Healing Journey level 6:

**Healing by expanding the sense of self.**

**Introduction**

A thoughtful person who tries to make sense of an experience of serious disease (or any other disaster, for that matter) is likely to ask some fundamental questions: “Is there any meaning to this?” “Why do bad things happen anyway?” Which may lead to: “Why are we here?” “What is the nature of ‘reality’ and how do I fit in?” Various answers to such questions have been given over the millennia – by philosophers, religious leaders, and more recently by science, but as a society we still operate on a view that was prevalent at the time of Isaac Newton: the world is seen as a kind of giant machine, in which things only happen as a result of physical interactions, and are not directly influenced by our thoughts. A different understanding is possible, however, one that is based on the ideas and experiences of great sages and mystics over millennia, (the new paradigm, shown below), supported in many respects by scientific evidence acquired during the last century. This new/old view has great practical implications for people interested in self-directed healing. I summarise the main points below, and then expand on them.

**Principles of the new paradigm: the nature of reality, and how this affects healing.**

1. Mind works through the brain, but exists independently of it.

2. Consciousness precedes mind: it forms (“creates”) physical reality. We are not simply passive spectators of the world, but help to construct it.

3. Consciousness is arranged in an orderly hierarchy, in levels or “shells” of increasing complexity. The highest level may be viewed as a vast “Intelligence”, “God”, “Source”, or overarching consciousness. Our minds are part of all of this - there are no real boundaries.

4. This Intelligence, or Whole Mind, or Source, is entirely benevolent.

5. We are usually unaware of our true nature as consciousness or “mind-stuff”, embedded in a hierarchy of consciousness. This is because our very limited and fixed beliefs or concepts of reality, and of ourselves, obscure our connection with the Whole, consigning us to a kind of tiny, mental “prison”.

6. We can greatly expand our awareness of the higher levels of our consciousness, seeking help and guidance from them, and thus gain much more control over our experience, including the state of our bodies.

7. Healing is ultimately this expansion of awareness, leading to experience of connectedness with all.
Some further explanations of these principles: there are varying amounts of evidence for them, either from the experience of many people or, in some cases, from scientific experiments. Perhaps the best way to view them is as a guide to our own exploration – we will find that we can validate much of the new paradigm for ourselves, although this takes time, of course.

1. (First point in the new paradigm, above): The idea that consciousness precedes matter, that we are at root “mind-stuff” rather than material stuff, is, of course, central to many religions. This essential core of ourselves has been given various names – spirit, soul, essence and so on - and it implies survival of at least aspects of ourselves after death of the body. It is opposed by our society’s insistence on materialism – the view that only matter is real. Some of the best evidence for the fact that our minds, while normally acting through the brain, can also act independently of it, comes from studies on “out of body” (OBE) or near death experiences, such as cases where people have been clinically brain-dead for some days, then unexpectedly recover and relate stories of passing into light, interacting with other beings, feeling overwhelming love and security, and other phenomena, which tend to be similar in many of these instances (see, for example, the recent book, “Proof of Heaven”, by a neuroscientist, Dr. E. Alexander, who describes his out-of-body experiences during several days in a coma). There are studies published by scientists who have collected literally thousands of these accounts, and carefully examined them for validity, e.g. to verify that the individuals did indeed show no brain activity during their OBEs.

A related kind of evidence, for those open-minded enough to consider it, is the vast body of “channelled” material from a wide range of sources. Channelling involves a living human, either wide awake or in trance, receiving and writing or dictating ideas purporting to come from a non-living agent, that is, from a “mind” unencumbered by body! The Koran, parts of the Bible, A Course in Miracles, and many other seminal works, have been transmitted in this way.

2. The second major new principle is perhaps less familiar: that consciousness actually forms or creates physical reality. This is a radical shift from our normal view of the world as a kind of “stage”, independent of ourselves, on to which we are deposited at birth, so to speak. We are used to thinking of ourselves as largely passive spectators of the world, and that at best we can make small changes through our actions. This principle tells us that, to at least some degree, we form it, by thought and intention.

Understanding and eventually accepting this view requires reviewing and revising all our ideas about reality; this shift takes long-term study. However, we can cite some lines of evidence that point to the conclusion. First, it is well established, even if not widely accepted, that the mind can influence matter at a distance without energy flow intervening. For example, when a computer is programmed to print out plusses and minuses in a random order, a person simply sitting and trying to influence the fall of these numbers can sometimes do so – i.e. can induce, by mental intention alone, more plusses than expected by chance. The effect is small, but statistically significant, and shown in literally thousands of experiments over many years by several scientific groups. It works equally well when a mechanical sorting device is substituted for the computer. The effect can even be shown if the experimenter, focussing on influencing the machine, does so after it has done its run, provided nobody has looked at the printed record in the mean-time!

Another example of mind acting at a distance is the “remote viewing” protocol, also well-established by a number of scientific groups, in which one individual is sent to a location which may be many miles from a home laboratory where a second person is asked to draw what the first is looking at. The drawings, in many cases, show a startling resemblance to the scene being viewed miles away. Once again, this does not seem to depend on a strict time sequence: at least in some experiments the drawer can play his or her part before the observer is sent into the field, and even before it has been decided where he will be sent! Both time and space seem to be different than we imagine – not absolute
qualities, but dependent on conditions (which is what Einstein’s theory of special relativity showed us a century ago). There are other experiments in what is sometimes called “paranormal” science; for example, telepathy has been documented, as has precognition (knowing what will happen ahead of the event). There are also many experiments on healing by mental intention and by prayer. All of this large body of work tends to be disregarded by most professionals since accepting it requires a complete revision of our ideas about reality. (There are many books for the lay reader describing some of these fascinating phenomena. A good place to start is with those by Lynne McTaggart, a journalist, e.g. “The Intention Experiment”. You might also try “Entangled Minds” by Dr. Dean Radin, who has himself carried out many important experiments in parapsychology).

Western physical science itself has done a lot in the last century to undermine the old-fashioned “common-sense” view of reality. The universe, as the famous physicist Sir Arthur Eddington said, begins to look more like a giant thought than a giant machine. For example, quantum physics has taught us that any observation changes what is observed. We can no longer think of an electron as a little object circling around a central proton, for example—it is instead a wave, and could be anywhere until observed. The same is true for larger particles, and physicists like Amit Goswami (see, for example, his very readable “The Self-Aware Universe”) argue that nothing that we think of as a concrete object has any physical form until some consciousness views it—we give form to the world by our perception and thought. If this seems strange, consider the rainbow: it does not exist “out there”, but is simply an impression on our retina and brain when we look at the sky through rain with the sun behind us. It moves as we move; without a viewer, there is no rainbow!

3. The idea that consciousness is arranged in an orderly hierarchy, simpler forms operating within more complex arrays, is something that mystics and channelled voices have been telling us for centuries. It does not, however, seem to be something for which we can get evidence in a scientific way, since we do not know how to measure “consciousness” (and perhaps in principle cannot). That need not stop us thinking intelligently about it. Whatever consciousness is, it obviously exists in degrees or levels; simple organisms like bacteria, or single cells within our body, must have a much simpler kind of consciousness than we do. It is not unreasonable that there exist more complex, overarching assemblies which include our human consciousness as a kind of sub-set or “sub-program”. Organisation of such complexity as some kind of “hierarchy” seems inevitable.

The clearest account I have found of all this comes from the Seth books, channelled by Jane Roberts (e.g. in “The Nature of Personal Reality”). We will examine Seth’s description of what we are, in terms of consciousness, later in the course, but for now may say that our ego, the ordinarily self-aware or “small” self, is simply a part of a larger organisation that he calls the Whole or Higher Self, or Entity. Each Entity has many small selves (incarnations if you like—but since time and space are not absolute but ideas we have constructed, these selves, these “lives”, all take place together). The Entity is embedded in still higher levels of the hierarchy, and overarching all is what Seth calls “All That Is”, corresponding to what religions have called “God”.

4. “All That Is”, and in fact the whole organised consciousness that constitutes our underlying reality, is entirely benevolent. In religious terminology: God is love. This is obviously not something we can assess with the methods of physical science, but instead is a proposition that we must test for ourselves. How to do that? Using the time-honoured methods of the great spiritual systems or paths, which advocate meditation and prayer, inner “listening”, surrender (to the divine), reading spiritual works, meeting with others of like mind, various rituals, and so on. With sufficient dedication and practice it becomes clear that “help is available” to us. We will address some of these ideas later.

It is possible, as when pondering how consciousness is arranged, to speculate about this most important principle, that the structure in which we are embedded is benevolent, rather than indifferent
or malevolent. The existence of any hierarchy, even within our own limited experience in this world, depends on the higher parts taking some care of the lower, otherwise the structure could hardly endure. And if our true “Self” is indeed a more complex and diverse level into which our ego-self is embedded, then our very existence as apparently separate little selves would seem to depend on the good will, so to speak, of the Higher Self.

5. And 6. We are on firmer ground with these 2 principles, since they are open to testing through our own efforts and experience. We begin this course by thoroughly examining some of our entrenched beliefs, for example, the important set of beliefs we have held, all our lives, about our own worth. We can also read some of the many books now available from great spiritual masters and from modern interpreters of the “perennial philosophy” (basically, what I’ve called the “new paradigm”), reassuring ourselves that the message has been the same across time and from many cultures. As we gradually release our grip on limiting but long-held concepts of what is possible, we become more open to actual experience of “higher” dimensions of ourselves (i.e. of the hierarchy). Unexpected and self-transcending experiences may occur, and perhaps in compensation for the miseries of a cancer diagnosis, these experiences seem to be more likely when we are afraid for our lives. We may find and follow a traditional spiritual path and enhance our experience by practising its techniques.

Finally, we come to understand healing in a quite different way: as the expansion of awareness of who we are, not only in an intellectual sense, but as actual experience. This expansion seems, in itself, to benefit the body, but whether the body heals or not, issues of life and death are now seen in a very different light.

Practical approaches to expanding our awareness

It is essential, if this healing work is to be pursued effectively, to be strongly motivated, and willing to reflect on and journal about the new ideas, tackle the “homework”, and practice the various techniques regularly. Cancer, with its threat to our lives, can be a strong motivator! But after a while, as a new sense of “who I am” becomes established, you will probably find (as many previous students have done) that this kind of self-exploration is valued for its own sake, and that it brings meaning and joy into your life. So at the outset, examine your motivation honestly (we’ll help you with some set exercises), and determine to cultivate a strong motivation (affirming this often to yourself). Think of healing as the main priority in your life, and not as a duty that you have to somehow “fit in” to a busy, worldly schedule.

The course is divided into 3 parts or phases, each with a number of “topics” (listed below). Each topic includes exercises typically intended to occupy one, sometimes two, weeks’ work at home.

**Part 1** is about examining the mental “prison” we construct for ourselves with our beliefs – about ourselves, and about all events in our lives, notably cancer. In some ways this is the hardest part of the work, because it requires that we look at characteristics of ourselves that we might rather ignore (you will have encountered this problem in level 3 of the Healing Journey!). We can’t hope to escape from these limits, and expand our awareness of self, without identifying the limiting beliefs. So we ask you to do quite a lot of initial exploration, first on self-concept, and then on concepts of cancer and what you believe it implies for you. We couple this investigation with specific techniques for changing our inner monologue.

In the **second phase (part 2)** we start the perhaps more intriguing work of exploring aspects or dimensions of ourselves which may have previously lain outside of our awareness. The main approaches are analysis of dreams, and contacting “higher” aspects of the self/Self (an extension of the “Inner Healer” technique from HJ level 2). This requires “listening” with a quiet mind and a strong, unambiguous desire for help and guidance. We also take a look back over our lives, seeking patterns that may need modifying, and explore “sub-personalities”, properties of oneself which can be visualised as small, inner, semi-autonomous “beings”.

Part 3 is about spirituality: first, clarifying our aims and ideas about the spiritual search (a process begun in HJ levels 2 – 5), then examining a number of writings from some of the experts in the field – the great mystics.

Main topics covered in level 6

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Topic 1: Beliefs: mainly about the self.

The first area for investigation is our beliefs. This may sound irrelevant: “what have my beliefs got to do with my health?” But our beliefs form the “prison” that sets severe limits on what we can experience. The aim here is to discover that we create our concept of ourselves, through our beliefs. This is conventional psychology at work. Later we will consider the esoteric idea that our beliefs actually play a part in creating our physical reality – our world, our bodies, and our health.

What are beliefs? Simply ideas, usually derived from others at first, then repeatedly asserted by ourselves to ourselves. With time they come to be taken as “facts”, e.g. “I’m a failure”, or “I need 7-8 hours of sleep each night”, or “eating meat is essential/not essential/harmful to health”, or even “the sun will rise tomorrow”. Note that these are all beliefs, and not, ultimately facts, in the sense of being necessarily true. Many of our preoccupations, and hence beliefs (as you will discover if you watch your mind conscientiously) concern ourselves, our comfort, security, relations with others, and so on. In any case, it is these beliefs about ourselves that are relevant here, since they are of great importance to our mental and physical health.

What do my beliefs do? A bit of self-exploration, like the work we did in HJ level 3, will show us that our beliefs are largely responsible for our experience of life; you could even say “beliefs create experience”. This is not a radical statement, although most people don’t realize its truth (because it is much easier to blame external circumstances for our problems). We perceive whatever may be “out there” (and this is ultimately unknown) with our senses, then apply the “filter” of our preconceived ideas, emotions, and past experiences, to determine a reaction to what we think we perceive. Our constant stream of internal commentary also tends to shape any experience to fit what we think we already understand. Then we take action: designed mainly to provide ourselves with the security, comfort, and stimulation that we feel we need.

This is all very obvious on a social scale: for example, members of a religion often believe that their understanding is the only true one, and may even go to war because of this belief. Or think of negative discrimination over race, gender or sexual preferences, or the “positive” discrimination shown by the adulation and money showered on sports stars or performers. Important social consequences flow from the beliefs prevailing in a community.

It gets less obvious when we turn to what matters more here: our beliefs about ourselves, beliefs that we often take as undeniable truths. For example, many people believe they are somehow unworthy or inadequate. Often they never admit this, even (or especially not) to themselves, but it will affect everything they do. It may inspire excessive efforts to compensate for the perception of inadequacy, followed by a mid-life heart attack. Or it may prevent someone from undertaking challenges that he or she was perfectly capable of meeting, and from growing by doing so. Another example: if I believe others will hurt or humiliate me, given the chance, this will obviously colour all my interactions with people. If this belief is intensely held we might call it paranoia – but many “normal” people hold such a view, deep down. Another version of this is “others can’t be trusted”; imagine how that can corrupt relationships! A further example: “I am (somehow) entitled to a long, healthy life”. Clearly, such a belief will exacerbate the suffering a sudden illness causes. It takes honest examination of one’s thoughts to unearth such buried ideas.

Why are our beliefs not obvious to us? Partly because they are ingrained, often life-long, and so familiar that we take them as undeniable (if indeed we ever think about them). And partly because we tend to ignore inner, or intuitive knowing in favour of what we think we see outside of ourselves. We will see that the inner exploration is much more relevant, indeed essential, to our search for healing.
Practical explorations of our beliefs about ourselves:

**Background reading.** Many popular psychology books deal with beliefs, for example D. Burns, “Feeling Good: the New Mood therapy”, and other titles of his. For those who want to go into this more deeply than modern western psychology does, I warmly recommend reading “The Nature of Personal Reality - A Seth book” by Jane Roberts, and in particular, the first 2 chapters on beliefs.

**Constant monitoring of one’s thoughts.** This is an essential practice for conscious living: knowing your thoughts forms a large part of self-awareness! People sometimes complain that this is too much effort, or that it inhibits “spontaneity”. In fact, it is simply learning to live in another, and more conscious way. Regular journaling is a vital part of this learning: if we don’t record what we discover about ourselves we generally lose the insights.

**Exercise 1. Investigating how my self-concept was formed.**

> Obviously we have no fixed opinion about ourselves at the time of birth, and for many months thereafter. Gradually, however, through interactions with parents, siblings, and others, we begin to form an impression from what they say and do to us. To take an extreme example, if we are subject, as children, to bullying and abuse, it will be natural to conclude that we don’t deserve to be respected. By contrast, if we are treated with kindness and consideration for our needs and wishes, and in such a way that we know what behaviours are permitted and what are not, we will feel much more secure and comfortable, a feeling that will translate into a sense of self-worth.

Think of instances from your childhood where you were subject to:
- what you considered to be unfair, unwanted, distressing treatment from important others, family or teachers or peers
- treatment that made you feel “good”, worthwhile, valued.

Write about these experiences – note form will do: try to “re-live” them in your imagination. Notice which ideas and feelings about yourself that were conceived at those early times have persisted into your adult life.

**Note on “projection (before doing exercise 2 below):**

This is an important if rather “slippery” concept to grasp (and see HJ level 3). The kind of projection most relevant to us here is blaming others, or the environment, for some perceived problem, without realizing that the origin of the problem really lies within oneself. For example, someone who delayed seeking medical advice for symptoms that turned out to indicate cancer might subsequently “blame” the doctors for “not catching it early enough”. Another example: if someone’s behaviour seems “threatening” to you, it may be because feel insecure (if you didn’t, they might appear quite differently to you): you are attributing to them your assumptions about their aggressiveness.

**Exercise 2. The formation of self-concept by imagining what others think of us.**

Our self-concept is constantly evolving, changing, mainly as a result of our ongoing interactions with other people, although as we get older it tends to stabilise. As adults, however, we usually remain very sensitive to what we imagine others think of us. In fact, our conclusions about how others see us is often a projection of our own ideas about ourselves. For example, if someone snubs us, our immediate reaction may be anger, but underneath that lies a fear that they don’t think us worthy of their attention. Such a conclusion is only likely if we secretly harbour the belief that we are really not worthy of others’ notice. (If this seems improbable to you, imagine that you are totally secure about yourself, that everyone admires you, then see if you would care about a snub - and recall the exercise along these lines in level 3).
If we pose directly the question: “what do I think of myself?” we may end up with a vague, “street level” answer, such as “I’m basically a good person”, which doesn’t tell us much. Instead, we can learn more by investigating how we believe others view us; with this indirect approach, we may uncover our projections, as shown by our reactions to their observable behaviours.

**Part (a). Investigating at the conscious “thinking” (cognitive) level**
- Use specific instances: visualise/remember certain situations that stand out, because they were vivid, or emotionally-laden, or because they occurred often. Explore, write notes.
- Pick one or two cases where the behaviours of colleagues or friends seemed to indicate some strong feeling towards you and your work (positive or negative – the latter are more likely to come to mind!)
- What interpretations did you put on these behaviours? What other interpretations are possible? Do you think others really cared what you were up to? (Note: most are concerned only for themselves)
- What did you think about them? This may provide some clues as to what you imagine they thought of you.
- Can you see now how your beliefs about their opinions are mainly your own projections of your ideas about yourself?
- Generalising from these examples: can you see that many of our other reactions to other people such as our expectations, resentments, frustrations, and so on ultimately depend on our beliefs, and in particular on our beliefs about ourselves: what we believe we are “worthy” of, and what we are entitled to? (If this is all new to you, don’t be concerned if it’s not entirely clear at first – just keep working away at it over the coming weeks and you will come to understand it).

**Part (b). Investigating at a “deeper” (more unconscious) level.**
We can usually dig out more of our hidden thoughts and emotions by doing this self-investigative work in a relaxed “alpha” state - perhaps going to a familiar “room” or place where you can visualise more easily. Try the following after getting yourself very relaxed, and/or “going down” to your healing room or place:

- Allow memories of interactions with colleagues, family or friends to rise to the surface of the mind.
- In this state, observe rather than thinking; the point is to bypass the usual patterns of thought, in order to learn something new. Now “watch” how the actions of the people you are thinking about gave hints of what they were thinking.
- Look more widely for other instances.
- Pay particular attention to how your interpretation of your colleagues’ or friends’ actions and words made you feel.

