

HEALING JOURNEY PROGRAM

LEVEL 3: WORKBOOK

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THE HEALING JOURNEY PROGRAM: LEVEL THREE WORKBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Level Three of the Healing Journey Program! You have already done 12 sessions of the Healing Journey and covered a lot of ground.

Levels One and Two of the program were about gaining control of one's experience through coping strategies and self-awareness.

We have learned the following:

- The relaxation response, through progressive relaxation and centring with the breath
- Meditation and while it is challenging, every time you focus and turn towards a quietening centre, you are learning to marshal your mind
- Healthy thought management, identifying, challenging and managing your thoughts
- Imagery connects with the body's ongoing efforts to protect your health and all the things that you are doing to help yourself
- Goal setting to identify what matters to you now and what doesn't
- The last two sessions of Level Two introduced two ideas
 - Letting go of resentments
 - Discussion of spirituality, how it feels and how to encourage it



We are not adding new techniques at this Level 3. It is more of a process of exposing our blocks to spiritual experiences and then letting them go. Recall the story from Level One about the sculptor of elephants who describes his work as carving away all that is not elephant (see the end of this chapter). It is a metaphor for what we will be doing here: allowing a more authentic self to shine through by letting go of resentments and beliefs that no longer serve us, reducing our allostatic load even more. It is also about developing a more compassionate nature, being more compassionate to ourselves, and then extending that compassion to others.

Allostatic Load

Remember the allostatic load or knapsack of stressors that we carry through life? We adapt throughout our lives, learning to alter our responses to manage stress. However, some of our adaptations are less effective than others; for example, we may harbour anger and resentments that we do not express. Over time, these resentments accumulate, creating wear and tear on the body systems — this load is called the allostatic load. This load varies from person to person and reflects our personal stress history, such as stress from our childhood, families and work and specific crises or resentments we have accumulated. Higher levels of allostatic load may increase our vulnerability to illness.

One metaphor for allostasis and allostatic load is that it is like the water that firefighters use to put out a fire. Under ideal conditions, firefighters use just enough water to prevent or put out a blaze. However, if too much water is used, other problems can occur, such as flooding or water damage; or the firefighters may run out of water or water pressure, leaving them less equipped for subsequent fires. It is the same with the body — too strong a reaction to stress has consequences, as does a too-weak response.

The body's costs rise if the organs mediating allostasis (adrenal hormones, neurotransmitters or immune-cytokines) are released too often or inefficiently managed. Practicing coping skills such as meditation helps us realign or recondition our allostatic mechanisms.

Letting go of these old patterns of responses may help us reclaim our authentic selves. For example, dropping resentments and learning to be compassionate with ourselves and others: these changes create a different feeling within us — calmer, more peaceful, tolerant, and accepting. And in terms of the spiritual search, when we can extend compassion to ourselves, we can better extend it to those around us. As a result, we can move more smoothly through life. We are less likely to become “hooked up” on issues or events, feel less irritable and judgmental of others, are more patient and calmer in our dealings with others, and can take comments and the behaviour of others less personally. In essence, we can become less like Velcro and more like silk! The work of Level Three is to unpack and free ourselves of these old weights, allowing us to be freer and more authentic.

Level Three will reflect the contents of Alastair Cunningham’s book, *Bringing Spirituality into Your Healing Journey*. In addition, the leader will offer expanded models of the concepts and different ways of understanding Alastair’s ideas. This workbook contains materials your group leader presents and homework for you to consider between sessions. Please read Alastair’s book and this workbook for each session, and bring this workbook to the group with you for making notes and capturing ideas.

We hope you find this work as interesting and compelling as the earlier Levels of the program!

SESSION ONE

IDEAS OF THE DIVINE

As with every Level of the Healing Journey, each session begins with a grounding exercise. The grounding we will use at the beginning of Level Three sessions will build on the skills that we used in Sessions One and Two and introduce some new skills.

Om and Chanting

In Level One, we moved from focusing on the breath with the sound of a sigh to using the word 'Om.' We will build on that strategy by externalizing the breath with a more advanced version of 'Om.' We are going to try chanting.

