does not advance smoothly and uninterrupted; rather, it often comes to a halt or develops in a



way uncondusive to mental health. When this happens, it is imperative for our well-being that we reignite the process and return it to a healthy course of development, and to this end, the assistance or promotion of the natural individuation process is the main goal of Jungian psychotherapy.

A good way to understand the natural individuation process, which “just happens”, and the more conscious way of individuation, which Jungian psychotherapy promotes, is to consider the analogy of the human body. Our physical bodies grow and develop on their own, without requiring our conscious awareness. We can, however, take a more proactive, conscious stance towards our physical development by exercising and eating properly. In the same manner, we can be more proactive

in terms of the development of our psyche by taking certain measures to accelerate the natural process of individuation.

*”The difference between the “natural” individuation process, which runs its course unconsciously, and the one which is consciously realized is tremendous. In the first case, consciousness nowhere intervenes; the end remains as dark as the beginning. In the second case, so much darkness comes to light that the personality is permeated with light, and consciousness necessarily gains in scope and insight.”* (Carl Jung, Answer to Job)

The best method to accelerate individuation is to record and analyze our dreams over an extended period. Carl Jung was greatly influenced by Sigmund Freud's work on dreams, but his views evolved and eventually came to differ in fundamental ways from those of Freud. Both Jung and Freud agreed that dreams were a product of the unconscious, but where they differed, however, was in their conception of what the unconscious was expressing through our dreams.

*”For Freud, the dream was a psychological mechanism that functioned to preserve sleep by expressing and thereby discharging unacceptable, unconscious wishes in disguised form.”* (Robert Hoptke, A Guided Tour of the Collected Works of C.G. Jung)

Freud claimed that dreams are disguised expressions of the unconscious which Jung found untenable. Dreams according to

Jung, are not hiding anything, rather they are undisguised and spontaneous representations of the unconscious.

*“Our dreams are like windows that allow us to look in, or to listen in, to that psychological process which is continually going on in our unconscious.”* (Carl Jung, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra)

Many people struggle to interpret their dreams because they do not understand the symbolic language of the unconscious mind. In his quest to decode this language, Jung discovered a striking resemblance between the symbols appearing in the dreams of his patients and those found in the mythologies of various cultures throughout history. To account for this similarity, he proposed that the unconscious mind contains universal or transpersonal elements that are inherited through biology (genetics) rather than personal experience. The shared symbols in the dreams of different people and the myths of various cultures can be attributed to the fact that they are manifestations of these "identical psychic structures common to all," which Jung referred to as "Archetypes." The term "archetype" comes from the Greek words "arkhetupos," meaning prime and printer.

*“With respect to manuscripts [the word archetype] denotes the original, the basic form for later copies. In psychology archetypes represent the patterns of human life, the specificity of man.”* (Aniela Jaffe, The Myth of Meaning)

Individuation is the process through which one gains awareness of the symbolic expressions of archetypes, thus obtaining knowledge of the timeless "patterns of human life." This knowledge is valuable as it provides an understanding that many of our struggles are not unique to us, but are shared by all humanity. This realization can be therapeutic as it offers a new perspective and a sense of connection, helping us feel less alone in our suffering.

*“What, on a lower level, had led to the wildest conflicts and to panicky outbursts of emotion, now looks like a storm in the valley seen from the mountaintop. This does not mean that the storm is robbed of its reality, but instead of being in it one is above it.”* (Carl Jung, Alchemical Studies)

For those who wish to begin the conscious path of individuation, the first step is always the same. We must, as Jung put it, *“divest the self of the false wrappings of the persona”* (The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious)

The "Persona" is a term used to describe the social mask we wear to fit into society. This mask starts to form early in life when we begin to conform to social norms. We identify most strongly with aspects of our personality that align with the values of our society while rejecting those that do not. However, the issue is that many people eventually come to believe that their social mask represents their entire identity. This causes them to disconnect from the deeper layers of their psyche. To embark on the

conscious path of individuation, it is essential to acknowledge that the social mask represents only a small part of our total personality.

*“One cannot individuate as long as one is playing a role to oneself; the convictions one has about oneself are the most subtle form of persona and the most subtle obstacle against any true individuation. One can admit practically anything, yet somewhere one retains the idea that one is nevertheless so-and-so, and this is always a sort of final argument which counts apparently as a plus, yet it functions as an influence against true individuation. It is a most painful procedure to tear off those veils, but each step forward in psychological development means just that, the tearing off of a new veil. We are like onions with many skins, and we have to peel ourselves again and again in order to get at the real core.”* (Carl Jung, Visions: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1930-1934, Vol. II)

#### RICHARD SCHWARTZ'S INTERNAL FAMILY SYSTEMS

Internal Family Systems (IFS) is a type of psychotherapy that focuses on the concept of the "internal family," which refers to the various sub-personalities or "parts" that make up a person's psyche. According to IFS theory, these parts are organized in a hierarchical system, with some parts serving as protectors or managers that help us navigate the world, and other parts serving as exiles or wounded inner children that carry emotional pain and trauma.



The goal of IFS therapy is to help individuals identify and get to know these different parts of themselves and to facilitate communication between them to resolve internal conflicts through collaboration and promote healing. The therapist serves as a guide, helping the client to access

and work with different parts in a safe and supportive environment.

Richard Schwartz developed the Internal Family Systems approach in the 1980's. While working with clients, he noticed that they would often describe their internal experiences as if they were separate individuals with their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. He also noticed that these different "parts" of his clients seemed to have different goals and motivations, and sometimes conflicted with each other.

Drawing on his training in family therapy and his own experiences with meditation and spirituality, Schwartz began to develop the idea that the mind is naturally made up of different "parts" or subpersonalities, each with its unique perspective and role to play. He also believed that each part had the potential for healing and growth and that by working to integrate and harmonize these parts, clients could achieve greater self-awareness, inner peace, and well-being.

Schwartz began to formalize his ideas in the 1990s and published his first book on the Internal Family Systems approach in 1995. Since then, the approach has gained popularity and is used by therapists and mental health professionals around the world.

One of the unique aspects of IFS therapy is the emphasis on developing a compassionate and non-judgmental relationship with each part, recognizing that every part has a positive intention and serves a purpose, even if its behavior or beliefs may be causing problems. Through a process of self-discovery and exploration, clients can gain insight into their patterns of behavior and thought, and learn to integrate and harmonize their various parts to achieve greater overall well-being.

IFS has been found to be effective in treating a wide range of mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, trauma, and relationship issues. It is considered a highly respectful and empowering form of therapy, as it emphasizes the client's inner wisdom and capacity for healing.

#### PURPOSE OF INTEGRATED SELF-REALIZATION

In Jungian psychology, the shadow refers to the unconscious parts of our personality that we repress or deny because they do not align with our conscious self-image or values. The shadow is a natural and necessary part of the personality, but it can also contain aspects that are considered negative, destructive, or "dark."

The dark aspect of the shadow refers to the parts of ourselves that we find unacceptable or shameful, such as our aggressive impulses, sexual desires, envy, greed, or other taboo emotions. These aspects can be seen as negative because they go against our conscious beliefs or societal norms, and we may feel ashamed or guilty for having them. It is the 'monster' we are capable of becoming, but we bury these thoughts in the hope of preventing the creation of this beast from happening.

When we repress or deny these dark aspects of our shadow, they can manifest unconsciously in harmful ways, such as through projection, where we see our negative traits in others, or through destructive behaviors such as addiction, self-harm, or aggression towards others.

To understand the concept of the shadow, it is important to first grasp the idea of persona, or what I refer to as your mask. Persona, or mask, is the version of yourself (as discussed before) that you present to others when you want them to accept and like you. For example, if you go to a party and try to impress the people there, you might go along with their jokes and laugh even if you don't find them funny. Later, you might feel bitter and resentful about being “put down” at the party, leading to aggressive and vengeful thoughts.

The problem here is that you were too much in persona at the party, keeping your “social mask” on and sacrificing your true self to gain acceptance. Later, you refuse to acknowledge the existence of the parts of you that could have protected you from

doing so. The bitterness and resentment you feel at home reveal the aggressive shadow part of you that you need. If you had successfully integrated that part of yourself into your personality, you would have presented a more assertive and determined face and stance, which would have prevented people from putting you down in the first place.

However, you may have adopted a moral code that emphasizes being likable, avoiding conflict, and never hurting anyone's feelings. This causes you to present yourself as a punching bag, which doesn't lead to the integration of the shadow. Ultimately, being a good person doesn't mean sacrificing yourself or denying parts of yourself. It means integrating all aspects of yourself, including the shadow, into a cohesive whole (united self).

The pathway to completion as a human being is through the embodiment of the monster, the realization of the shadow. Jung did not believe that you could be a good person until you comprehend your capacity for evil. He does not intend for you to act it out in the world, but to understand that it is possible. Then, not only to understand it is possible but then bring it under your control. In essence, you need to become a "Civilized Monster." Morality comes when you are a monster, and you can control it, and that is the union encounter with the shadow.

## GOALS OF ISR

Achieving integrated self-realization typically involves a process of self-exploration and growth. Here are four key steps in the process:

1. **Self-awareness:** Developing a deep understanding of yourself is a crucial first step towards integrated self-realization. This may involve exploring one's personality traits, values, beliefs, emotions, and life experiences. Self-awareness is achieved through various practices such as journaling, meditation, therapy, or self-reflection.
2. **Self-acceptance:** Accepting yourself (flaws and all) is a critical step towards integrated self-realization. This involves embracing all aspects of yourself, including the shadow self, and acknowledging that every experience and trait has contributed to your unique identity. Self-acceptance will be accomplished through practices such as self-compassion, forgiveness, and reframing negative self-talk.
3. **Integration:** Integrating all aspects of yourself, including the unconscious and shadow aspects, is a crucial step towards achieving wholeness and completeness. This may involve working through past traumas, healing emotional wounds, and developing new ways of relating to yourself and others. Integration can be supported through

practices such as therapy, shadow work, and spiritual practices.

4. **Authentic living:** Living in alignment with your true self is a key aspect of integrated self-realization. This involves expressing your unique talents, values, and life purpose in all aspects of life, including work, relationships, and personal pursuits. Authentic living can be fostered through practices such as goal setting, mindfulness, and creative expression.

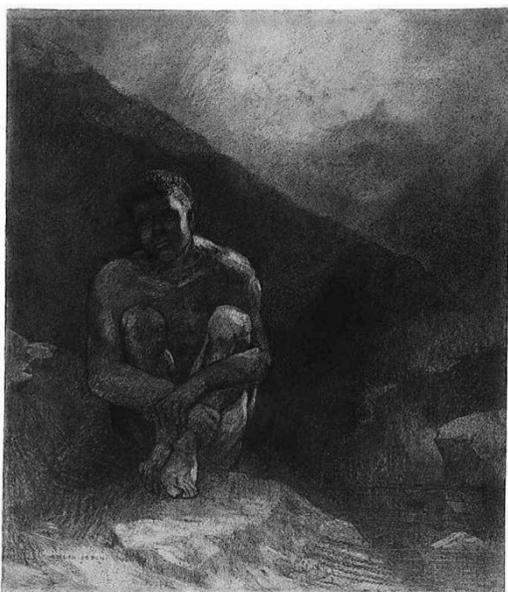
The process of achieving integrated self-realization is unique to each individual and may involve a combination of these and other steps. It is an ongoing process that requires commitment, self-compassion, and a willingness to embrace change and growth.

*“You are blind to your own weaknesses, but you are also blind to your own strengths” ~ Jordan Peterson*



## Chapter 6

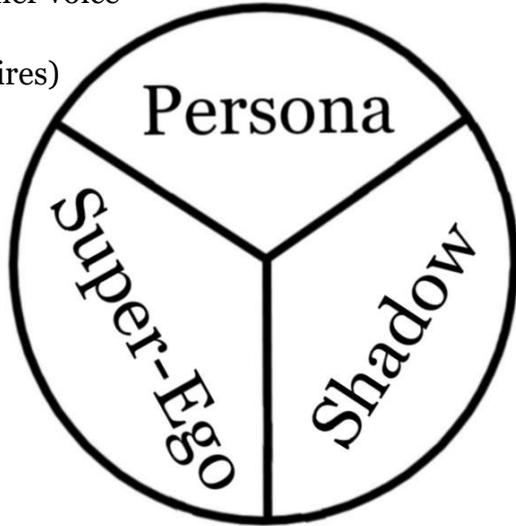
# Shadow Work



*"The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form...  
...If it is not embodied consciously, it will be embodied unconsciously." ~ Carl Gustav Jung*

# Model – Parts of Self

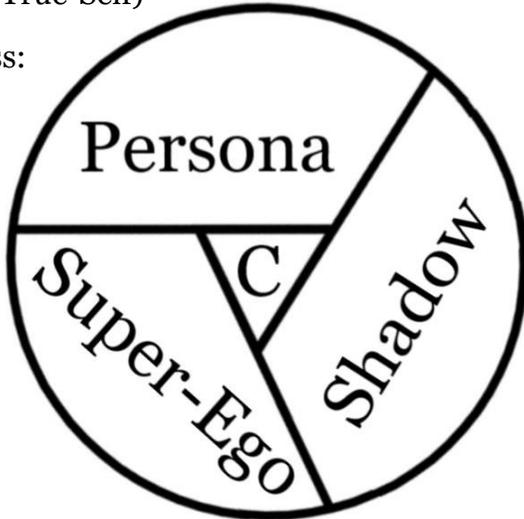
- **Persona** - social personalities
- **SuperEgo** - critical inner voice
- **Shadow** - painful past  
(and primal desires)



**C** = \***Consciousness** (True-Self)

**HOPE** of \*Consciousness:

- Honest
- Open
- Peaceful
- Empathy



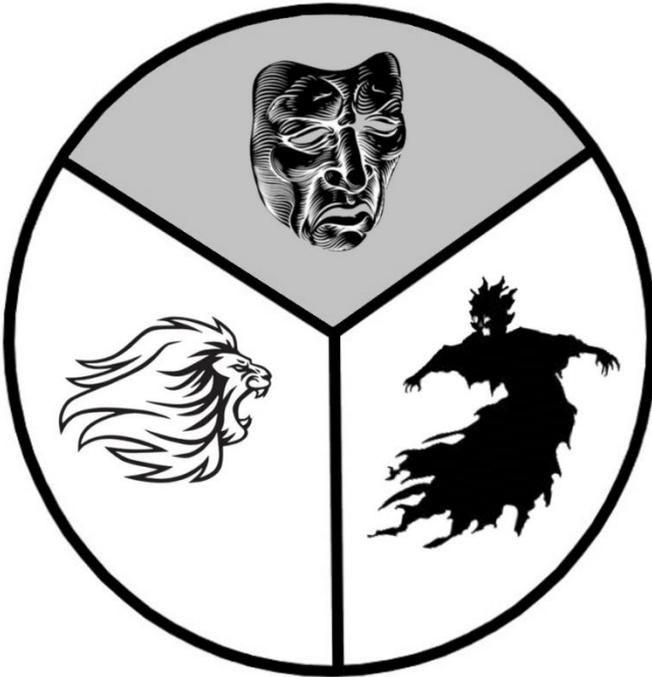
*\*Consciousness [Psyche or Soul] is an entity, not a personality or mask you wear. It's your Conscious-Spirit that survives death. Your True-Self.*

### **3-PARTS** of SHADOW WORK:

1. **PERSONA** – (*social masks*) The persona is the mask we wear, in order to conform to society. We could describe it as the societal roles we “wear” to “fit in”, based on norms and ethics. An example is the definition of masculinity and femininity: what does it mean to be a man or a woman? Most cultures and subcultures propose certain criteria for this, and the persona is the product of us meeting these criteria to fit into society. The persona is nothing more than a superficial construct of how we wish to be perceived by our world.
2. **SUPEREGO** – (*harsh critic*) The Superego is an internalized critical voice that can be harsh and punitive, leading to feelings of guilt, shame, and self-blame. It can develop from a variety of sources, including childhood experiences, cultural and societal norms, and trauma. The Superego represents an internalized moral and ethical standard that can become unrealistic, perfectionistic, or unattainable, leading to significant emotional distress and mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, perfectionism, or addiction.
3. **SHADOW** – (*childhood trauma*) The shadow lies in the unconscious and consists of undesirable characteristics that we have repressed and want to keep in the dark. This happens consciously as well as unconsciously. Jung stated that the less the shadow is embodied in the individual’s conscious life, the blacker and denser it becomes.

*"If the repressed tendencies, the shadow as I call them, were obviously evil, there would be no problem whatever. But the shadow is merely somewhat inferior, primitive, unadapted, and awkward; not wholly bad. It even contains childish or primitive qualities which would in a way vitalize and embellish human existence, but—convention forbids!" ~ Carl Gustav Jung, Psychology and Religion: West and East (1938), Psychology and Religion, p 134.*

Many people aren't even aware that they have a shadow. When parts of it inevitably come to the surface, they tend to brush this off as something outside themselves.



**HOPE:** for recognizing your Consciousness/Psyche (Your Higher-Self, Consciousness of Spirit)

**H – Honest:** You will feel your inward thoughts as being honest and truthful; no deceptions or excuses being made about thoughts.

**O – Open:** You will experience a sense of openness when examining your traumatic memories or the feelings they evoke.

**P – Peaceful:** This may take longer to identify due to the current situations you are experiencing. In the beginning, it may be a passing moment when sitting quietly that you feel “okay”, not happy or sad, anger or love..., just “okay” with the world. As you process through your Shadow Work, this sense of Peace will be easier to recognize and know that it’s your true-authentic Self.

**E – Empathy:** This will be the hardest of them all for you to identify in yourself, especially if you do not normally feel empathy for others. This is not Sympathy, like feeling bad for another person; it's understanding another’s situation without experiencing it yourself. The best way to think about it is when you “feel the willingness to help” without being asked because “you know what they are going through”.

# Unlocking the Shadow

The key to unlocking this process is thinking with your Soul. Some call it your higher self, others refer to it as the true or authentic self, and still, some address it as the enlightened self, but they all describe what I am labeling as your Soul. The Swiss psychiatrist (founder of Shadow Work) Carl Jung stated,

*“...medicine discovered the psyche, and it can no longer  
honestly deny the psych’s reality.”*

Psyche is the Greek word for Soul. This is the part of yourself, your consciousness, which survives bodily death; this is what lives on; it is separate yet a part of our human mind.

The Persona (or social personalities) in this model, is like a social mask that we wear to fit in with other people. We start developing it when we're young because we want to be accepted by society. However, sometimes people start thinking that their social mask is who they really are, and they forget about their true self, their actual soul. If you want to explore who you truly are, it's important to understand that your social mask is only a small part of who you are.

I'm attempting to keep this as realistic as possible, with grounded concepts that are easily understandable. According to information shared by the Near-Death Experience (NDE) community, they explain why our consciousness exists in human form. As stated earlier in the book, “we are spiritual beings having

a human experience” and the purpose we are here is to learn through our personal struggles, sometimes horrific ones. The lesson’s ultimate goal is for us to achieve “unconditional altruism”.

To encourage a deeper level of introspection, I purposely employ terminology that may not be commonly used. The aim is to stimulate a mode of thinking that transcends the limitations of the mind and taps into the depths of our soul. Altruism, in this context, refers to the voluntary act of providing assistance or resources to others, without expecting any personal benefit or gain. Sometimes, it may even involve self-sacrifice. It is those moments when we feel an innate sense of doing what is right, without any ulterior motives. Many people would equate altruism with the concept of love. However, I believe that the word "love" has become overused, as it encompasses a range of experiences. For instance, I may love my wife, love the serenity of a lake, and love the taste of pizza, yet these instances of "love" are not interchangeable or comparable in the same way.

Learning how to be altruistic requires the ability of empathy, which I list as the “E” in HOPE. You can begin to see how all this is interconnected and at the core of Shadow Work. The general population doesn’t think about deep concepts of “why do I exist” or “what is my purpose in life”? Most will live out their lives on a more superficial level of the mind as demonstrated by ‘feeling’, ‘speaking’, and ‘acting’ in response to surroundings and people they encounter.

This state of mind is represented by the first model “Persona-Superego-Shadow”; your Soul/Consciousness is in there, just dormant while you live out your life. By bringing this aspect of yourself ‘forward’ and into your conscious world (the second Model), you can begin Shadow Work to heal the pain within and bring an end to addiction.

**COMMON SIGNS** that may indicate you have a repressed wounded/traumatized – shadow self:

Persistent negative emotions:

- If you're frequently plagued by negative emotions like anger, jealousy, fear, or shame, it may indicate that your shadow self is attempting to emerge.

Feeling stuck or stagnant:

- If you sense that you're not advancing in your personal or professional life, it could be a clue that your shadow self is impeding your progress.

Lack of self-awareness:

- If you find it challenging to understand your thoughts, emotions, and actions, it could be a sign that you're suppressing your shadow self.