**Integration**
During daily activities, we can watch for “how other people make us feel!”, and quickly learn that this is a misnomer – what we are experiencing is our projections coming back at us, so to speak. This daily mental awareness work is usually done by thinking briefly about what has happened, and trying to understand what our thoughts are. When we have the time to sit and relax deeply, to an “alpha” level, we can explore more deeply, picking instances we want to investigate more fully.

Put together the results of your explorations of both kinds. What is your view now of how you were seen by other people, and how does it compare with what you may always have assumed? What would be a more balanced view? How might you change your attitude towards colleagues, family or friends?
Topic 2: Self-concept: digging deeper

In topic 1 we began an investigation of how our “self-concept” develops, noting that it evolves mainly from our observation of how others treat us, and how we conclude they must therefore view us. Our “self” concept thus becomes largely what we believe others think of us. Self-healing depends on recovering our own, authentic view of who we are, as individual humans, then expanding this to include our spiritual dimensions.

Much of the process of learning what others think of us occurs in childhood, of course, although we can still change as adults. If we learn to see ourselves as being unworthy or inadequate in various ways, we will experience feelings of anxiety and guilt. These feelings are painful, so we typically don’t admit them into conscious awareness, but suppress them and try to compensate, for example by being extra conscientious, or judgmental, or placatory, or aggressive (and recall HJ level 3). When the sense of personal unworthiness is very strong, it can sabotage everything a person tries to do – the inner dialogue, often recognised goes something like this: “I’m so hopeless at that… things never work out for me…. I can’t expect people to like me…. Nobody cares…..” The actions such a person takes are often undermined by herself, and the expectation of failure tends to bring it about. This general picture is familiar to many people, but the harmful power of the pattern is usually underestimated. Alternatively, people may develop a defensive inner monologue more like this: “…other people have no idea… I have to do it all myself…. I am pretty darned special, even if others don’t see it…” Such an attitude is likely to be unappealing to others, to say the least! Painful though it is, we need to look deeply within ourselves for such old, irrational ideas, and identify them, as a necessary prelude to changing them.

Work of this kind, central to conventional psychotherapy, is absolutely critical for those seeking to use their minds to affect a disease. Without an authentic sense of self-worth, the necessary intense desire and expectation for healing work can hardly be mustered. A Course in Miracles (quoted frequently in HJ level 3 – “Bringing spirituality into your healing journey”) takes this reasoning further than is usual in western thought. For example, in chapter 12, section II, paragraph 1, the author says: “If to love oneself is to heal oneself, those who are sick do not love themselves. Therefore, they are asking for the love that would heal them, but which they are denying to themselves. If they knew the truth about themselves they could not be sick” ….. and the “truth about ourselves”, as the course explains in depth, throughout, is that we are part of a much larger consciousness, or “God”, and that we are not the separated fleshly beings that we conventionally imagine. However, we do not have to subscribe to this spiritual view in order to recognise that having a genuine love and respect for ourselves is important to our wellbeing, including our physical and mental health. Even without exploring the mystical viewpoint, it is pretty clear that if we don’t “love” (i.e. respect and accept) ourselves, we are unlikely to believe that we are worthy of help from any level of consciousness or god beyond ourselves.

Many people balk at this work because it is painful; we discover things about ourselves that we would rather not acknowledge. But it is vital not to bypass it: understanding what we think of ourselves is at the root of everything we do. The key to the process is always to go “deeper”, as if in an archaeological dig. As soon as you come up against a belief about yourself that seems potentially unproductive or harmful (for example, “I must do better than those around me”), ask yourself: “why do I believe that? What do I fear would happen if I dropped the belief?” Your answer may throw up another belief, such as, in this case: “Then people wouldn’t think I was worthy”. Repeat the process, by asking yourself: “Is it likely that people would think that?”, and “what am I afraid might happen if people didn’t think I was worthy?” Eventually you will come to some “rock bottom” idea, commonly a variant of “I’m just not good enough”. The irrational and unwarranted nature of that self-statement will be clear to you, a realisation that will help you go back “up the chain”, as it were, re-examining the validity of the intermediary stages.

This kind of exploration can be applied to almost any action that you contemplate, and is especially valuable if you are aware of some emotion attached to your contemplating. For example: “I should go to this meeting but……” Let’s say you feel reluctant, anxious — that immediately indicates another underlying idea, which you can usually uncover quite easily, for example: “I’m afraid if I go I will have to interact with people, X
and Y, who I believe don’t respect me”…… and the consequences are? “I’ll feel really uncomfortable.” Why?
“Because deep down I believe they are right in their evaluation of me…”, and so on. This kind of clarification of
ideas, motives and fears is the essence of self-discovery. Here’s a potentially more intimidating example: “I
must confront X about his/her behaviour in certain circumstances”. The feeling attached to this might be strong
anxiety. You need to know what causes that. A very useful question in most cases is: “what do I fear might
happen if I do this confronting?” A possible answer: “X will be angry or upset, and will hate me, possibly attack
me”. This in turn may lead to questions about your own fears of being attacked, which depend intimately on
how you view yourself. As you get the whole sequence clear in your mind you will be able to make better
decisions about what you should do.

Note that at this stage we are mainly trying to “diagnose” our self-concept. The more “therapeutic”
phase, trying to change it, comes later.

Exercise 1. Digging deeper: Find a possible course of action that would be a major change, and might help you,
but which you are ambivalent about making; e.g.:

a. giving up work
b. stopping some activity at home to make time for other things that seem important now, like
   healing studies and practices
c. some travel that you have wanted to do for a long time
d. no longer seeing some old acquaintance who no longer seems compatible
e. spending time at a healing centre or retreat

Ask yourself: “What do I fear might happen if I made this change?” And then, if that happens, what might be
the further consequences …. And so on.

Here are some more possible changes; what do you fear might be the consequences, and your reactions to
them?

- If I express anger, or other strong emotions (what do I fear might happen if I do?)
- If I refuse to do what X expects of me in certain situations ……
- If I don’t look attractive to certain others.
- If I get sick and can’t look after myself.
- If I can’t look after my family
- If I “waste” time watching TV or reading the newspaper or…..
- If I don’t have enough money ……..

The usual tendency with issues like these is to say, at first: “but these are factual cases – if I don’t have enough
money, or if I get very sick, it will make things really difficult, no use pretending otherwise”. The point of our
work here, however, is to probe more deeply and find out why you believe this would be so troublesome. By
doing so you will uncover various contributing beliefs, at least some of which are irrational and unnecessary.
When these are dropped, things that seemed “disastrous” may turn out not to be so.

Exercise 2. My “inadequacies”: Complete the sentence: “I’m not much good at…. Find a number of examples
(e.g., physical feats, writing, public speaking, getting along with others, making conversation with strangers,
meditating, remembering names, arriving on time at meetings, confrontations…. the list must be your own, of
course.
Now ask yourself, for each item, a question along the following lines: “what consequences do I fear from this “deficiency” in me?
If I fear that others won’t like or respect me because of this “inadequacy” of mine, what consequences might that have? 
See if you can come up with a kind of core idea, usually a fear, about yourself (although it is possible that confident individuals will find a strong image of personal competence at the root of their mental processes).
There are other ways to pose the initial question: e.g., “I must do better at.....”, then ask yourself what you are afraid might happen if you don’t.

Exercise 3. Some further, specific ideas about yourself to examine:

- Do you see yourself as “smart”? Have you lived up to your potential?
- Do you believe it is OK to express your emotions freely? If not, why not? (what do I fear might happen if I did?).
- Are there areas in your life about which you feel guilty or ashamed?
- Do you, deep down, regard yourself as superior/inferior to others?
- Do you have any sense that you “deserved” illness?
- Do you feel you can control events around you, or that you are basically helpless before them?
- Do you have a right to recreation, free time?
- Do you feel you have a right to do what you want to do in life?
- Are you creative? In what areas?
- Do you feel attractive to others?
- Do you feel the “the Universe”/God/some Higher Power cares what happens to you?

Try not to give knee-jerk answers like “of course I’m in control, smart, attractive....” and instead “dig deeper”, overcoming the fear of acknowledging unpleasant conceptions of yourself – without doing so, you can’t change them. Then tell yourself: “these are ideas about reality, not reality itself”.

(Additional exercise for veteran self-investigators!)

Exercise 4. How you thought about yourself at different stages of life

If you have the stamina for it, you can, with benefit, return to the examination of the origins of self-concept that we began in the last session.

In a deeply relaxed state, bring up a mental picture of yourself and salient features of your life at various ages, for example, early childhood (5-10yrs), as an adolescent, a young adult (in your 20’s), and later stages. Write and/or draw pictures of how you viewed yourself at the different stages. You might consider also the following questions for each stage:

- What did you believe others thought of you then?
- At which stages were you most/least yourself?
- The things I most love/hate to remember are....

Then look for qualities in yourself that have stayed more or less constant throughout, and those that have changed.
Topic 3: the “Ego Triangle”; thoughts, imagery, emotions.

In level 1 of the Healing Journey we noted that emotions are regularly preceded by a thought – even if the thought flashes very rapidly across the screen of consciousness. It can take some practice to detect this. In both levels 1 and 2 we also introduced another aspect of the mind’s workings – mental imagery. Images, too, are closely connected with thinking. In our current work we want to look more closely at the relationship between these 3, vital elements of our mental activity.

The attached diagram (below) shows this relationship: thoughts give rise to a mental image which in turn prompts an emotional reaction. This is the usual pattern, one which you need to verify for yourself. For example, imagine you are going to get your car. There will be a (probably very brief) mental picture of where you parked it, followed by a small glow of satisfaction at remembering this – reinforced when you actually find the car. Or imagine you have a visit to a doctor tomorrow: this thought will be accompanied (in fact followed immediately) by some kind of mental picture of the clinic and other aspects of the visit, then followed again by an emotional reaction to the idea – perhaps fear, if the visit seems likely to produce difficult news.

The weaker arrow lines in the diagram show that there are other directions to some of this mental movement: emotions and images will in turn prompt thoughts; imagery and emotions may interact directly. But the most important “pathway” seems to be: thoughts, to images, to emotions.

A reminder: images are any mental representation of what we perceive outside, or summon up from the “inside” (memories). They are often visual, but can also be auditory (sounds) or even tastes, smells or touch...
Images are like blueprints for action: imagination becomes “image-in-action”! “Emotions” are something we are all intimately familiar with, although experts have difficulty defining them. My dictionary of psychology says they are “a complex state of the organism, involving widespread changes” in the body, accompanied by “a (mental) state of excitement or perturbation, marked by strong feeling, and usually an impulse towards a definite form of behaviour”! In simple terms, an inner feeling prompting a desire to act.

You will need to satisfy yourself that this “triangle” or triad, (the terms are mine, and not “official”), is the “software”, so to speak, that drives much of what we do in our lives. Now there is a second, extremely important aspect to this, dramatised by the big, downward arrow in the diagram: when the triad is activated, the body, unavoidably, becomes involved. How? In any thought with an emotional component, the possibility of action, or potential action, is implied. There is a “gearing up” phase when nerves are firing (electrical and chemical messages passing between them), production of hormones, like adrenalin, and muscles tensing in preparation for movement, whether or not this follows. Even when the thought is not obviously about doing something, for example, “I remember how mean she was to me”, there is an image of the interaction, and an emotional response to the memory, inevitably causing some “perturbation” (as the experts say) of various bodily systems. We are all aware that we can get quite “stressed out” by sitting in a chair obsessing about past injustices!

Coming back to self-concept. It is possible, I suppose, to think about oneself in an entirely detached or abstract way, but generally, when we do think about ourselves, it is in connection with some other actions or ideas – myself in relation to my world, in fact. If you watch your mind while thinking about yourself you will find that the same kind of triad of thought, images and emotion is activated. The body will automatically respond; it can’t help doing so, even if the response is slight and unnoticed. In other words, thoughts about oneself, like many other types of thought, prepare the whole system of mind and body for possible action. Our “self-concept”, far from being a bloodless abstraction, is in fact more like a blueprint or a template guiding what we do. Actions are often blocked, of course. What we call “stress” is not the situations we find ourselves in, but the inner conflict that follows from not being or feeling able to take appropriate action or to somehow express the resulting emotion.

In a sense, self-concept is a kind of representation in the body of what we think we are. The “concept” is written, in our very nerves, muscles and other tissues. Someone with a strong self-concept may have a confident stance, a mind relatively free of conflict, vigorous health in the tissues, and behaviours to match. Another individual with a “poor” self-image may be anxious or depressed, have a hunched posture, be prey to various ailments, and unable to pursue behaviours that are in his or her best interest. Becoming familiar with the ego triangle is essential both to improving our own self-esteem and to further progress in mind-body healing. Once we know this pattern, we will see that it is not so-far-fetched to imagine that a “disease” symptom is very like a “self-concept”, a representation of mental ideas in the body’s tissues. Practice of various “mind-body” disciplines, such as hatha yoga, tai chi, or chi gong, can sensitise us to the intimate and constant interplay between thoughts and bodily arousal.

Exercise 1. Consider a number of everyday situations, and investigate how the “ego triangle” operates in each case. For example:

- going to the local store to buy groceries
- thinking what to cook for dinner, what to wear today, when to go to bed, what to read next, what TV to watch (if any)..........................
- planning to talk so someone about a sensitive topic; or to someone who scares you; or to someone you dislike; or like very much
- bring to mind situations involving illness: visiting a clinic; sensing a pain in your body; wondering about your lifespan; thinking about your family should you die prematurely
• Now shifting to self-concept specifically: if you doubt that you are sensitive about your “worth”, consider a case where someone cuts in front of you, either in a car or standing in a queue – follow this one down to its core idea!
• Imagine interacting with someone you suspect dislikes you.
• Think about a task that you must do that you find difficult – how is self-concept involved?

Please don’t restrict yourself to these examples: find your own, and let it become a habit to analyse any situation that appears to cause you to react emotionally (even when the reaction is slight). Developing such awareness is the core process in “personal growth” and self-healing.

You will find that you can start at any point on the triangle, i.e. start with an emotion, and try to sense what the thought provoking it may be, and any associated images. Or begin with an image (often visual, but it could be a feeling sense or a sound), and note how emotions are immediately prompted, and thoughts as well.

Exercise 2. Draw a picture of how you see yourself and your world (if you have a current illness, this may well appear in your depiction, but we will be addressing illness more specifically in a later session). Note that whatever you put down, and the way you do it (timidly vs boldly, calmly vs angrily, and so on) tells you something about your concept of self. The drawings are symbols for how you think about yourself in your “deeper” mind.

(Instead, or as well as drawing pictures, you could write a poem about yourself)

...........................................................................................................................................................................
**Topic 4: Changing our beliefs about ourselves.**

Having uncovered at least some of our beliefs about ourselves, we now want to construct a much more positive and uplifting narrative or internal monologue that reflects how we would prefer to think. This might sound contrived or artificial – but remember, the thoughts ultimately create the reality.

This is a life-changing task, and nobody can responsibly claim that it is easy to do. Consistent judgment and criticism of oneself, frequently reiterating the voices of parents, peers and powerful others from an early stage of life, often causes low self-esteem, which in turn can undermine our performance in many areas, not to mention creating vast unhappiness. Our often poor self-concepts are deeply ingrained, and we hang on to them as if they were of great benefit to us – as sometimes indeed they are (see exercise 1, below).

We will work on improving self-esteem in a number of different ways in various sessions of this course, and will see how analogous this effort is to attempting to change beliefs about a disease and hence, perhaps, its physical manifestation. At this stage, it may be helpful to list and briefly describe some of the main approaches that have been used in the psychological sphere.

1. **Rejecting harmful self-criticism:** The central aim of many conventional systems of psychotherapy is to examine the beliefs we hold of ourselves, and drop any unwarranted or distorted views. We’ve begun this process in topics 1 – 3, and will continue it; individual therapy with a professional may clarify issues that you find you can’t uncover or change while working alone.

2. **Using verbal affirmations:** The constant affirmation of “positive” ideas about oneself. In ordinary life, we may have found that things we particularly desire and expect sometimes do come about. The forthright claim of esoteric psychology, as discussed earlier (see the Introduction to the course), is “you get what you concentrate on”, otherwise expressed as “beliefs create reality”. For this to happen, though, certain conditions must be met. First, any contradictory beliefs need to be eliminated from our minds. Thus if we affirm “I am strong and capable” while underneath thinking “I’m really unworthy”, a good result can hardly be expected. I think this lack of what we might call single-pointedness is the greatest obstacle to realising whatever power verbal affirmation possesses.

Given that we have a clear, believable idea of what we want to accomplish, 4 things are important. We must intensely desire the change, be diligent in our practice, expect that the change can happen, and avoid focussing on the “negative” (note that these 4 steps can be remembered as the acronym IDEA, as shown in the table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>Intensely desire the change: this is the “fuel”, as it were, that propels physiological changes in the body.</th>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Be diligent in your practice: affirmations should be repeated regularly and as often and as intently as possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Expect that the change will happen: note, however, that it may not happen within any specific time frame.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Avoid focussing on the negative, i.e. what you see as obstacles, since this may act as an unconscious suggestion reinforcing such patterns. (A common and understandable habit of people struggling with serious disease is to focus on the disease itself and how much they do not want it. Seth points out that this may even reinforce the disease process: we need to acknowledge what we have, then move on, with our imagery and words, to affirming what we do want).</td>
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3. **Using the “ego triangle”**: If we use words alone, we are neglecting the other two elements of the ego triangle, images and emotions. Images are arguably the most potent tool we have to make deep changes in mind and body – they “speak to” the tissues much more directly than words do. So another type of affirmation is to develop a symbol or image of oneself that is desired, and constantly bring that to mind. As with words, pre-existing “negative” or unwanted images need to be uncovered first, and consciously rejected. We can enter the triangle at the “emotions” step also: recognise what emotions come up as you think of yourself (the mirror gazing exercise below is helpful for this purpose), deliberately drop what is not wanted, and try to substitute constructive emotions, such as love or esteem for oneself. (These two versions of the affirmation approach are less conventional in nature than the use of words alone).

4. **Cultivating a satisfying interest.** The pioneer in the field of psycho-oncology (mind – cancer relationships), Dr Lawrence LeShan, claimed from his clinical experience that cancer patients were much more likely to live if they found a project or direction in life that was truly satisfying. Although this doesn’t have rigorous research support, it does not seem surprising. Certainly when we are considering improving our self-concept, it is a common-sense notion that getting involved in some purpose that feels stimulating or exciting will make us feel better about ourselves. We will explore this further in the next session.

5. **Working with sub-personalities**: Aspects of the personality can be conceived of as small “individuals” within ourselves – the “scared child” for example – and these can be encouraged to develop and integrate. This approach will be explored in later sessions.

6. **Identifying with a “higher” Self**: The classical spiritual answer to the dilemma of not feeling good enough is the teaching that we are not, ultimately, what we think we are, a fallible mortal body, but an eternal spirit. If we can only “surrender to” or completely trust the Divine, which is the same as “identifying” with this spiritual part, problems of earthly self-esteem will fall away. Put another way, we need to learn to detach our sense of identity from the usual ego-self, and experience ourselves instead as a being beyond the body. This, too, we will defer to a later session.

As we embark on this life-changing task, it is reassuring to recall statements found in the Seth books (and elsewhere, paraphrased here): “thoughts about reality are just that, thoughts, and not reality itself”. And in NPR pg 19: “...your inner self believes in you, often even while you do not believe in it”. This last is analogous to the idea, common in Christian discourse, that “God loves you”, which is potentially very comforting, but hard to believe deeply for someone who sees herself as guilty or unworthy. In a sense, the work we are doing here is a clearing away of misconceptions, so that we can accept the wonderful spiritual principle of being accepted by, and a part of, a Divine Being or Unity.