Chanting is the use of a short musical phrase that is repeated over and over again. The words are often some mantras. Many religions will use chanting, prayers, and hymns. Perhaps you have encountered chanting in a yoga class. In the 1990s, some Gregorian chants were recorded, putting the monks onto the radio charts! It is not about singing well but rather having a tune in your pocket that you can associate with feelings of calmness. It's a helpful technique for shutting down the chatter in your mind, and it is something that you can even hum to yourself through the day or listen to when you are driving. It is about having a larger target for your attention because it's hard to think about other things when you are chanting. If it feels too weird to you, don't worry. Just sit back and listen. If you are game, join in!

The chant we are using is 'Om Namah Shiva.' It is a Hindu chant, and we use the one from Robert Gass and the *Wings of Sound* because it is accessible and pretty. You can find it on Youtube.



It is helpful to know what a specific chant means.

Om: the sound of creation. The first vibration emerged from the void and silence that existed before creation. It is also the root of the word amen.

Namah: my salutations, or I bow and offer deference.

Shiva: to Shiva, auspicious one. Shiva is the god of destruction and knowledge. His name means explicitly, auspicious, propitious, gracious, benign, kind, benevolent, and friendly.

Aya: can mean “to” or “for” the word to which it is attached. The word “ya” by itself means the soul. This word is a grammatical aspect and also a word unto itself.

In Hinduism, Shiva is the Supreme Lord who creates, protects and transforms the universe. Hindus believe in one God and worship that one God under many manifestations, deities or images. Examples of Hindu deities are Krishna, Shiva, Rama and Durga. Furthermore, Hindus believe existence is a cycle of birth, death and rebirth, governed by karma (a complex belief in cause and effect). Therefore, Shiva is just one aspect of the Divine.

Do we need to believe in Shiva to chant these words? We chant with respect and appreciation, using the chant as a coping skill to encourage peace and calm, just as we used the word Om and just as one might in a yoga class.

Light Imagery

We have used Light imagery at the end of each Healing Journey session. In Level Three, we return to this strategy of imagining Light and will return to its roots. Alastair studied with Swami Radha, a yogini and spiritual teacher who established Yasodhara Ashram in the Kootenay Mountains in British Columbia. She taught what is called ‘The Divine Light Invocation,’ which calls upon Light to enter through the top of the head and through the body, which can then be sent to other people.

The mantra that goes with this imagery is:

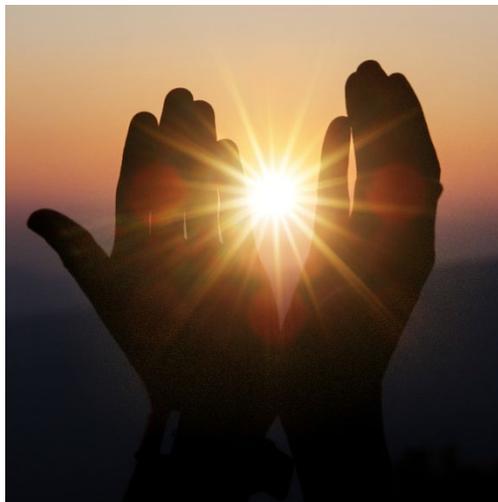
- I am created by Divine Light,
- I am sustained by Divine Light,
- I am protected by Divine Light,
- I am surrounded by Divine Light,
- I am ever growing into Divine Light.

We repeat together as a group, twice, first for ourselves and then for others in the world who are in need. It may feel quite different to say a mantra together as a group. Some people were uncomfortable with the words in the past, so they changed the word Light to Love or dropped the word ‘Divine.’ Whatever works for you is fine. Remember that it is yet another coping skill for your collection.

Religion and Spirituality

Some people are uncomfortable with religion, while others will be quite committed to a religious tradition and derive much comfort from this. In every group, some members will feel hurt and separated from their religion of origin or who have not had positive experiences with religion. In contrast, others feel very connected and supported by a religious organization. Our focus is on spirituality, which is the felt experience of expansiveness, peace and calm that can come from connecting with something larger than oneself, whether religion, nature or mindfulness.