Repetitive patterns in relationships:

- When you find yourself repeatedly experiencing the same relationship problems, like attracting partners who treat you

poorly, it's a strong indicator that your shadow-self is playing a role in your decision-making.

#### Projection:

- If you constantly blame and criticize others over different issues, it's a sign that you may be projecting elements of your shadow-self onto them, which is a primary indication of struggling with your shadow.

#### Addiction:

- If you struggle with addiction or compulsive behavior, it is usually the result of your persona trying to avoid confronting issues of your shadow-self and to silence the super-ego's critical inner voice.

#### Impulsive behavior:

- If you often act impulsively or without thinking, it suggests that your shadow self is exerting an influence on your decision-making.

#### Disconnection from your values:

- When you act in ways that contradict your moral beliefs, it could be your shadow self attempting to manipulate your behavior.

Physical symptoms:

- Physical symptoms like headaches, back pain, or digestive issues are often closely linked to the repression of shadow-self emotions.

When you experience trauma, your shadow self can become particularly pronounced and exhibit problem behaviors.

## NEGATIVE TRAITS

Self-destructive behavior:

- Trauma can cause individuals to engage in behaviors that harm themselves physically, emotionally, or mentally. This could manifest as addiction, self-harm, or risky behavior.

Avoidance:

- Traumatized individuals may avoid situations or people that trigger memories or emotions associated with their trauma. This can lead to isolation, social withdrawal, and difficulties in forming relationships.

Aggression:

- Some people who have experienced trauma may exhibit aggressive behavior, either as a way to protect themselves or to release pent-up emotions.

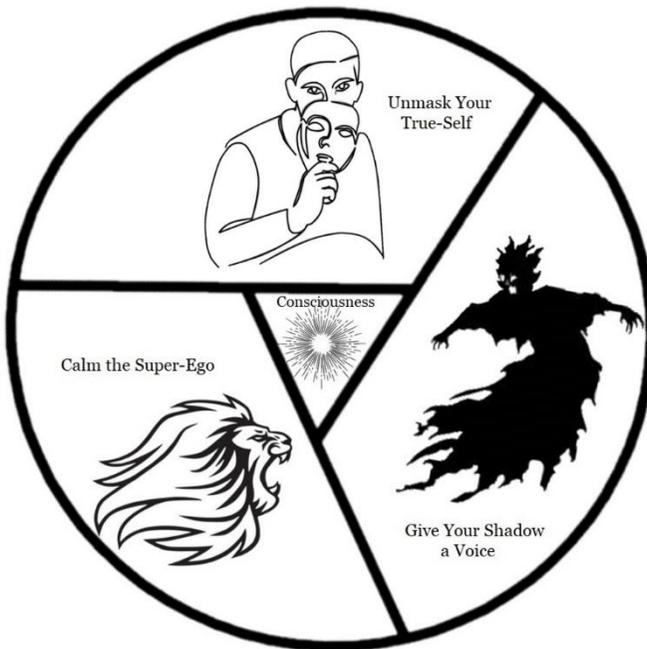
Self-blame:

- Trauma survivors may blame themselves for what happened, even if they were not responsible. This can lead to feelings of guilt, shame, and low self-esteem.

Difficulty trusting others:

- Trauma can make it challenging for individuals to trust others, particularly if their trauma was caused by someone they trusted. This can make it difficult to form and maintain healthy relationships.

## THE PROCESS



Shadow work is a process of exploring and integrating the unconscious or repressed aspects of the self. Here are the steps to perform shadow work as per Carl Jung's approach.

## SHADOW WORK

Here are simple ways to begin your shadow work:

### 1. Review your childhood

Reflect on your childhood experiences and ask yourself: "Was I fully accepted as a child? How did I typically feel growing up? What expectations were placed upon me, and which behaviors and emotions were deemed unacceptable by those around me?"

By exploring these questions, you can identify the shadow aspects of yourself that may have emerged as a result of the judgment you experienced in your past.

### 2. Become aware of your shadow

The shadow within us is like the darkness, invisible until we choose to shed light on it. To become conscious of our shadow aspects, we must first decide to acknowledge them. Once we do, we can reflect on these rejected parts of ourselves and determine whether they hold positive or negative traits.

If we discover negativity within the shadow, we must strive to find inner peace and release those aspects from their grip. On the other hand, if we recognize positivity within the shadow, we should strive to integrate these aspects into our lives and call forth our true power.

The crucial first step to successful shadow work is acknowledging its presence, which can be compared to shining a light on what was once hidden.

### 3. Don't shame the shadow

When you become conscious of your shadow self, it's important to approach it with compassion and acceptance, rather than shame or blame.

Remember that your shadow emerged as a result of non-acceptance and rejection, stemming from the moment you began pushing it away. Engaging in further conflict with the shadow only fuels its influence over you. Instead, recognize that the shadow is an integral part of who you are and view it through a lens of understanding.

By offering the shadow self-kindness and compassion, you can begin to transform it into a source of strength and healing, rather than a source of negativity and pain.

### 4. Use Your Triggers

Triggers can serve as messengers, inviting us to explore our unconscious emotions and beliefs. These messengers are often events that elicit an intense emotional response within us. However, labeling these experiences as triggers can shift our perspective and reduce their impact on us.

When we name our triggers by calling them messengers, we can take a step back from our emotional reactions and observe them from a more detached perspective. This allows us to gain insight into the deep-seated wounds and unresolved issues that are often the root cause of our reactions.

Rather than suppressing these emotions, triggers serve as reflections of our internal struggles, highlighting the areas that need attention and healing. By acknowledging and addressing our triggers, we can begin to move towards a more positive and fulfilling life.

#### 5. Observe without judgment

When it comes to shadow work, one of the most common mistakes is to judge the shadow once we become aware of it. Allowing our inner critic to pass judgment on the shadow only serves to reject it once again, ultimately amplifying its hold on us.

Instead, when we recognize our shadow, it's important to acknowledge and observe it without judgment. By observing the shadow with a curious and open mind, we can begin to understand its origin and purpose.

Rather than rejecting the shadow, we must work towards integrating it into our lives. This process involves acknowledging the traits and beliefs that make up the shadow and finding ways to incorporate them into our daily lives in a healthy and constructive manner. By embracing and integrating the shadow, we can achieve a more complete and authentic version of ourselves.

### SHADOW WORK STRATEGIES

#### 1. Pay attention to your reactions:

Notice when you have a strong emotional reaction to someone or something. This could be a sign that you are projecting an

unconscious aspect of yourself onto others. Ask yourself, "What about this situation is triggering me? What am I feeling, and why?"

2. Look for recurring patterns:

Identify recurring patterns or themes in your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. For example, do you find yourself repeatedly attracting emotionally unavailable partners? This could be a sign that you have an unconscious belief or pattern that is keeping you stuck.

3. Explore your dreams:

Your dreams can offer valuable insights into your unconscious mind and shadow self (*I will have you keep a dream journal to write down your dreams each morning in the section Dream Work*). Look for recurring symbols or themes in your dreams that may indicate unconscious patterns or beliefs.

4. Reflect on your childhood experiences:

Childhood experiences can shape our unconscious beliefs and patterns. Reflect on your childhood experiences and identify any significant events or patterns that may be contributing to your shadow self.

5. Practice mindfulness:

Mindfulness involves bringing non-judgmental awareness to your thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations in the present moment. By practicing mindfulness, you can become more

attuned to your inner experiences and begin to identify patterns and beliefs that may be hidden in your unconscious mind.

It's important to approach this process with self-compassion and curiosity, recognizing that it may take time and patience to fully identify and integrate your shadow self.

## THE METHOD: Journaling

Journaling helps you learn about parts of yourself that you hide from the conscious self and the world. These parts are considered undesirable or shameful and may include internalized trauma, fears, or negative beliefs about yourself and the world. The goal of shadow work is to facilitate a conversation between your shadow self and your higher self.

This involves exploring a prompt or trigger by asking questions and giving advice from your best self. Essentially, you're uncovering the subconscious beliefs and experiences that shape your thoughts and behaviors. By asking yourself questions, you're able to understand why you behave the way you do. In a sense, you're acting as your therapist.

There is a basic structure for you to follow when journaling and it requires nothing more than paper to write on. It can be as elaborate as you desire, such as acquiring an actual journal or using different colors to write with; maybe even drawing illustrations to help express your thoughts. No matter the

circumstance, each journal entry will be sectioned off into 4-headings:

- Situation
- Examine Emotions
- Realization
- Change

## JOURNAL FORMAT

### 1. Situation:

- A troubling thought or feeling you are currently experiencing.
- Use a prompt supplied at the end of this section that causes strong emotions.

### 2. Examine Emotions:

- What am I feeling?
- Why am I feeling this way?
- Where did this feeling come from?
- Have I felt this way before?

### 3. Realization:

- You see a similar situation in your past.
- You ‘connect the dots’ to why you are reacting so strongly to this event.

### 4. Change:

- How can I take this understanding and improve myself?
- What can I try to do next time this happens?

An example of a Journal entry might look as follows:

---

### Situation

What negative self-talk or beliefs do I still carry from my childhood?

### Examine Emotion

It's tough to think about, but I want to be honest with myself and try to work this out.

(What am I feeling?) One thing I always think about is that I'm not good enough.

(Why am I feeling this way?) I remember feeling like I wasn't as smart or talented as the other kids in school.

(Where did this feeling come from?) I got bad grades, but my older sisters always got straight "A's", my parents thought I wasn't trying hard enough. I thought I was just bad or not meant to be successful at anything.

(Have I felt this way before?) I thought I had to be perfect. I remember thinking that I had to be the best at everything - my grades, my looks, my behavior - so that the adults in my life would like me.

I get upset with myself even for small mistakes, thinking that it means I'm worthless.

## Realization

Writing these things down makes me feel upset. It's hard to admit that I still think this way after all these years. But I know that I have to face it if I want to feel better.

A list of how these thoughts have made my life hard -

- Opportunities I've missed out on
- Bad relationships its caused
- Feeling sad and depressed to the point I don't even get out of the bed
- Being scared to take chances because I know I'll fail

Seeing it written down helps me understand how much these thoughts have been hurting me.

## Change

I don't want to let these thoughts control me anymore. This list is to remind myself that I'm okay just as I am:

- "I'm good enough even if I'm not perfect."
- "Making mistakes is how I learn and grow."
- "I'm worth love and respect even if I don't do everything perfectly."

I will work on feeling grateful for this chance to become a better person.

---

In the beginning, your journal entries may not be as in-depth especially if you have never done anything like this before. Allow

yourself to start small, no matter how brief, it is important to put your thoughts and feelings in writing. Do follow the same 'heading structure':

---

### Situation

- I was told to "mind my own damn business" and I was just trying to help.

### Examine Emotion

- I am pissed!!!
- I just want to kick his ass! Why am I so mad?

### Realization

- Growing up in my house, 'kids were to be seen, not heard!' and I was told to "shut up" and "don't talk about things I know nothing about!"
- I felt worthless like it didn't even matter that I existed.

### Change

- When it happens remember I'm not a little kid anymore.
  - I can choose not to be angry.
-

The final step of your Journal entry is to name your ‘parts’ of this Shadow Work session. Literally, give a ‘nickname’ or title to identify all the aspects of your personality and to see reoccurring themes as you progress.

An example using this last entry would look like:

- Shadow - Worthless Kid
- Persona - Bad Ass
- SuperEgo - Anger

It’s important to remember not to be judgmental towards these aspects of yourself; you are approaching these issues through HOPE. Be honest, open, at pease, and with empathy as you have this experience. The goal is to help yourself heal from the pain. The memories will never go away, but they will decrease in causing you to suffer.



*“One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.” ~ Carl Jung*

## 50-Prompt Questions

1. What memories from my childhood and teenage years still affect me today?
2. What were some of the significant events in my childhood?
3. What were some of the things that I was not allowed to do or express when I was young?
4. What was the emotional climate of my household growing up?
5. How was conflict or stress handled at home growing up, and how did that affect me?
6. What parts of my personality or behaviors do I blame on my childhood or when I was a teenager?
7. What were some of the significant losses or traumas that I experienced when I was younger?
8. How did I cope with problems I faced in school or at home?
9. What impact did my childhood or teenage experiences have on my relationships?
10. What were some of the significant relationships I had growing up, and how did they affect me?
11. What did I feel I needed as a child or teenager that I did not receive?
12. What was my own sense of self or identity I had as a teenager?
13. What were some of the significant conflicts or struggles I faced when I was young?
14. What negative self-talk or beliefs do I still carry from my childhood and teenage years?

15. How did I learn to deal with difficult emotions as a child or teenager, and how has that affected me as an adult?
16. How did I learn to express or suppress my emotions?
17. How have my childhood and teenage experiences affected my self-worth and self-esteem?
18. What were some of the significant transitions or changes that I experienced, and how did they affect me?
19. How did my childhood and teenage experiences impact my relationship with authority figures?
20. What are some of the things that I wish I could tell my younger self?
21. What emotions do I still need to process from when I was younger?
22. How did my teenage experiences affect my sense of belonging and identity?
23. What are some of the things that I feel I missed out on or wish I had experienced?
24. When was the first time I felt like I didn't belong?
25. What were the unspoken rules in my family growing up?
26. What was my relationship with my parents like? How did that affect me?
27. What was my experience with love and relationships growing up? How has that affected my relationships now?
28. Did I ever feel like I had to hide or suppress parts of myself growing up? What were those parts?

29. How did I cope with difficult emotions as a child and teenager? Are those coping mechanisms still present in my life today?
30. What were some major milestones or turning points in my teenage years? How did those experiences shape me?
31. How did my experiences with bullying or peer pressure affect me growing up? Are there still lasting effects?
32. What were my dreams and desires growing up? How have they changed over time?
33. How have my experiences with childhood trauma and neglect affected my relationship with myself and others?
34. What are some of my earliest memories, and how do they make me feel?
35. What are some specific events or experiences from my childhood that still affect me today?
36. What was my relationship with my parents like growing up? How did that affect my sense of self?
37. How did my childhood experiences shape my current beliefs and values?
38. What was my experience with love and relationships growing up? How has that affected my relationships now?
39. Did I ever feel like I had to hide or suppress parts of myself growing up? What were those parts?
40. What emotions come up for me when I think about my childhood? How do I usually deal with these emotions?
41. What is one experience from my childhood that I have been avoiding thinking about? Why do I think that is?

42. How have my childhood experiences impacted the way I see myself and the world around me?
43. What parts of myself do I try to hide from others? Why do I feel the need to hide them?
44. How did my relationship with my siblings, if any, affect me growing up? Are there any unresolved issues or emotions related to those relationships?
45. How did my experiences with school shape my sense of who I am?
46. How did my childhood experiences with religion or spirituality shape my beliefs and values?
47. What was my experience with body image growing up?
48. What are some of the emotions that I tend to avoid feeling? How can I begin to work on feeling and processing those emotions?
49. How do I deal with failure or rejection? Are there any childhood experiences that have affected the way I handle those situations?
50. How did my childhood experiences shape my views on money and financial stability?



## Chapter 7

# Dreamwork



*"Your vision will become clear only when you look  
into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who  
looks inside, awakens."*

~ Carl Jung

# Purpose of Dreamwork

Dreamwork is a powerful tool that allows us to explore the depths of our unconscious mind and gain insights into our inner world. It involves delving into the realm of dreams, those cryptic narratives and images that emerge during our sleep, allowing us to better understand ourselves and tap into our hidden issues.

One aspect of dreamwork focuses specifically on the exploration of the shadow self. The shadow represents the parts of ourselves that we repress, deny, or disown; the characteristics we deem unacceptable or undesirable. These shadow elements may include our fears, insecurities, repressed emotions, and unresolved traumas.

Dreams provide a unique platform for the shadow to express itself and attempt to disclose what we have been disavowing. During sleep, the unconscious mind has the opportunity to manifest these shadow elements in symbolic or metaphorical ways through dreams. By paying attention to the imagery, emotions, and events in our internal projections, we can decipher the messages that the shadow is trying to communicate.

Developing a consistent practice of recording and analyzing your dreams is crucial for engaging in shadow work through dreamwork. An excellent way to start is by keeping a dream journal by your bedside and capturing the details of your dreams upon waking. As you develop this habit, you'll gradually start

recognizing recurring themes, symbols, and patterns that might hold significant meaning.

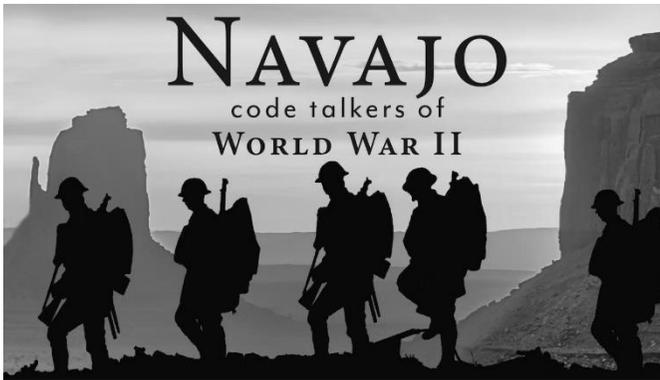
Gaining insight from dream symbolism necessitates a nuanced comprehension of your personal associations, considering symbols can differ from person to person. This idea, termed "amplification" by Jung, urges individuals to explore their own distinct interpretations of dream symbols. Engaging in dialogue with your dreams, employing techniques like active imagination or visualization (which we will discuss further in the next chapter), offers deeper insights and enhances communication with the shadow.

When embarking on dreamwork for shadow inclusion into the authentic self, it is vital to approach the shadow with compassion, curiosity, and an open mind. Embracing and acknowledging these repressed aspects of ourselves paves the way for healing and integration. By providing a voice to the shadow through dreamwork, we foster a chance for self-discovery, growth, and ultimately, the development of a more integrated and harmonious sense of identity.

It's important to remember that dreamwork and shadow integration are continuous processes, and need patience, self-reflection, and a readiness to explore into the depths of your psyche. Seeking guidance and support from a trained therapist or a dreamwork practitioner can also offer valuable assistance throughout this transformative journey.

## Decoding the Symbols

Dreams have captivated the human imagination throughout history, offering glimpses into the profound depths of our unconscious minds. Like encrypted messages awaiting decipherment, dreams are adorned with symbols that carry significant meaning. Exploring the realm of dreamwork parallels the remarkable endeavors of the Navajo code talkers, where decoding symbols becomes an intimate journey known only to the dreamer.



In Dreamwork, we find a parallel to the awe-inspiring feats of the Navajo code talkers during World War II. These remarkable individuals, uniquely equipped with the Navajo language and profound cultural understanding, developed an unbreakable code that played a vital role in secure communication among military units. Similarly, within the realm of dreams, we encounter a language of symbols that beckons us to unlock its secrets, a language understood solely by the dreamer.

Just as the Navajo code talkers encoded messages to safeguard valuable information, dreams encode messages within their symbolic tapestry. Dreamwork involves the delicate art of decoding these symbols, unraveling their veiled significance. The dreamer, like the code talkers, holds the key to deciphering the enigmatic language woven within their dreams.

The code talkers drew upon their native language, a vessel of deep cultural significance and historical resonance. In parallel, dream symbols in dreamwork draw upon personal and collective cultural experiences, memories, and archetypal elements, enriching the symbolic landscape of dreams. The dreamer's unique cultural background infuses the dream symbols with profound meaning, further individualizing the interpretation.

Unlocking the Navajo code required an acute awareness of the language's unique context and linguistic nuances. Similarly, dreamwork demands an understanding of the dream's contextual elements—exploring the dreamer's personal history, emotions, and experiences—to grasp the layers of meaning embedded within the symbols. The dreamer, intimately connected to their history, holds the context necessary for interpretation.

The Navajo soldiers functioned as a secure channel of communication, enabling effective and confidential exchanges. The same is true of the way symbols in dreamwork serve as a means of communication from our unconscious minds, offering insights into our emotions, conflicts, and desires. The dreamer becomes both sender and receiver, attuned to the personal

language of their dreams, and interpreting the symbols with the precision of a skilled linguist.

The Navajo code talkers possessed exceptional expertise, honed through rigorous training, allowing them to encode and decode messages swiftly and accurately. This is also seen with dream analysis practitioners, psychologists, and therapists developing

WORD	NAVAJO	LITERAL TRANSLATION
Airplane	Wo-tah-de-ne-ih	Air Corps
Dive Bomber	Gini	Chicken Hawk
Torpedo Plane	Tas-chizzie	Swallow
Observation Plane	Ne-as-jah	Owl
Fighter Plane	Da-he-tih-hi	Hummingbird
Bomber	Jay-sho	Buzzard
Patrol Plane	Ga-gih	Crow
Transport Plane	Astah	Eagle

expertise and interpretive skills to navigate the intricate realm of dreams. However, they act as guides and facilitators, empowering the dreamer to uncover their unique symbolism and meaning, for only the dreamer possesses the intimate knowledge needed for a comprehensive interpretation.