If you have not already done so, ask yourself (in a relaxed, alpha state) what “benefits” have come from negative self-appraisals – e.g., have they enabled you to avoid unwanted responsibilities, challenges or confrontations? What other purpose might they have had, such as self-punishment, unconscious expression of conflict?

Exercise 2. Using verbal affirmations

Examine your listings of negative self-appraisals (see topics 2 and 3), and develop affirmations to counter them. These should be brief, of course positive, and relatively realistic. Use the IDEA table as a guide to procedure. As an example, if a core self-statement has been: “I’m just not good enough”, you might replace it
with: “I am totally worthy, secure and loved by the Divine”. Such brief statements can be repeated many (hundreds of) times during the day. You will need to find what resonates within you, rather than just accepting suggestions from others. A table with negatives on one side and positive substitutes on the other might be helpful.

Exercise 3. Affirmations about self while looking in a mirror.
An exercise related to the last one, which may seem embarrassing at first but can be surprisingly effective, is to gaze at yourself in the mirror for a few minutes, while verbally repeating the qualities you would like to have or experience. For the first day or two you could do some “diagnosis”, asking yourself “what do I think about this person”, and making some notes. Then in following days, while looking at your image, repeat affirmations of your worth, value, lovable-ness, and the fact that you are determined to take charge of your life and health to the greatest extent possible, e.g. “this is my life and I create it”.

Exercise 4. Making a list of your successes. List all the accomplishments or events in which you can (if you allow it!) take some pride. Include “small” things like learning to type, or use the internet, or drive a car. Think what your life would have been like without these accomplishments. Let the list be long. Then go back over it and choose the most important of these. For each, write down the beliefs that went into the “creation” of that reality for yourself. Think how your imagination helped to achieve that goal, and the emotions that supported it.

Seth suggests: “concentrate on your abilities, not your liabilities”!

Exercise 5. Using mental imagery:
Return to the images of yourself and your life that you developed in the last topic/session. Obviously, the aim now is to change what you don’t like about these. This should be done, not by simply reasoning about preferred alternatives, but by meditating deeply about it and allowing new images, with their accompanying emotions, to emerge. You will probably need to try this several times.

Then, as you go about your day, vividly imagine that the conditions you want are being gradually realized. If you are sick, try to imagine yourself well, moving about happily – try to be that person. Now you are bound to come up with conflicting impressions here – what you want will likely not seem to be the case. But you can modify the self-talk – for example: “I do feel unwell but am determined to do all I can to help my body heal”, “I am gradually improving”, or some similar phrasing that you find acceptable. Critics say this is being “unrealistic”, but if reality is something we create…….

A helpful idea can be to find a symbol of yourself as you are, or have been, in your most unhappy times, then “erase” it, and construct another for how you would like to see yourself now: e.g. a lighthouse, a big tree……. Explore the implications of your symbol(s) of yourself.

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Quotes from ACIM:
• “Illness of any kind may be defined as the result of a view of the self as weak, vulnerable, evil and endangered, and thus in need of constant defense”. (Psychotherapy: purpose, process and practice. IV.6.1).
• “Your worth is not established by teaching or learning. Your worth is established by God”. T-4.1.7.1

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## Revision/discussion of topics 1-4

Main points and exercises from topics 1-4

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<th>Main points</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>Healing comes from expanding the sense of self</td>
<td>Reading, reflecting</td>
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| **topic 1** | - Beliefs about oneself (self-concept) largely determine the nature of our life experience | - Examine how your self-concept was formed in childhood.  
- Note how your current self-concept is affected by what you imagine others think of you (projection) |
| **topic 2** | - We can find out what we think of ourselves by “digging deeper”, i.e. understanding the thoughts “underneath” the immediate surface impressions. | - Ask “what do I fear might happen if I do ....” (specified) things?  
- Examine how you thought of yourself at different stages of life. |
| **topic 3** | - The “ego triangle”: a model of how the ego works, connecting thoughts, images and emotions | - Verify how these 3 elements play a part in almost all of your thinking about yourself and your actions.  
- Draw and describe how you see yourself and your current life situation. |
| **topic 4** | - Ways of deliberately changing how we view ourselves  
- This is possible, although not easy. The most important part of the process is to examine thoroughly how we currently see ourselves, before trying to change this. | - Clarify any perceived benefits arising from illness  
- Drop the negative self-statements  
- Add positive affirmations (the IDEA acronym)  
- Use images of a desired state of being, as well as words.  
- Focus on your successes, and on creative, compelling activities in your life (reasons to live). |

Make sure you have understood the main ideas, listed above, and if you have not attempted the associated exercises, you may wish to do so before we go on. This basic “self-examination”, although often painful, is fundamental to self-healing: we learn to view ourselves without pretense, and can then avoid projecting our self-criticisms on to others. We can look back over our lives and see what has led to our present set of attitudes. Then from this point we can decide what is really important to us. It becomes easier to believe that we are loved and accepted by a divine source if we have first learned to understand and accept ourselves.
**Topic 5. Finding a compelling purpose in life.**

Does my life have a purpose or meaning? It may be a question that we try to brush off, yet few of us would like to believe the reverse – that our lives are meaningless! Why does it matter? Well firstly, we all know that we are much happier, more satisfied, when pursuing activities that seem meaningful (and I’m thinking here of long-term activities, work, raising a family and so on, not brief holiday “escapes”). Second, a sense of purpose will enhance our desire to live; you can see this most clearly by again looking at the opposite – someone who feels her life has no purpose may readily come to feel that life is not worth living. Thus defining meaning or purpose in our lives may be a factor in combating serious disease. There is an obvious connection between purposeful living and self-concept too, as we’ve discussed in earlier sessions – we appreciate ourselves more when we feel engaged in meaningful activity.

Eckhart Tolle in “A New Earth”, chapter 9, provides a brilliant and simple discussion of the difference between what he calls “inner” and “outer” purpose. Our outer purpose is what we believe to be worthwhile in the world of form: conventional, action-related activities and achievements. Our inner purpose is to get in touch with the higher or inner self, and allow ourselves to grow in awareness of who we are. This latter aim is promoted by all major spiritual traditions, and is approached through time-honoured methods like meditation and prayer. Outer purpose is more immediately accessible, and is what we mainly deal with in this topic; work on defining inner purpose will come in later sessions.

Outer purpose (what the world simply calls “purpose”) can be explored rather easily: it begins by finding out what one feels is really important, interesting, stimulating and worthwhile in one’s life. A list should be generated (see exercises below) in the most relaxed and spontaneous way possible, without any initial censoring or rejection of ideas on the grounds of feasibility; considerations of practicality can be brought in later. We have done a number of exercises of this general type at various points in earlier stages of the Healing Journey, beginning with defining an “ideal day in the future”, in level 1. Another version of the same exploration is to ask yourself: “what would I do if I had only 1 week to live?” – a cogent way of winnowing out everything that is not really important! In level 4 we tried some exercises of this kind from Lawrence LeShan’s book “Cancer as a Turning Point”, which you may want to review. Leshan, a psychologist, was a pioneer in the field of using the mind in cancer healing, his main finding being that patients who found a purpose in their lives that excited them tended to survive the disease. We made similar observations in our own study of people using self-healing techniques, and in interviews of “remarkable survivors”, whose main point of difference from others who did not survive cancer was that they were clear about what mattered to them in life (“authenticity”) and felt entitled to pursue such goals (“autonomy”). (You can read about these studies in my book: “Can the Mind Heal Cancer?”, and in the back of the level 4 HJ manual, available free on [www.healingjourney.ca](http://www.healingjourney.ca).)

(A good refresher relevant to this topic is to read (or re-read) chapter 9 of Tolle’s “A New Earth”)

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**Exercise 1. Finding out what “turns me on” (and “off”)!**

I’m suggesting a repeat (or a first attempt) at the exercise in “Assignment 2” of the level 4 handbook, available on the Healing Journey website noted above. If you have already done this some time ago, you may well have some new insights this time. Re-read the text: the parts to the exercise are, in brief:

- List activities that stimulate you, and make you feel satisfied with yourself and your life. Even “small” things, like listening to music, chatting with friends....
- Write a similar list of activities that drag you down, are depressing or boring.
- Examine what proportion of your time is spent in activities in these 2 broad categories.
- Find beliefs that have stopped you, in the past, from spending more of your time doing what you think is important and satisfying.
Exercise 2. Finding out how I would most like to spend my time.

This exercise is similar to “An ideal day in the future”, which we did in HJ level 1, and which you can find as an audio track by going on our website to “Materials and Resources”, and clicking on “Paul’s Cancer Centre, UK” at the end of the list. It also covers similar ground to that in “Assignment 5” of the level 4 workbook.

Get yourself very relaxed (light trance), and proceed to your inner “room” or other place from which you do imagery exercises. Now imagine, without allowing any censoring or doubt, that in the forthcoming days you will be doing whatever you enjoy most. We are trying to access activities that you feel will be satisfying in the long term, as part of an ongoing direction in life, not brief orgies of any kind, and probably not travel, holidays or other experiences that are usually transient. What is the mental state you most desire as a continuing experience? Imagine that there are absolutely no obstacles to your achieving this kind of life, financial, social, career-related, or others.

The important element here is to simply “play” with the process, relax and let images and ideas emerge, no matter how outlandish they seem to be at first. Make notes or drawings. You can later begin to use your ordinary reasoning faculties to devise ways to move your life in the direction that your deeper self has indicated would be “right” for you.

Exercise 3. How would you spend your time if you were certain it was very limited?

Like all of these exercises, this is another way in which you can direct your own investigation of what matters most to you. Imagine you have been given an absolutely certain prognosis – that you have only a certain specific time to live, after which you will expire, without suffering, and immediately. (For the purposes of the exercise you can vary this time interval – I’d suggest, for a first attempt, 1 year). Investigate (using deep relaxation as a preliminary) how you would spend this time. Write about it. Does this suggest how you might spend your current days? How much does uncertainty about the time “left” to you (and this is true for us all) affect what use you make of it now?

Exercise 4. Finding a compelling reason to live.

(This is a much “grittier” form of the exercises above.)

Imagine you are offered an immediate and painless exit from this life and world, at a time of your choosing. The following conditions also apply:

1. Your loved ones will not suffer.
2. Your various responsibilities, financial and so on, are all taken care of.
3. You are sure that the death of your body is not the end of you – that you will be going to some other realm more interesting and pleasant than this one.

The question is: would you accept this offer?

- If you answer “No”, it implies you have some strong interest, passion, vocation or purpose that makes you want to stay on this Earth. Spell that out.
- If you answer “Yes”, then clarify what, if any developments in your life might change your mind.

The purpose of this exercise is obviously to force a defining of positive reasons to live and to embrace life. People often don’t have such reasons, and want to stick around because of some fear of the unknown, or reluctance to abandon others. You can also ponder this question without the caveats 1 – 3, in particular without # 3. This may help you see if your “desire to live” is simply a fear that there is nothing more after death of the body.
Integration:
After working on the exercises above, ask yourself how much of the purpose you defined is “outer”, and how much “inner”, in the sense described so well by Tolle in chapter 9 of “A New Earth”. If these 2 kinds of purpose seem out of balance in your life, consider how you might readjust.

Exercises for veterans:
If you have previously done the kind of exercises described above, perhaps a number of times, you might want to consider the purpose of life in a deeper way. Assuming that you are clear about the distinction between inner and outer purpose, let’s look more closely at “inner” purpose. Unless you subscribe to modern, naïve materialism, you will accept that you are here, on Earth, for some reason. And you will probably also understand that this is just one of many possible earthly experiences. With that background, you could ask yourself first: “what are the main lessons I have learned from this life?” The answers might be framed in terms of emotional learning – for example, what you have discovered to be the consequences of the various kinds of behaviour that inevitably follow from our identification with form, such as self-protectiveness or greed. You may also find answers in terms of learning about your ultimate nature: “how do I now see my apparently separate self in relation to the world?” This could lead to asking “what else do I need to explore and learn while here?” Then finally, a slightly different question: “in what way, am I meant to evolve while here – what, ideally, will be my state of mind and understanding when this lifetime draws to a close?”
Topic 6: Beliefs and imagery relevant to cancer, and symptoms generally.

We have examined how, beginning early in life and continuing throughout, we create a self-concept, an idea of who we think we are and what our strengths and weaknesses may be. I hope you have verified for yourself that this mentally-held concept of yourself is of central importance to your life, influencing all aspects of your behaviour. The “ego triangle” – beliefs about self, with the imagery and emotions that accompany these beliefs - forms a kind of software that runs, so to speak, behind everything we think and do. This activity of the mental software produces changes in the “hardware” of the body, as any thoughts do: thoughts are physical events as well as mental events, brought about by the passage of tiny amounts of hormones from one nerve cell to another. Such activity in the nervous system causes large changes throughout the body. Think of the difference in posture and general behaviour of a very confident person compared with a depressed and insecure person. Thus it seems fair to say that self-concept does, in fact, largely create who we are, and our experience of life.

We come now to a parallel but less conventional idea: that our thoughts, and in particular our ideas about ourselves, our problems or conflicts, and our bodies, play a major role in physical as well as mental health and experience. This section is a bit more technical than most of our “topics” – if you find it confusing you could skip to the last paragraph of this introduction.

The diagram below shows a range of existing views about the impact of mind on health.

1. Pure materialism: mind irrelevant
2. Unhealthy behaviours cause illness
3. Stress promotes disease
4. Illness has symbolic significance
5. Esoteric view: mind creates physical reality, including disease.

(Spectrum of views on the influence of mind on disease)

Number 1 on this chart is essentially how western medicine operates – treating the body as a machine to be repaired – although acknowledgement is made that unhealthy behaviours (#2) are an important cause of illness. It seems easier for the modern mind to see a link between external events (smoking, diet) than when the process is internal, which is often the case with “stress” (#3). Stress is experienced when an individual’s ability to cope is overtaxed, and is gradually becoming recognized as a cause of illness, although stress reduction techniques are not usually a part of any medical treatment protocol. Number 4 is the idea that symptoms may be a symbolic reaction by the body to its surroundings or situation. As an example, stiffness of joints might represent a reluctance to move; a skin condition could reflect a desire to reject or exclude the world (such interpretations would apply only to specific individuals, and must be established by careful interviewing). The concept is not unknown to modern medical science (although generally discounted); a branch of medicine called
“psychosomatic”, beginning with Freud, has provided some evidence that many symptoms are caused by mind influencing body (which is what “psycho – somatic” means), and there has been speculation about such a link in cancer, although scientific investigations have so far been inconclusive. Number 5 is the esoteric view that mind creates the material world, including all that happens to the body. In the early levels of the Healing Journey program, we draw mainly on views 3 and 4 above, but we are moving towards the idea that our beliefs are a primary agent in the construction of reality.

Once we have studied the generation of a self-concept, it becomes easier to understand, by analogy, how mind might promote symptoms in the body (symptoms are disturbances of normal function in the body – pain, weakness, and so forth, while a “disease” is a medically-defined collection of symptoms forming a recognisable pattern). Under the influence of our beliefs, hormones are released into the blood stream and circulate in the tissues, respiration and blood flow are affected, the muscles tense or relax, even digestion of food may be modified. This close relationship between body and mind becomes obvious when we take the trouble to become sensitive to it (especially through “mind-body” techniques like hatha yoga or tai chi), but it tends to be ignored by the wider culture.

What about illness? Could an intangible thing like our mind really contribute to development of a physical disease like cancer? We are beginning to recognize stress-induced conditions: many headaches and gastrointestinal disturbances, elevated blood pressure, some infections (stress is now proven to make people more susceptible to the common cold, for example), but is it true for hidden, “deep-seated” diseases like cancer? We know that the mind ultimately controls most if not all functions of the body, constantly shaping its form and function in temporary and permanent ways. We can readily accept its power to create illness when the pattern of thoughts leads to cancer through unhealthy behaviours, such as smoking, but the link seems to be more difficult to take seriously when there is no such external intermediary known. So it is important to realize that as we begin here to explore the role of mind in cancer, we are pursuing a path that is considered radical; most oncologists would say there is no such link (although it is interesting to note that such a view was expressed about exercise and cancer until a few years ago, when a strong effect was demonstrated in rigorous experiments!).

If we propose that the mind has a role to play in cancer development does this imply that other kinds of cause, genetic, for example, are unimportant? Certainly not. A disease like cancer does not have one simple, single cause; instead, many events, at many levels of the individual, hormones, DNA, cells, tissues, organs, all contribute to it. There is generally a series of genetic (DNA) changes, for example, but then one has to ask: “what caused them?” The answer may sometimes be environmental events, like toxic waste, smoke, carcinogens in buildings, excess exposure to sunlight, and so on. These events, in turn, are the result of social factors. Some cancers are prompted by virus infections, others by constant trauma to a tissue. Qualities of the affected individual are also important – for example, obesity makes some cancers more likely, and many cancers are known to be sensitive to hormone levels in the patient. The point is that many factors contribute. In proposing that mind is involved, we are suggesting that the mind, with its great power to influence the body, is one important factor, generally acting on cells through the nervous and hormonal systems. In fact it may well be an agent that can over-ride some of the more “biological” ones.

If we are open to this idea, that the mind, in humans, is an important link in the chain of events leading to cancer and its progression, we can investigate any symptoms we are facing in much the same way as we did for self-concept. The first step, as for the self-concept work, is “diagnostic”. We seek to determine whether our symptoms or cancers represent some idea or belief held by the mind, an answer to the question: “why is this disease or set of symptoms occurring?” By examining how our minds “see” such changes in the body we may be able to find mental reasons contributing to its development, and then ways of changing our mental state that could oppose its growth.

The following exercises are aimed at exploring possible symbolic significance of symptoms, and of cancer itself; that is, we are adopting view #4 of mind-body relationships discussed above. The exercises are
intended to occupy 2 weeks, divided up as you wish (exercise 1 should precede exercise 3, however). If you are interested in the esoteric view (#5 on the diagram above), reading Seth (especially “The Nature of Personal Reality”, chapter 5), would prove helpful. We will examine the implications of this more unconventional view later in the course.

Exercise 1: Ideas, imagery and emotions associated with “minor” physical symptoms.

Think of the ego triangle software doing 2 analogous things, or having 2 kinds of “read-out”: the first is our beliefs, including self-concept, other psychological attitudes, and our behaviours. The second is a profound influence on the body; the readout in the tissues (the influence it has on the body) extends all the way from enhancing normal functions to producing physical symptoms. So our “diagnostic” task is to try to find activities in the elements of the “triangle” – our beliefs, images, and emotions – that are contributing to symptom formation. It is advisable to practise this exploration process first on relatively minor symptoms before tackling the more hidden relationships between mind and body that are likely to operate in the case of cancer. We want to uncover our beliefs about these symptoms, and the images and emotions that go along with them.

Begin this exercise in the usual way, by relaxing deeply and going to your inner sanctum – a room, chapel, cottage, garden – whatever place allows you to feel at peace and focussed. Pick some relatively minor ailment of the body, where you can feel and perhaps see or hear what’s going on – it might be a skin condition, breathing difficulties, stiffness or arthritis in joints, headaches, digestive upsets, insomnia, poor circulation in various areas, an infection, hearing difficulties, and so on. Keeping the critical thinking part of the mind out of the way, try to let images and ideas form that are associated with the problem. They may symbolise or represent it, as your deeper or unconscious mind sends you messages about it. Focus more on finding out (diagnosis) than on solutions, at this stage.