Take a moment to review your ideas about religion and spirituality. The two columns are divided by a dashed, not solid, line because these qualities are not mutually exclusive. Some spiritual people belong to a religion, and some do not.



Religion	Spirituality

Our work together in Level Three will focus on the spirituality side of the chart, and we recognize that people in the group will have different relationships with the left-hand side of the chart. We are about the feelings of calm, peace and safety that spirituality can offer us, however we chose to get there

Ideas about what the Divine is and is not

In discussing complex concepts, it can be helpful to identify what something is not as much as what something is. We used this strategy in Level Two when talking about what Forgiveness is and is not in Session 6. Consider filling out some of your ideas in the following chart to develop theories of a greater power or higher spirit. We will use the term Divine for God because not all religions are comfortable using it, but it refers to the same thing for our purposes.

We may have ideas about what it is from childhood, but it can also be helpful to appreciate how our thoughts have changed.

What the Divine is	What the Divine is not

Spirituality can refer to:

- The feelings that arise from the sense of being connected to something bigger than ourselves
- Seeking a sense of purpose and meaning in life
- A universal human experience—something that touches us all.
- It can feel sacred, transcendent, or a deep sense of aliveness and interconnectedness.

It can be accessed through:

- A church, temple, mosque, or synagogue
- Prayer or a personal relationship with God or a higher power.
- Connections to nature or art.

Like your sense of purpose, your definition of spirituality may change throughout your life, adapting to your experiences and relationships.

What All Religions Share

While there may be differences in how we understand the Divine, there is one overarching similarity in all religious traditions. One universally shared message you may remember from childhood is 'The Golden Rule.' The rule is that we should treat others as we wish to be treated. This sounds so simple, but it can be so difficult! Recall the challenges many of us felt during the letting go of resentments exercise in Week 6 of Level Two.



The focus of Level Three will be the resentments we hold against others and the challenges we have in letting go of those resentments. We will examine the challenges of letting go of resentments, why we find it difficult and how we can work to overcome our resistance.

What are the benefits of this work?

- a greater sense of peace
- less conflict
- more compassion for others and ourselves
- less need to control others and the things that go on around us
- a greater ability to go with the flow rather than fight with others
- more equanimity

Homework

The first half of the book *Bringing Spirituality into Your Healing Journey* is a review, reminding us of what was learned in Levels One and Two. Feel free to review them as you wish. However, our work will begin in Chapter 2 on page 72.

1. Your views:

(a) Write an account of your current views on the possible existence of some higher power, order, intelligence, or God.

(b) What would you regard as evidence? What would it take to convince you?

(c) What kinds of doubts or resistance do you have? E.g.:

- “I haven’t seen anything that couldn’t be rationally explained.
- I would feel that I was betraying my sense of honesty if I considered something beyond my - experience.
- After many years of not going to church and being an agnostic, I can't turn around now and say that I hope there is something more.
- “Religion is for wimps.”

(d) Have you had experiences that convinced you of the existence of a higher power? If so, write about them. What happened? How did it feel to you?

2. What is the Divine like?

If you believe, or are prepared to consider, that a Divine Power, Order, Intelligence or Being exists:

What might this be like (assuming for a moment that He/She/It exists)?

What is God not like?

What is your relationship to this power - how do you fit into the picture?

What would convince you of the existence of such a Power?

What would convince you that it does not exist?

3. Reading:

Choose a book written by someone who has demonstrated a high degree of spiritual development in their life and writings. Some examples are:

- Yoga: Eknath Easwaran, Yogananda, Swami Radha; the Bhagavad Gita
- Christian mysticism: John Main, Thomas Merton, St Teresa of Avila, Saint Augustine
- Buddhism: The Dhammapada, Jack Kornfield, Stephen Levine, Thich Nhat Hanh;
- Unclassifiable: Krishnamurti, Eckhart Tolle, A Course in Miracles.