Embarking on the path of dreamwork invites us to investigate the enigmatic domain of our dreams, where symbols await our attention. By learning to decipher these symbols, we unravel the deeper layers of our being, gaining profound insights into ourselves and illuminating the hidden aspects of our lives.

Through the comparison to the Navajo code talkers, we not only acknowledge the transformative potential of dreamwork but also recognize the significance of the dreamer as the sole interpreter of their symbolic language. Within the private world of dreams, each individual holds the exclusive understanding required to decode the intricate messages crafted by their unconscious mind.

### DREAM RIDDLE

Just as the Navajo Code Talkers battled with deciphering cryptic messages from their native tongue into English, let us also struggle to find comprehension when confronted with the perplexing symbolism we encounter in the realm of our dreams. Solving a riddle is a universally recognized concept that demands individuals to interpret clues, patterns, and symbols, all in pursuit of unraveling the mystery. Dream allegories can be likened to a complex puzzle, where the dreamer must meticulously examine the diverse elements of the objects, characters, actions, and emotions in dreams to construct the underlying meaning.

Similar to how one would examine the shape, color, and patterns of puzzle pieces to determine their placement, dream analysis involves examining the symbols, their context, and personal associations to uncover their significance. The dreamer essentially becomes the puzzle solver, using their intuition, introspection, and knowledge of themselves to unlock the meaning behind the dream's symbols and patterns.

This analogy emphasizes the importance of decoding hidden meanings and comprehending the symbolic language of dreams without resorting to a generic approach of predefined and unreliable dream symbol lists. When it comes to understanding the language of your shadow, a "one-size-fits-all" approach is insufficient; rather, it necessitates a customized and tailored interpretation.

## DREAM TRANSLATION

Engaging in dreamwork involves translating the language of the shadow to convey its messages, which often come through symbolic and metaphorical elements in dreams. By exploring the figurative projections and underlying significance in our dreams, we decode the language of the shadow, enabling it to express itself and communicate its concerns, desires, and messages. This transformation process deepens our understanding of the shadow, helps us address unresolved issues, and integrates these aspects into our conscious awareness. As a result, we develop a more holistic and balanced sense of self, fostering personal growth and facilitating healing.

It's important to approach the translation of the shadow's language with an open mind, patience, and self-compassion. Dreams can be multi-layered and complex, and their messages may not always be immediately apparent. Cultivating a regular dreamwork practice and seeking guidance from professionals versed in dream analysis can further enhance your ability to understand and translate the shadow's language effectively.

# Dream Journal

The first part is easy, you don't have to do anything but dream. Yet, this is already a tricky task for some people to perform, especially if you have any substance addictions or are required to take medications. Even things like nicotine and alcohol might give you trouble dreaming or at least problems remembering your dreams.

## DREAMWORK RECORD KEEPING

When recording your dreams, it's helpful to identify key points and list them underneath the dream story using bullet points. Include suggested titles such as People, Places, Things, Emotions, Events, and Topics. Remember to log your dreams each night, capturing as much detail as possible. This comprehensive record will allow for later analysis of patterns and a deeper exploration of the dream's meaning and significance. Here are the basic items you should track:

**DATE and TITLE** - Start by recording the date of the dream, and give it a title for reference. This can be important later during analysis, especially if you notice patterns developing over time.

**DREAM** - First write down the dream as quickly as possible before the content is forgotten; trust me, do not wait or it will be gone. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation are not important when recording your dreams. Just get the dream down on paper before it slips away and record everything that you remember even if it may only be fragments. As you start writing, more and

more pieces of the dreams will come to you, because we are not able to write faster than we can think.

**PEOPLE** - Identify and describe the individuals present in your dream, whether they are familiar or unfamiliar to you. Note any significant characteristics of these people, such as their appearance, age, gender, or emotional state. If the dream includes people you know in waking life, reflect on the nature of your relationship with them and how it may relate to the dream's themes or messages.

**PLACES** - Describe the settings and locations where the dream takes place. Pay attention to both the overall environment and specific details. Note whether the places are familiar or unfamiliar to you and consider any personal associations or emotional significance they may hold.

**THINGS** - Record any objects, items, or elements that stand out in the dream. These can include both mundane and symbolic objects. Describe the appearance, characteristics, and interactions involving these things. Note any personal or cultural meanings associated with them. Pay attention to the role these things play in the dream's narrative or how they evoke certain emotions or reactions.

**EMOTIONS** - Pay attention to the emotions you experienced in the dream. Jot down the predominant emotions you felt, whether it was fear, joy, sadness, or any other emotional state. Emotions

serve as important indicators of the dream's significance and can guide your interpretation.

**TOPICS** - Examine the dream for patterns, themes, or recurring elements. Pay attention to specific situations, conflicts, or motifs that stand out. Identifying these patterns can provide insights into underlying subconscious concerns or unresolved issues.

**EVENTS** - Focus on specific actions, interactions, plot developments, and symbolic occurrences within the dream. Note behaviors, movements, gestures, and major plot points. Pay attention to transitions between dream scenes and identify symbolic or metaphorical events.

**PERSONAL ASSOCIATIONS** - Reflect on what each symbol means to you personally. Ask yourself questions like: What thoughts, memories, or emotions come up when I think about this symbol? How does it relate to my waking life? These can offer a unique perspective for interpreting the dream.

For future reference, it is a good idea to give your dream a title. As your journaling grows, you will hopefully see a correlation and pattern between your dream and reality.

## REVIEW CONTENT

After recording the details of your dream in your journal, take some time to review and reflect upon the dream's content. Look for recurring themes, symbols, emotions, and patterns within the dream. Consider how various elements of the dream may relate to your waking life, personal experiences, or inner conflicts.

Ask yourself questions such as:

- What are the key symbols or images in the dream? What do they represent to you personally?
- How did you feel during the dream and upon waking? Are there any emotions that stood out?
- Are there any connections between the dream and your current life situation or any unresolved issues?
- Are there any parallels or similarities between this dream and previous dreams you've had?

By analyzing your dream, you can start to uncover its hidden meanings and gain a deeper understanding of its messages. This step allows you to establish a foundation of awareness and insight before moving on to active imagination or other forms of dialogue with the dream.

Once you have spent time reflecting on the dream's symbolism and personal significance, you can then proceed to active imagination. This technique involves consciously engaging with the dream's imagery and entering into a dialogue with the dream characters or symbols. Active imagination can take the form of visualization, meditation, or even creative expression like drawing or writing.

Remember that dreamwork is a highly individual process, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. The important thing is to approach your dreams with curiosity, openness, and a willingness to explore the depths of your unconscious mind.





## Chapter 8

# Active Imagination



*"If there's anything you can do. Then by all means.  
Be kind to yourself. You are a work in progress. Just  
remember not to give up on yourself.*

*There's still time."*

*~ R. M. Drake*

# Exploring Active Imagination

Active imagination is a process in Jungian psychology used to bridge the gap between the conscious and unconscious minds. It places a heavy emphasis on dream interpretation and the contents of the unconscious mind. During the process of active imagination, clients are encouraged to translate the contents of dreams without adding any analysis from the conscious mind. The goal of this process is to understand the workings of the unconscious mind.

Dreams and other unconscious images can be particularly vivid when these images attempt to make their way to the conscious mind. Through the process of active imagination, these images may become less vivid and allow the contents of the unconscious mind to healthily integrate with the conscious mind. I do caution that the process of active imagination used in a meditative form needs to be done carefully because it could cause a disconnect with reality.

Active imagination is intended to bring about a state of hypnagogia. This is the state in between sleep and wakefulness, where people may be partially aware that they are dreaming. Carl Jung argued that active imagination can be achieved naturally during intense states of relaxation such as when listening to a story or drifting off to sleep.

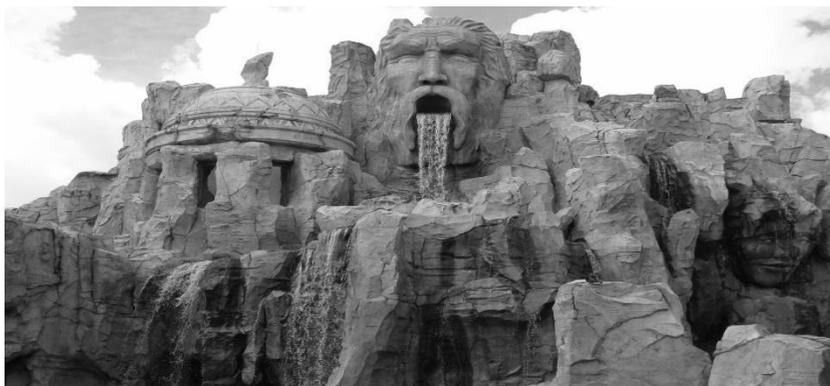
For our purposes, we will remain in a more wakeful state as you would experience during a daydream. I make this comparison to help with understanding the process of active imagination and how it's performed. While daydreaming and active imagination share some similarities, they differ in their intentionality and level of engagement. Daydreaming often occurs spontaneously and without conscious effort, allowing the mind to wander aimlessly, weaving imaginative narratives or scenarios unrelated to the present moment. It can be a form of mental escape or a source of entertainment, providing a temporary retreat from the demands of daily life.

On the other hand, active imagination is a deliberate and focused engagement with the contents of the unconscious mind. It is a structured practice that involves actively entering into a dialogue with the various aspects of our psyche, such as archetypal figures, symbols, and inner voices. Unlike daydreaming, active imagination is consciously directed toward exploring the depths of our inner world and seeking insights, understanding, and integration.

In active imagination, we intentionally create a receptive state of mind and enter into a purposeful dialogue with the contents of our imagination. We engage with the symbols and characters that emerge from our unconscious, allowing them to take on a life of their own and communicate with us in a profound and meaningful way. This process is characterized by a heightened

awareness and a sense of active participation in the inner narrative.

While daydreaming often remains superficial or disconnected from our conscious intentions, active imagination serves as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious realms. It enables us to access the hidden layers of our psyche and tap into the profound wisdom and creative potential that lies within. By actively engaging with our imagination in this intentional manner, we can gain profound insights, heal unresolved emotions, and integrate aspects of ourselves that have remained dormant or disowned.



#### DISCOVERY / DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVE IMAGINATION

Carl Jung's break from Sigmund Freud and the subsequent personal crisis he experienced played a significant role in the development of active imagination. Jung initially admired Freud and became an important figure in the psychoanalytic movement. However, their professional relationship began to strain due to differences in their theoretical perspectives. Jung's expanding

interests in spirituality, mythology, and the exploration of the unconscious clashed with Freud's emphasis on sexual and Oedipal conflicts as the primary determinants of human behavior.

The rift between Freud and Jung grew wider, leading to their eventual split in 1913. This rupture caused great personal turmoil for Jung, as he not only lost a close friend and mentor but also faced criticism and ostracism within the psychoanalytic community.

Following the split, Jung went through a profound personal crisis. He experienced intense inner turmoil, vivid dreams, and fantasies that seemed to emerge from his unconscious mind. Feeling disoriented and on the verge of a breakdown, he withdrew from his professional duties and turned inward.

During this period of introspection, Jung actively engaged with his unconscious through what he called "active imagination." He intentionally entered into a receptive state, allowing the contents of his unconscious to manifest in the form of images, visions, and inner dialogues. Jung documented these experiences in a personal journal known as the Red Book.

Through the practice of active imagination, Jung engaged with various figures and archetypes that emerged from his unconscious. He interacted with them, engaged in dialogues, and sought to understand their significance. This process allowed him to confront and integrate suppressed or neglected aspects of his

own psyche, leading to a greater sense of wholeness and self-discovery.

Jung's experiences during this personal crisis and his engagement with the unconscious heavily influenced the development of his psychological approach, known as analytical psychology. Active imagination became an essential technique within this framework, allowing individuals to access the unconscious, explore its symbolic language, and foster individuation—the process of becoming a more integrated and authentic self.

#### JUNG'S STORY OF THE RAINMAKER

While discussing active imagination, Carl Jung highlighted the significance of storytelling, particularly the inclusion of the rainmaker story. This narrative effectively portrays a crucial aspect of the process by serving as a metaphorical representation of the transformative power of the unconscious and the integration of its contents.

The rainmaker story is as follows:

Once, there was a village suffering from a severe drought. The people were desperate for rain, as their crops were dying, and their livelihoods were at stake. They called upon a renowned rainmaker to help them. The rainmaker arrived in the village and requested a small hut on the outskirts. He then told the villagers that he needed to be left alone in the hut for three days.

For three days and three nights, the rainmaker remained inside the hut. The villagers anxiously waited for rain, but no clouds appeared. On the fourth day, however, dark clouds gathered in the sky, and a gentle rain began to fall. The rain gradually intensified until it poured, bringing relief to the parched land. The crops thrived, and the village was saved from the drought.

Afterward, the villagers approached the rainmaker and asked him how he had made it rain. He replied, "I didn't make it rain. I came to the village that was out of alignment with the rain, so being in the village I also was out of alignment with the rain. I spent those three days aligning myself with the rain, and then the rain came."

Jung believed that the rainmaker story beautifully illustrates the process of active imagination. The rainmaker represents the individual who engages in active imagination and seeks to align themselves with the unconscious. By delving into the depths of the unconscious and engaging in a dialogue with its contents, one establishes a connection and attunement with the inner world.

The rain itself symbolizes the transformative power and healing potential that can emerge through active imagination. Just as the rainmaker aligns himself with the rain, the individual aligns with the unconscious, allowing for the integration of previously unrecognized or unacknowledged aspects of the self. This alignment fosters a sense of wholeness, healing, and creative renewal.

Jung's inclusion of the rainmaker story in discussions about active imagination emphasizes the importance of approaching the unconscious with respect, patience, and receptivity. It highlights the potential for profound change and growth that can arise from engaging in active imagination and establishing a meaningful connection with the unconscious.

## Examples in Literature

### BIBLICAL

This example I refer to is of Jesus' temptation in the Bible.

Though it is not explicitly an example of Active Imagination as understood in Jungian psychology, it is an example often interpreted symbolically or metaphorically. In the story of Jesus' temptation in the Bible (Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13), Jesus goes into the wilderness and encounters various temptations presented by the devil.



These temptations are seen as symbolic challenges that Jesus faces before he begins his ministry.

When Jesus ventured into the desert for 40 days and nights, he encountered the devil, engaging in a conversation that likely involved active imagination. This experience can be understood as a manifestation of unconscious content, where the invisible becomes visible. The devil, in this context, symbolizes

temptation. Given Jesus' exceptional gifts and strong self-awareness, it is natural to expect that he would be tempted by power. Interestingly, the manifestation occurred in the desert, a place devoid of distractions, allowing for focused introspection.

The depths of the unconscious can reveal themselves when one embraces solitude, devoid of external distractions. In such moments, the spiritual dimension of Jesus' existence on earth found vibrant expression. The conversations with the devil symbolize active imagination, where the invisible becomes tangible through dialogue and vivid imagery. This pivotal experience marked a turning point in Jesus' mission, as he consciously rejected the temptations of power offered by the devil. Had he not confronted and integrated his unconscious shadow, his divine purpose would have been compromised.

While not a direct parallel to Active Imagination, some individuals may interpret this story as Jesus engaging with his unconscious symbolism or undergoing a psychological journey. The devil in this context can be seen as a symbol representing the temptations, doubts, or shadow aspects that Jesus needed to confront and overcome as part of his preparation for his divine mission.

## WONDERLAND

A commonly known literary example that can be seen as representing Active Imagination is the story of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" by Lewis Carroll. In this whimsical

tale, Alice enters a fantastical world filled with peculiar characters, symbolic encounters, and surreal experiences. The story can be interpreted as an exploration of Alice's inner world and a journey of self-discovery.



Throughout her adventures, Alice engages in dialogue and encounters with various symbolic figures, such as the Cheshire Cat, the Mad Hatter, and the Queen of Hearts. These

encounters and interactions can be seen as manifestations of Alice's psyche, representing different aspects of her unconscious. Through her interactions with these symbolic figures, Alice navigates challenges, confronts her fears, and gains insights about herself and the world around her.

Alice's adventures in Wonderland can be viewed as a metaphorical representation of Active Imagination. Through her imaginative engagement with the symbolic characters and situations in her dreamlike world, Alice gains self-awareness, explores her psyche, and undergoes personal transformation. The story highlights the power of imagination and symbolism in the process of inner exploration and self-discovery.

# Method to Engage

## A PRACTICAL APPROACH

One practical way to engage in active imagination and initiate a dialogue with the unconscious involves selecting a specific image or symbol from an imaginary story or daydream and observing it closely. When the image starts to move or change in some way, it can signify the unconscious taking an active role in the dialogue. This approach aligns with Jung's idea of allowing the symbol to come to life and speak for itself.

By focusing on a particular image and observing its movements or transformations, you create a space for the unconscious to express itself. The movement or change in the image can be seen as a signal that the unconscious is activating the symbol and using it to communicate with you. It serves as an invitation to enter into a deeper dialogue with the symbol and explore its significance.

Engaging in this process requires receptivity, patience, and a willingness to let go of conscious control. By allowing the symbol to unfold and guide the dialogue, you create an opportunity for the unconscious to reveal its wisdom and insights.

It's important to note that this approach may not always produce immediate results or clear-cut dialogues. Active imagination is a fluid and subjective process, and experiences can vary from person to person. It is crucial to approach the practice with an open mind and a sense of curiosity, allowing the dialogue to unfold naturally and trusting in the wisdom of the unconscious.

Working with a trained analyst or therapist familiar with an active imagination can provide additional support and guidance in exploring this approach effectively.

## STAGES OF ACTIVE IMAGINATION

I've outlined several stages or phases that individuals may go through during the process of active imagination. These stages can vary in duration and intensity, and not everyone may experience all of them. Here are the general stages of active imagination:

- Preparation

This stage involves creating a suitable environment for active imagination. It may include finding a quiet and comfortable space, setting aside dedicated time, and adopting a receptive and open mindset. Relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or meditation, can also help prepare for active imagination.

- Invocation

In this stage, individuals intentionally evoke or summon images, fantasies, or figures from the unconscious. This can be done by focusing on a specific question, issue, or symbol and allowing the imagination to generate corresponding material. The goal is to establish a connection with the unconscious and invite its contents to emerge.

- Dialogue and Exploration

Once an image or figure appears, engage in a dialogue or interaction with it. This stage involves observing, questioning, and actively engaging with the unconscious material. The individual may ask the figure about its meaning, purpose, or significance. The dialogue can be both verbal and non-verbal, with the individual using their imagination to explore and gain insights into the symbol or archetype.

- Amplification and Reflection

After the dialogue and exploration, reflect on the encountered material. This stage involves considering the personal associations, cultural or mythological references, and potential symbolic meanings of the images or figures that emerged. Jungian amplification techniques, such as researching related myths, symbols, or dream motifs, can provide further insight.

- Integration and Application

The final stage focuses on integrating the insights gained from active imagination into one's conscious life. This involves reflecting on the personal relevance and implications of the encountered material. The individual may explore how these insights can be applied to personal growth, relationships, creative endeavors, or problem-solving. Integrating the lessons learned from active imagination helps bridge the gap between the unconscious and conscious aspects of the psyche.

These stages are not strictly linear or fixed. They provide a general framework for understanding the process of active imagination, but each individual's experience may differ. Some stages may be revisited or repeated, and the process can be ongoing and evolving over time.

### EXAMPLE OF USING STAGES

Here's an example illustrating how someone recovering from addiction might progress through the stages of active imagination:

**Preparation:** Mark, a man in his 40's, is in recovery from substance addiction. He decides to use active imagination as a tool to explore the underlying emotions and triggers that contribute to his addictive patterns. Mark creates a calm and comfortable space in his home, ensuring he won't be disturbed. He takes a few moments to ground himself, setting the intention to gain insight and support his recovery journey.

**Invocation:** Mark brings to mind an image that represents his addiction—a dark, swirling vortex. He visualizes the vortex and invites it to reveal itself



further. He allows his imagination to generate images, sensations, and emotions associated with the vortex.

**Dialogue and Exploration:** As Mark focuses on the vortex, he engages in a dialogue with it, asking questions like, "What purpose do you serve in my life? What emotions or experiences are you linked to?" He allows the vortex to respond, imagining it speaking or manifesting symbolic representations of his underlying emotions and triggers.

**Amplification and Reflection:** Mark concludes the dialogue and takes a moment to reflect on the encountered material. He recognizes that the vortex symbolizes his deep-seated emotions of pain, trauma, and unresolved issues. He reflects on the personal associations he has with the vortex, considering the moments when he felt drawn towards addictive behaviors as a coping mechanism. Mark also seeks therapy or support groups to further explore and understand these underlying issues.

**Integration and Application:** Mark contemplates how the insights gained from active imagination can support his recovery journey. He realizes that addressing the underlying emotional pain is crucial for long-term healing. Inspired by the exploration, he seeks professional help, engages in therapy, attends support groups, and explores healthier coping strategies. Mark commits to self-care practices that promote emotional well-being, such as mindfulness, journaling, and creative outlets.