You can work backwards from emotions to ideas and symptoms. For example, if fear is involved (and it usually is), we need to find out what exactly we fear. Identifying the emotion can lead us to the thoughts that provoked it, and so to what “purpose” the disease or symptoms serve (usually some distorted attempt at self-protection). As a simple example: we have a pain in the lower back, and sit quietly, searching for associated emotions, which may be anger or resentment. We ask ourselves what thoughts prompted this emotional response, and find ideas of having to perform unwelcome tasks, or take on unwanted responsibilities. Now we may be able to see that this inner conflict (“I must do something I don’t want to do”) has led to the physical reaction, perhaps muscle spasm, a stiffening or resistance of the body as a whole, and an inability to carry out the tasks. Or a headache, upon examination, might come with emotions of confusion and helplessness, to which we might be able to associate thoughts like “this is too much”, or “I shouldn’t be asked to do all this”.

Identifying the underlying thoughts and images opens up the possibility of changing them, thus alleviating the symptoms.

Exercise 2: Beliefs about cancer

For this exercise, be in a relaxed, but not a trance state. Make notes as you go along. Consider all of your ideas and beliefs about the implications of your cancer (or other problems) – here are some ideas, but add your own:
- What the word “cancer” means to you; what it meant when you were growing up, and now
- What other associations come up when you think about cancer – no matter how wild
- Your expectations about the course of your own disease. Don’t be content with “I don’t know what’s going to happen; I expect it will turn out OK, but it might not” and other, similar, vague remarks – pin yourself down.
- The impact of the disease on your life, and on others; is this impact inevitable?
- Your ideas/beliefs on possible causes of your cancer
- Any hidden “secrets” that others don’t know about that you think might have contributed.
- Any premonitions that you may have.
- Any spiritual experiences, or sense of being loved and cared for
- Any beliefs about needing to attack or “punish” yourself.
- Do you feel in any way “less” worthy because of your disease? In what way?
- Watch your inner censor: how it steers you away from sensitive areas
- Note that there are “degrees” to beliefs: at a surface level you might say “I think everything will be alright”; but at a deeper level you might say something quite different.

Then focus on the emotions thinking about cancer brings up: likely to be fear in some form, but also could be anger, sadness, frustration, shame, bitterness and so on. When you have the emotion clear in your mind, ask yourself what are the thoughts behind it – it is nearly always thoughts that prompt an emotion. Again, be specific – we need to work conscientiously on this. If there is fear, ask yourself fear of what exactly.
- Does it sometimes feel easier if you could just die? Is there a part of you that would prefer to give up or die?
- Is the effort of dealing with cancer worth it (or to put it another way, do you have strong reasons for wanting to live)?
- If you are angry, why? About what exactly? At whom or what? At yourself?
- Perhaps there is gratitude or some other positive emotion?

This is difficult, demanding work. Most people will not contemplate it – so if you are willing to do so, give yourself a pat on the back! Note that at present we are focussed on the “diagnostic” side of ego beliefs. We’ll move soon to the “therapeutic” side, i.e., how to change our ideas.

Exercise 3: Imagery of cancer

In a deeply relaxed state, using the same procedure as for exercise 1 above, allow images associated with cancer (or other disease) to come up. In effect, we are trying to find out what the cancer or symptoms symbolise, what it is that our minds may be “saying” about it in the tissues. To put it another way (and to repeat): a self-concept is a set of beliefs and images about oneself where the “readout” is primarily in the brain. A physical symptom can be seen as a set of beliefs and images and emotions where the readout is in the tissues of the body.

As a simple example, Seth points out (to Robert Butts) that his hay fever is a symbolic attempt to shut out the world (I’ve found the same to be true in my own life!). Any such “meaning” that a cancer may have is likely to be much less obvious than this, but the attempt is worthwhile. The language of imagery will bypass the tendency most of us have to intellectualise. So, remembering your early efforts in levels 1 and 2 of the Healing Journey, try now to go deeper, and find a visual symbol representing the cancer. Then draw anything that comes up (boldly, in colour). Similarly, find and work with images of your whole body, and whole life. Consultation with experts about the meaning of such images is likely to be helpful, although the ultimate appraisal must be your own; there is a feeling of “rightness” when you find a true interpretation.

Postscript: a valid concern is often expressed that if people believe their mind “caused” their cancer they will feel unjustifiably blamed for their disease. Two things need to be said in response: first that nobody can be blamed for actions, mental or physical, that they did not know to be unhealthy. Second, as discussed above, the mind is only one link – although a potentially important one – in the chain of events leading to cancer. We are not proposing that the mind “says” something like: “I’ll give my body a cancer!”, but rather that the mind, through beliefs and emotions, creates a state of body in which cancer is more likely to occur.
Topic 7: Changing the way we represent cancer in our minds.

In the last 2 sessions (both exploring topic 6) we attempted to uncover our beliefs about cancer (or other symptoms and illnesses), and to find symbols representing them in our minds. Following this “diagnostic” phase of our investigation of mind-cancer relationship, we now progress to the “therapeutic” phase – changing these beliefs and symbols, in the hope that this may affect the progression of the disease. Our approach will be essentially the same as for the analogous project of changing self-concept (topic 4).

The options open to us depend entirely on our views on the way mind may influence cancer (see the chart in topic 6).

1. If we are pure materialists, we believe that cancer is simply an unfortunate accident and that nothing the mind can do will affect it: we therefore must rely exclusively on medical treatment.

2. If we agree that unhealthy behaviours, notably smoking and poor diet, may promote cancer (and there is now good evidence for this), we may adjust our behaviours prior to cancer, and expect the risk to go down. Sometimes the evidence on diet, particularly, is taken to mean that changing diet will change the rate of progression of cancer, once it has occurred. Progression is a different process from initiation of the disease; there is no good evidence for an effect of diet on it, although it seems possible that some such effects might occur. However, it is very difficult to decide exactly what kind of diet might be therapeutic among the welter of conflicting claims and speculation.

3. We are on slightly firmer ground in reviewing effects of stress – using the word broadly to mean any lifestyle patterns that cause undue strain on the body, a sense of being unable to cope, or hopelessness. We have already seen, when investigating self-concept, that ideas and images in the mind have physical consequences: the kind of internal environment that may accompany aspects of low self-esteem (anxiety and depression, for example), is very likely also to affect resistance to disease. There is good scientific evidence that “stress” can depress the immune system, which protects us against some (by no means all) cancers. So it is logical, following what is known at present, to try to construct a calmer, more satisfying life if we are battling the disease (we investigated this approach in more detail in topic 5 and will do so again in future sessions).

4. Views 4 and 5 on the chart in topic 6 have in common the idea that the mind contributes to development of illnesses by promoting a representation, or “picture” in the body of conflicts that cannot readily be acted upon, like a desire to escape a life situation, or frustration at perceived deficiencies in oneself, or at something that one may want to do but which is seen as too dangerous or difficult. Symptoms, in other words, are seen as having meaning; that is, they can be a way in which the body expresses something. This is obvious in the case of sudden pain caused by trauma, or muscular stiffness after overexertion, but is much more obscure in chronic disease. As pointed out earlier, these ideas have been quite widely discussed, but do not form part of mainstream western medicine. We attempted, in the last 2 sessions, to find ideas, images and emotional reactions that might connect our mental process to development of symptoms and disease. We now apply what we have found (and it is very individual) to attempting to change the course of cancer.

Please review topic 4: the techniques we will use in our work on cancer parallel those used to change self-concept.

1. **Changing “negative” beliefs.** The obvious first approach is to try to change any beliefs that cancer inevitably means death. Many cancers are completely cured, and even with late-stage disease when the prognosis is poor, unexpected recoveries occur. Medicine puts this down to chance: we have shown that it may, at times, be associated with involvement in self-healing methods (see the papers reproduced on our web site [www.healingjourney.ca](http://www.healingjourney.ca)). So if you find that your inner predictions are
something like: “I’ve got cancer and there’s nothing I can do”, recognize that this is simply not true – there is a great deal you can do, with the help of programs like the Healing Journey or other methods promoting psychological and spiritual growth. The first method then, is to reject beliefs and images of disaster. This does not mean taking a Polyaanna-like approach - we can readily accept that a condition might be fatal, while at the same time recognizing there is room for us to do a lot to try to change the outcome. At the very least, our quality of life will be improved by this kind of attitude. Many people, after a diagnosis of cancer, live in an agony of catastrophizing thoughts. This is unnecessary, and most could be helped to take a different view.

2. **Using “positive” affirmations.** This method follows on the heels of the first: recall the IDEA acronym that we introduced in topic 4 as a way of shifting self-concept. The same conditions apply here. The “I” letter refers to the need for intensity of desire to change our beliefs, if we hope for results. Likewise “D”: to change old habits of thought requires dedicated, frequent and regular action. Under “E”, in the acronym, we need to expect that we can make a difference to the overall experience, and very possibly to the disease itself. Item “A” is point 1 above – avoiding the unnecessary suffering (and possibly worse physical outcome) caused by constantly indulging in “negative” thoughts.

3. **Using the “ego triangle”**: this depends on our prior work diagnosing the beliefs, images (or other sensory representations) and emotions that reside in our minds when we think about our disease (topic 6). New symbols need to be found to replace the old ones that were generated unconsciously. Images are a type of symbol that speak directly to the body: as in levels 1 and 2 of the Healing Journey, we devise images that appear to effectively remove or oppose the images that we have already created to represent our cancer. We can enter the “triangle” at the emotions step also, and when we find fear, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and other “negatives”, try to uncover the thoughts associated with them. The thoughts/ideas then become our point of intervention. An image of oneself as healthy and looking forward to a meaningful, productive life, doing things that excite us, can be another potent tool (see the next point below).

4. **Cultivating a compelling direction in life.** Here the work we did in topic 5 translates directly into a possible influence on physical disease, as first pointed out by the pioneer in this field, Lawrence LeShan.

Methods 5 and 6 from topic 4 (Changing beliefs about ourselves) may also be applied to opposing cancer: we will access them in later sessions.

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**Exercise 1. Changing the way we think about disease.**

Go over your work from exercise 2 in topic 6 (or if you haven’t yet done that, it can be done now as a necessary preliminary to this one): there is a wealth of opportunity for beneficial change in most peoples’ unedited ideas about disease. For example, if you have been thinking something like: “this cancer has made me a less significant person, and I can’t any longer do all that I want to do”, you might replace that with “this cancer is the major challenge of my life; I will face it with all my resources, and find ways to do whatever I need at this time”. If you feel angry at the world/fate/God/the medical system, you might change that to: “nobody, including myself, is to “blame” for this cancer; I accept it as a motivator to move ahead with my personal growth”.

If it seems impossible that changing beliefs could affect a physical disease like cancer, it may help to consider that “cancer” is really a **process**, rather than a “thing”. Some of the cells in the body are “cancering” –
that is, multiplying and not heeding the normal regulatory checks that the body tries to impose on all dividing cells (probably through hormones in the tissues; little is known about this). A similar way to think of it is as an “unhealed wound”. With perspectives like these it is easier to accept that the mind, acting through nervous and hormonal systems, could stop the cancerting process and encourage a healing process. So if you have uncovered a relevant “meaning” for your disease, your affirmations or imagery might be along the following lines: “I can solve this problem/ express this frustration another way – you can stop spreading now!).

As always, though, be aware that this is a difficult and unconventional enterprise, one that would be acceptable in some circles but not by western medicine. There is absolutely no need to feel you have “failed” if you give this your best effort and the disease continues to grow – some cancers are probably too aggressive to be stopped by any kind of intervention.

**Exercise 2: Developing healing imagery.**

Here you will want to draw on your work in exercise 3 of topic 6, where you looked for images representing cancer, your body and your life. The aim now is to change them, in similar fashion to changing verbal affirmations (words are also symbols!), except that you can work more “deeply” with images than with words. In a relaxed state/light trance, bring up again any images you associate with cancer (or other conditions) and how it affects the rest of your life. Try not to impose a “corrected” image with your reasoning mind, but instead, ask what needs to change, and how. Your Inner Healer could be invited in, to offer guidance. As with all of this work in the deeper part of the mind, the aim is to allow unanticipated ideas and images to emerge; often they will be unclear, perhaps fleeting. The first thing to “pop into one’s mind” is often the most significant. When you have settled on imagery that seems life-enhancing, then you can use it as a form of affirmation, by bringing it to mind many times during the day (you’ll recall we did some of this back in levels 1 and 2 of the HJ program, but here we are trying to place it in a wider context, the idea that we create, or at least mould, our reality with our minds).

Emotions can be worked on in a similar way – first identifying them, then deliberately changing them towards more upbeat feelings. This usually requires associating them with positive thoughts about what you can do, and about desirable outcomes.

Then “enlarge” the sphere of your imagery to encompass your whole self, and your life (loved ones, occupations, recreations), and generate imagery of yourself as healthy and going about your life in the future.
**Topic 8: Summary of phase 1: Exploring the power of beliefs.**

Our beliefs, meaning simply long-held and often-restated ideas, have the power to shape our worlds. Most important: our beliefs about ourselves and our relation to the world define our self-concept, which in turn determines almost everything we think and do. Even modern western psychology, which is very limited in scope, endorses this. And if we are open to the ideas of the great wisdom traditions and spiritual teachers we get an expanded view: according to Seth, for example: “The personality is given the greatest gift of all; you get exactly what you want to get”; “beliefs create reality”; “you get what you concentrate on”.

Why don’t we realize this? There are at least two obstacles to doing so. First, we seldom examine our beliefs, almost never in any depth or detail; in fact, we hardly see the need to look at our long-held ideas, which we take to be “facts”. Second, we often hold conflicting beliefs, which cancel each other out, so to speak. For example, we may believe: “I think I’m going to be OK, and will recover from this disease”, while underneath, out of awareness, we are telling ourselves “I’m doomed”.

This course, Healing Journey level 6, is a guide to examining your beliefs, so that you have the opportunity to change them if you wish. Phase 1 focusses on your beliefs directly, but they will keep intruding in the later phases, and in fact being aware of one’s beliefs is a pre-requisite for doing effective work on “expanding” one’s sense of self (phase 2), or contacting spiritual and alternative dimensions of the self (phase 3). The exercises laid out in phase 1 are basic, therefore, and can with benefit be done many times. (For those who want to read more, I suggest again “The Nature of Personal Reality”, a Seth book, by Jane Roberts).

**Summary of the exercises in phase 1:**

These fall into 2 groups: the first group focusses on self-concept, vitally important in our lives, and relatively simple to examine if we are willing to take the time. The second concerns beliefs about cancer (or other illnesses). We see that we can apply almost precisely the same methods as for self-concept, although beliefs about physical health seem to be more “buried” and difficult to access and change, perhaps because the process is unconventional and less familiar to us.

**Introduction:** the theory behind this process

**Topic 1:** Beliefs about oneself generally; what we think others think of us

**Topic 2:** Self-concept: especially the idea that we need to constantly “dig deeper”; beliefs seem to be “layered”.

**Topic 3:** The ego triangle: understanding and using the close relationship between beliefs (cognition), mental imagery, and emotions. This was presented as a crucial piece of mental “software” that influences much of what happens in the body.

**Topic 4:** Changing our beliefs about ourselves.

**Topic 5:** Finding a compelling purpose in life. This is key to having the determination to explore and expand the self.

**Topic 6:** Beliefs about physical symptoms, and cancer (ideas and imagery)

**Topic 7:** Further work on beliefs about cancer.

**Topic 8:** Changing our beliefs, and the way we represent cancer in our minds.

It can, of course, be valuable to go back over the exercises in this phase of the work, and probe more deeply. People who have done the course several times typically say that they come back to the same exercises from a different “baseline”, so to speak, and learn more about themselves from each exploration.
**Topic 9: Mapping the “Space” of the Self.**

Having examined the beliefs accessible to our everyday working minds, we now seek, in part 2 of our work, to expand our awareness to further parts of the mind. This expansion and broader understanding will allow us more options for healing, much as an adult has more available options in any situation than a child does. We can thus take some responsibility for it, as an adult must. The main difficulty we encounter will be old, limited habits of thinking. The main practical methods are reading widely, to enhance understanding, and the practice of meditative and introspective techniques.

According to spiritual masters in many traditions, what we think of as our “mind” is simply one tiny part of a vast “sea” of consciousness. Consciousness overall is arranged in a series or hierarchy of levels, the “higher” levels encompassing the lower. Each of us is a part of this, with potential access to all of it. However, we usually think of ourselves as restricted to the ego-mind, a tiny part of the whole, specialised for operating in the physical world, a viewpoint that is not bad, just very limiting. If the whole were an ocean, the ego self might be a wave, tiny and temporary on the surface.

A “map” of the mind will help chart our way (see the end of the notes for this topic), recognizing that this is simply an aid – we are not dealing with material things in space but mapping consciousness. The map is not the territory, and the lines shown on the map are not real, since there are no boundaries between the different levels of consciousness. Many versions of this map are described in spiritual and metaphysical texts: as before, I draw on the Seth books as the clearest and most detailed description I have found anywhere.

A computer analogy may be useful: what we normally consider to be the self is simply the ego mind, a separate small “program” running within a much larger array of programs, that are, in turn, part of the “internet”! “Deeper” programs, out of awareness, are also constantly running (keeping the body going, for example); they might be compared to executive programs on a computer. The body itself is simply the hardware, or shell currently housing the software, or mind. The computer analogy is appealing here: we know that we can copy all the vital information on to a memory stick, then re-house it in another machine!

Our quest can be seen as gradually moving outward from the little ego-self to contact and invoke the potentials of the areas of consciousness around (and part of) us. We have perhaps found that we can fairly readily retrieve beliefs (regular patterns of thinking) that were previously outside our awareness. As we move further out, so to speak, we will encounter other aspects of the self, for example “dream selves”, that may be quite different from our normal waking selves, although just as valid. The diagram shows an inner (or higher or deeper) Self - the capital “S” helps to distinguish it from the egoic self. If we ask ourselves “who I am, really?” a simple answer is: “I am this Whole Self”, or Higher Self, plus various other forms of self (like dream personalities and others that we can leave aside for now), right down to the ego self that we all know and identify with normally. In fact, the Whole Self embraces many little ego personalities. It is the overarching Self (or soul) that survives death, according to Seth, and many others.

If it seems complicated, the essential practical idea is this: the familiar ego is the part that is intimately connected with the body, but we also have a much more comprehensive and powerful Higher Self, normally out of our awareness. There is a very close relationship between ego and Higher Self. While the ego has a degree of autonomy (free will) and makes its choices independently, the Higher Self tries to carry out (materialize) these wishes or expectations. Illness and suffering seem to contradict this, at first glance: few of us “want” illness. However, as we have begun to discover, the deeper recesses of our smaller minds may have all kinds of wishes and expectations of which we are not normally aware, for example, a desire to get out of a situation by any means, or an expectation of being punished as a physical representation of the guilt (shame) that we feel (an idea that is thoroughly explained in “A Course in Miracles”). Illness is often fostered by conflict, when 2 or more contrary wishes are held at the same time. For example we may want to lash out at someone or something, but be afraid to do so.

The broader message from esoteric sources is that illness (and indeed the whole material world) is not something visited upon us, but is an environment we generate ourselves. Thus self-healing is the process of...
uncovering and minimising all of the psychological “blockages”, conflicts and misunderstandings that prevent us from contacting and cooperating with the higher levels of ourselves. The ego has relatively limited capacity to heal: by tapping into or connecting with our higher levels, we greatly increase our potential. Our main practical problem is that the ego is reluctant to invoke this power for fear of having to relinquish its own control.

Note that we are not denying the essential role of physical mechanisms, such as the immune system, or medical treatments, in healing the body. As discussed before, there is a chain of events in any healing, with molecular and cellular events like immune reactions right at the “front line”, so to speak. We all rely on these physical processes. Animals and small children get cancer, and have no other healing options. But where the mind is well-developed, as in adult humans, it forms another important, potentially overarching link in the chain. A limited ego mind, intent on protecting its little domain, is liable to create all kinds of suffering and ill-health, through poor behavioural choices, unskillful management of stressful interactions in life, and through unaware instructions to the Higher Self, which the latter may then take literally (“I can’t stand it here – get me out!”). But as the mind “expands”, meaning that it becomes aware of its greater dimensions, many other healing options emerge. This is something that has been known for millennia in many cultures, but has been largely forgotten in ours.