It is important to go to original sources and not be satisfied solely with books by popularisers who write about spirituality but may not have done much spiritual work themselves. Instead, read at least one of these books and write about what you read. Continuing this reading for the next several months would be most helpful.

4. Your expectations and goals from this work:

(a) What do you expect to “get” from reading this book and doing these exercises?

(b) What are your goals from your spiritual journey? What do you hope to achieve after working through these chapters and eventually?

Review

Alastair reviews several forms of meditation in *Bringing Spirituality into Your Healing Journey*. Please read pp. 47 – 52. There are also quotes from Healing Journey participants describing their experiences with meditation.



BRINGING SPIRITUALITY INTO YOUR HEALING JOURNEY

SESSION TWO

REACTION, RESPONSE, AND JUDGMENT

Om and Chanting

In Level One, we moved from focusing on the breath with the sound of a sigh to using the word ‘Om.’ We will build on that strategy by externalizing the breath with a more advanced version of ‘Om.’ We are going to try chanting.

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Creating an Altar

In today's session, we introduce the idea of creating an altar in your home. In some traditions, the creation of an altar is a common addition to the house. However, even if it is not part of your tradition, you may have small collections of objects around your home that remind you of things that give you joy or peace. For example, groups of photographs are common, or a collection of items brought home from holidays, mementoes that you bring back to remind you of your experiences, such as rocks, sea shells, and driftwood. These objects can take us to another place, pull us out of our busy lives to remind us to take deep breaths and recall the things that give us peace. For example, when coping with cancer, sometimes people collect symbols that they find healing, like angels or hearts.

You can set up an altar with things that remind you of peace, healing, and something you are doing to help yourself. You can experiment with creating things, remembering that it is how it feels that can guide you. It need not be public. It can be kept privately in the same space that you use for meditation.

We invite you to bring things to our group altar so that we can enjoy them for the session as well. Each week we will have a simple altar or focal point. It may have various items on it: candles, flowers, a photograph or picture, small stones or seashells; these objects are symbols and, as such, can be quite individual and personal.

These symbols can be thought of as shortcuts, like an icon on your computer desktop— by connecting with the symbol, we activate a spiritual 'program.'

Reaction, Response and Judgment

For this session, we want to explore judgment. We judge constantly: thought-watching shows us how much space in our minds is consumed with judging others and ourselves. Thank goodness we do not have thought bubbles above our heads that others can read! Often our thoughts are not very friendly to ourselves or others.

The words we use can be confusing here: let's be clear about judgment in this context. Judgment is not the same as discernment. The word judgment can refer to two entirely different things:



Judgment can be discernment, an essential skill that we use every day. Examples of discernment would include: judging when it is safe to cross the road, when the light is green, whether that driver's paying attention, whether it is safe to pass, whether I need to speed up/slow down, whether that person is a safe driver or a hazard. There is no emotional heat in these discernments, they are based on the facts as we understand them, and we use these discernments to guide our behaviour.

Judgment can also refer to a condemnation of ourselves or others. It has an emotional charge. Condemnatory judgment is something we do all the time and can be habitual. It happens when we interpret the behaviour of others (or ourselves) as unworthy, inappropriate, wrong or even despicable. We condemn the behaviour, but we also condemn the person; we define them by this moment of unskillful behaviour. It is not just that what they did is bad, but it is that they are bad. A clear tip-off is when we use insults or name-calling: "That son of a ..." is a sign that we are condemning, no longer seeing the other person in the fullness of their humanity, but distilling the whole person down to a single, pejorative label.

Watch your thoughts as you walk down the street. Are you thinking things like:

- that jerk just stepped in front of me
- that selfish son-of-a-gun just littered
- how can those idiots smoke... don't they know...
- she shouldn't wear that
- he's too fat
- that kid is a brat

It is humbling to acknowledge the stream of condemnation that we allow to flow through our minds. Watch the thoughts that come up when you are in traffic to see the judgments flow!

Where do these judgments come from? Are we treating others well, even silently in our thoughts? Often our criticism of others emerges out of frustration of being unable to reach our goals, for example, when we are late, stressed, or things are not moving smoothly.