Mark continues to engage in active imagination sessions, gradually gaining deeper insights into his addictive patterns and emotional triggers. As he progresses, he might encounter other symbolic figures or scenes that shed light on his recovery journey.

Through continued engagement with an active imagination and the integration of insights into his daily life, Mark strengthens his recovery, heals emotional wounds, and develops healthier coping mechanisms.

## Insight Benefits

### SIX USEFUL RESULTS

Engaging in active imagination and dialoguing with the unconscious can offer several practical benefits and insights. Here are six useful pieces of information you may hope to gain through this process.

#### 1) Self-Discovery -

Active imagination can provide valuable self-knowledge by bringing forth hidden aspects of the self. It can reveal repressed emotions, unresolved conflicts, unacknowledged desires, and forgotten memories. This self-awareness allows individuals to better understand themselves, their motivations, and their patterns of behavior.

- Example: Through active imagination, Sarah engages in a dialogue with an inner figure that represents her fear of vulnerability. This dialogue reveals underlying childhood experiences that contributed to her fear. She gains a deeper understanding of herself, her emotional patterns, and how her fear affects her relationships and choices.

## 2) Emotional Healing -

Engaging in dialogue with the unconscious can help individuals process and heal emotional wounds. It provides a safe space to explore and express complex emotions, traumas, or unresolved experiences. This process can lead to emotional integration, increased resilience, and greater emotional well-being.

- Example: Mark uses active imagination to explore his unresolved grief following the loss of a loved one. Through dialogue with symbolic representations of his grief, he expresses suppressed emotions, processes his pain, and finds solace. This emotional healing allows him to move forward and find meaning in his loss.

## 3) Problem Solving and Decision Making -

Active imagination can offer insights and alternative perspectives when facing difficult decisions or challenges. Through dialogue with the unconscious, one can tap into intuitive wisdom and creative problem-solving capacities. The unconscious mind often holds valuable information that can shed light on solutions or new approaches to problems.

- Example: John is struggling with a career decision. He engages in active imagination and has a dialogue with his inner guide. Through this dialogue, he uncovers deeper desires, values, and fears related to the decision. The insights gained helped him clarify his priorities and make a more informed and authentic career choice.

#### 4) Symbolic Guidance -

The unconscious communicates symbolically, and active imagination allows individuals to engage directly with these symbols. Through dialogue, individuals can seek guidance and interpretation of symbols, archetypes, or metaphors encountered during active imagination. These symbolic insights can provide a deeper understanding and guidance in navigating life's complexities.

- Example: Maria encounters a recurring dream symbol of a labyrinth (Maze). She uses active imagination to engage with the symbol and has a dialogue with the labyrinth itself. Through the dialogue, she gains insights into her journey of self-discovery, the challenges she faces, and the need to embrace the unknown. The labyrinth symbol guides her in navigating her life's complexities.

#### 5) Integration and Self-Transformation -

Active imagination facilitates the integration of unconscious material into conscious awareness. This process allows individuals to reconcile conflicting aspects of the self, harmonize opposites, and work towards a more integrated and authentic identity. Active imagination can support personal growth, self-acceptance, and the development of inner resources.

- Example: James engages in active imagination to explore his relationship with his inner critic. Through dialogue, he discovers the roots of his self-judgment and critical thoughts.

By engaging compassionately with the inner critic and integrating its positive intentions, he transforms it into an inner ally that supports his growth and self-acceptance.

#### 6) Creative Inspiration -

Engaging in active imagination can be a wellspring of creative inspiration. It allows individuals to access the rich imagery, symbolism, and narratives of the unconscious, which can be channeled into various creative endeavors. Artists, writers, and musicians often draw from active imagination to tap into their creative potential and explore new artistic directions.

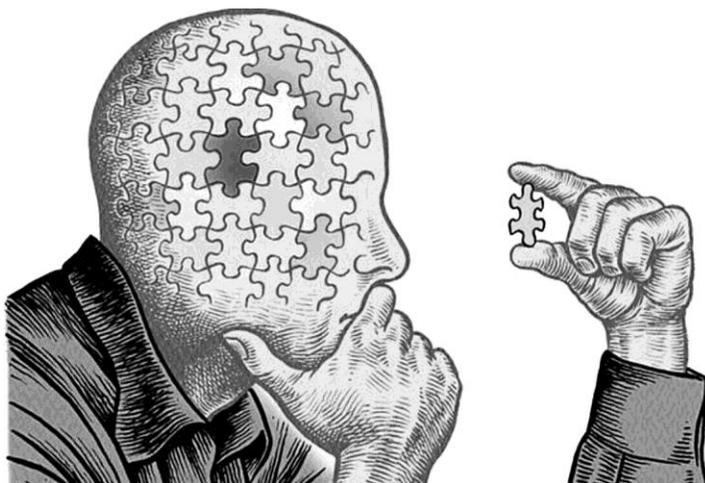
- Example: Emily, a writer, uses active imagination to access her creative inspiration. She engages in dialogue with the characters and settings that emerge from her imagination. Through these dialogues, she uncovers rich narratives, develops multidimensional characters, and gains new perspectives that enhance the depth and authenticity of her storytelling.

It's important to note that the practical information gained through active imagination is deeply personal and subjective. The insights and benefits can vary for each individual, depending on their intentions, questions, and personal circumstances. Engaging in active imagination with curiosity, openness, and a non-judgmental attitude can enhance the potential for practical information and transformative experiences.



## Chapter 9

# Integration



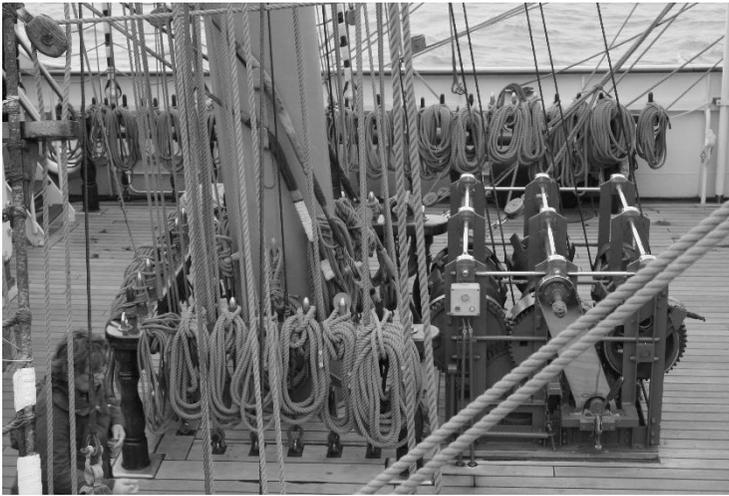
*“Unity, not uniformity, must be our aim. We attain unity only through variety. Differences must be integrated, not annihilated, not absorbed.”*

~ Mary Parker Follett (1918).

# Terminology

Throughout our journey within this book, we have dedicated time to understanding how the shadow-self communicates through symbolic language. By deciphering its meaning, we gain insight into the origins of our problematic behaviors and desires. To illustrate this concept, we used an example of the Navajo Code Talkers, demonstrating how the shadow utilizes symbols to convey its message. Now, as we begin engaging in dialogue with our shadow self, I will be employing specific terminology to describe the components of this process. Although these terms might be unfamiliar and potentially confusing, they are essential for our exploration.

Many individuals can relate to the experience of using "technical terms" when talking about their professional careers or when discussing hobbies. A perfect illustration of this situation occurred as I was learning to sail. In the world of sailing, terminology is used in a very specific manner, differing from our everyday 'land-based' language. My education started with the seemingly simple word "rope," which I soon discovered had an entirely different meaning on a sailboat. Initially, I thought it was a joke since there were ropes all over the boat. However, I quickly learned that in sailing terminology, any "rope" serving a purpose or fulfilling a specific function is referred to as a "line". Moreover, each individual line responsible for a particular task carries its unique name. This refers to all the moveable lines that are used to pull up and adjust the sails.



The rope that runs up the mast to pull up the mainsail is called the “Halyard” and to bring the sail down the line is called the “Downhaul”. The lines that are used for the sailing direction of the ship are called sheets, and each sheet will refer to the sail that it controls. So, when you trim the mainsail you use the “Mainsheet”, if trimming the jib, then you will adjust the “Jib Sheet”. There are other lines used for sail trimming such as a “Cunningham” or a “Kicker”. The “Standing rigging” refers to all the lines that support the stationary objects on a sailing yacht, such as the mast. These are generally steel cables and are called either “Shrouds” or “Stays”. For example, the line (cable) that runs from the mast to the bow of the boat is called the “Forestay”, and lines that run to the stern of the boat are often called “Backstays”.

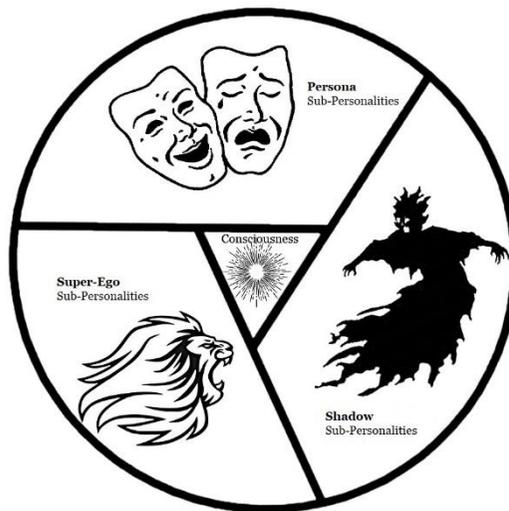
The lines that are used when you are tying up to a jetty or pontoon are often called “Dock lines” or “Warps”. I was told there are only two times a rope is called a rope:

1. The rope that is sewn at the edges of the sail for reinforcement is called, the “Bolt Rope”
2. The line used to ring the ship’s bell is called, “Bell Rope”

Just like using terms on a sailboat to help the sailor understand which “rope” to grab, I am using terms to describe your complex inner world of sub-personalities. The following list is intended to be used as a reference point for our exploration of the integration technique. You should recognize these terms from earlier chapters where we introduced their use; this may be more of a review to refresh your understanding.

- SUB-PERSONALITIES – are temporary personality modes. They are identity patterns derived from important relationships that take the form of our self-images and social roles.
- PARTS – the sections grouping our sub-personalities into their similar characteristics.
  - PERSONA sub-personalities – the outward masks we wear to society (i.e., Parent, Spouse, Co-worker, Friend, Neighbor, etc.)
  - SUPER-EGO sub-personalities – the critical voices in our heads spreading shame and doubt.

- SHADOW sub-personalities – the negative aspects of ourselves responsible for selfish wants, violent thoughts of action, or lustful desires.
- CONSCIOUSNESS – is the essence or core of a person's being, not just cognitive awareness. Consciousness extends beyond the physical body and continues to exist after death in a non-physical or spiritual realm (our Higher Self).



## Born Skeptic

Explaining the concept that normal personalities are composed of sub-personalities can be quite alien to most people, including many mental health professionals. Generally, we tend to perceive personalities as singular entities. However, there is an exception to this unfamiliar notion: the documented reality of a condition formerly known as multiple personality disorder (MPD), now referred to as dissociative identity disorder (DID). Upon

encountering the idea that one's personality, as a regular and unique individual, is comprised of a collective of sub-personalities, much like players in a sports team, members of a drama group, or musicians in an orchestra, individuals may experience a sense of disorientation and even fear.

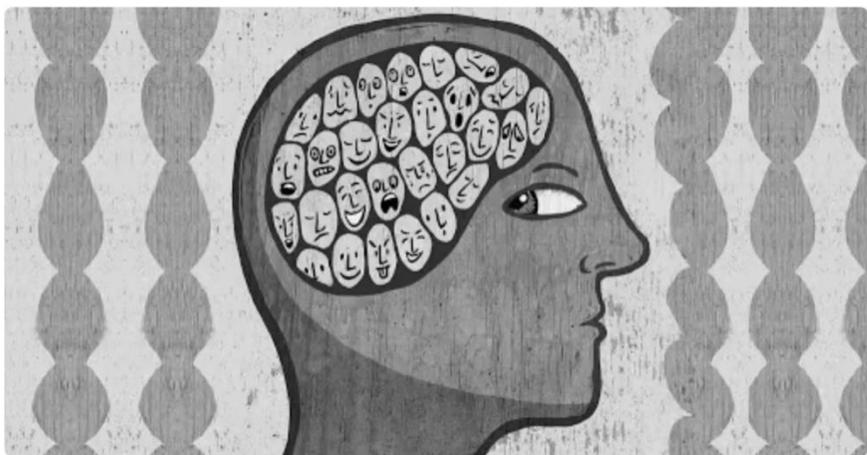
Allow me to present you with some of the evidence that has convinced me, as an initial skeptic, regarding the unquestionable reality of sub-personalities in normal individuals like yourself. If you happen to be skeptical, which is a perfectly understandable and cautious reaction, consider the advancements in science over the past 35 or 40 years. We now have the capability to capture images of living brains in action through a technique called Brain Positron Emission Tomography, or brain PET/CT scan for short. These scans reveal different regions of our brains activating at various times, emphasizing that our brains essentially function as intricate networks of minicomputers. Drawing upon my background as a former HVAC technician and how controlling an indoor environment requires the inner connection of multiple sub-systems, it seems logical to me that sub-personalities are, in essence, specific segments of our brains with distinct programs. When activated, sub-personalities govern our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in particular ways; while remaining dormant results in a different set of thoughts, actions, and behaviors. Does this line of reasoning resonate with you?

Have you ever encountered inner voices, perhaps resembling the critical inner voice I mentioned previously? Is it possible that

you're accustomed to streams of thoughts, akin to inner voices, and have never pondered their origin? Additionally, have you ever found yourself "spacing out" or losing track of your surroundings in the real world? For instance, during a long drive on a quiet roadway, where your mind drifts elsewhere while your body continues to navigate the route safely, arriving at your destination and you can't even remember the last few stop signs or turns you made. Does this sound familiar? If so, have you ever contemplated how such occurrences unfold between your mind and your behaviors? Furthermore, have you ever encountered a "racing mind", where thoughts cascade chaotically, often hindering sleep? Does this ever happen to you?

I propose that this is evidence of multiple sub-personalities simultaneously generating streams of thought, much like numerous students in a classroom vying for attention, all talking at the same time. This phenomenon arises when your sub-personalities clamor for recognition. Have you ever engaged in internal debates, where conflicting thoughts like "I should do this" and "No, I should do that instead" arise? Have you ever stopped to consider which aspects of your personality align with different perspectives, weighing the "pros and cons" of making a choice? How do you resolve these inner conflicts? Is there an internal negotiator who steps in and says, "Now, listen up, we're going to find a solution together"? Do you possess such sub-personalities? Many individuals wish they could find this internal negotiator but are unsure why it seems to be absent.

What about the familiar occurrence of obsessions, where your mind tenaciously fixates on a subject despite other parts of your mind urging, "Let it go... Stop!" Meanwhile, another part of your brain insists, "No, I won't! We must keep thinking about it!" And how about the common experience of self-criticism? Have you ever engaged in this issue? Within you, there exists an inner voice that berates you, calling you a "stupid idiot" and highlighting your mistakes, saying, "You should have done this instead... This is wrong... This is bad!"



Let's also consider perfectionism. Do you ever have thoughts or dreams that persistently highlight your shortcomings and point out instances where you didn't achieve perfection? These experiences often come with accompanying emotions. In my experience, these are typical manifestations of a sub-personality known as "the perfectionist." This aspect of your personality tirelessly scrutinizes your actions, offering constant suggestions for improvement, day and night. Moreover, have you ever found yourself doing something and later wondering, "Why did I do

that?" It's as if you acted against your better judgment. Have you ever engaged in impulsive behavior or regretted certain actions? Have you ever found yourself engaging in actions that your "true self", your wise inner voice, advises against, and later regretted doing them? For instance, telling a lie and then feeling remorseful about it? This is a common occurrence and serves as universal evidence that we all possess sub-personalities. Have you ever made the remark, "I don't know what came over me?" when your thoughts, feelings, moods, and values suddenly or gradually shifted, making you feel like a different person? Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever experienced a situation where your partner, after getting married, seemed to transform into a different person? I argue that such instances are examples of sub-personalities in action.

Let's consider the phenomenon of having different moods. How do you explain the reality that sometimes you feel happy, other times sad, occasionally bored, and then suddenly excited? There are moments when you're highly focused, while at other times, you experience a sense of vagueness, apathy, and numbness. How do you make sense of these varied experiences?

Different parts of your brain activate various hormones, resulting in different moods. That's how I interpret it. Have you ever encountered someone who appeared childlike in their mood, their thinking, or their behavior? In my perspective, this serves as strong evidence of the presence of inner child sub-personalities located within the Shadow self. These sub-personalities often

take control of our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. When they subside, we (hopefully) return to normal adult behavior.

Have you ever experienced what some individuals refer to as "a still, small voice"? Perhaps you've had a hunch or intuition. These are again instances where sub-personalities provide you with thoughts, images, and feelings regarding something significant in the world. Have you ever heard someone describe themselves as having different sides to their personality? For instance, an intellectual side, a creative side, or a fun side. These various personas are influenced by different sub-personalities from the shadow self or super-ego self, depending on the situation.

## SETTING THE STAGE

Let's start by addressing the dynamics taking place between the terms we have just listed, and how it has led to substance use or troubling behaviors as we attempt to find relief from the emotional pain. The core problem in most cases is that the addicted person's Consciousness has been disabled by the sub-personalities who don't trust its guidance. This primarily comes from the Super-Ego who is trying to 'manage' the sub-personalities of the Persona and 'repress' the sub-personalities of the Shadow; all to keep the person (as a whole) safe and functioning. The other parts also could be responsible for blocking the Consciousness from taking an active role in your life; as seen by the strong pressure exerted by the Shadow's desires or the Persona trying to quiet the other parts through seeking a substance-induced euphoria.

When doing Shadow Work, we are striving to:

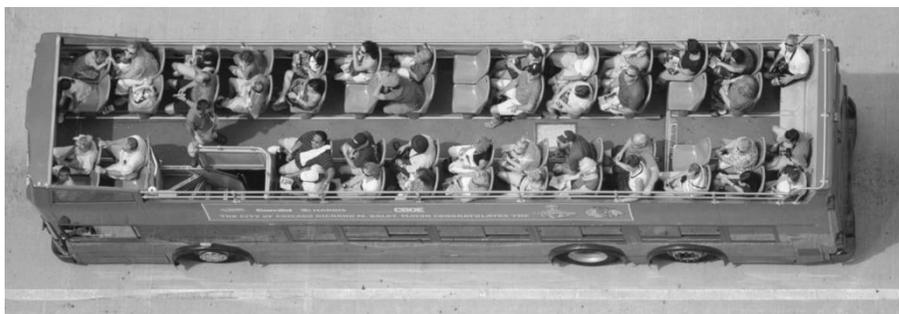
1. identify which sub-personalities are responsible for disabling the Consciousness (true self), and...
2. understand the source of your pain.

Different combinations of active Shadow sub-personalities and distrustful Super-Ego sub-personalities cause different symptoms to manifest and diagnostic labels to be given. I'm not aware of any research that has explored the connections between non-genetic organic dysfunctions like cancer, diabetes, migraines, or the disruptions of your inner personalities, but I don't think it necessarily takes a scientist to recognize the correlation taking place.

The shadow is considered crucial in resolving conflict disruptions between the persona and the super-ego because it represents the aspects of ourselves that we have suppressed or disowned. These can include our darker impulses, fears, desires, and qualities that we deem unacceptable or incompatible with our desired self-image. When conflicts arise between the persona and the super-ego, it is often due to the tension between the idealized self (super-ego) and the wounded self (shadow). The persona tries to project an idealized image to conform to societal expectations, while the shadow contains aspects of ourselves that we perceive as negative or undesirable.

Resolving these conflicts requires acknowledging and integrating the shadow. By exploring and embracing the shadow, we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and become more whole and

authentic individuals. It involves bringing the unconscious aspects of our personality into conscious awareness and accepting them without judgment. When we neglect or suppress the shadow, it can manifest in various ways, such as projection onto others or acting out in unhealthy or destructive behaviors. By recognizing and integrating the shadow, we can reconcile the conflicts between the persona and the super-ego. This process allows us to develop a more balanced and integrated sense of self, leading to greater self-awareness, self-acceptance, and inner harmony.



## Who Is Driving Your Bus

Imagine a school bus as the vessel of our inner world, filled with a diverse group of passengers representing different aspects of our psyche. The bus is a metaphorical representation of our minds, navigating through life's journey.

At the front of the bus, we have our Super-Egos represented as the authority figures, symbolizing the critical voices we often internalize. They resemble past figures of authority, such as strict parents, teachers, or other influential individuals whose words

and actions have shaped our beliefs about ourselves. These voices tend to be loud and dominant, occupying the front seats, and steering the direction of our thoughts and actions.