Earlier in the Healing Journey we investigated judgment, resentments, projections, and other routine actions of the everyday mind that separate us from our higher Selves. These ideas are worth revisiting now. But above all, in attempting to contact other levels of ourselves, it is essential to first quieten the constant chatter of the ego mind. Awareness, “knowings”, emerge in silence. Meditation is the classical way of quietening the mind, and needs to be reviewed and its practice reinforced at this stage. Below are 3 exercises designed to enhance our ability to be silent.

**Exercise 1. Staring at an object without thinking.** Sit in front of an object that does not arouse a lot of emotionally-laden associations: a potted plant might suit, or a wall hanging. While timing yourself, try to gaze at it (shutting your eyes as needed) for about 5 – 10 minutes, without thinking. At the end of this time, note your thoughts (if any) and emotional or other reactions towards the object.

**Exercise 2. Walking without thinking.** Try, while walking, to keep the mind quiet. You will probably find that you can do it for only a short time, perhaps seconds, but persevere, noting differences in the way you perceive your environment, and the “felt-sense” that goes with being silent while in the world.

**Exercise 3. A period of silence, while with others.** This is an exercise that people often decline to do (a bit like the “mirror gazing” of topic 4!), but which, if attempted, can tell us a great deal about many facets of our selves. Select a period (perhaps 3 hours) during which you will not speak, while around other people. You need to explain that you are doing a self-awareness exercise. Observe closely all the thoughts and feelings that emerge.
A diagram of the personal “mind” or “Whole Self” (bolder line) nested within a larger hierarchy of consciousness. Note that the lines are not real – just a convenience for thinking about levels of mind. Also note that the diagram is not at all “to scale”, i.e. the Whole Self is a minuscule portion of All That Is (the Divine Ground), and the ego mind a small part of the “Whole Mind”.

“All That Is”

Many higher levels

Inner/Higher/Whole Self

Other aspects of the Self (e.g. dream selves)

Deeper mind

Ego mind

Body

In topic 9 we examined a “map” of the Self, noting that the representation of parts surrounded by lines is simply an aid to thinking: there are no actual boundaries between levels of consciousness. However, it is meaningful to identify different levels or organisations of consciousness; some are much more encompassing or “higher” than others. Dream awareness extends beyond that of the waking mind, the Whole Self (see the diagram in topic 9) is much more extensive than the ego, and the Divine Mind, or All That Is, embraces every consciousness that exists.

Another way to think of it is that our consciousness is positioned at the centre of a web of relationships, from which point we can move “outwards”. While in part 1 of this course we stayed relatively “close” to the images familiar to our everyday minds, in this phase we want to extend out further. Some of our moves will be small, like examining sub-personalities, and our dreaming selves, others will take us a little further, as in today’s topic of contacting an Inner Healer. Then in part 3 we will pursue the more traditionally spiritual endeavour of trying to relate to the highest, most all-encompassing level of our consciousness, the Divine Source.

Clearly, access to these higher or more comprehensive levels could assist our healing. In fact it may be an essential part of “mind-body” healing, since, as Einstein and others have pointed out, “no problem can be solved at the level at which it occurs”. In other words, we need to move to a higher, more all-embracing level, in this case, to the “Higher Self”. How might we contact our higher levels? The first requirement, as we saw in the last session, is to minimise the chatter of the ego mind, at least for a time. Then in a quiet state, we need to “listen”, meaning simply to be aware and receptive to whatever emerges. We can steer this process somewhat, if we wish: for example, we might “ask” to contact our “Inner Healer” (as we did in HJ level 2); or if we have religious beliefs, we might attempt to bring an avatar, like Jesus or the Divine Mother, into our awareness. We can use visual imagery to help us, in the same way as we attempted to find symbols representing disease, or how we see our selves, earlier in the course.

People sometimes ask: “am I just making these images up?” What we are doing is giving form to aspects of our consciousness that are in fact formless, in order to interact with them in a way that is familiar to us, for example by engaging in a dialogue. The physicist Amit Goswami, in his book “The Self-Aware Universe: how consciousness creates the material world”, explains that this is what we are doing all the time - giving form to what he calls “formless potentia”. Tolle, in “The Power of Now”, refers to contacting the “unmanifested”. Another way to describe it is that we are focussing on one small part of the vast “sea” of consciousness that surrounds and permeates us. So that, in a sense, we are “making it up”. This is not really an unfamiliar process: as the mystics explain, we make up all forms, even those around us in daily life! So when we contact an “Inner Healer”, we are constructing an image to represent a part of our wider consciousness that is intuitively known, but not physically seen. The specific images we come up with will depend on our past experience, and will be unique to us. However, when many people subscribe to one particular way of thinking, as in a religion, they may summon up similar images of, say, Jesus, Krishna or the Buddha, since all are steeped in a common way of thinking about and visualising such avatars (incarnations of the Divine).

Exercise 1. Examining our resistance to being “guided”. In HJ level 4, “Assignment 7”, we did an exercise to identify our resistance to being guided by some higher level of the Self, or by a divine agency. It would be helpful to repeat this here (the workbook for level 4 can be downloaded free from our website, www.healingjourney.ca). In brief:

- How does your ego-self react to the idea that some higher level has much more wisdom to offer, and will guide much of your thinking life if you allow it? What am I afraid I might lose? What might I have to give up? What would be the advantages? Could this guide my healing? Any other questions you can think of to pose to yourself........
Exercise 2.a. Writing a 1-act play: a dialogue between your ego and your Higher Self. Write a short “play” (a page or two is enough) with 2 characters: your ego self, and some higher aspect of yourself – it could be, for example, your Whole or “Higher Self”, or an avatar, like Jesus, or The Divine Source/God. Do this in the form of a series of statements or question by one character and responses by the other, i.e. in “play” form. Preface the action sequences with a sentence or short paragraph explaining (to an imaginary audience) who these two characters are.

Exercise 2b. Acting the play: Have 2 individuals (you may be one of them) read your play while sitting facing one another (incorporate emotions and actions as they seem appropriate).

Exercise 3. Conducting a dialogue with your Higher Self. (This is similar to exercise 2, but is done alone): In a relaxed state, simply imagine that there is a source of wisdom within you, that you are calling the “Higher Self”. Imagine yourself as alternately being this HS or your ego self. Pose questions from one to the other, making notes of any answers. (This may sound a bit odd, but it is quite surprising what new insights can be gained through this process). For example, if you have cancer you might ask what it is “seeking to accomplish”, and what you can do about it.

Exercise 4. Visiting the Inner Healer. Review the exercise we did back in level 2; it is one way of “visiting” your Inner Healer/Higher Self, and beginning a dialogue with it. If you don’t have the relevant CD, and want to use an audio support, it can be downloaded through a link on our website. Alternatively, once you have become familiar with the process, you can dispense with the “journey” through a woods and so on, and simply relax deeply and ask directly that the Inner Healer will appear.

Reading for this week. “The Power of Now”, by Eckhart Tolle, especially chapter 7 on “portals to the unmanifested” (i.e. to the higher dimensions of self):

Tolle’s “portals” to the unmanifested or higher dimensions of Self

Tolle, in “The Power of Now” describes 7 “portals into the unmanifested”, which simply means ways of contacting higher levels of the Self. You will find them described in chapter 7 of the book – I highly recommend it.

- Portal 1: The “Now”, i.e. resting in the present moment.
- Portal 2: Cessation of thinking
- Portal 3: “Surrender”, meaning letting go of emotional resistance to what is.
- Portal 4: “Getting in touch with the energy field of the inner body”.
- Portal 5: Silence
- Portal 6: Space/nothingness (i.e., being aware of this).
- Portal 7: the portal that opens at the time of death (involuntary)
Topic 11. Dreams: recording and analysis

We will have 2 sessions on dreams, which are very important in our work on expanding the sense of self, in particular because they show us undeniably how we create a reality with our minds. A dream may be full of convincing action – during which we do not leave our beds! Furthermore, while few of us have “out-of-body” experiences, perhaps the most dramatic evidence that consciousness does not depend on a physical body, we all dream, and are capable of remembering dreams if we wish to do so.

Dreams are an avenue into another reality; our dreaming consciousness has simply turned in another direction, so to speak, a process somewhat analogous to changing the channel on a TV set. The dream reality is more fundamental than the waking one, however: esoteric teachers tell us that it harbours great creativity: that our physical world emerges from it (something certain “primitive” cultures understood!). It is a state in which communication can occur more easily between levels of consciousness, that is, between all parts of the greater Self.

As you will find when you study your dreams, different laws seem to operate there. Time and space are much less in evidence: we can sometimes fly, or move instantly from one place to another! Ideas are expressed immediately, e.g. as visual symbols, without the time delay experienced in waking reality. Some people learn to become aware that they are dreaming and direct their actions (such as flying) deliberately. Healing is said to be possible in dreams, and spiritual experiences often occur within them. Insights may be acquired, for example by posing a question to ourselves before going to sleep, and finding a symbolic answer in a dream. Clearly, it is a dimension of ourselves well worth cultivating.

We can divide our dream study into 2 phases: first the “capturing” and recording of dreams, and second, analysing them. At the end of these topic notes there is a summary of the main points about both strategies. The most important prerequisite for remembering dreams is the desire to do so: if you are not recalling any, examine your thinking for any ambivalence – does it seem like too much trouble, or are you afraid of what you might find? Then in the analytic phase, the main point is to be intuitive rather than rational/intellectual; you are asking the deeper levels of mind to show you something new, which they will do, but in their own “language” – and the symbols used in that language tend to be visual and other images, rather than words. We need to find out what those symbols are able to convey to us. Various methods may be used for this purpose, the most common being to generate lists of ideas associated with each symbol. One or more of these ideas often “resonates” – i.e., there can be an “Ah-ha” feeling: “so that’s what it means!” We each have to do our own work on this – lists of standard meanings for symbols have little value.

There are very many books on dream analysis, which you can find in any New Age bookstore. “The meaning of your dreams” by D.F.Melbourne and K. Hearne seems to be a good one by 2 dream scientists. “Realities of the Dreaming Mind: the Practice of Dream Yoga” by Swami Sivananda Radha is an outstanding and accessible account, particularly for those interested in ultimately understanding the spiritual meanings of their dreams.

Exercises: these can be split between the 2 weeks in which we are studying dreams. You might, for example, do exs 1–3 the first week and make a start on trying to “catch” your dreams, then spend the second week on ex 4, a determined effort to record and analyse dreams.

Exercise 1. How our senses create our world.
(I have drawn and adapted some of these exercises from a valuable “Seth workbook” entitled “Create your own reality” by Nancy Ashley, Prentice-Hall, 1984).

Part1: Exploring sensory perception
(a) Make sure you understand the difference between these 2 operations of the body: (1) “sensory perception”, meaning the taking in, and acknowledging, of “raw, sense data”, i.e. visual data, hearing, smelling, tasting,
feeling touch. (2) “Conception”, or thinking about things, forming concepts in the mind. Often this immediately follows a sensory experience – we see something, then we label it and think about it. Please do explore this by looking around and noticing how quickly thought follows perception, and how difficult it is to look at things and not think about them! Perhaps you have already tried walking along the street just noticing (i.e. perceiving) everything without any thought (labelling, judging, remembering, fantasising….).

(b) Sit with eyes closed and focus on individual sounds around you. Notice other sensations in the body: aches and pains, smells, taste (in the mouth), touch (e.g. of clothing, the chair). Feel where the muscles of your body are tense. Try to capture feelings within the body organs, e.g. in your gastro-intestinal tract.

(c) Now open your eyes and note how rich and diverse the visual stimuli are. Try to bring the inner world and the outer world together, i.e. continue to note how the (apparent) outer world registers on your senses. Think of it as an extension of your senses. Feel yourself as part of this process of creating and experiencing the world about you.

(d) Repeat the eyes closed/open cycle, (b) then (c), a few times.

As always, write about your findings. Try the whole practice a number of times.

Part 2. Exploring how we create what we see
(Quote from ACIM, Workbook lesson # 2: “I have given everything I see all the meaning it has for me”).

(a) Find a place by a window where you can look out at a garden or interesting local scene, as if it were simply a picture. Alternatively, you could do this gazing at an indoor scene – or try both. See the scene as representing your imaginings, feelings, beliefs about reality. Sense this process beginning within, then projected out (as if you had a movie projector inside your mind). Feel your energy and desire translating inner processes into outward form.

(b) Study the details of this picture: what do they say to you? Have you seen it differently at different times (e.g. at different seasons)? What stands out? What varies and what stays the same?

(c) Try to change the picture slightly; use your imagination to alter it.

This exercise is not a simple one; but even if you can get a slight impression of how we create by projection, that will be a valuable step in breaking down the cherished illusion that we are nothing more than passive spectators!

Exercise 2. Associations to a recent event.
Pick any recent event and “relive” it in your imagination. Let your associations flow. Other events or memories will spring to mind. Try to recall the emotions connected with them. Write it all down, then construct a “map” or flow chart showing how the different streams of memories led from one to another.

Exercise 3. Constructing a waking (day) dream.
Create a dream for yourself, starting with whatever event or image you like. Let it simply unfold, naturally, playfully; let the images flow (it will help to be in a relaxed state). You can imagine that you are the Higher Self, watching it all unfold. Let it end in whatever way it does without trying to force a pattern or conclusion on it.

Now write this daydream down, and analyse it as you would a sleeping dream (see below), i.e. underline the symbols (words) that seem important, and generate a number of associations to each.
Exercise 4. **Recording and analysing your dreams**: see the directions below. Ideally, watching and analysing your dreams can become a regular feature of daily life.

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**Recording and analysing dreams**

**“Capturing” and recording**

- The key requirement is **intention**; we need honestly and intensely to desire to remember and record our dreams. Affirm this to yourself before going to bed.
- Have a pen and paper ready by the bed. Explain to any sleeping partner what you are up to.
- When you wake in the night (and this can be made more probable by consuming lots of liquids before retiring!) keep still, and see if you have been dreaming (we all have many dreams each night). If you remember something, move as little as possible as you write down what you can recall – you’ll need a small light, obviously. Don’t get up and walk around first – dreams seem to dissolve with major body activity.
- Be honest, even if you don’t like what you recall.
- If you feel you know what it’s about, note that down too.
- Return to sleep: you may wish to try and continue with the same dream (works sometimes).

**Analysing.**

- Next day, read through what you wrote (or scribbled!)
- Record also what you were doing in the day before the dream; in particular, any activities or thoughts that were emotionally charged.
- Now go through the text (if you are very conscientious you may wish to type it out, but that’s not essential), and underline or highlight every word or phrase that seems to have possible significance – err on the side of underlining more, not less.
- Make a list of these words/phrases. Each one is a symbol, i.e. it stands for something which may be quite different from what it appears to be. Each one is also (obviously) part of yourself – you have created this inner world.
- Now painstakingly go through the list, one by one, making associations to each. For example, you see a **dog**, and you might write: companion/pet, diversion, loving acceptance, my old dog Fido (childhood), warm fuzzies….. ; or you might write: danger, noise, too much energy, responsibilities, vet bills, mess….. and so on: it is different for everyone. You can’t rely on lists of the “meaning” of dream symbols. When you have finished this, you may well find that reading through all your associations points to a meaning for the dream that was quite unexpected. Reinsert the symbolic meanings into the text of the dream, and see how it reads now. The hope is to learn something about yourself that you did not already “know” at the consciously-aware level.

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**Topic 12. Making a graphical array of our beliefs about ourselves (a “belief tree”)**

If you look back over topics 1 – 7 you will recall the great importance of beliefs in the structuring of our lives. These beliefs are not randomly scattered – one or a few of them (about ourselves and our relationship to the world) tend to dominate, and subsidiary beliefs can be grouped into categories. To make this more obvious, one way is to arrange them as a “tree”, with trunk, branches, and progressively smaller or more detailed twigs and leaves. The topics below are simply an indication of what you might consider – you may find others; everyone will have their own tree, with differing branches.

You can construct this as a table (see below), or, for greater impact, draw this up on a large sheet of paper as an actual tree. Another possible metaphor is a river, with tributaries. You can continue the “tree” into the “ground” – looking at the roots of your current personality in childhood and earlier life. The main aim is not so much to retrieve a lot of small details, as to demonstrate to yourself how a few central beliefs about oneself have ramifications in all areas of our lives.

If you find a lot of negativity in your honest appraisal of your qualities and priorities, it is an excellent idea to construct a second tree (either separate or indifferent colours on the same branches, etc) showing the qualities and behaviours you would like and aspire to exhibit. If these trees are to be shown to others, you may want to leave some areas blank (e.g. thoughts about sex), with a code referring to your private descriptions, noted elsewhere.

To stimulate your thinking, I present below a listing of areas of mental life that are important to most of us. You will see that there are major categories, divided into smaller areas (“twigs and leaves”). This is by no means a complete list – everyone is different, so you will need to devise some of your own categories.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table of MY BELIEFS</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ROOTS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic biological fears – my sense of security, vulnerability….</td>
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<td>How I thought parents viewed me….</td>
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<td>Other adults, teachers…</td>
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<td>My peers…..</td>
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<td><strong>TRUNK</strong></td>
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<td>My basic nature: I am ……</td>
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<td>My fears, self-doubt…..</td>
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<td>How the world seems to me; dangerous, safe, depressing, exciting……</td>
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<td><strong>BRANCHES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>twigs</strong></td>
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<td>Branch 1: my relationships - How I believe others view me now</td>
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<tr>
<td>- My need to perform, control, compete.</td>
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<td>- My reactions to others</td>
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<td>- My need to defend myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Actions I must take (in various situations)…</td>
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<tr>
<td>My rights to express myself - How I must act, present myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>- How much I need to hold back</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Examples of holding back, over-reacting, pretending…</td>
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<tr>
<td>How I see my family, intimate - Time and attention I give them</td>
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<td>- Specific instances</td>
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<td><strong>leaves</strong></td>
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<td>Branch 2: My health</td>
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<td>Branch 3: My employment.</td>
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<td>Branch 4: My finance</td>
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<td>Branch 5: My interest in arts and creativity</td>
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<td>Branch 6: My recreation</td>
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<td>Branch 7: My search for purpose, meaning in life</td>
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<td>Branch 8: My beliefs about my ultimate fate (after death)</td>
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Topic 13. Significant events in my life; drawing a “life graph”.

We have been trying to expand our awareness of who we are by attempting to contact a “Higher Self” within, and by observing ourselves operating in the dream state – an accessible state of consciousness different from our ordinary waking one. We move now to expanding the sense of self in another way, by examining our lives, and personalities, more closely. We will first work on a life history – a list of events and ideas that have been significant to us. Then (in later sessions) we will look at our personal qualities in a novel fashion – by defining a number of “sub-personalities” that, taken together, make up what we think of as the self.

Constructing a life history helps us to see that we are not some static entity, but more like a series of selves, apparently strung out over time. While some of our psychological features remain relatively constant, many beliefs and priorities in adults bear little resemblance to those of childhood. As we review the main events of our lives we will no doubt find many things to regret (and somehow these tend to be especially memorable!), but also a number of important happy occasions, and memorable successes or accomplishments. We may be able to identify “choice points” – where we took one alternative route, thus closing off others. Bearing in mind our earlier work on the higher self, we may be able to look back on our life story from that “higher” perspective, with affection and understanding for our often struggling ego-self.