In the back section of the bus, we find the children who have been traumatized. Each child represents a specific moment or experience from our past that caused emotional pain, fear, or distress. These children embody the wounded parts of our Shadow selves, carrying the weight of unhealed wounds and suppressed emotions. They are filled with fear, anger, and unfulfilled desires, yet they often remain ignored and silenced, confined to the shadows.

Caught in between these two groups are our adult Personas, representing the roles we play in our daily lives—father/mother, husband/wife, manager, worker, neighbor, son/daughter, or friend. These personas try to navigate the bus, attempting to balance the demands and expectations of the authority figures at the front with the needs and emotions of the wounded children at the back.

The question of "Who is driving the bus?" arises, highlighting the power dynamics within our psyche. It raises concerns about the true source of control and agency in our lives. Are we allowing the critical voices of authority to dictate our thoughts and behaviors? Or are we honoring and addressing the needs of our wounded inner children?

The dynamics that unfold within this bus can be complex and challenging. The authority figures may dominate the front seats, steering the bus towards self-criticism, doubt, and perfectionism. The wounded children, hidden in the back, may create disruptions, manifesting as emotional outbursts, triggers, or self-sabotaging behaviors.

Meanwhile, the adult personas caught in the middle may struggle to find their voice and balance amidst the competing influences. They may try to mediate between the critical voices and the wounded children, seeking harmony and healing within themselves.

Ultimately, our task is to recognize and integrate all parts of ourselves. By accessing our Consciousness, our True Self, as our inner guide and counselor, we can begin to acknowledge the wounded children within us and their unmet needs. This empowers us to provide the care, compassion, and healing they require. Simultaneously, we can learn to challenge and reframe the critical voices of authority, questioning their validity, and fostering self-empowerment.

In this analogy, the journey of driving the bus represents the journey of self-discovery, self-acceptance, and healing. It is about finding the right balance and harmony within ourselves, allowing our adult personas to become compassionate guides while addressing the needs and honoring the experiences of our wounded inner children.

## INTEGRATING SHADOW TO STOP PAIN OF TRAUMA

Integrating the shadow self is a powerful process that can contribute to healing inner pain stemming from childhood trauma or neglect. Integrating the shadow self involves acknowledging and accepting the suppressed and often painful aspects of one's personality. This includes recognizing how childhood trauma or neglect may have shaped and influenced these aspects. By acknowledging the existence of these painful experiences and their impact on one's psyche, individuals can begin the process of healing.

Integrating the shadow entails exploring the painful emotions, memories, and beliefs associated with childhood trauma or neglect. This exploration is done with compassion and support, often through therapy or counseling. By delving into these experiences in a safe and non-judgmental environment, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of how the past has affected them and their current patterns of behavior.

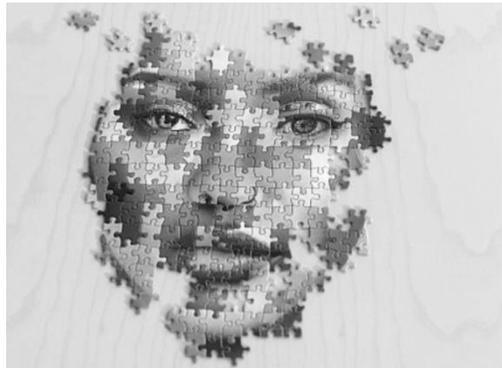
Integrating the shadow provides an opportunity to release pent-up emotions and process unresolved feelings related to childhood trauma or neglect. This can involve expressing and validating the pain, grief, anger, or sadness associated with those experiences. Through various therapeutic techniques, such as somatic therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, or trauma-focused

interventions, individuals can work towards healing the wounds and finding emotional relief.

Childhood trauma or neglect can lead to a sense of powerlessness, low self-esteem, and a disconnection from one's authentic self. Integrating the shadow involves reclaiming personal power by acknowledging one's strengths, values, and inner resources. By recognizing their inherent worth and capabilities, individuals can cultivate a sense of empowerment and resilience in the face of past pain.

Integrating the shadow allows individuals to examine and challenge the limiting beliefs and narratives that may have developed as a result of childhood trauma or neglect. Through self-reflection and reframing negative self-perceptions, individuals can start reshaping their understanding of themselves and their potential. This process helps in fostering self-compassion, self-acceptance, and the development of healthier self-narratives.

Integrating the shadow involves prioritizing self-care and seeking support from trusted individuals or professionals. Engaging in activities that promote emotional well-being, such as mindfulness practices, exercise, creative outlets, or spending time in nature, can help in managing and reducing inner pain.



Additionally, connecting with supportive relationships or joining support groups can provide validation, empathy, and a sense of belonging.

While integrating the shadow self is a profound and transformative process, it's important to note that deep-seated childhood trauma or neglect may require specialized therapeutic interventions and professional guidance. Seeking help from qualified mental health professionals can provide the necessary support and expertise for navigating this complex healing journey effectively.

### NAMING SHADOW TRAUMAS

Giving names or labels to different aspects of neglect and trauma can be a helpful tool in the shadow work process and the subsequent integration. This naming process can facilitate inner dialogue and increase awareness and understanding of these aspects. By assigning specific names or labels to different aspects of neglect and trauma, it becomes easier to recognize and differentiate them within oneself. This naming process can help identify specific patterns, emotions, or belief systems associated with different aspects of the trauma or neglect. It provides a framework for understanding the complexity of these experiences and their impact on one's life.

Naming aspects of neglect and trauma can create an internal dialogue within oneself. It allows for a more focused and intentional exploration of each aspect, enabling deeper self-

reflection. By engaging in this inner dialogue, individuals can better understand the origins, triggers, and effects of each aspect, leading to increased self-awareness and insight. Naming different aspects of neglect and trauma can help create a sense of separation between one's authentic self and those aspects. This separation allows individuals to view these aspects as separate entities, rather than defining their entire identity. It supports the recognition that these aspects are not the entirety of who they are and can be worked with and integrated into a more holistic sense of self.

The act of naming and identifying aspects of neglect and trauma can be empowering. It provides a sense of agency and control over these experiences. By acknowledging and labeling these aspects, individuals can actively work on healing and integrating them into their lives. It allows for targeted healing efforts and helps in developing strategies to address each aspect effectively. It's important to approach the naming process with sensitivity and self-compassion, as it may bring up intense emotions or memories. It's advisable to undertake this process in a supportive environment, such as with the guidance of a therapist or counselor, who can provide assistance and create a safe space for exploration and integration.

#### PROCESS EACH OF THE IDENTIFIED SUB-SHADOW SELVES

I'm providing you with a general process when working with identified sub-shadow selves through dialoguing with their issues from childhood. Find a quiet and comfortable environment

where you can focus without distractions. Ensure you have ample time for this process. You may also want to have a journal or notepad to write down your thoughts and reflections. Begin by reflecting on your experiences of neglect and trauma from childhood. Identify the different aspects or sub-shadow selves that have emerged as a result. Give each 'sub-shadow-self' a distinct name or label that resonates with its specific issue or characteristic.

Choose one sub-shadow to begin with. Mentally or in writing, address this identity by its name. Initiate a dialogue, inviting it to express its feelings, needs, or concerns. Imagine or write down what it might say in response. In the dialogue, adopt a compassionate and non-judgmental stance. Listen attentively to what the 'sub-shadow-self' expresses, allowing it to voice its pain, fears, or unmet needs from childhood. Be patient and open to whatever arises, maintaining a space of understanding and empathy. Respond to the 'sub-self's' concerns with empathy and reassurance. Acknowledge the validity of its emotions and experiences. Offer comforting and supportive words, letting them know that you are there to listen and understand. Provide reassurance that you are committed to its healing and well-being. Prompt the 'sub-shadow-self' to dive deeper into its issues from childhood by asking open-ended questions. For example, "What were the specific experiences or events that contributed to your pain?", "What unmet needs did you have at that time?", or "How did these experiences shape your beliefs about yourself and the

world?" After the dialogue, take some time to reflect on what emerged. Write down any insights, realizations, or patterns that you noticed during the process. Consider how these 'sub-selves' and their issues have influenced your life and behaviors. Contemplate how you can begin integrating their



needs and healing into your present self. Continue the dialogues with each identified sub-shadow, one at a time. Work through their issues from childhood, engaging in compassionate listening, response, and reflection. Allow each sub-self to express itself fully and offer the understanding and support it needs.

Shadow work can be intense, and some aspects of neglect and trauma may require professional guidance. If you encounter particularly challenging emotions or find it difficult to process certain issues, consider seeking the assistance of a therapist or counselor who specializes in trauma or shadow work. Remember to approach this process with self-compassion, patience, and a

willingness to heal. Integrating shadow selves takes time and may require ongoing inner work. Be gentle with yourself and honor your unique journey of healing and self-discovery.

## PROCESSING THE OTHER PARTS

After addressing issues of the shadow self, it can be beneficial to engage in some processing work with the personas and the sub-personalities associated with the super-ego. While the integration of the shadow self is an important step, achieving overall harmony within the self involves addressing and balancing all aspects. Start by reflecting on the different personas you present to the world and the roles you play in different contexts. Consider whether these personas align with your authentic self or if they are based on external expectations or societal pressures. Evaluate whether any of these personas have become overly dominant or disconnected from your true desires and values.

Examine each persona and assess its authenticity and alignment with your core self. Ask yourself whether these personas serve as a genuine expression of your identity or if they are primarily driven by fear, a need for acceptance, or a desire to conform. Consider whether any adjustments or modifications are needed to align your personas with your true self. Cultivate authenticity by embracing and expressing your true thoughts, feelings, and desires. Strive to align your actions and behaviors with your core values and aspirations. Allow yourself to be more vulnerable and genuine in your interactions with others. This process involves

letting go of the need for external validation and embracing self-acceptance.

Super-ego sub-personalities are the internalized voices of authority figures, societal expectations, or cultural norms that shape your sense of right and wrong. These voices can be excessively critical, judgmental, or rigid in their standards. Take time to identify and examine these sub-personalities, recognizing how they influence your self-perception and decision-making. Once you identify super-ego sub-personalities, work on challenging their critical and judgmental voices. Reflect on the origins of these standards and beliefs, considering whether they are realistic or based on outdated conditioning. Practice self-compassion by reframing self-judgment and adopting more supportive and nurturing self-talk. Aim to develop a compassionate super-ego that encourages personal growth, self-care, and balanced self-improvement. Foster an internal voice that supports you in setting healthy boundaries, making wise choices, and striving for personal well-being. This compassionate super-ego encourages growth without harsh criticism or unrealistic expectations.

Maintain an ongoing practice of self-awareness to monitor and adjust your personas and super-ego sub-personalities as needed. Regularly reflect on your thoughts, behaviors, and motivations to ensure they align with your authentic self and promote overall well-being. Engage in practices like journaling, meditation, or therapy to deepen your self-awareness and foster continuous

growth. The goal is not to eliminate personas or the super-ego sub-personalities, but rather to cultivate a healthy and integrated sense of self. Strive for a harmonious balance among the different aspects of your personality, allowing your true self to shine while still honoring the social roles and responsibilities you choose to embody.

### SUGGESTED EXERCISE

Here's an exercise using a bus seating chart to help the reader visualize and integrate the different players of their inner dialogue:

Materials needed:

- A bus seating chart (you can create a simple one by drawing rows of seats)

Instructions:

1. Print or draw a bus seating chart with enough rows to accommodate the number of sub-personalities you would like to explore. Leave space for labeling each seat.
2. Divide the seating chart into three sections: Front (Super-Ego/Authority figures), Middle (Adult Personas), and Back (Shadow/Traumatized Children). You can draw lines or use markers to separate the sections.
3. Start with the front section (Super-Ego/Authority figures). Think about the critical voices or authority figures that have influenced you in the past. These can be parents, teachers, or anyone whose words and actions shaped your beliefs and behaviors. Write down their names or role

titles (e.g., strict parent, demanding teacher) on the seats in the front section of the bus.

4. Move to the middle section (Adult Personas). Consider the various roles you play in your daily life, such as father/mother, husband/wife, manager, worker, neighbor, son/daughter, or friend. Write down the names or role titles associated with these personas on the seats in the middle section of the bus.
5. Finally, focus on the back section (Shadow/Traumatized Children). Reflect on the moments or experiences in your past that have caused emotional pain, fear, or distress. These can be instances of humiliation, harsh punishment, or family crises. Think about the different wounded aspects of yourself that emerged from these experiences. Give each wounded aspect a name or label and write them on the seats in the back section of the bus.

Take a moment to observe the seating chart as a representation of your inner world. Notice the distribution of names and roles across the bus, representing the different sub-personalities within you.

Reflect on the dynamics and interactions between the different sections. Visualize how the authority figures at the front may influence or dominate the personas in the middle, and how the wounded children at the back may affect both the authority figures and the personas.

Consider how these different sub-personalities have influenced your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors over time. Are there any patterns or conflicts that arise from these dynamics? Take note of any insights or realizations that come up.

To foster integration and healing, imagine yourself as the bus driver, taking control and guiding the bus towards a harmonious and compassionate inner dialogue. Envision a nurturing and understanding presence that acknowledges the needs of the wounded children, challenges the authority figures' dominance, and allows the personas to express their authentic selves.

By completing this exercise and visualizing the different players of your inner dialogue through the bus seating chart, you can gain a clearer understanding of the dynamics at play within yourself. This visualization can help you integrate and reconcile the different sub-personalities, ultimately fostering healing and wholeness within your psyche.

# Front of Bus

Driver ↑		Door →	
#2		#1	<b>Authority</b> [Super-Ego]
#4		#3	
#6		#5	
#8		#7	
#10		#9	
#12		#11	<b>Adults</b> [Persona]
#14		#13	
#16		#15	
#18		#17	
#20		#19	<b>Children</b> [Shadow]
#22		#21	
#24		#23	

## Chapter 10

# Progressing Danger



*"Living too close to the edge is like dancing with the devil.  
It may seem exciting at first, but the price you pay  
for one wrong move can be your soul."*

~ Anonymous

# High Risk Recovery

"Progressing Danger" in the context of addiction recovery refers to a critical phase where an individual's recovery progress is at risk or in jeopardy. It signifies a stage where despite initial progress, some potential challenges and threats could undermine the recovery efforts. These dangers vary and can pose a significant risk of relapse or hindering the ongoing recovery process.

One of the progressing dangers is high-risk situations. These situations involve the individual being exposed to environments or activities associated with their past addictive behavior. For instance, someone recovering from alcohol addiction might find themselves in social gatherings where alcohol is readily available. Such environments can tempt them to abandon their commitment to sobriety and revert to their old habits.

Emotional triggers are another aspect of progressing danger. These triggers can evoke intense cravings or emotional distress, making it challenging for individuals to resist the temptation to engage in addictive behaviors. Triggers can be diverse, ranging from stress, anxiety, depression, or even positive emotions like excitement or celebration. When confronted with these triggers, individuals must develop healthy coping mechanisms to manage their emotions and avoid relapse.

Complacency and overconfidence can also be dangerous during the recovery process. As individuals experience initial success,

they may become complacent and neglect the essential self-care practices and support systems that helped them achieve their progress. It is crucial for individuals to maintain their vigilance and remain actively engaged in their recovery, consistently seeking support and practicing self-care.

Another progressing danger is the presence of co-occurring disorders. Many individuals struggling with addiction also experience underlying mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, or trauma. If these disorders are not adequately addressed during the recovery process, they can significantly impact an individual's ability to maintain sobriety. Proper diagnosis and integrated treatment approaches that address both addiction and co-occurring disorders are essential for long-term recovery.

Negative social influences can pose a threat to an individual's recovery progress as well. Friends, family, or acquaintances who are still engaged in addictive behaviors may exert pressure or enable the individual, making it difficult for them to maintain their sobriety. Individuals need to establish boundaries and surround themselves with a supportive network that encourages their recovery efforts.

External stressors and life circumstances can also contribute to progressing danger. Job stress, financial difficulties, relationship problems, or a lack of stable housing can create significant challenges for individuals in recovery. These stressors can strain their ability to cope with cravings and triggers effectively.

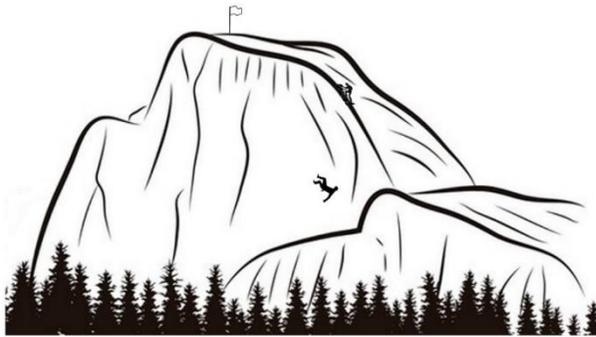
Developing healthy coping mechanisms, seeking professional assistance, and addressing these external stressors are crucial for maintaining progress in the recovery journey.

Recognizing and addressing these progressing dangers is essential for individuals in addiction recovery. They must remain vigilant and actively engage in self-care practices, therapy, and support systems. It is important to have a comprehensive relapse prevention plan in place and continually adapt it to changing circumstances. By being aware of the potential challenges and actively working to overcome them, individuals can navigate the progressing danger and continue their path toward long-term recovery.

## Mount Recovery

When discussing the danger of progressing too rapidly through the stages or steps of recovery, the risk we are talking about can be visualized through the analogy of climbing a mountain. The goal of your journey is to reach the summit of the mountain, which represents your success in overcoming addiction. The shortest, most direct path is foraging your way straight through the 12 steps. When you first embark on your climb, you make swift progress, fueled by determination and adrenaline. It feels like you're on the fast track to reaching the top, and you're exhilarated by the speed at which you're ascending through the program.

But here's the catch: that quick route you've chosen lies along the edge of a cliff. Initially, if an unexpected life event were to blindside you while you're still close to the base of the mountain, the fall off the cliff may not be too devastating. You're not that far from the ground, and you have a safety net of support systems and resources to help break your fall. It's not easy, but recovery seems manageable.



Now, let's shift our focus to farther up the path of recovery. You have been living right, doing what you were told to do; you now have a good job, a place to live, regained your driver's license, and even have a car. You have persevered and are near the summit of your recovery journey, steadily making progress and building stability with each step. However, you have remained on that short, straight path along the edge of the cliff. You are more vulnerable to a devastating fall which you may not survive; the impact of a relapse from this level of recovery may seem impossible to overcome.

To be blindsided by an unforeseen event would shove you headfirst over the edge; it's what I call, "The F-it Moment". When the event is so overwhelming despite your achievements in recovery you just want to say, "Fuck it!" Let me give you a scenario example of what this might look like:

Let's say you are on probation; you have been reporting on time and are current on your fines and fees. You are carpooling with a friend and the two of you are heading in to work the second shift. You notice a police officer following you as you look through your rearview mirror. He's riding your tail, so you know he is calling in your tags; your heart is pounding even though you know you haven't done anything. You're not even speeding.

Sure enough, the lights come on and he taps his siren a couple of times for you to pull over. When he finally approaches your window he asks, "Do you know why I've pulled you over?" And in your most respectful and concerning way, you respond, "No sir, officer, I have no idea why you pulled me over". The officer continues, "You bumped the yellow line a couple of times and I'm afraid you are an impaired driver. May I see your license and registration please".

Having been a police officer in the past (graduating from the 65<sup>th</sup> Police Academy at Joplin, Mo. in 1993), I know that most likely when the officer called in your plates he learned from dispatch you are on probation with the state for drug charges, which in most states will allow him to search your car without even probable cause. He still needs a reason to pull you over though,

and the situation I am presenting was my favorite “probable cause” for making a traffic stop. I would follow the person very closely on their bumper to call in the tags, knowing very well, that they are watching me in their rear-view mirror more than they are watching the road. So, to say they bumped or crossed the yellow line is not a hard assertion to make.

What you didn’t realize is your co-worker in the car is carrying drugs, even though you made it very clear when you agreed to carpool, “THIS IS A DRUG-FREE CAR! You leave that crap at home!” He panics when he sees the cop and shoves the drugs in between the seats.

While you wait for the officer to return with your license and registration, you see two more squad cars pull up behind him.



You know what is about to happen, but you still know you have done nothing wrong. As expected, he demands to search the vehicle and has you both stand at the rear of the car. The assisting officer finds the baggy of drugs, and they confront you both asking, “who’s are these?” You rightfully declare your innocence, but your co-worker also denies the drugs are his; they were found in your car, and you are on probation for drug possession, guess who is getting cuffed and taken to county jail? That’s right, you are, and your car is being towed to the impound lot.