If we are willing to consider a more “esoteric” view, the idea that there is no time, and that all events are happening at once, we may then see the “life review” in a new light. Think about your child, your adolescent self, your young adult, your birth and death, all being present now. Then by trying to find your way “back” to how you thought and felt as a child, you are in fact exploring a dimension of your present self, one that has been set aside but still exists within. Events that happened “back then” are still occurring, and their effects resonate through your “present” experience. The opposite is also true: that what you decide and do now affects your “past”! This is probably unfamiliar, and mind-bending, but there is no reason beyond habit to think of time as a linear arrow – even modern physics has disproved that everyday notion. Can you feel yourself expand as you imagine all of yourself, including past and future, available to you at this moment?

Exercise 1. Making a list, and “graphing” the unfolding of your life.

a) In a relaxed state, slowly go through the “history” of your life (it can be very helpful to look at photos and other aids to memory). List any events that seem important, e.g. starting school, learning to play a sport, getting a good result in some endeavour, graduating from school, marriage or lasting relationships, significant health changes …. and so on. Aim to list around 30 – 40 of these key events.

b) Go through your list and mark, in some way, your successes, accomplishments, or things about which you feel particularly pleased (in this second pass, you may recall events that you forgot the first time round).

c) Note points in your life where you made an important choice, e.g. whom to marry, or choosing one career path over another.

d) With this “map”, and ideally some photos in front of you, go through your material slowly, and recall how you felt at the various points: not just immediate emotions, but the kind of “feeling tone” or quality of your life at each event or stage. Make some notes about your feelings, if you haven’t already done so.

e) Now construct a graph, designed to show how your general mood or emotional “quality of life” was affected by the main events going on at different times. Along the bottom axis, mark out your lifespan in years. Note where some of these main events occurred – i.e., at what age. Then on the vertical (Y) axis, that is, up the left side of the page, draw a line at right angles to the first, from “0%” at the bottom, representing the worst you have ever felt, to 100%, at the top, the best. Now draw, across the page, a line that will move up or down depending on how you felt at the
different stages. For example, if you had a happy childhood, your line might stay near 100 during that period, but it is likely to take a severe dip at the time of a diagnosis of cancer!

You could plot other lines on the same paper if you like, following how they went up and down over time; for example, you might have a line representing feelings of self-worth, and/or degree of satisfaction with career, family development, and any other aspects of your life that have been important to you.

Veterans (i.e. those who have done this before): identify the main choice points. Now speculate on what your life might have been like if you had followed paths other than the one you chose. You can elaborate this as much as you want – developing some complete, “alternative” lives for yourselves. Think about how you might incorporate some of the desirable qualities of these alternatives into your current chosen life.
Topic 14. The “visual autobiography”

Building on the list of significant events of our lives (made in the exercise of the last session), we will now arrange these events in various ways, as shown in the exercise below. The aim is to uncover patterns, i.e., broad general trends, clusters of similar happenings, repetitions of similar events, that may be discernable in this retrospective overview, but which were probably not obvious at the time.

There is a lot in this exercise, which comes from one of the Seth books. Veterans may be interested in doing it all, including parts not tackled at earlier times, but if you are new to this work and find it daunting, the main parts to complete are steps 1 – 4. You could then ponder steps 8 and 9. Step 10 is a very interesting one for everyone, whatever your experience: we all have times in our lives where sudden changes, perhaps the averting of disasters, occurred. Look at these points now from a new perspective – do you feel you may have been “helped” by a higher dimension of yourself, or by a divine force?

Exercise 1: A Visual Autobiography
(adapted from “Nature of the Psyche”, by Jane Roberts, pp 44-45)

Step 1: Start with a numbered list of events of major significance in your life history (If you did this during the last week, start with that list; otherwise, make it now).

Look through the list and pick out main events or situations (perhaps 20 – 40 of them) that had a strong emotional content for you at the time (your birth would not qualify; your marriage presumably would!). Consider interpersonal relationships, education, career, creative activities, hobbies, sports/diversions, spiritual and personal growth activities, travel .....

Step 2: Take a pile of 3 x 5 inch cards, or cut sheets of white typing paper into 6 or 8 equal pieces. Put one “event” on to each card as a simple diagram, with a descriptive label.

Step 3: Arrange the cards in chronological order: see what patterns you can find, e.g. “childhood anxieties and satisfactions”, “learning that I was responsible for getting ahead”, “finding a career path”, and so on. Consult with and compare your “life graph”, plotting your general emotional satisfaction (from “0” very low to “100”, peaceful, blissful) against your age.

Step 4: Now disrupt the time sequence, if necessary, and instead see if you can group the cards into a number of clusters of related events. Draw a “map” of this arrangement on paper – a series of boxes or circles connected by lines would be one way. Make this big and bold enough that you can show it to the group, perhaps even pin it on the wall, if you want.

Step 5: Order the cards backwards in time, starting with the present – and note any insights, in particular how your current state of mind has developed from earlier conditions.

Step 6: Select the scene which causes the strongest emotional response (or alternatively, the one you think is most significant to the course of your life – they may well be the same). Now see if you can cluster some of the other events/cards in groups around this central one (the idea is to see if other events led up to, or were prompted by, a single, seminal happening).
**Step 7:** (and this could be done at each step as you go along): write notes on whatever you discover about the patterns and themes in your life. You may well find one or two main themes during your adult life. What has given you the greatest satisfaction? What has most held you back? What have been the factors contributing to your sense of satisfaction or success, on the one hand, and unhappiness or “failure” on the other?

**Step 8:** Find a symbol for your life (a flowing river? Climbing a mountain? A descent into a morass? Learning to fly?......), and a symbol for yourself – one that may have changed during the course of your life. Ponder these symbols and write about them. You could also try interpreting your life as if it were a dream.

**Step 9:** Where is your life “pointing” or going? What do you now see as the most important theme or direction for your life?

**Step 10:** Identify times when you feel you were helped, by the Higher Self or a divine agency.

**Veterans** (i.e. those who have done this before): as suggested in the last session, you can enlarge the scope of this exercise by identifying the main choice points, then speculating on what your life might have been like if you had followed paths other than the one you chose, elaborating this as much as you want.
**Topic 15. Listing our personality traits.**

As a preliminary to finding “sub-personalities” in our deeper or unconscious minds, we can work first at the ordinary, cognitive level, listing our various personality traits. Below is a list of some of the main qualities people display, grouped into clusters. We are all different; there’s no real “good” or “bad”, but it is important to be honest with oneself. Look for qualities that seem relevant to you, then make a note on how you see yourself in that general area. For example, under “emotional expressiveness” one person might write: “constantly driven by emotional reaction to events”, whereas another person might write “tend to suppress my emotions and rarely display them”. There are many ways to do this – the list is only a prompt to help you get started, and you may decide to add traits and list them in different ways. The aim is to come up with a number of personality characteristics that describe who you are.

It is useful to draw a scale from 0 to 100, for each quality, as shown below; then mark where you feel you fall on the scale (and see separate page):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 (don’t have this quality at all)</th>
<th>(fully express this quality) 100</th>
</tr>
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</table>

**Benevolence:** Ask yourself if you usually feel inclined to help others; also whether you tend to have warm, even loving, feelings vs feeling the need to be self-protective or avoidant. Another aspect of this is the degree to which one tends to judge other people or situations, vs accepting them.

**Activity:** This is about the extent to which you tend to be an active person, always on the go, doing things, getting involved. Or maybe you’re the kind of person who lets things take their course, hoping for the best.

**Self assertion:** We can be “assertive” in different ways. For example, do you tend to stick up for yourself, versus feeling unworthy or unable to do that effectively? Another kind of self assertion is the quality of adventurousness, tending to try new things, to experiment, to assert your own way of doing things.

**Self absorbtion:** Do you tend to be absorbed by your own needs and interests, or are you more inclined to be interested in what is going on around you? How concerned are you with the needs of others?

**Habits of thought:** Are you someone who relies mainly on intellect, making rational appraisals, or do you tend to go with impulses, intuition and feeling (or both)? Are you a seeker after new ideas (or not)?

**Emotional expressiveness.** How do you manage your feelings? By hiding them, or at least keeping them in reserve, vs letting emotions come out, and letting yourself feel what’s going on inside?

**Sensual interest:** The extent to which you tend to be drawn to sensual experience, through interest in things like food, sex, comfort, distractions for the mind.

**Social inclinations:** The preference for being in the company of others where possible, vs being alone, and attending to one’s own interests. The extent to which family and friends preoccupy you.

**Spiritual interest:** The extent of one’s mystical or spiritual inclinations – whether or not spiritual matters seem compelling, and whether we devote time to them.
**Imaginativeness and creativity:** This is about being constantly open to new ideas or ways of doing things vs being more conservative, and preferring the familiar ways. Also about interest in the arts or crafts, and in making or doing original creations of your own.

**Anxiety/confidence:** People obviously differ in the extent to which they tend to worry about things and thus become prone to anxiety, or to feel pretty much on top of things, without worrying so much.

**Organisation:** ask yourself if you are an organiser, or whether you let events unfold without trying to control them much. Is career important to you?

**Persistence:** The extent to which you stick at things until you get what you want, vs becoming discouraged if things don’t go your way.

After thinking about this list, and adding your own ideas, now try to come up with a short list of brief phrases that describe you; some examples (one person would not exhibit all of these!):

A manager: I organise, control, keep order  
A creative person or artist: love to create new things  
A thinker: fascinated by ideas, and working things out.  
A wounded child: I still feel the effects of early abuses.  
A helper: driven by sympathy to try to help others  
A sensualist: seeking experiences of the body  
A parent: my kids need most of my energy  
An impatient striver: always wanting to accomplish  
An intuitive: seek to feel my way through life  
A self-preoccupied person; have enough to do managing myself  
A lover of the company of others  
A career person: this matters most to me  
A seeker/explorer: of spiritual and other ideas and experiences.  
A failure: things never work out for me  
A fighter: I won’t let things get the better of me

and so on. Remember, you are unique.

Pick one or two (or more) of the qualities that are most typical of you, and draw a symbol representing that; this could be a diagram of you “doing your thing”, or of an animal or environment that typifies the quality, or any other symbol, realistic or abstract. Alternatively, write a poem about yourself!
Topic 16. Accessing our “sub-personalities”

We can identify in our minds collections of related ideas that form patterns of behaviour or traits that we often display (and see the previous topic on “Listing our personality traits”). For example, a person may be readily affected by the suffering of others, eager to help them, perhaps feeling guilty about selfish inclinations, having a need to prove his or her own worth, maybe with lofty ideals about all of us being brothers and sisters – and this cluster might constitute a “helper” or “healer” personality trait. As another example, someone might believe (because of early life experiences), that others will always try to harm him, and that it is necessary to be tough and vigilant at all times – a cluster that might represent a “fighter” of a certain kind. Most of us have within a “scared child” that was more obvious when we were small, but is less on display in adulthood. We can call these aspects of ourselves “sub-personalities”, and recognize that they can take over control of our behaviour at times. Different circumstances bring different sub-personalities to the fore; for example a fright may cause the scared child to control us temporarily. Such a narrow focus usually does not lead to the most mature and beneficial way of acting – we are better served when all aspects of ourselves consider, in an integrated way, how best to respond to situations.

The sub-personality work – somewhat unconventional, but well-tested over many decades – has as its aims the identifying of these clusters of characteristics, these semi-autonomous parts of the whole person, and allowing them to assume a visible form. We might, for example, be able to picture ourselves as a small child, at the mercy of domineering adults. Or a more fanciful symbol might emerge from our unconscious, like a knight on horseback, representing that part of ourselves that rides to the defence of others. Such symbols are intensely individual, and quite fascinating when we allow them to form. We can then interact with them, for example in a dialogue between the whole or core self and the sub-personalities, encouraging them to express what they want and need, helping them find a constructive way to achieve that, prompting them to grow or mature, and promoting harmony and integration between the various sub-personalities to serve the interests of the whole self. Healing of mind and body may follow. (A fascinating account of healing from cancer using this approach can be found in “Mind, Fantasy and Healing, by Alice Hopper Epstein, 1989. – available from Amazon).

Exercise 1. Giving shape to some of our personality aspects or traits

In the last session we listed some of our personality traits and came up with clusters or patterns of behaviour that could be captured by labels like “manager”, “helper”, “fighter”, “wounded child”, and others. The aim of this exercise is to develop visual symbols or representations of such patterns, e.g., if the pattern (sub-personality) we were considering was “frightened child”, we might see a small figure, cowering as if under threat, or for a “creative artist” the symbol might be a kind of stereotyped French figure in a beret, brandishing a palette. These visual pictures might represent yourself, behaving in the way under consideration, but they need not be: they could show a generic figure, or some symbol that is not a human person at all – for example, a lover of food might appear as a hungry animal! The image could be an archetypal one from a film or TV; it could be someone encountered in life; or it could be a personality that has appeared in dreams.

This exercise will be easier if done if a very relaxed or mild trance state. Get yourself into such a state, then recall an incident in which you felt strong emotion. Note the activities prompted by this emotion. Then wait for an image representing this combination of ideas, emotions, and behaviour. This may arise spontaneously, or you may have to use some reasoning to construct the image.
As an example the following is a spontaneously-appearing sub-personality of this kind (reproduced with permission from a member of the Healing Journey group):

I tried to imagine myself when the personality trait has taken me over - for example being judgmental and critical - I tried to imagine how I looked to the person who was receiving my criticism. This is how the Rich Bitch appeared. While I pictured myself in a critical moment I saw this image of a tight lipped, perfectly put together woman, she reminded me of how wealthy women are often portrayed on Television.

And here is an account from the same individual of a time when her “old woman” sub-personality appeared:

It was a minor incident, a phone conversation where the person crushed something I had been enthusiastic about. I felt tears welling up inside me and quickly ended the conversation. It was not a big deal, so I was alarmed at my strong reaction. I decided rather than bury the emotion and tears I would stay with the emotional pain I was feeling. An image of an old lady appeared, pointing her finger at me she said “See that is what happens when you get too excited, someone comes along and crushes you, it is better not to become too excited or happy, someone will always come along and be critical of you, crush your enthusiasm, your happiness.”

At first it was my vulnerable little girl that appeared hurt and upset, then the old woman pointing her finger. She was protecting the little girl, but also doing a lot of damage.

Exercise 2: Contacting our sub-personalities through a magical door:
(adapted from notes by the Psychosynthesis Institute, San Francisco)

Now our aim is to increase our awareness of these sub-personalities so that we can interact with them. We want to become aware of their needs, their wants, their special qualities, their behavior patterns. Of course these are our own wants, needs, qualities and behavior which may be locked into the inner psychological configurations we call sub-personalities. The goal of the work is to “release the energy” which is caught in them and to integrate it into the whole personality, so that the overall life energy can flow more smoothly and harmoniously. The true observer within us, our “center,” does not criticise. It is objective and wise, and understands that the needs of our sub-personalities (although not necessarily their wants) are valid and legitimate.

(For a first attempt, if you manage to do the first 5 of the operations below, you will have made good progress. On subsequent occasions you could try the remaining exercises).

1.) Sit comfortably and relax. After closing your eyes, take a few deep breaths. Imagine a big wooden door in front of you. Make it as real as you can – note the texture and the color, and any details such as the hinges, handle or knob. On the door there is a sign that says SUBPERSONALITIES. Imagine that they all live behind the door.

2.) Now open the door and let some of your main sub-ps come out. Just observe them. Don’t get involved. Be aware of them.

3.) Gradually focus on some of the most important or interesting ones. And of these, choose one which seems most central, or which interests you most.
4.) Approach the sub-p, and begin to relate to it. Talk to it and listen to what it says to you. See what you have to say to each other.

5.) Ask it what it wants. Then ask it why. These are different questions and they are very important. Make a mental note of the answers.

6.) Now let yourself become the sub-p. Identify with it and experience what it’s like to be it. As this sub-p, how do you feel? What is the world like to you? Ask yourself: “What do I want? What would I like to do? What do I need?”

7.) After summoning one or more sub-ps, see it/them in front of you. Ask yourself: “What would my life be like if that sub-p fully had its own way, if I were the sub-p all the time?”

8.) Take another look at the sub-p examine carefully what you like and what you dislike about it.

9.) See yourself outside in the sunshine with the sub-p. Imagine that it is a beautiful, sparkling day and that the sun is shining brightly. Now image that a special warm beam of sunlight slowly radiates from the sun towards you, and envelops you and the sub-p in light and warmth. The energy of the sun will make something happen.

10.) Is the sub-p different in any way now? If it is still there, turn toward it, and again begin to relate to it. See if you can improve things, if you can arrive at some better relationship with it. Take all the time you need to do this.

11.) Now write about what happened. What did you like and dislike about the sub-p? What does it need? Were you able to reach an understanding with it? You may find it helpful to make a drawing of the sub-p.

-These exercises can be repeated as needed, focusing on the same sub-p or on different ones. Be sure to spend plenty of time in the write-up afterwards.
Topic 17. Spiritual Aspects of Healing: Clarifying our Aims

We now begin a series of sessions on what is potentially the most important area of work in self-healing: the spiritual. While the body is perhaps the most obvious “dimension” of ourselves (and in some people consumes most of their attention), we have learned that with a little practice we can become familiar with the stream of thoughts, perceptions and emotions in our minds, and that this mental dimension then seems much more central to our identity than our body does. The great spiritual teachers take a giant step further, and tell us that our minds are simply a tiny part of a much larger universal Mind or consciousness; our idea of being a separate little mind is an illusion, but we can become aware of or “connected to” this higher or deeper (the words are metaphors) dimension if we wish. The spiritual work is an attempt to do this – to gain direct experience of this order that transcends the material (and refer back to the level 3 workbook, “Bringing Spirituality into your Healing Journey” for further discussion).

How do we do it? Religions have their various approaches. The great religions are all based on spiritual experiences of their founders, but with time tend to become rigid, and about concepts more than experience. We can work within a religious framework, but need to relinquish dogmatic concepts in order to touch the spiritual core behind them. The great mystics are people who have devoted their life to this search, and their writings are an invaluable guide to our own efforts. In reading these texts we do not have to subscribe to any specific tradition; instead, we can focus on the idea that there is ultimately only one consciousness, of which ours is a tiny part. Avatars, like Jesus or the Buddha, and even “gods” are not separate from ourselves but simply part of a larger Self to which we, too, belong. In this course, we take this relatively “secular” approach (and see topic 9), emphasising that it in no way contradicts the essential message of the great religions.

Why is “accessing the spiritual dimension of ourselves” important for healing? The basic idea of this course is that healing is expansion. Just as expanding our awareness of the workings of our minds provides us with a much wider range of ways of responding to a crisis like cancer, so if we can expand our awareness further, beyond a focus on thinking, and tap into a much higher/broader level of ourselves, we may access an immeasurably greater range of options to apply to healing both our mental state and our bodies. To put this another way: it seems foolish to rely entirely on our very limited intellects if there is a much larger reservoir of knowledge available to us, something that Eckhart Tolle calls a “vast intelligence”.

Spiritual experience is non-verbal: insofar as it can be described in words, the mystics tell us, it comes more in the nature of a “felt-sense” or a delightful “inner knowing”. However, it is valuable, and probably essential for most of us, to first do some hard thinking about our aims, to clarify the major principles and terms involved, and to set a rational course of study and practice for ourselves. Benefits won’t come from simply drifting along as usual in a state of pious hope, or, for that matter, by attending religious services in an automatic, non-reflective way. Spiritual growth requires a personal struggle with old habits of thought, and the cultivation of receptivity to the grace that comes when the aspirant (student) has prepared the ground. We need to muster enthusiasm and dedication to the process, and to organise our efforts sensibly, just as we would in setting out on any important enterprise, such as learning a new language, or embarking on a new career. And we need to approach our explorations and practices in the spirit of “an acute fever”, and not as a “dull habit”, in the words of William James, a century ago.