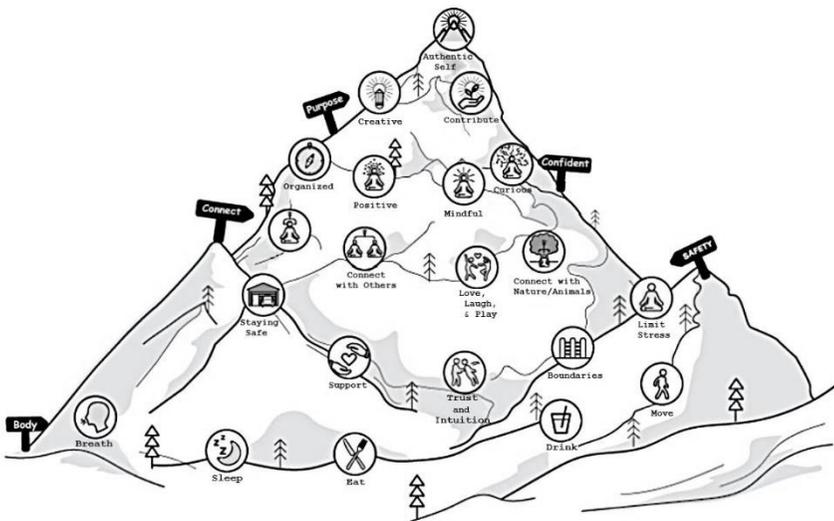
Let's take an inventory of how fast your life has bottomed out in a matter of minutes... and you did nothing wrong!!!

1. You have new felony drug charges
2. Your probation officer is filing a "petition to revoke"
3. Your car is impounded
  - a. Tow fee of \$125
  - b. Plus impound fee of \$250
  - c. And a cost of \$100 per day in storage
  - d. I'm being conservative with these prices!
4. You most likely have lost your job
5. Which means you can't afford your rent
6. And whatever possessions you still have are being stolen by your "so-called-friends" while you're locked up
7. Even if you get released sooner than a week,
  - a. Where will you go?
  - b. Where will you stay?
  - c. How will you even make it to see your probation officer when released?

This is the point that most people say, "F-it! I did nothing wrong! I'm innocent! I have been doing everything I'm told to do! And the world is still screwing me over!" They go back to the one thing they can count on... getting wasted. It doesn't even need to be a complex cascading of events like this example presents, it could be simply facing the sudden loss of a loved one; possibly the only person who still showed you love and support. It's a devastating

blow, and the pain threatens to knock you off the course of your recovery.

This analogy of climbing the mountain emphasizes the importance of taking a slower but safer route in recovery. It's about choosing stability over speed, gradually building a strong foundation, and ensuring that you are secure in your progress. By taking a path away from the cliff edge, you create a buffer zone that allows you to better weather unexpected storms and



challenges that life will throw at you. This means developing coping mechanisms, seeking support from loved ones or professionals, and engaging in self-care practices. It may not be as thrilling as the fast ascent, but it significantly reduces the risk of relapse or setbacks. The key to a successful recovery journey is not always about how quickly you reach the top, but rather how well you navigate the path and maintain stability along the way. By prioritizing stability, you give yourself the best chance to

overcome life's unexpected challenges and enjoy a fulfilling and sustainable life in recovery.

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a psychological theory proposed by Abraham Maslow, which suggests that human beings have a set of hierarchical needs that must be fulfilled in a specific order. According to Maslow, individuals strive to fulfill these needs to reach their full potential and achieve self-actualization. The hierarchy is typically depicted as a pyramid with five levels, each level building upon the previous one.

**Physiological Needs:** These are the most basic and fundamental needs necessary for survival. They include air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing, and sexual reproduction.

Examples:

- **Food:** The need for nourishment and sustenance to provide energy and maintain bodily functions.
- **Water:** The need for hydration to support bodily functions and prevent dehydration.
- **Shelter:** The need for protection from the elements and a safe place to live.
- **Sleep:** The need for rest and sleep to rejuvenate the body and mind.

**Safety Needs:** Once the physiological needs are met, individuals seek safety and security. This includes protection from physical harm, danger, and a sense of stability.

Examples:

- **Personal Security:** The need for personal safety, and protection from violence, crime, and harm.
- **Financial Security:** The need for stable income, savings, and resources to meet basic needs and handle emergencies.
- **Health and Well-being:** The need for access to healthcare, safety measures, and preventive measures.

**Love and Belongingness Needs:** After safety needs are satisfied, people seek love, affection, and a sense of belonging. This involves forming meaningful relationships and being part of a social group.

Examples:

- **Family:** The need for love, acceptance, and support from family members.
- **Friendship:** The need for companionship, trust, and emotional connection with friends.
- **Intimacy:** The need for romantic and intimate relationships.

**Esteem Needs:** Once the lower needs are fulfilled, individuals strive for self-esteem, recognition, and a positive self-image.

There are two aspects of esteem needs:

1. **Self-esteem:** The need for self-worth, self-confidence, and a sense of achievement.
2. **Esteem from others:** The need for respect, recognition, and admiration from others.

Examples:

- **Achievement:** The need for personal accomplishment, success, and mastery of skills.
- **Recognition:** The need for acknowledgment, praise, and appreciation for one's contributions.
- **Status:** The need for social recognition and reputation.

**Self-Actualization:** At the top of the hierarchy, self-actualization represents the fulfillment of one's potential and the desire to become the best version of oneself. This involves personal growth, self-discovery, and the pursuit of meaningful goals.

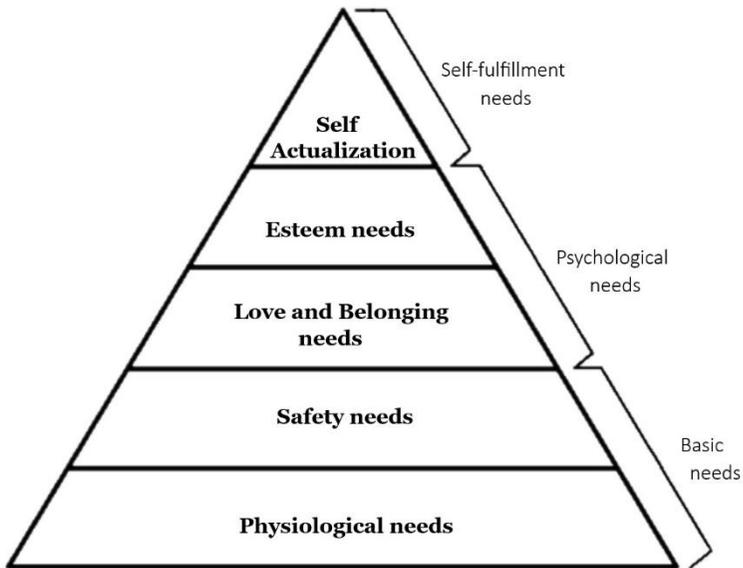
Examples:

- **Creativity:** The need to express oneself through art, music, writing, or any other form of creative outlet.
- **Personal Development:** The need for continuous learning, self-improvement, and self-reflection.
- **Fulfillment of Potential:** The need to pursue and achieve personal goals, realizing one's unique talents and capabilities.

According to Maslow's theory, individuals typically need to have their lower-level needs met or stabilized before they can effectively pursue and focus on higher-level needs. The hierarchy is often depicted as a pyramid, with the lower needs forming the foundation for the higher needs.

For example, if someone is struggling to meet their physiological needs such as food, water, or shelter, their primary focus would be on fulfilling those basic requirements for survival. It would be

difficult for them to prioritize higher-level needs like developing relationships or pursuing personal growth if they are constantly worried about finding basic resources for their survival.



Similarly, if an individual feels unsafe or lacks a sense of security, they will prioritize addressing those safety needs before focusing on love and belongingness or self-esteem needs. They may seek a safe environment, secure employment, or take measures to protect themselves from harm.

However, it's important to note that the fulfillment of lower-level needs does not guarantee the automatic progression to higher-level needs. While stability in lower-level needs provides a foundation, individuals can also experience overlapping needs and may work on multiple levels simultaneously. The hierarchy serves as a general guideline, but individual experiences and circumstances can influence the prioritization and progression through the different needs.



## Chapter 11

# Finding Purpose



*"The two most important days in your life are  
the day you are born and the day you find out why."*

~ Mark Twain

# Synchronicity

Carl Jung developed the concept of synchronicity through his extensive work in psychology and his exploration of the unconscious mind. The idea of synchronicity emerged from his collaboration and friendship with renowned physicist Wolfgang Pauli.

In the early 20th century, Jung was deeply interested in understanding the workings of the human psyche and exploring the connections between the conscious and unconscious realms. During his studies, he observed that certain events seemed to occur in a way that defied conventional explanations of causality. He encountered numerous instances where meaningful coincidences appeared to be more than mere chance.

Jung's exploration of synchronicity was greatly influenced by a series of discussions he had with Wolfgang Pauli, a pioneer in quantum physics and a Nobel laureate. Pauli himself had a keen interest in the relationship between science and the psyche. Together, Jung and Pauli explored the parallels between the mysterious interconnectedness found in the quantum world and the concept of synchronicity in psychology.

The term "synchronicity" was coined by Jung to describe these meaningful coincidences. He defined synchronicity as an "acausal connecting principle" that goes beyond linear cause-and-effect relationships. According to Jung, synchronistic events occur when there is a significant correspondence between the

subjective inner experience of an individual and an external event.

Jung's concept of synchronicity was introduced in his book "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle" published in 1952. In this work, he presented case studies and examples to illustrate the occurrence of synchronistic events and their significance in personal growth, psychotherapy, and understanding the nature of reality.

While Jung acknowledged that synchronicity was a challenging concept to validate empirically, he believed that it represented a fundamental aspect of human experience. He saw it as a way to bridge the gap between the scientific worldview and the realm of the psyche, offering insights into the interconnectedness of all things.

## RECOGNIZE SYNCHRONICITY

To recognize when synchronicity is happening, it helps to be attentive and open to the signs and patterns that emerge in your experiences. Here are some key aspects to consider:

### Meaningful coincidences

- Synchronicity involves coincidences that carry personal significance or meaning. These coincidences may involve events, encounters, symbols, or themes that seem to relate to your thoughts, desires, or questions.

## Alignment with intentions or questions

- Synchronistic events often appear to align with your intentions, goals, or inquiries. Pay attention to instances where the events or symbols resonate with your current focus or the direction you seek.

## Feeling a sense of resonance

- Synchronicity is often accompanied by a feeling of resonance or a strong inner response. You may experience a sense of "aha" or intuition when encountering a synchronistic event as if it holds a message or insight for you.

## Frequency and recurrence

- Synchronicity may manifest as a series of related coincidences or occur repeatedly over a short period. The repetition of certain symbols or themes can be a sign that synchronicity is at play.

## Intuitive awareness

- Synchronicity is often recognized through intuition or inner knowing. It requires cultivating a heightened sense of awareness and trusting your instincts to discern the meaningful connections between events.

## Personal interpretation

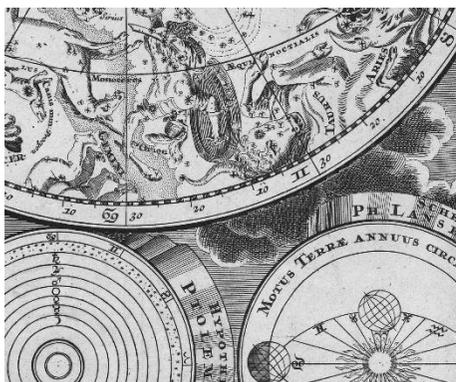
- Each person's experience of synchronicity is unique, and the interpretation of these events is subjective. Reflect on

how the coincidences resonate with you personally and the insights or guidance they may offer.

Remember, synchronicity should not be approached with a rigid or overly analytical mindset. It is more about embracing the interconnected nature of life and allowing yourself to be open to the deeper meanings and possibilities that emerge through these meaningful coincidences.

### THE STARS HAVE ALIGNED

The saying "The stars have aligned" is often used figuratively to express the idea that everything has come together in a perfect or fortuitous way. It implies that circumstances or events have fallen into place, aligning in a manner that is favorable or significant.



The origin of the saying can be traced back to ancient astrology and the belief that the positions and movements of celestial bodies, such as stars and planets, have an influence on human affairs.

Astrologers would study the alignment of these celestial bodies and interpret their significance. When the stars were said to align favorably, it was believed to bring about positive outcomes or opportunities.

In a modern context, saying "The stars have aligned" typically means that various factors or elements have come together in a fortunate or harmonious manner, leading to a desired outcome.

It suggests that a series of events or circumstances have coincided or synchronized perfectly, creating an ideal situation or enabling success. It can refer to a variety of scenarios, such as achieving personal goals, finding the perfect timing for an event, or experiencing unexpected luck or serendipity.

Several other phrases convey a similar meaning to "The stars have aligned." Here are a few examples:

- "Everything fell into place": This phrase suggests that all the necessary elements or factors have come together perfectly to achieve a desired outcome. It implies that things have unfolded in a way that is favorable and advantageous.
- "The pieces of the puzzle fit": This expression signifies that all the individual parts or components needed for a situation or plan have come together seamlessly. It implies a sense of completeness and coherence.
- "In the right place at the right time": This expression implies being present or involved in a situation when advantageous circumstances arise. It suggests that one has had the good fortune of being in the optimal position to benefit from a particular event or opportunity.

The term "synchronicity" can also be used to describe a situation where events or circumstances seem to align in a meaningful or significant way. It refers to the occurrence of meaningful coincidences that cannot be explained by conventional cause-and-effect relationships. In the context of saying "The stars have

aligned," synchronicity can be seen as a concept that encompasses the idea of events or elements coming together in a meaningful and interconnected manner. It suggests that seemingly unrelated events or circumstances have aligned in a way that holds personal or symbolic significance. Synchronicity goes beyond mere chance or luck and implies a deeper underlying connection or resonance between different events or experiences. It often involves a sense of meaningfulness, purpose, or a feeling that there is a greater pattern or intelligence at work.

### CHANNEL MARKERS

Channel markers are the signs that help sailors navigate through shallow, potentially dangerous waters. They guide travelers on rivers and waterways safely telling them where the mythical beasts of fast water or unseen, below the surface, obstructions lurk. By following these signs and indicators of dangers to be avoided, ships are able to stay on a successful course through the deep, barrier-free channel.



Our journey to living a successful, rewarding, and happy life can become frustrating when our efforts seem to fail with every step. Often, we find ourselves looking to a horoscope for direction, or seeking out the service of a clairvoyant for the reading of tarot

cards that may warn us of choices to avoid or book a session with a medium to supply us needed insight from supernatural sources.

If we consider those pursuits too ridiculous, we still may find ourselves "knocking on wood" to advert bad luck, "crossing our fingers" for that extra little help when hoping for the future, or relying on our "good luck" charms in order to win at a game. If only life could just provide us with an indication of when we are heading down the right path; choosing the proper choices for our direction of travel, as we figure out future plans.

Just like channel markers revealing the main course of a river's navigation free of obstructions, there is a system of "markers" built into the very fabric of our existence. As you unmask your true self and live a life centered on honesty, the path you should walk becomes apparent. As you start "doing the right thing... and the next right thing", you notice synchronistic events occurring and the 'sting' of karma becoming less and less.

When someone adopts synchronicity as their guide, they believe these coincidences are not mere chance but rather reflections of a larger pattern or purpose in the universe. They pay attention to the occurrences that seem to align with their intentions, desires, or questions, seeing them as meaningful and offering guidance in their life journey.

Using synchronicity as a guide involves cultivating a heightened sense of awareness and openness to these synchronistic events. It requires actively observing and reflecting upon the patterns and

connections that emerge in one's experiences. By recognizing and interpreting these synchronicities, individuals may gain insights, make decisions, or find direction in their personal, professional, or spiritual lives.

It's important to note that synchronicity should not be viewed as a replacement for rational thinking or careful decision-making. Instead, it can be seen as a complementary tool that taps into the intuitive and interconnected nature of reality. Those who use synchronicity as a guide often combine it with other approaches and practices to gain a more holistic understanding of their experiences and choices.

## Epiphany

An epiphany refers to a sudden and profound realization or insight that brings about a deep understanding or awareness of something. This was incorporated into my own family “Full Achievement” (more commonly known as Coat of Arms) with our motto, “Sentire Eventum Intellectus” which is the Latin definition of epiphany; the literal translation is “to feel the results of understanding”. It is often described as a moment of clarity, where a person gains a new perspective or understanding that they may not have had before.

An epiphany can occur in various aspects of life, such as personal experiences, relationships, intellectual pursuits, or creative endeavors. They are often characterized by a feeling of enlightenment, as if a light bulb has turned on in one's mind,

revealing a new truth or solution to a problem. It will happen spontaneously, triggered by a particular event, conversation, observation, or even through introspection and deep contemplation. They have the power to reshape one's beliefs, challenge assumptions, and lead to personal growth or transformative changes in behavior, goals, or outlook on life.

Many famous scientists, artists, and philosophers have experienced significant epiphanies that have revolutionized their fields or influenced their work. For example, the physicist Isaac



Newton famously had an epiphany when he saw an apple fall from a tree, leading to his understanding of the concept of gravity. Overall, an epiphany is a powerful and often life-changing experience that brings about a profound shift in understanding, perception, or awareness, leading to personal growth and new insights.

One of the advantages of an experience like this is gaining clarity and insight. They have the power to make complex ideas, or problems suddenly become clear and understandable. This newfound understanding allows individuals to see things from a fresh perspective and make connections that were previously elusive. Epiphanies can bring insight into personal dilemmas, relationships, or life choices.

In addition to personal growth, it can provide individuals with a sense of direction and purpose. It can reveal a path, calling, or a new focus that aligns with their values, passions, or goals. Epiphanies play a vital role in helping individuals clarify their life's purpose and motivating them to take action toward meaningful endeavors.

Epiphanies are also closely linked to problem-solving and creativity. They often ignite innovative solutions to problems or creative breakthroughs. Epiphanies bring forth novel perspectives or connections that lead to unique insights and ideas. By experiencing an epiphany, individuals can unlock their creativity and approach challenges with fresh thinking.

Furthermore, epiphanies can be highly motivating and inspiring. They have the power to ignite a sense of enthusiasm and drive to pursue new goals or make positive changes in one's life. Epiphanies often bring a surge of energy and passion, propelling individuals forward on their chosen path. The experience can also contribute to emotional well-being. It can bring about a sense of joy, fulfillment, and emotional well-being. By aligning their actions and choices with their newfound understanding, individuals can experience a greater sense of purpose and contentment. Epiphanies can also provide a sense of relief or resolution to emotional conflicts or dilemmas, promoting emotional well-being.

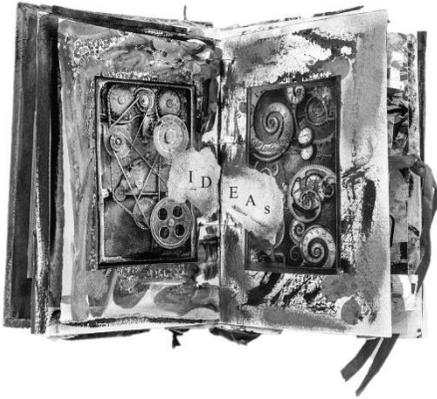
While epiphanies can be powerful and life-changing, they often occur spontaneously and unpredictably. However, fostering an

open mind, engaging in self-reflection, and exposing oneself to diverse experiences and perspectives can significantly increase the likelihood of experiencing transformative moments of insight and epiphany. Developing an open mind involves actively nurturing a mindset characterized by receptiveness, curiosity, and a willingness to consider new ideas, perspectives, and experiences. It requires embracing new information, different viewpoints, and alternative possibilities, even if they challenge or differ from one's existing beliefs or opinions.

One crucial aspect of nurturing an open mind is suspending judgment. This means temporarily setting aside preconceived notions, biases, and judgments when encountering new ideas or perspectives. It involves approaching situations with curiosity and a genuine desire to understand, rather than immediately forming conclusions. Another aspect is active listening for fostering an open mindset. It involves actively and attentively listening to others without interrupting or dismissing their ideas. By genuinely hearing and considering different viewpoints, one can broaden their understanding and potentially learn something new.

Challenging assumptions is also critical and requires actively questioning and examining one's own assumptions and biases. It involves being aware of cognitive biases and being willing to challenge and reevaluate beliefs and opinions based on new evidence or insights. This can be achieved by seeking wisdom and discernment in your understanding of life's complexities and

intricacies. It involves maintaining a genuine thirst for knowledge and a commitment to continuous learning. Nurturing an open mind means actively seeking out diverse sources of information, being receptive to new ideas, and being willing to update or revise one's understanding as new insights emerge.



By consistently nurturing an attitude of willingness to explore unique ideas, individuals can expand their worldview, enhance their critical thinking skills, foster empathy and understanding, and embrace lifelong learning.

It allows for personal growth, deeper connections with others, and a more nuanced and balanced approach to navigating the complexities of life.

By actively exposing yourself to diverse experiences and perspectives, you can develop a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the world. This intentional engagement helps cultivate empathy, open-mindedness, and the ability to navigate complex issues. It also allows you to embrace diversity and seek out different viewpoints, broadening your knowledge and challenging biases. As a result, you foster a more inclusive and interconnected mindset, opening yourself up to new possibilities.