In this this topic/session we will begin to examine our aims in some detail, and to establish what we, individually, understand by commonly used terms and ideas. In the next session the focus will be on practical approaches towards accomplishing our spiritual goals. The following sessions will define and examine various “paths”, that is, integrated series of exercises, to guide us over time.

Consider the following issues and questions. To benefit from this you will obviously need to think for some time about most of them, and write your conclusions (simply musing does not force us to confront our confusions, and leaves no record for later review).
A. **Initial statement of aims and aspirations:**
1. What is my aim in trying to contact the spiritual “dimension” or aspect of myself?
2. How will I go about it – what will be my principal methods?
3. If I already belong to a religion or similar organisation, how can I use this as a platform for spiritual growth?

B. **Clarifying terms:**
1. What is the difference between “spirituality” and “religion”?
2. What do I mean by the word “God”? What, to you, is the meaning of the commonly heard questions “Does God exist?” or “Do you believe in God”?
3. What do you understand by the spiritual concept of “surrender”? What needs to be surrendered, and to whom or what?

C. **Examining common misconceptions.** Write your views on the following:
1. My religion (___________ fill in) is the only true road to salvation/truth/enlightenment.
2. Religious “observance” and my “faith” is enough – I don’t need a “spiritual path”.
3. I don’t need to think about all this: I just “know” I am “spiritual”.
4. The body is basically sinful; I am tainted by “original sin” (Adam and Eve!).
5. When I die, I will be judged (by whom)? Then I will be sent to heaven or hell.
6. When I die, that’s the end – “I” won’t exist anymore.
7. This world is all there is.
8. This world is unreal.

D. **Why pursue a spiritual path?** Having considered the above questions, we can look at some major reasons why people undertake spiritual exploration. How important to you are the aims listed below? Write a few notes about each.

1. **“Connecting”**: What does this really mean (to me)? It suggests a link of some kind: is this simply a metaphor? To what or whom would I be “connecting” with anyway?
2. **Understanding**: How important is it to me to clarify my understanding of spirituality? How is this related to the purpose of my life?
3. **Affective (emotional) state**: What do I want my moment-to-moment experience of life to be (this is worth examining and describing in some depth; don’t sell yourself short by simply responding “peace of mind” or with some other pat phrase).
4. **Healing**: what does this mean to me? How do I include psychological and physical states in my understanding of this?

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**Topic 18. Practical approaches to spiritual connection**

Having clarified our ideas somewhat about the divine ground of our being, and affirmed that we seek to connect with this overarching power or “energy”, we now need to consider ways to do so. Fortunately we have several thousand years of the spiritual experience of others to draw upon. And we are fortunate too that in the modern west we have probably more spiritual books and other resources to consult than were ever available to people in previous times.

I have clustered the major methods into 4 main groups: acquiring (cognitive) understanding; quietening the mind and directing it towards spiritual ideas; working through the body; and “interpersonal” approaches (selfless service to others).

(1) **Acquiring a psychological (cognitive) understanding.**

(a) **From external sources:** This includes reading (and thinking hard about what is read!), other audiovisual sources (there are many CDs and DVDs available now, lectures on You-tube, etc.), listening to and learning from teachers and peers in discussion groups, joining a spiritual community and taking part in its services and retreats.

(b) **Examining one’s own thought processes closely:** When we examine all aspects of our thinking very closely, for example noting carefully how we respond to others, or how we are driven by our desires and beliefs, this can lead us beyond ordinary psychological understanding and to a realization that we are part of a greater order. Modern examples of this approach are Eckhart Tolle’s books, and Swami Radha’s “Kundalini Yoga for the West”. We can also include under this heading the recording and analysing of our dreams.

(2) **Quieting and directing the mind** (“Emptying” and “Filling”).

(a) **Meditation:** This can be defined as focussed concentration in the (relative) absence of thought. It is a classical approach to the Divine, requiring us to “empty” our minds of our (ego-centred) thinking. We can do this in traditional sitting postures, or while gazing at an object, walking about (see exercises below), and ideally also when interacting with others (difficult!). As we attempt to be quiet within we quickly discover that much of our thinking (at least when there is no specific task to concentrate on) is involuntary, apparently random, unrestricted, intrusive …. In Eastern traditions the untrained mind has been likened to a drunken monkey, bitten by a snake!

(b) **Replacing involuntary thoughts with spiritual symbols:** “Emptying” the mind may or may not be followed by “filling” – not with random thoughts but with images or ideas that direct us towards the Divine. Prayer can involve this kind of deliberate entertaining of spiritual aspirations, or it can be simply quiet communion. The great mystics have written about various forms of prayer (St Theresa of Avila for example) – requests for desired outcomes, being usually ego-driven, would be considered the “lowest” level! For those who find the idea of prayer embarrassing, a generic form can be used (as in much Buddhist practice): “May I be…”; or “may all beings be…”.

Guidance from a spiritual source may, of course, be sought in prayer. We need to ask ourselves what we need to do to be open to such guidance (see exercises below). It may also requested in dreams. Spiritual affirmations, for example, that we are “loved by God”, may also be a form of “filling”: this approach is used in the workbook of “A Course in Miracles”, which we will examine in a later session. Constant repetition of a short prayer, word or phrase (mantra or mantram) is also a kind of “filling” of the mind, “protecting” it from random thoughts.

Perhaps the approach to spiritual connection that is most used world-wide is “devotion”, which often includes filling the mind with spiritual ideas, for example with images of an avatar (spirit in human form) like Jesus or the Buddha, or Divine Mother in various guises. Reverence and love is then offered to
the form, as a kind of proxy for the ultimate Source or God. This method uses the emotional need we all have for closeness to other human beings, leading perhaps to a similar sense of closeness to the Divine. Pictures and statues are used in some religions (although frowned upon in others), to make the experience more tangible. It is a simple, easily understood approach (there is really nothing requiring understanding), whose effectiveness probably depends on the intensity and belief that the worshipper can bring to bear.

(3) **Body-oriented approaches:** Examples are hatha (asana) yoga, tai chi chuan, Qi gong (spellings vary), some martial arts (depending on the way they are taught), and also formal breathing practices like the pranayama of yoga. One might include sacred dance in this category, and perhaps spiritual chanting (although this could also be considered a method of meditation). There are doubtless other traditional practices, and many modern derivatives.  

Eckhart Tolle, in “The Power of Now”, says the following about using the body as a “portal” to spiritual connecting: “By going deeply into the body, you have transcended the body.....When your consciousness is directed outward, mind and world arise. When it is directed inward, it realizes its own source and returns home into the un-manifested”.

(4) **Interpersonal/behavioural approaches.** In this category we can put expressing or manifesting, in the world the kind of understanding and self-awareness that results from methods (1) and (2) above: the practice of unconditional love and acceptance of all other people, and indeed of all situations. “Karma yoga” is such a manifestation, recognised by Hindus (and others), meaning selfless service (with no thought of reward). Swami Radha would often repeat a saying of her own guru, Sivananda: “selfless service makes you divine!” I think it is what the Dalai Lama means when he says “my religion is kindness”.  

We need to recognise that this kind of attitude lies “upstream” from conventional morality. The latter is a description of behaviour – do as you would be done by, and so on, which may or may not be accompanied by lofty thinking. The spiritual, as opposed to moral, description refers to inner thought processes, which will lead naturally to “moral” behaviour.

Motivation: Key to the effectiveness of any practice:  
Recall the IDEA acronym we used in topic 4, to assist making changes in our beliefs:  
- I: intensity of desire for change  
- D: dedication to the necessary work  
- E: expectation that beneficial results will happen  
- A: Avoidance of (obsessing about possible) obstacles and unwanted outcomes.

For any change, in any system, we need a driving force: that is the intensity of desire for change. Then we need to practice the necessary operations or methods (which are what this session attempts to teach). And we must cultivate an open-minded, receptive attitude – our beliefs, as free as possible from the kind of automatic negativity with which our culture surrounds almost any claim that we can take some responsibility for self-healing.

Exercises: In the next session we will be constructing a “path” for ourselves, an individual blend of approaches that we choose to apply to our own quest for spiritual connection. In this session, the main aim is to consider the various methods listed above, and recollect our experience of them, and the effects they appear to have.
Exercise 1: Assessing what I do
Ask yourself the following questions:
1. Does it help my thinking and planning to look at an overview like this of different spiritual “techniques”? If not, how would you prefer to think about it?
2. Have I encountered any approaches other than those listed here (check whether any such techniques that may come to mind fit under the categories described)?
3. Do any of the listed methods have a particular appeal to me? Any to which I feel an aversion? (Say why in either case).
4. What sense do you make of Tolle’s statement about the mind directed inward and returning to the “un-manifested”? (Think about things that are “manifested” in your daily life and things un-manifested).
5. How might recording and analysing my dreams assist my understanding of myself and my healing?
6. What difficulties (if any) have I experienced in meditating? What has helped me overcome them?
7. What has been my experience of prayer? To what extent have I used and seemed to benefit from this practice? (If I’m averse to it, why?).
8. Do I use any images to assist my spiritual practice? Do I have a specific place set aside for this? A regular schedule?
9. Describe your interest in and use of any “body” approaches to self-understanding and spiritual connection.
10. Does the idea of “selfless service” have any relevance to your inner work?

Exercise 2: How I divide up the time I spend in healing practices:
Make a list of the various practices you do that aim at self-healing: this might include relaxation, meditation, work with mental imagery, Inner Healer, journaling, mind watching, reading books about spirituality and healing, attending groups or services with spiritual or healing aims, “body” approaches to healing (yoga, tai chi etc), prayer, psychotherapy ……
Estimate the time spent on each every week (ideally, keep a record for a week or more)
Draw a pie chart, showing the proportion of your “healing time” that you spend on each method you use.

Exercise 3. Minimising thinking in various situations:
Try to do the following without allowing the mind to indulge in automatic (uncontrolled or involuntary) thinking:
- Conventional meditation
- Sitting staring at an object for 5 minutes (or more if you can). A pot plant is a good choice of object.
- Walking in quiet surroundings
- Interacting with other people
Write notes on what you experience.
If you never quite got around to the “silence” exercise of topic 9, you might like to try it now.
Topic 19. Planning our spiritual “path”.

The spiritual dimension of ourselves is intangible but all-embracing. It is, of course “within” everyone, although many are unaware of this. To know who we are – to expand our awareness of ourselves – we need to understand and have some experience of this dimension, in other words, to “connect” with it. Quite apart from the central importance of our spirituality it is also clearly vital for healing: within this vaster “Self” lie potentials that influence all aspects of our physical lives.

The spiritual search has engaged many people over thousands of years, and many have made it the central focus of their lives; some of the most influential individuals on the planet have been spiritual teachers – think of Jesus, the Buddha, Lao-tzu and Mohammed. Most of the major religions have a kind of “mystical” arm, a set of learning and practices for those (few) adherents who wish to probe more deeply: for example, Sufism in Islam, the Kabbalah in Judaism, Yoga in Hinduism, Christian mysticism within that religion. One very sound approach to strengthening one’s spiritual experience is to find a school that appeals, and follow its teachings in depth over a period of time. In fact, if you are serious about it, this is virtually essential, at least for the first few years. It is important for most of us to seek a teacher or teachers who will challenge us, otherwise it is just too easy to “let oneself off the hook”, so to speak – to avoid demanding tasks and obstacles.

The Healing Journey program can provide only an introduction to the main ideas and practices of the spiritual search. We began this in the early levels of the program, and studied some modern texts in level 5. To widen our own experience and practice in this sixth level we have first focussed on clarifying terms (topic 17), and then examined some of the main methods people have used over the centuries (topic 18). You may encounter the metaphor of “paths” up a “mountain”, indicating the many possible paths up the slopes of spiritual understanding, all leading to the same summit. In practical terms, a “path” is a collection of methods, underpinned by a philosophical view of the nature of reality and of the Divine. We can begin to develop our own path by studying ideas on “reality”, as we are doing in this course, and by putting together for ourselves a program of practical methods. The daily schedule you develop, supplemented by reading, can become your route to spiritual growth, at least until “your teacher appears” (something which the sages tell us tends to happen when we are ready and eager for it!).

The first issue confronting us is always motivation: how important I think this is to me, which will in turn depend on how effective I think it can be in supporting my aims (such as healing), and how confident I am of my ability to do the necessary work. I would suggest making a frank listing of the main activities and responsibilities in your life and ranking them: this might include: immediate family, friends and relatives, career/work, sports, entertainment, food, education, hobbies, and other things. If strengthening your spiritual connection is not at or near the top of this list, how could you make space for it? What might need to go? (Remember: the spiritual search needs to be “an acute fever rather than a dull habit”). And although our primary aim in the Healing Journey program is to promote healing, mental and physical, if you pursue spiritual connection sincerely, you will probably come to value it more for its own sake than for any effects on the body – many dedicated students have expressed this view in the past. Physical healing becomes a valuable side effect, so to speak!

Exercises

1. Listing your priorities: make a list as suggested above, and consider how you can set aside more time for spiritual practice (assuming you value this).
2. Examine the table (below; on a separate page): with how many of the “paths” listed do you have some familiarity? Are you acquainted with other paths, not listed there?
3. Enter a rating of the attention you currently give to the various methods using the “++” system of the table. Add a second rating for what you would like to do. Think about whether you wish to be eclectic, or to focus on one approach in depth. Consider whether you will design a program for yourself at present, and/or try to find an established spiritual organisation offering training that appeals to you. (Most established systems or paths of spiritual growth will include practices or ideas that are confusing or unappealing at first. If you are a “beginner”, recognise that it is difficult to assess what approaches or
philosophies will help you until you have experienced them. Try to base your assessment on the overall philosophy and depth of the tradition behind any path you are considering. The integrity of the leader(s) is also important.

4. An obvious, straightforward way to introduce yourself to different spiritual paths is to read about them. You will find a reading list at the back of “Bringing Spirituality into your healing journey” (available as part of the level 3 workbook, freely downloadable from our website, www.healingjourney.ca). Some books illustrating the main approaches in the table (plus a couple more) are listed below.

5. In a book on spiritual matters that you have found inspiring, mark one or a few passages for presenting to the class (i.e. reading and explaining why you think it important).

- Easwaran, E. **Meditation**. Berkeley, Calif., Nilgiri Press, 1978/1991. This explains Easwaran’s “8-point program”. My personal favourite among his many wonderful books is **Original Goodness**.
- Radha, Swami S. **Kundalini Yoga for the West**. Spokane, Timeless Books, 1978. This monumental work is for the dedicated student who wishes to undertake personal spiritual growth from a yogic perspective.
- Tolle, E. **The Power of Now**. Vancouver, Namaste, 1997. A living spiritual master describes a readily understandable route to the spiritual domain. (See also “**A New Earth**”)
Fostering spiritual connection: the main approaches in various paths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive (understanding)</th>
<th>Quietening the mind</th>
<th>Mind-Body approaches</th>
<th>Interpersonal (service to others)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External sources</td>
<td>“Emptying” (meditation)</td>
<td>“Filling” (using images, avatars, devotion)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easwaran (8-point program)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kundalini yoga (Swami Radha)</td>
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<td>A Course in Miracles</td>
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<td>Seth materials</td>
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<td>Tolle materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buddhist mindfulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yogananda (Self-Realization)</td>
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<td>Other(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your own path</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes about this table

- The list in the left hand column above is, of course, only a sampling of “paths” or approaches for which literature and/or teachers are currently available. They are all “modern” paths, in the sense that the instigators lived or spread their teachings in the 20th century, with the exception of “Buddhist mindfulness”, which is intended to represent the current interest in one aspect of a rich, ancient religion.
- The categories on the top line are the methods discussed in topic 18.
- The “++” entries indicate the apparent emphasis put on the corresponding kinds of method; obviously this is only my impression, and in any case will vary widely with different teachers and spiritual centres. Also, all paths probably use most or all of the methods to some degree.
- There is no intention to rank or judge the paths: more crosses are not necessarily better!
The Perennial Philosophy:

A common theme emerges from the ideas and experiences of spiritual seekers over many centuries and in many cultures. This has been called “the perennial philosophy”. An account has been given by Easwaran in his book “Original Goodness, shown in abbreviated form below:

(Quotes are from Meister Eckhart, late C13 Germany. He taught this doctrine, which Leibnitz (and later Spinoza and Aldous Huxley) called “the Perennial Philosophy”).

- First, there is a “light in the soul that is uncreated and uncreatable”... universal, deathless – a divine core of personality
- Second, this divine essence can be realized. It is not an abstraction... need not remain hidden under the covering of our everyday personality.
- Third, discovering this is life’s real and highest goal – our supreme purpose.
- Finally, when we realize this goal, we discover simultaneously that the divinity within ourselves is one and the same in all – all individuals, all creatures, all of life.

(The following text is a slightly modified form of the introduction to “level 5B” of the Healing Journey, a workbook which can be freely downloaded from the website www.healingjourney.ca/books, audio and video resources. The internet version also shows a number of tables and diagrams not reproduced here)

The source to be studied for this topic is a most remarkable book from an unusual source. The author is none other than Jesus Christ himself, arguably the most important spiritual teacher (for western peoples) in 2 millennia! “But didn’t he die 2000 years ago?” ACIM is a text “channeled” from Jesus, through an atheistic psychologist, Helen Schucman, over a period of 7 years, beginning in 1965. She “heard” a voice, identifying itself as Jesus, and dictated daily installments of what has become the text to a colleague, William Thetford, who typed up the material, which was eventually published in 1976. This history is likely to inspire more than a little scepticism in some who encounter it for the first time! In fact, there are many examples of such channeling - the Koran was channeled, for example. Texts generated in this way should be judged by the nature of the material received; the content, rather than the source, is after all what matters to us, and the material of ACIM is quite exceptional. It is a text on healing at all levels, psychological, physical and spiritual. It is the most sophisticated and profound material on self-initiated healing that I have encountered in about 30 years of searching, which is why I draw on it here. Moreover it is written in modern language, with psychologically understandable reasoning (although the conclusions go far beyond the conventional). It offers us an extraordinary opportunity to evolve, and although Christian in terminology and origin, is not conventionally Christian at all: in fact certain sections offer a correction to many of the misconceptions that have crept into the Bible as a result of centuries of injection of human ideas and values into that text. A typical reaction to something as unusual as this is criticism and summary rejection! We might, however, try a different approach: suspending scepticism and seeing what it can do for us, upon which we may become filled with gratitude to both the author and the two ordinary people who persevered, year after year, in making the course available to us all.

Since 1976, several million copies of ACIM have been distributed in many languages. A lot of commentaries have been written explaining some of the concepts in it. There are also a number of popular books written by mental health professionals who base their texts around ACIM, for example those by Marianne Williamson, Karen Bentley and Gerald Jampolsky, among others (reading some of these books can be a helpful introduction). The “Foundation for ACIM” has been established under the direction of the late Dr Ken Wapnick, who was perhaps the foremost exponent of the course; he was present in the early stages of its publication. The website, www.facim.org is a resource centre for materials (many books, audio- and videotapes, plus advice on workshops), and questions may be put, on the site, to foundation staff.

What does ACIM say, and why is it hard to read?

Perhaps the most important revelation, in ACIM as in other mystical writings, is that “God” or the Divine Source is within us all, and not some authoritarian being outside ourselves, as often represented in the theistic religions. To put it another way, we are all part of the Divine, but we have lost sight of that; our task is to recover this awareness. We are primarily “mind-stuff” rather than body, and are not separate, from God or from others, so we need not attack (i.e. resist, judge) any of them! Fully realizing this is healing.