Furthermore, when individuals experience moments of synchronicity, such occurrences can evoke a sense of awe, wonder, or curiosity. These seemingly random events may disrupt their usual understanding of cause and effect, prompting them to question the nature of reality or the interconnectedness of events. In such moments, one may find themselves contemplating the deeper meaning behind these occurrences and exploring the potential significance they hold within the fabric of existence.

In some cases, moments of synchronicity can trigger a shift in perception or understanding, leading to an epiphany. The experience of witnessing a meaningful coincidence can make individuals reevaluate their beliefs, explore new perspectives, or contemplate deeper aspects of existence. It may provide a sudden realization, insight, or a profound understanding of a particular situation or one's own life.

Moments of synchronicity can trigger a shift in perception or understanding in several ways. First, they often involve seemingly unrelated elements that align in a way that holds personal meaning for an individual. This connection can challenge their existing worldview and expand their understanding of how events and experiences may be interconnected. It prompts individuals to question the boundaries of causality and opens the possibility of a deeper underlying order or meaning in the universe.

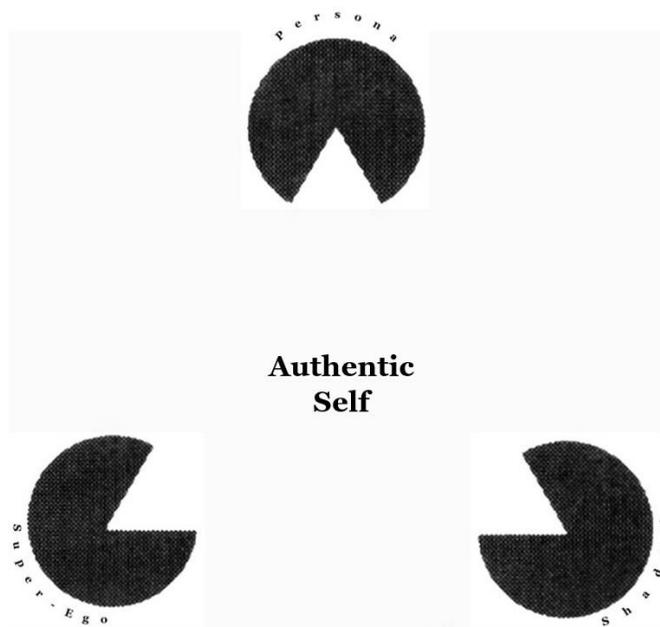
Second, synchronistic experiences can disrupt linear, cause-and-effect thinking by presenting coincidences that defy conventional explanations. This disruption can shake individuals out of their habitual thought patterns and invite them to explore alternative ways of perceiving and interpreting the world. It encourages a more open, intuitive, and holistic approach to understanding reality.

Third, moments of synchronicity often leave individuals with a sense of awe, mystery, or curiosity. They invite individuals to reflect on the significance of the event and its potential implications. This reflection may involve contemplating one's beliefs, values, or life direction, leading to a reevaluation of one's perspectives and priorities.

Fourth, synchronicity blurs the boundaries between the inner subjective experiences of individuals and the outer objective reality. It suggests that there may be a deeper connection between an individual's thoughts, emotions, and external events. This bridging of the inner and outer worlds can prompt individuals to explore their consciousness, intuition, and the role of intention in shaping their experiences.

Finally, synchronicity can evoke a sense of the transcendent, suggesting that there may be more to reality than can be explained by purely rational or scientific means. It opens individuals to the possibility of larger cosmic or spiritual forces at play. This expanded perspective can lead to shifts in perception and a broader understanding of the nature of existence.

Moments of synchronicity have the potential to trigger a shift in perception or understanding through various mechanisms. They challenge conventional understanding, disrupt linear thinking, invite reflection, bridge the inner and outer worlds, and open individuals to the possibility of larger cosmic or spiritual forces. The interpretation and impact of synchronicity are highly subjective, varying from person to person based on their beliefs, experiences, and cultural contexts.



The importance of recognizing and experiencing an epiphany becomes apparent following the work you have performed with Integrated Self-Realization, and bringing your inner struggles into balance. After addressing issues of the shadow self, and engaging in the process work of the personas and the sub-personalities associated with the super-ego, it is time to see the emergence of your 'Authentic Self'.

While the integration of the shadow self was the main focus in the beginning, now, achieving overall balance and cooperation within all aspects of your personality reveals your true self.

## Purpose

Discovering purpose in life is closely intertwined with finding meaning. When individuals embark on a journey to find meaning, they naturally uncover their sense of purpose. Meaning can be found in three main ways:

1. through creating a work or doing a deed,
2. by experiencing something or encountering someone, and
3. by adopting an attitude toward unavoidable suffering.

This emphasizes that meaning is subjective and unique to each individual. Here's how the process of finding life's purpose can unfold:

**Exploration of Values** - By delving into your values, beliefs, and aspirations, you can gain a deeper understanding of what truly matters. This exploration helps align your actions and choices with core values, ultimately leading to a sense of purpose.

**Personal Responsibility** - Recognizing your agency and freedom to choose, you gain an understanding of possessing the power to shape your life and find purpose. Taking responsibility for attitudes, decisions, and actions allows you to actively pursue

your purpose and make a positive impact in your life and the lives of others.

**Engagement in Meaningful Activities** - Engaging in activities that resonate with your values and contribute to a greater cause is essential in finding purpose. Whether it's pursuing fulfilling work, engaging in meaningful hobbies, or nurturing meaningful relationships, these actions align with your sense of purpose and provide a sense of fulfillment.

**Attitude Toward Challenges** - Adversity and suffering are inevitable aspects of life. However, individuals can find purpose even amidst difficult circumstances by adopting an attitude that transcends their suffering. By finding meaning in the midst of challenges, individuals can derive purpose from their ability to overcome and grow through hardships.

Through these processes of exploring values, taking personal responsibility, engaging in meaningful activities, and cultivating a positive attitude towards challenges, individuals can uncover and nurture their sense of purpose.

It's important to remember that purpose is subjective and unique to each individual. There is no predetermined or prescribed purpose. Instead, individuals have the opportunity to discover and define their own sense of purpose based on their values, aspirations, and life experiences.

## CARROTS, EGGS, AND COFFEE BEANS

The story of "Carrots, Eggs, and Coffee Beans" is a popular anecdote that has been used to illustrate the concept of resilience and the ability to respond positively to challenging situations. I've adapted the characters and situations to align with the realities of incarceration.

A young woman named Dawn found herself in prison for the first time. She was scared and unsure of how to survive in such a violent and dangerous environment. One day when she was on kitchen duty, an older inmate noticed her fear and offered some advice.

The older inmate pointed out three objects lying on the counter: carrots, eggs, and some coffee beans. She placed one of each on a table in front of Dawn and said, "Girl, these three things can teach you a valuable lesson about how to survive in here."

She asked the young inmate to think about what happens when each of these objects is placed in boiling water. Dawn answered, "The carrot becomes soft, the egg will turn hard inside, and coffee beans make coffee." "That's right", said the old inmate, "The carrot turns soft and weak; no longer hard and strong. The egg that is hard on the outside but soft on the inside, becomes hard all the way through. And finally, the coffee bean is the only one that doesn't change; instead, it changes the water into a fragrant and delicious drink that fills you full of energy."

The older inmate explained the meaning behind each object. “The carrot, you see, represents those in here who are weak and fragile, yet they didn’t start out that way. They were hard and strong when first arriving on the cell block, but the others in this place bullied and beat them until the “heat” from their new life made them soft and weak. The eggs are those who were strong on the outside but still cared about other people. Slowly, over time, the intensity of anger and violence that goes on changed them, becoming hard and pungent on the inside. The coffee beans are those inmates who are resilient to the harsh conditions of mass confinement. Instead of the cruelty and brutality making them soft and weak or hard and pungent, they (like the coffee bean) changed the world they found themselves in; transforming these challenging situations into something positive.”

She continued explaining to Dawn, "In here, you'll be tested in ways you can't even imagine. You can't control what happens, but you can control how you will react. You can be like the carrot or the egg, and let prison change your heart into something weak or hard. Another choice you have is to be like the coffee bean, and use the challenges you face to transform yourself and your surroundings."

The older inmate encouraged Dawn to stay strong and not let others break her soul; reminding her that one day she will be back in the ‘real world’ and what she chooses to become ‘in here’, will follow her ‘out there’. “While you can't control what others do, you can control how to respond. By keeping your head up, staying

true to yourself, and being resilient, you can come out of prison a stronger person.”

Dawn took the lesson to heart and tried her best to be like the coffee bean. She didn't let the violence and brutality of prison life change her into someone weak or hard. Instead, she tried to stay positive and focused on making the best of a difficult situation. Over time, Dawn built up a network of supportive friends and allies. She found that others who wanted to become resilient sought her out, and together they created their own positive community.

While Dawn couldn't change the violent environment of prison, she could change her response. By staying true to herself and focusing on the positive, she transformed her time in prison into a period of personal growth and self-discovery.



## FOR A PRISONER

Caged in a cold, functional cell,  
Far from the comfort of home  
With none of your own things,  
In a place that is gray and grim,  
Where sounds are seldom gentle,  
Amidst the shuffle of dumber feet,  
The crossword of lost voices,  
The one constant note  
Is the dead, trap-shut sound  
Of unrelenting doors that  
Make walls absolute.

Though you have lost the outside world,  
May you discover the untold journey  
That await you in the inner world.

May you come to recognize  
That though your body is imprisoned,  
No one can imprison your mind.  
May all the time you have on your hands  
Bring you into new friendship with your mind  
So that you learn to understand and integrate  
The darkness that brought you here.

Within this limited space,  
May you learn to harness  
The stretch of time.

May your compassion awaken.  
May you learn to recover the self  
You were before you lost your way  
And draw from its depths  
Some balm to heal your wounds.

Behind the harsh rhythms of prison life,  
May you find a friend you can talk to  
And nurture the natural kindness  
To become more free in your heart  
And lighten the outer constraints.

May your eyes look up and find  
The bright line of an inner horizon  
That will ground and encourage you  
For that distant day when your new feet  
Will step out onto the pastures of freedom.

~ John O'Donohue





# Appendix

## List, Assessments, and Techniques

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- ESSENTIALS FOR RECOVERY
- PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT INVENTORY
- HOLD FAST (Grounding Techniques)
- SHADOW WORK
  - Model
  - Process
  - Strategies
  - Journal
  - 50-Prompt Questions
- DREAMWORK
- ACTIVE IMAGINATION
- INTEGRATION
  - Naming Sub-personalities
  - Dialogue with Parts
- MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS
- MOUNT RECOVERY MODEL
- EPIPHANY: AUTHENTIC SELF MODEL
- TEN COMMANDMENTS OF RECOVERY
- CRISIS HOTLINES – Contact Information

# Essentials for Recovery

## CHANGE YOUR WORLD

- Know your TRIGGERS:
  - As you identify them – AVOID AT ALL COST!
- End ALL RELATIONSHIPS that promote your addiction:
  - Change phone number and social media accounts.
  - Be very guarded about who you let have this new information.
- ENVIRONMENTS must be safe from addiction triggers:
  - Drug/Gambling Free Cars.
  - Drug/Gambling Free Homes.
  - Even if it's family - DO NOT LET THEM IN IF DRUGS OR DRINKING!
- Have 3-Emergency Contacts for Relapse Prevention:
  - Stable Recovery-People willing to let you contact them Night or Day.
  - Have numbers and addresses.
  - If one is not available, reach out to the next on the list.

## FIND RELIABLE TRANSPORTATION

- Public transit, private car, bicycle, or walk:
  - Only look for housing where one of these means of transportation is available.

- Make sure your transportation will get you from home and to work on time.

## GET A STEADY JOB

- One that takes income taxes out and pays in checks or direct deposit:
  - No “cash only” or “work on demand”.
- Have a “Generic” application filled out that you carry with you:
  - This will be your resource information when applying for jobs.
  - You can get one from the unemployment office or just ask for one from any business.
  - Use the information to fill out applications around town.

## GET A HANDLE ON YOUR FINANCES

- Follow a simple basic budget:
  - Always take out ‘Housing Costs’ first.
  - Then transportation costs.
  - Followed by your need for groceries.
  - Ask for help if you are having difficulty making a budget.

## GET A PLACE TO LIVE

- Secure affordable housing away from old people-places-things:
  - No ‘couch surfing’.

- No living out of your car, a tent, or someone's camper.
- Preferably find a 'Sober Living' home for your first year of recovery.

### SET A SCHEDULE

- Schedule every minute of your day and night:
  - Follow your schedule religiously.
  - Plan activities for any 'relaxation' or 'fun' times.
  - No just scheduling "free time"; always have a plan.
  - Keep your schedule busy; no time for boredom.

### PLAN A YEARLY CALANDER

- Have addiction-free Holidays – plan activities for these times.
- Anticipate how to handle upcoming birthday parties or other celebrations.
- Prepare to grieve during anniversary days, comfort yourself without substances.

# Personality Development Inventory

Here are five yes/no questions for each of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development. If you answer 3 or more “No” in a given stage, then you may be struggling with this issue.

Trust vs. Mistrust:

- Do you feel like you can trust others to meet your needs? (Yes/No)
- Have you kept away from any major disruptions to your sense of safety or security? (Yes/No)
- Are you comfortable asking for help when you need it? (Yes/No)
- Do you trust others easily without suspicion? (Yes/No)
- Have you had positive experiences with others that have strengthened your trust in them? (Yes/No)

Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt:

- Do you feel comfortable making decisions for yourself? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to express your needs and desires? (Yes/No)
- Do you handle criticism or negative feedback very well? (Yes/No)
- Do you accept responsibility for your actions and refrain from blaming others? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to learn from your mistakes and move forward? (Yes/No)

### Initiative vs. Guilt:

- Are you comfortable trying new things and taking risks? (Yes/No)
- Do you feel like you have a sense of purpose or direction in life? (Yes/No)
- Do you handle failure or setbacks very well? (Yes/No)
- Do you take responsibility for your actions, and avoid blaming others? (Yes/No)
- Do you try again even when you repeatedly fail? (Yes/No)

### Industry vs. Inferiority:

- Do you feel a sense of pride or accomplishment when you complete a task? (Yes/No)
- Do you handle competition or comparison with others in a positive manner? (Yes/No)
- Have you avoided having any major setbacks or failures in your pursuits? (Yes/No)
- Do you feel confident in your abilities? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to take on challenges and persevere through difficult times? (Yes/No)

### Identity vs. Role Confusion:

- Do you have a clear understanding of your values and beliefs? (Yes/No)
- Do you avoid comparing yourself with others? (Yes/No)
- Have you remained confident about who you are even when faced with major changes in your life? (Yes/No)

- Are you comfortable expressing your true self to others?  
(Yes/No)
- Are you secure in who you are and what you stand for?  
(Yes/No)

#### Intimacy vs. Isolation:

- Are you comfortable being vulnerable and open with others? (Yes/No)
- Do you have stress-free romantic relationships? (Yes/No)
- Have you avoided any major losses or separations in your relationships? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to maintain close relationships with others?  
(Yes/No)
- Are you able to balance your own needs and desires with those of your partner or loved ones? (Yes/No)

#### Generativity vs. Stagnation:

- Do you have goals and aspirations for the future? (Yes/No)
- Do you contribute to your community or society at large?  
(Yes/No)
- Do you feel a sense of purpose or fulfillment in your work or personal life? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to balance your own needs and desires with those of your family, career, or other obligations?  
(Yes/No)
- Are you able to adapt to change and new challenges?  
(Yes/No)

## Integrity vs. Despair:

- Do you feel satisfied with the life you've lived so far? (Yes/No)
- Are you free from any unresolved issues or regrets from your past that continue to bother you? (Yes/No)
- Do you feel like you've made a meaningful contribution to the world? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to find meaning or purpose in your life, despite any challenges or setbacks? (Yes/No)
- Are you able to accept the inevitability of death and dying? (Yes/No)

## Psycho-Social Development – scoring feedback

[Circle Issues of Struggle from Scoring]



## POSSIBLE CAUSES

If areas of concern were found, you can explore further the possible source of the problem when developing through those psycho-social stages. There are a variety of environmental or life events that can contribute to a failure in achieving any particular phase. Here are some situations covering each stage that often strongly impact the outcome of personality development, and that will help your self-examination into the past.

### Trust vs. Mistrust:

- Neglect or abuse by primary caregivers.
- Inconsistency in caregiving, such as frequent changes in caregivers or unpredictable responses to the child's needs.
- Traumatic experiences, such as hospitalization or a natural disaster.

### Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt:

- Overly restrictive or controlling parenting.
- Overly critical or punitive responses to the child's attempts to assert independence.
- Traumatic experiences, such as a serious accident or illness.

### Initiative vs. Guilt:

- Overly harsh punishment or criticism for mistakes or accidents.
- Lack of opportunities for exploration and play.
- Traumatic experiences, such as abuse or witnessing violence.

### Industry vs. Inferiority:

- Negative feedback or criticism from teachers or peers.
- Lack of opportunities for success or mastery in academic or extracurricular activities.
- Traumatic experiences, such as bullying or social rejection.

### Identity vs. Role Confusion:

- Pressure to conform to rigid gender, cultural, or societal expectations.
- Lack of support or opportunities for exploring different identities and roles.
- Traumatic experiences, such as sexual assault or bullying based on identity.

### Intimacy vs. Isolation:

- Traumatic experiences, such as rejection or abuse in past relationships.
- Difficulty establishing close relationships due to social or emotional barriers.
- Lack of opportunities for socializing and meeting new people.

### Generativity vs. Stagnation:

- Lack of opportunities for career or personal growth.
- Negative life events, such as job loss or divorce.
- Feelings of social isolation or lack of purpose.

## Integrity vs. Despair:

- Lack of opportunities for reflection or resolution of past conflicts.
- Chronic physical or mental illness that affects the quality of life.
- Fear or anxiety about death or dying, often related to a lack of acceptance, or meaning in life.

# Hold Fast

Brief Overview – 3 methods to grasp

## 1. Grounding Techniques [Thought – Deep Breathing – Body Scan]

- **5-4-3-2-1 Technique:** This simple exercise can help distract from negative thoughts by focusing on the immediate environment. Identify 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.
- **Deep Breathing:** Practice deep breathing exercises. Count slowly to four as you breathe in (through your nose), hold for four, and then exhale (blowing out the mouth) for four.
- **Body Scan Meditation Routine:** Sit comfortably. Take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. As you exhale, close your eyes. Notice how your body feels. Starting from the top of your head, gently scan down through your body. Observe any areas of comfort or discomfort without trying to change anything. Continue scanning evenly through each part of your body, all the way down to your toes.

## 2. Challenge Negative Thoughts

[Stop Thought – Switch Thought]

- **Interrupt Negative Thoughts:** When you catch yourself engaging in negative self-talk, use a thought-stopping technique. This could be saying "stop" out loud or visualizing a stop sign.

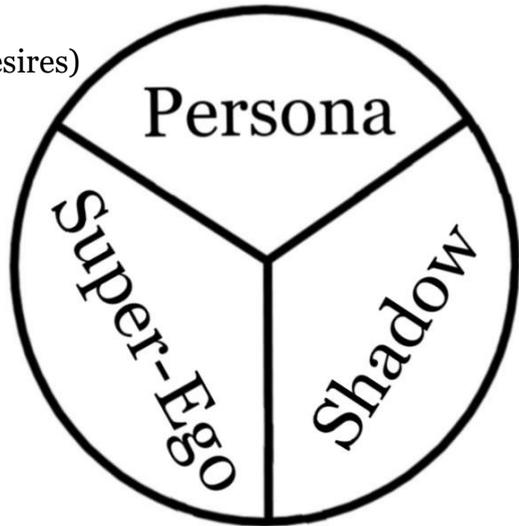
- Redirect Attention: Shift your focus to a more positive or neutral activity, like visual-mental imagery, listening to uplifting music, or engaging in a hobby.

### 3. Cognitive Restructuring [with Mirror Affirmations]

- Identify Negative Thoughts: Recognize the negative or distorted thoughts about yourself. These could be related to self-worth, abilities, appearance, or any other aspect of self-perception.
- Create Positive Affirmations: Develop positive, affirming statements that counteract these negative thoughts. For example, if you often think, "I am not good enough," you might create an affirmation like, "I am capable and worthy of success."
- Use the Mirror: Stand in front of a mirror, make eye contact with yourself, and say the positive affirmations out loud. The act of looking at yourself while affirming positive beliefs can reinforce the message and make it more impactful.
- Consistency: Repeat this practice daily, ideally multiple times a day. Consistency helps reinforce the new, positive thoughts and beliefs.
- Reflect and Adjust: Reflect on how the affirmations make you feel over time. Adjust them as needed to ensure they remain relevant and powerful for you.