It must be conceded, however, that ACIM is often difficult reading. (The “Workbook” part of it, as you will find, is perhaps simpler than the main text, and therefore may be a place to start as one is becoming acquainted with the course). Why is much of the text so difficult? In part because it turns most of our conventional ideas about “reality” through 180 degrees. And in part because it seems to be designed to make us think hard, so that we truly master the material, rather than have it “slip down” and be forgotten. The terminology can pose an initial barrier to some readers also, appearing sexist (always “he” and “your brothers”), and Christian in some of its symbology. We simply must allow any old hackles this raises to subside, and get on with the substance of the text, if we are going to benefit from it.
An outline of the process of separating and healing

We began as, and are still all part of, One Mind, which may be called by various names – “God”, the Divine, the Source, the One and so on. ACIM uses “God”, sometimes the “Father” (which can be validly translated into “Divine Mother” if you wish). The important point, however, is that we are not ultimately material but “mental”, the inverted commas denoting that this is an approximation - we can’t, from this earthly vantage point, expect to understand fully what such a different state of being would be like. At some point, for reasons that are not clear (I like what the Hindus say, that it’s “God’s play”!), we became temporarily separated from God. “We” here means that some part or aspect of God believed itself to be separate, although this was immediately corrected. This apparently separate part is called the “Son of God” in ACIM. The separation is an illusion, and the separated mind retains that awareness, a kind of connecting link that ACIM calls the “Holy Spirit” (or we can call it the “Higher Self”, and use the same initials, HS). Because of the guilt such a radical separation invoked, there was immediately a fragmentation of this mind into millions of apparently separate beings, each clothed in material substance, the purpose being (to put it simply) so that others could now be blamed for “my” predicament. Each unit however still contained a knowledge of the whole - the separation was, and is an illusion, to say it yet again, a kind of dream or play put on by the separated mind.

We are, unfortunately, some of the apparently separated beings arising from this “Big Bang” of creation. We start from the following misconception, to paraphrase Descartes: “I think I’m separate, therefore I am”. But it is a false conclusion. We can “swim back upstream”, return to our original home, simply by a change in perception. This is not easy because, as a result of our presumed separateness, we have developed all kinds of fearful ideas about our guilt (ultimately towards the Divine, for leaving it/Him), and vulnerability (to retribution from Him, and to attack by others). We therefore have surrounded ourselves by defenses, including our material bodies as a defense, and we have buried the knowledge of our true nature underneath all of this. Now, we say, we are simply bodies, and we may even get ill and die to prove it! The material world, and particularly other people, are blamed for all our problems.

A degree of healing can be achieved without invoking spiritual connection and change - for example, by management of stress and aligning ourselves with a purpose in life that is fulfilling and meaningful to ourselves. Any kind of healing requires initial openness to change, motivation, and a fair amount of work, but given that, it may go in different directions. (The figures in in the workbook for level 5B of the Healing Journey, on the internet, explain this further). Our research over the last 15 years has provided some evidence for the healing effect of involvement in self-healing, and the development of “authenticity” in people who have greatly outlived their prognoses. The spiritual route to healing involves developing a particular kind of “authenticity”, namely recognising our identity as part of the Divine. Spiritual healing is the reversal of separation, a shift in perception of what we are. It affects every aspect of our lives. This shift is what ACIM calls a “miracle”. The whole text is thus about healing, although not specifically healing of the body, since it views that as an illusion; the hope is that by correcting the overarching illusion, all aspects of ourselves will return to harmony. As we read the text we will receive many ideas about how to heal - i.e. what “healing” is will be expressed in many different ways. This can be confusing until you see that these different ways refer to different points along the process of separation. We can heal by forgiving our “brothers”; something that we emphasised in level 3 of the Healing Journey course. This requires recognizing that they have not “sinned” against us, merely fallen into error (as have we all), and that even an apparent attack on us is simply a disguised “call for help”. Then at a slightly “deeper” level, healing requires forgiving ourselves, recognizing that we are not sinners, destined for punishment. Higher still - that we are not even separate, from the Divine or other people; that somehow our minds are all joined. And even further upstream, as it were, there was no real initial separation from the Divine Mind at all, and hence no real material world was generated to “protect” us and maintain this separation. Occasionally, remarkable individuals will come to this last realization in one leap. Most of us, however, have to work away at the more accessible levels first - our judgment of others and of ourselves, moving up towards realizing that we are not separate from them, and can risk loving them, and ourselves! As we do this, our emphasis on the material world will diminish (there is no need to fear losing touch with it! We simply learn to have, as the course puts it, a “happy dream” rather than an unhappy one).
Metaphors can help us understand this drastic reversal of ordinary worldly conceptions ("all our conceptions are false" says ACIM!). Here are a few:

1. We could think of the original One Mind as a tree, spreading out into ever smaller branches then twigs and finally leaves. Each of us is a leaf, and our petty concern is to compete with other leaves for various advantages, such as being bigger and more beautiful, or having better access to the sunlight! We can content ourselves with learning to accept the rights of other leaves (the usual limit of human mental healing), or we can move back towards our origins, to where the twigs diverged, and recognize that we are in fact part of the same whole, and ultimately an integral part of the tree/Mind.

2. Another example: when a container of liquid mercury is spilled, it breaks into thousands of tiny droplets, which can readily merge again when pushed together. If, however, these droplets get covered with dust and grit (a metaphor for worldly defensiveness), they stubbornly refuse to merge, and retain their separateness! We need, of course, to remove the “dust” that normally surrounds each of us.

3. ACIM refers in several places to the metaphor of dreaming. When we dream it is as if our minds split into many separate characters or individuals. Yet they are all part of the one mind. And when we wake, we realize that “it was all a dream”. This, say the mystics, is what we will understand when we awaken from our current worldly dream.

4. Ken Wapnick makes a comparison with the case of people with multiple personality disorder, a pathological condition in which a person assumes, at different times, entirely different personalities that tend to be unaware of one another. Yet they are all parts of the same mind. So it is, he says, with the emanations of the Divine Mind.

**How text is referred to in ACIM**

References to the main text of ACIM are shown as in the following example: T-26.IV.4. T means text, 26 is the chapter, IV (roman numerals) is the section, and 4 the paragraph number. If there was more than one paragraph to be examined this would be shown as “4-8”, for example. The paragraph number may occasionally be followed by numbers of the individual sentences in a paragraph, as in T-26.IV.4:7

For the workbook: W.169.5, refers to the lesson number and paragraph.
For the Manual for Teachers, it’s M-13.3, the Question # and paragraph.

**Exercises** (for study at home and at a group meeting):

**The “text” of ACIM:** As an introduction to the main text, look at sections of chapter 5, “Healing and Wholeness”. If you do not have the book itself, there are reproductions that can be freely downloaded from the internet (for example, from www.unitedbeings.com).

Please study (ahead of any group discussion) section II “The Voice for God” (p 75 in the second edition of the book) and section V “The Ego’s Use of Guilt” (p 83). Bring the book or hard copy with you to the group meeting. I would also suggest meditating on section IV, paragraph 8 (p83) – it is a beautiful prayer.

If you are keen, or have already done some study of ACIM, you might wish to review the whole chapter.

**The Workbook of ACIM:** To get a sense of the workbook you could review lessons 22, 23 and 26, bringing hard copy of these with you also.
A superb complement to ACIM (last topic) is the series of books channelled by Jane Roberts from an entity which she called “Seth”. These provide a somewhat more “secular” account of our place in the world, and are the most comprehensive and detailed description of the nature of reality that I have found anywhere. As with ACIM, you have to be open-minded enough to consider that these narratives are what they purport to be, then interested enough to study them for a time, after which you will have no doubt of their validity.

Central to the Seth material are the 10 books which Seth himself regarded as his “dictated” works, although there are also many other written accounts by Roberts and her husband of sessions in which Seth’s teachings are quoted. While not “spiritual” in the usual sense, these writings explain all aspects of reality, including how the non-material substrate or framework of our lives generate the material world in which we currently find ourselves. A great deal of space is devoted to illness and approaches to overcoming it. There are no simple, pat solutions (in contrast to much “New Age” writing): rather the recommendation is to examine our minds – to discover how our beliefs, fueled by the intensity of our emotional desires, cause all kinds of distortion in the normally healthy body. Healing, in this view, depends on awareness and understanding of who we are and how our minds operate. It complements conventional spiritual works, which generally advocate surrender to a greater Self or divinity without addressing the mechanisms by which such a strategy might heal us. Many (about 90) therapeutic exercises are interspersed throughout the Seth works. This level 6 course draws on some of these, as well as other sources. It would be helpful, at this point, to review both the introduction and also topic 9, “Mapping the space of the self”, which offers a model of how the individual self is located in a hierarchy of more expanded levels of consciousness. Note especially how the model places “God”, or “All That Is”, as a level embracing all others.

A metaphor may be helpful in explaining Seth’s account of who we are: we are like actors in a play, in which the broad outline has been set by other minds, but leaving us with the freedom to interpret the action in our own way – even to changing the script somewhat as we go along (it’s “new theatre”!). We’ve been subjected to a lot of previous conditioning (learning), which restricts our range considerably, but we can break free of much of this if we try. While acting in the play, we become so absorbed with our role that we forget, for a time, that this is only a play, a small part of who we are; when the performance ends (at death), we return to a broader awareness of ourselves, and of our capacity to act in very many such plays if we choose.

The table below is a very brief summary of Seth’s descriptions of causes and healing of illness; there are many discussions of this topic throughout his works, and the interested self-healer is urged to consult them.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
### Ideas from Seth on Illness and Healing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Illness</th>
<th>Routes to Healing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| - Illness and early death are not “preordained” (i.e. by some higher level of the self, or the Divine)  
- But we have separated from (lost trust in) our body and nature  
- Science, medicine and religion, while often helpful, have fostered this mistrust. | - Trust – that we choose (at some level) what happens (therefore we need to investigate the choices we have made) |
| **Definition of purpose** |                   |
| - Illness often arises from lack of meaning in our lives: “value fulfillment is being denied”  
- There is “a failure to materialise spirit faithfully”  
- Specifically, cancer (in the old): spiritual and psychic growth are often being denied | - Seek meaning and value fulfillment in life, i.e. explore your full creative potential  
- Recognise that we may choose illness for learning. |
| **“Deep” psychology** |                   |
| - Failure to solve a psychological problem; a symptom is a materialised symbol, representing a challenge.  
- Cutting off emotional expression and blocking action. More generally, there is ineffective handling (blocking) of energy, and the ego is separating from the whole. | - Try to solve the problem; uncover the inner causes of symptoms – what they “mean”  
- Uncover the links between thoughts and emotions; allow emotional expression; trust your impulses; regulate thoughts, emotions, and intentions. |
| **Ego level** |                   |
| - Beliefs are distorted; because of the influence and power of negative suggestion in our lives, there is lack of trust in the “good intent of your bodies”. | - Uncover and control beliefs, and the activities of the conscious mind generally: “You get what you concentrate on” (i.e. what you truly and consistently believe and expect).  
- Use constructive suggestions  
- Identify and drop ideas of personal unworthiness. |

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**Exercise 1. How embracing the Seth ideas might affect your life, and healing.**

Imagine that you have absorbed Seth’s teachings (echoing those of many esoteric writings), and now have a “world view” something like the following: “I am currently having a life experience which is only one of very many I have had or will have (time not being the linear arrow that I used to think it was). My prime identity is not this body-mind, but an “essence” or higher Self much more extensive than my current personality. This higher Self is immortal, and cannot be harmed. I am here (in a material environment) to learn how to “create” (or at least strongly influence) my physical experiences with my mind, and in so doing, to explore and maximise my potential in important ways. I may also have set myself psychological problems to solve. My health status, while not completely under my voluntary control, is not at the mercy of purely physical/material events, but is substantially influenced by what I desire and expect within my mind”.

How might an understanding like this affect the following issues?

- What I see as the main point or purpose of my current life?
- How I understand my health problems in the context of my life?
• What I need to do to assist my healing?
• The use I need to make of powers of imagination, contacting an inner self, dream analysis, and other more intuitive approaches in addition to managing my thinking.
• How I will use my time while here if (a) I recover from my disease; (b) if I appear likely to die prematurely?

Exercise 2: Reading excerpts from Seth: “The Nature of Personal Reality”, channelled by Jane Roberts (Amber-Allen publishing 1974/1994) is probably the most popular and most immediately practical of all the Seth books. Please read, ahead of the next class, the two “prefaces” (one by Roberts, one by Seth) and the first 2 chapters of the book (pp2-36). Bring these excerpts along to the class – if you don’t have the book itself, the text can be freely downloaded from various sites on the internet (e.g. Google “the Nature of personal Reality Seth pdf; press “Save” then Open”).
Topic 22. Eckhart Tolle: Reclaiming consciousness from the mind.

Eckhart Tolle is a living spiritual master, a German-Canadian man who had an enlightenment experience in his late 20’s, and who has in recent years devoted himself to spreading his understanding of the nature of reality through his writings and talks. He is not affiliated with any religion or spiritual organisation, although many of his ideas echo those of masters through the ages, and are perhaps closest in style to Buddhism. His discussions deal with the problems of modern life, and are couched in simple terms. This does not mean that they are always easy to grasp, since the spiritual view of meaning in life is often directly opposed to the conditioning (materialism) we have all been subjected to since early childhood.Probably the best introduction to his teachings is to read “A New Earth” (his second book), and then the earlier one, “The Power of Now”, which is a little more difficult in parts. You will find that on repeated re-reading, more insights emerge: the works are profound. There are many CDs and DVDs of his talks available, and the internet has a number of sites devoted to his work.

Below I summarise some of the main ideas from Tolle’s teachings. In a sense, they offer a direct route to a deeper connection with our true Self, in contrast to the more cognitive methods that we have used for the previous 21 topics. For most of us, raised in a world of thinking and analysis, it is probably essential at first to use the thinking mind as a tool towards better understanding of our central task in life, expanding our sense of Self. The Eastern (Indian) teachings speak of using a thorn to remove a thorn – using the thinking mind to eliminate harmful thinking. Ultimately, however, we will see the truth of Tolle’s main message: that the great majority of our thinking is unnecessary, and often harmful. As we drop it we will uncover our true nature, or essence, which is consciousness itself. This transformation brings joy, peace, and a sense of love for all.

The main ideas in the teachings of Eckhart Tolle

Our basic misconception: that we are nothing more than material form, a body with a thinking mind. (Our “ego” is this false “self”, which believes itself to be separate from all other things and other minds).
- In fact, as Tolle and all other spiritual masters emphasise, our deepest and true Self is consciousness, ultimately one with all, and independent of form, but operating through forms (body and brain-mind).

Why don’t we realize this?
- Because obsessive thinking has taken over, and obscured the deeper “knowing” of consciousness. We have come to believe that we are this stream of thoughts.

Associated beliefs: since all forms are impermanent, we must die.
- The body dies, but our consciousness is immortal

We perceive our reality as bounded by space and time.
- In fact these are our own constructions, not absolute qualities of reality.
- Specifically, our idea of linear time is an illusion (this is a central theme of Tolle’s teachings: he points out repeatedly that the only experience we can have is of the present moment, the “Now”. The future always exists only as an idea).

How can we escape from our mistaken views?
- This needs a fundamental shift; we need to create a “space” in our minds in order, ultimately, to recognize and identify with our “being”, our deepest Self.
- Practically, this requires that we relinquish the constant thinking, and especially drop thoughts of past and future (which is most of them!), except where they are needed for planning.
- In addition to minimising thinking and thus being “in the Now”, we should cease the usual reflexive emotional resistance to whatever we encounter. This includes no longer labelling and judging the (apparent) world around us.
- Getting (and staying) in touch with the “energy of the inner body” is another valuable “portal” to deeper being.
- We become an “observer” of the thinking mind, detached from it. Thinking remains as a valuable tool, but one to be used only when necessary.

Some further consequences of our mistaken ideas:
- We think of our “life” as a series of events (including thoughts). In fact, this record is what Tolle calls our “life story”. Our true life is our conscious being, behind the story. He uses various analogies to illustrate this: we live in a dream, and imagine we are a character within it, whereas in fact we are the dreamers; we are actors in a play, but have so completely identified with our part that we have forgotten we have a “real life” outside of the play.
- Many people are consumed by grievances – wanting things to be different, wanting more of this, less of that. The antidote is to cultivate the kind of detached, aware mental state that he describes, from which forgiveness and acceptance will arise naturally.
- The “pain-body” (a kind of mental “program”) is a favourite topic: it represents the accumulated grievances within a person’s lifetime (and even beyond, to previous lives and to the species as a whole). The pain-body is like an entity that is always lurking in the psyche, ready to take over at the slightest insult or inconvenience. We must learn to observe this, but not identify with it (i.e. not let it guide our behaviour).
- Suffering: this is our mental reaction to physical or psychological pain – again, the old pattern of wishing things were different. Tolle suggests learning to “surrender to” (accept) the facts of any situation, and not to increase our distress with anxious forecasts about the future.
- Health and illness: Likewise, if we refrain from imposing our emotional reactions on illness, this will give the intelligence of the body the best chance to restore health.
- Relationship problems: Tolle discusses some of the many difficulties that arise between people: the remedy lies in first cultivating one’s own state of conscious awareness, from which position understanding, acceptance, forgiveness and compassion follow. Love is “perceiving oneself in the other”.
- Unhappiness in its manifold forms – e.g., anxiety, boredom, fear, including the fear of death, are all rooted in our misperception of time and space. Happiness is “being one with life”, that is, knowing oneself as the consciousness behind form.

Purpose in life:
- One of the most brilliant and practically valuable discussions in Tolle’s books concerns his analysis of purpose in life (and see chapter 9 of “A New Earth”). We usually think of our purpose as defined by roles – working life, parent, student, teacher, artist, home-maker, and so on. He points out that these are secondary purposes, and that the primary purpose is finding out who we are, by contacting our inner being. When we do this, everything else in life falls into place.

Social (collective) problems:
- Tolle discusses many of our major social problems – war, environmental destruction, preoccupation with pleasure seeking, and others, and points out how they would cease to exist if sufficient numbers of us were more conscious (i.e. aware). His telling comment: we pollute the planet by our collective unconsciousness.
He sees religion as usually being a conservative force, encouraging beliefs over experience, and generally inhibiting people from making their own connection to their deeper being or “God” (Tolle doesn’t much like the term, since it is used in a vague way to indicate a variety of unspecified phenomena).

Philosophical issues:
- In place of “God” Tolle often refers to the “vast intelligence” behind all the phenomena we observe. Consciousness is “the light emanating from this eternal Source”.
- Space and time are “the two essential attributes of God (using the word this time), infinity and eternity, perceived as if they had an external existence outside you” (Power of Now, chapter 7).
- As we drop our preoccupation with the “horizontal” dimensions of space and time, we become aware of a “vertical” dimension, one of intensity of connection to the absolute.

Exercises: The most important thing to do first is to expose oneself to Tolle’s teachings – by reading his books, and watching his DVDs, then thinking about them, enlarging our cognitive understanding. Discussions with a group of peers can help. Then, and simultaneously, we may try to do what he (and other spiritual masters) recommend: disallow all thoughts that are unnecessary (probably more than 95% of them!). Tolle particularly emphasises dropping thoughts of past and future – being, instead, as “present” in the Now as we can.

Some quotes from Tolle’s writings:
- Thinking has become a disease. This incessant mental noise prevents you from finding that realm of inner stillness that is inseparable from being.
- Conceptualising kills aliveness
- Full attention is full acceptance is surrender
- Surrender is the end of the mind as your master
- Joy is awareness of consciousness, of Self
- Embrace the space within, not the form
- Any form obscures God
- God is Being itself, not a being
- Sacredness is where form meets the formless
- Recognizing yourself (your Self) is love
- You are enlightened when you have no need of time
- To offer no resistance to life is to be in a state of grace, ease and lightness.

-What is God? The eternal One Life underneath all the forms of life. What is love? To feel the presence of that One Life deep within yourself and within all creatures. To be it. Therefore, all love is the love of God.