# Shadow Work – Parts Model of Self

- Persona - social personalities
- SuperEgo - critical inner voice
- Shadow - painful past  
(and primal desires)

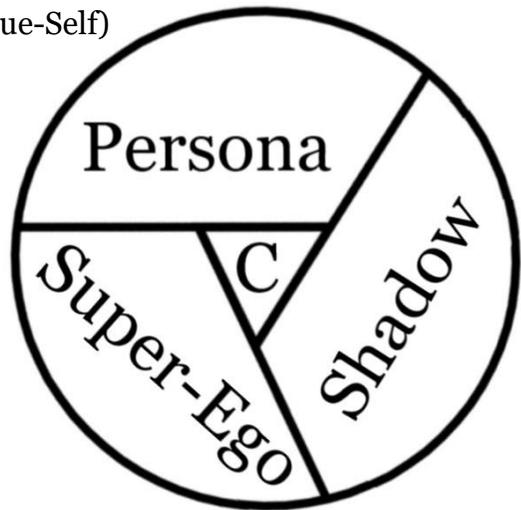


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**C** = \***Consciousness** (True-Self)

**HOPE** of \*Consciousness:

Honest  
Open  
Peaceful  
Empathy



*\***Consciousness** [Psyche or Soul] is an entity, not a personality or mask you wear. It's your Conscious-Spirit that survives death.*

## SHADOW WORK PROCESS

- Review your childhood
- Become aware of your shadow
- Don't shame the shadow
- Use your triggers
- Observe without judgment

## SHADOW WORK STRATEGIES

- Pay attention to your reactions
- Look for recurring patterns
- Explore your dreams
- Reflect on your childhood experiences
- Practice mindfulness

## SHADOW WORK JOURNAL FORMAT

1. Situation:
  - *A troubling thought or feeling you are currently experiencing.*
  - *Use a prompt supplied at the end of this section that causes strong emotions.*
2. Examine Emotions:
  - *What am I feeling?*
  - *Why am I feeling this way?*
  - *Where did this feeling come from?*
  - *Have I felt this way before?*
3. Realization:
  - *You see a similar situation in your past.*
  - *You 'connect the dots' to why you are reacting so strongly to this event.*
4. Change:
  - *How can I take this understanding and improve myself?*
  - *What can I try to do next time this happens?*

## 50-PROMPT QUESTIONS

1. What memories from my childhood and teenage years still affect me today?
2. What were some of the significant events in my childhood?
3. What were some of the things that I was not allowed to do or express when I was young?
4. What was the emotional climate of my household growing up?
5. How was conflict or stress handled at home growing up, and how did that affect me?
6. What parts of my personality or behaviors do I blame on my childhood or when I was a teenager?
7. What were some of the significant losses or traumas that I experienced when I was younger?
8. How did I cope with problems I faced in school or at home?
9. What impact did my childhood or teenage experiences have on my relationships?
10. What were some of the significant relationships I had growing up, and how did they affect me?
11. What did I feel I needed as a child or teenager that I did not receive?
12. What was my own sense of self or identity I had as a teenager?
13. What were some of the significant conflicts or struggles I faced when I was young?

14. What negative self-talk or beliefs do I still carry from my childhood and teenage years?
15. How did I learn to deal with difficult emotions as a child or teenager, and how has that affected me as an adult?
16. How did I learn to express or suppress my emotions?
17. How have my childhood and teenage experiences affected my self-worth and self-esteem?
18. What were some of the significant transitions or changes that I experienced, and how did they affect me?
19. How did my childhood and teenage experiences impact my relationship with authority figures?
20. What are some of the things that I wish I could tell my younger self?
21. What emotions do I still need to process from when I was younger?
22. How did my teenage experiences affect my sense of belonging and identity?
23. What are some of the things that I feel I missed out on or wish I had experienced?
24. When was the first time I felt like I didn't belong?
25. What were the unspoken rules in my family growing up?
26. What was my relationship with my parents like? How did that affect me?
27. What was my experience with love and relationships growing up? How has that affected my relationships now?
28. Did I ever feel like I had to hide or suppress parts of myself growing up? What were those parts?

29. How did I cope with difficult emotions as a child and teenager? Are those coping mechanisms still present in my life today?
30. What were some major milestones or turning points in my teenage years? How did those experiences shape me?
31. How did my experiences with bullying or peer pressure affect me growing up? Are there still lasting effects?
32. What were my dreams and desires growing up? How have they changed over time?
33. How have my experiences with childhood trauma and neglect affected my relationship with myself and others?
34. What are some of my earliest memories, and how do they make me feel?
35. What are some specific events or experiences from my childhood that still affect me today?
36. What was my relationship with my parents like growing up? How did that affect my sense of self?
37. How did my childhood experiences shape my current beliefs and values?
38. What was my experience with love and relationships growing up? How has that affected my relationships now?
39. Did I ever feel like I had to hide or suppress parts of myself growing up? What were those parts?
40. What emotions come up for me when I think about my childhood? How do I usually deal with these emotions?
41. What is one experience from my childhood that I have been avoiding thinking about? Why do I think that is?

42. How have my childhood experiences impacted the way I see myself and the world around me?
43. What parts of myself do I try to hide from others? Why do I feel the need to hide them?
44. How did my relationship with my siblings, if any, affect me growing up? Are there any unresolved issues or emotions related to those relationships?
45. How did my experiences with school shape my sense of who I am?
46. How did my childhood experiences with religion or spirituality shape my beliefs and values?
47. What was my experience with body image growing up?
48. What are some of the emotions that I tend to avoid feeling? How can I begin to work on feeling and processing those emotions?
49. How do I deal with failure or rejection? Are there any childhood experiences that have affected the way I handle those situations?
50. How did my childhood experiences shape my views on money and financial stability?

# Dreamwork

Dreams provide a platform for the shadow to express itself and attempt to disclose what we have been burying deep inside our psyche. During sleep, the unconscious mind manifests these shadow elements in symbolic or metaphorical ways through dreams. Pay attention to the imagery, emotions, and events present in the dream, and decipher the messages for use during the Active Imagination process.

●	DATE and TITLE:
	DREAM:
●	PEOPLE:
	PLACES:
	THINGS:
	EMOTIONS:
	TOPICS:
	EVENTS:
	PERSONAL ASSOCIATIONS:
	FOOTNOTES:
●	

# Active Imagination

## PREPARATION

- Find a location where you can be uninterrupted with your thoughts.

## INVOCATION

- Within your mind call up the imagery, emotions, and events that were present in your dreams.
- Wait and watch this image in your mind; when something moves without your intentional thought then this is your subconscious engaging in dialogue.

## DIALOGUE and EXPLORATION

- In your mind talk with the images or figures that are present.
- This involves observing, questioning, and actively engaging with the unconscious material.

## AMPLIFICATION and REFLECTION

- Consider the material you examined and find the potential meaning of the images or figures that emerged.

## INTEGRATION and APPLICATION

- Explore how insights gained can be applied to your personal growth, relationships, or problem-solving.

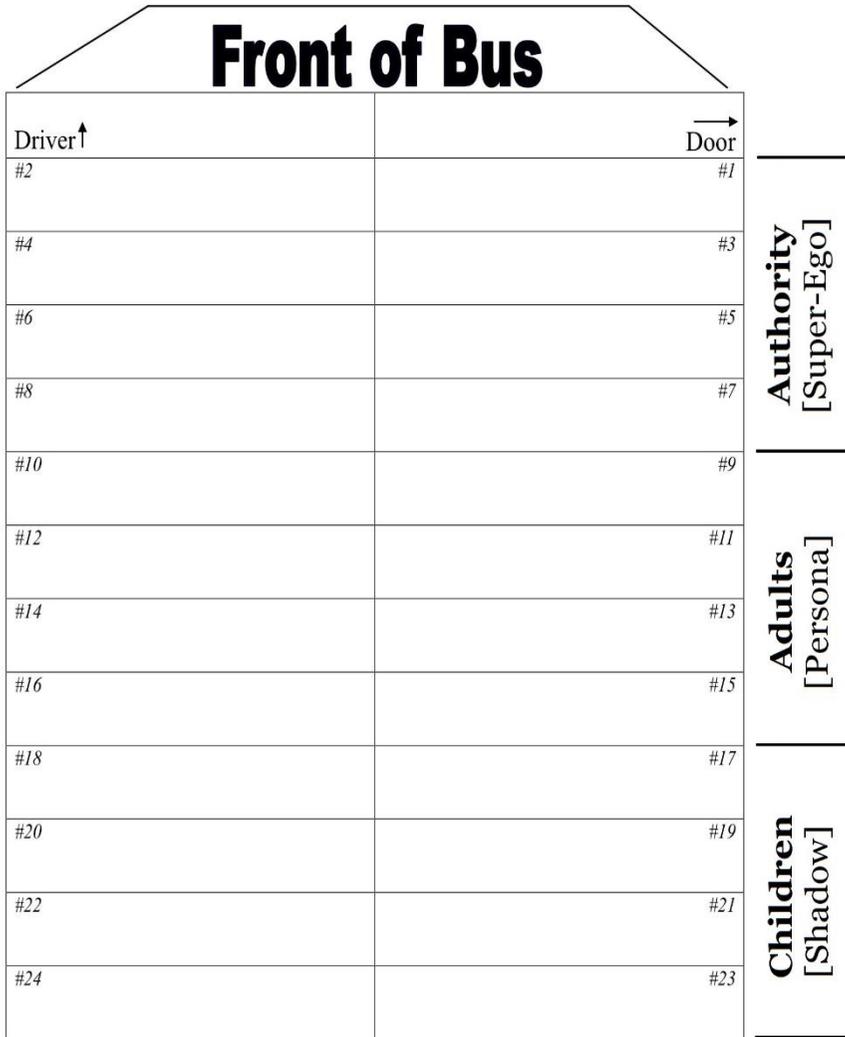
# Integration

## NAMING SUB-PERSONALITIES

In your journal make a bus seating chart to help visualize and integrate the different players for your inner dialogue:

- Draw a bus seating chart with enough rows to accommodate the number of sub-personalities you would like to explore. Leave space for labeling each seat.
- Divide the seating chart into three sections: Front (Super-Ego/Authority figures), Middle (Adult Personas), and Back (Shadow/Traumatized Children).
- Start with the front section (Super-Ego/Authority figures). Think about the critical voices or authority figures that have influenced you in the past. These can be parents, teachers, or anyone whose words and actions shaped your beliefs and behaviors. Write down their names or role titles (e.g., strict parent, demanding teacher) on the seats.
- Move to the middle section (Adult Personas). Consider the various roles you play in your daily life, such as father/mother, husband/wife, manager, worker, neighbor, son/daughter, or friend. Write down the names or role titles.
- Finally, focus on the back section (Shadow/Traumatized Children). Reflect on the moments or experiences in your past that have caused emotional pain, fear, or distress. These can be instances of humiliation, harsh punishment, or family crises. Write their assigned names and titles based on each moment or experience that caused the trauma.

SEATING CHART FORMAT:



Take a moment to observe the seating chart as a representation of your inner world. Notice the distribution of names and roles across the bus, symbolizing the different sub-personalities within you. By using the bus seating chart as a visualization tool, you can gain a clearer understanding of the dynamics within yourself of the different players during your inner dialogue process.

# Dialogue with Parts

*[A structured self-talk process]*

## BASIC GUIDELINES:

- Every sub-personality has a good intention.
    - Even those from your trauma and neglect.
  - Learn about the sub-personality's positive protective intentions (i.e., avoiding bad situations from happening to you again).
  - Whichever critical Super-Ego sub-personality is in control (driving your bus), ask permission to access the Shadow parts so that the critical voice doesn't interfere.
- 

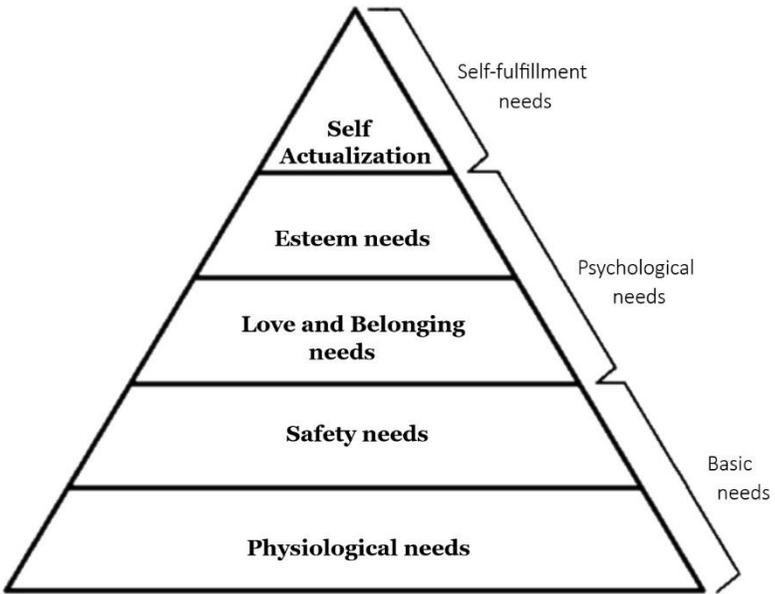
## DIALOGUE STEPS:

1. Identify the sub-personalities that are present.
  - Which is causing problems?
2. Follow your internal power structure.
  - Work with sub-personality 'in charge' first.
    - Always get their permission before working with any Persona or Shadow sub-personality.
    - After permission is granted, you may have to ask Super-Ego part to "step back".
  - Next work with the sub-personality causing the problem.
    - Get to know them.

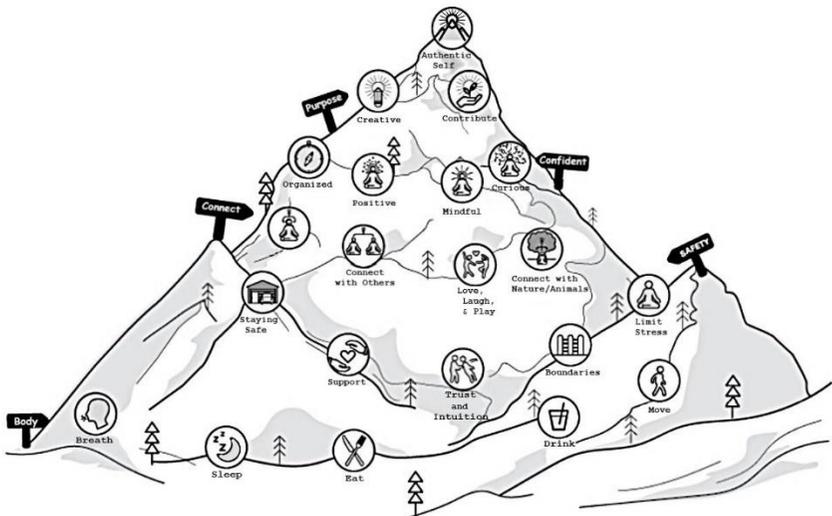
- Defuse the strong thoughts and feelings coming from this sub-personality.
3. Ask questions with true curiosity and compassion.
- Like you're talking to a lost and scared 7-year-old child.
    - "What's wrong?"
    - "Tell me more about it?"
4. Befriend the sub-personality.
- Develop a friendship through curiosity and compassion.
    - "How did you get this job?" (responsibility burden to remain aware of past trauma)
    - "How has it been going?"
    - "If you didn't have to do this job, what would you do instead?"
    - "How old are you?" or "What year do you think this is?" (this helps uncover the trauma event)
    - "What should I call you?" (asking for a name to go by)
5. What does this sub-personality fear?
- "What could I do to help you?"
  - "What do you think will happen if you just quit being responsible for this burden?"

*[You're not doing this process to look for answers or fix a specific problem; healing by integration will take place through your understanding of the source of your pain.]*

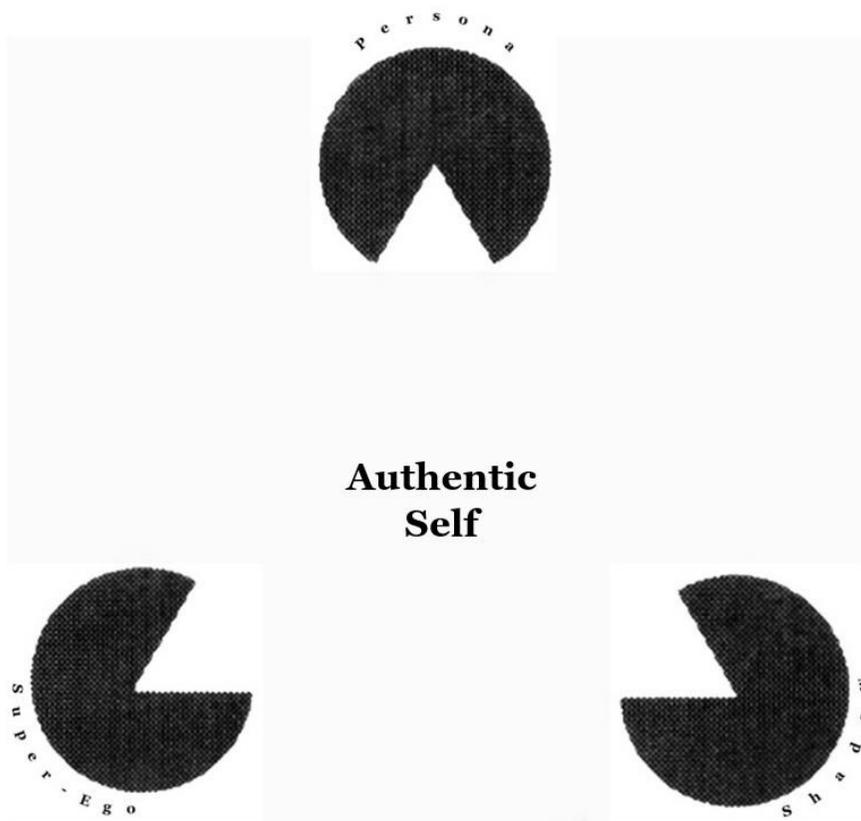
# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



# Mount Recovery



# Epiphany of Authentic Self



The importance of recognizing and experiencing an epiphany becomes apparent following the work you have performed with Integrated Self-Realization, and bringing your inner struggles into balance. After addressing issues of the shadow self, and engaging in the process work of the personas and the sub-personalities associated with the super-ego, it is time to see the emergence of your 'Authentic Self'.



## TEN COMMANDMENTS OF RECOVERY

- 1.** End all addiction-related relationships (new phone number - DO NOT SHARE)
- 2.** All environments free of any addiction triggers
- 3.** Find reliable transportation
- 4.** Get a Job (paycheck or direct deposit ONLY)
- 5.** Budget all Money (on paper and live by)
- 6.** Secure affordable housing (Sober Living preferred)
- 7.** Set a schedule for every minute of every day (sleep included - no free time)
- 8.** Plan a yearly calendar (anticipate events so as addiction-free)
- 9.** NO SOCIAL MEDIA during 1st year (maybe longer)
- 10.** No romantic relationships during 1st year (maybe longer)

[ANTICIPATE! No more excuses – No more, “it just happened”]



# Crisis Hotlines

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## **Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline**

(800) 422-4453

## **Crisis Text Line**

Text HOME to 741741

## **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

(800) 799-7233

## **National Sexual Assault Hotline**

(800) 656-4673

## **National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**

988

## **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** (Options for Deaf and Hard of Hearing)

For TTY Users: Use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988

## **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services**

Administration National Helpline

(800) 662-4357

## **Veterans Crisis Line**

988, then PRESS 1

Text 838255



## About the Author

David N. Russell is an Internationally Certified Co-Occurring Disorders Professional - Diplomate who specializes in addiction recovery and mental health counseling. His post-graduate education was originally in Neuropsychology, after having worked 23 years in Occupational Therapy, focusing on the treatment of traumatic brain injuries. Later, changed his career to Forensic Psychology, where he worked as a Drug Court Advisor to the 14th Judicial District in Arkansas and eventually became a Substance Abuse Program Leader for the Arkansas Department of Corrections, Area-2. He was also certified by the Arkansas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training as a Specialized Law Enforcement Instructor. With over 15 years of experience in this field, he has helped a multitude of individuals overcome their challenges and transform their lives from more than addiction alone.

David holds a master's degree in counseling psychology from Liberty University, a second master's degree in occupational therapy from Belmont University, and a Psy.D. from The Forest Institute of Professional Psychology. Following his reluctant retirement from the State of Arkansas due to partial paralysis from spinal stenosis, he received two successful spinal surgeries and a total hip replacement regaining limited ability to walk. He remains current with his credentials as a certified substance abuse counselor for co-occurring disorders.

His therapeutic approach is grounded in Jungian Psychoanalysis and heavily influenced by Internal Family Systems Therapy. It's from these two schools of thought this book is written, as an extra tool for others who struggle with Personality Disorders/Traits feeling forever trapped by addiction and the legal system. Unfortunately, it seems more cost-effective to build new prisons for controlling criminal behavior than to spend the money on intensive mental health treatment, which may or may not be able to prevent recidivism. As a result, he is dedicated to raising awareness about addiction within the criminal justice system and promoting holistic approaches to healing during recovery. You can learn more about David and his work by visiting his website at [www.innerpursuitofhappiness.com](http://www.innerpursuitofhappiness.com)