To identify our judgemental voice, starting with everyday, ordinary experiences that create anger rather than starting with more significant issues (just as we did when we introduced the topic of forgiveness in Level Two) is helpful.

Spend some time thought watching and notice what sort of judgemental thoughts come up. Perhaps you are judgemental of yourself when your mind wanders. Maybe you are judging others in your life. Run a recent triggering event or interaction in your mind and notice where the judgements arise.

Judgements that come up in thought watching:

Replay a recent triggering event or interaction in your mind, noting the moments of judgment:

Reaction and Response

Another way to recognize that we are judging is when we are drawn into a reaction rather than a response. What is the difference? A reaction is automatic. It happens very quickly and can feel out of our control. It is heated, stimulating a fight/flight/freeze reaction that shuts down our problem-solving ability. We are triggered into a reaction when we perceive a threat, perhaps not an immediate life-threatening challenge, but our body and brain can react as if it is. Take a simple example of driving. Countless moments in life can elicit anger, frustration, judgement and reaction. Because reactions happen so quickly and without thought, it is important to slow the story down, stop at various points and notice what is happening to you:

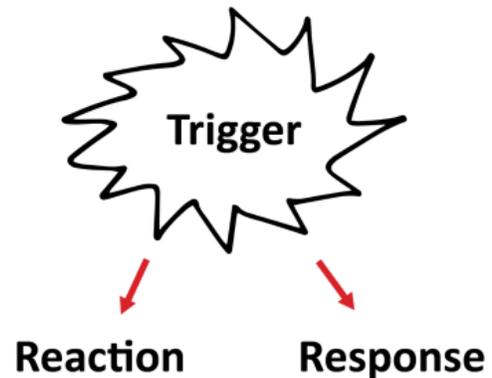
- Physically: the stress response
- Thoughts: critical and blaming, taking it personally
- Feelings: angry, frustrated, helpless
- Socially: judgemental, revengeful
- Spiritually: disconnected

Think of some of the triggering experiences and work through these different levels. Here is a suggestion, but you can use your own examples.

Someone cuts in front of you in a grocery line-up and insists they were there first. How do you react?

Body:

Thoughts:



Emotions:

Socially:

Spiritually:

It is an engaging experience, felt at all levels.

In this group session, we will compare a simple example of a reaction to a response. We will also discuss ways to shift from a reaction to a more responsive mode.

Reaction versus Response Chart

We will use a chart to deconstruct a situation in which someone is triggered into a reaction (rather than a response). At the top of the chart, we have a trigger, an event that causes us to have strong thoughts and feelings.

A Tale of Two Chickens:

Below is a true story one of our leaders told about picking up dinner on a Friday afternoon after work.

Fridays are special at our house. We all have busy lives, and both my partner and I work. Our daughters go to a local school, and it is on Friday that I get to pick them up; the rest of the week, they go to daycare. I love this part of our week, I pick them up, and we have something easy for dinner, and then we have a movie night. It starts the weekend on a great note and draws a nice boundary between the work week and family time.

Of course, by Friday, I have run out of ideas for dinner, and I'm too tired to cook anyway. So right on my way home, I can drop in at the local supermarket to pick simple food like; BBQ chicken, garlic bread, a bag of salad, and two-bite brownies. I get off work at 2:45, and the girls are out of school at 3:30. Time is a bit tight, but with no glitches, it should all work.

I get to the store, roll out the cart and start picking up a BBQ chicken, a bag of salad, and frozen garlic bread, and I hover over in the baked goods section. But, knowing that this will not be the healthiest of dinners, I still grab the bag of two-bite brownies because it is Friday, it is special, and we all need a little chocolate!

I come around to the check-out, and it is very crowded, with many people picking up last-minute things before the weekend.

I go to the 8-item or less lineup and notice the man in front of me has 16 items. I know that because I counted them in frustration. The cashier seems to be remarkably slow.

1. I think and feel: (fill in the following chart under reaction)

Finally, the man ahead of me gathers his things and moves on, so I start to put my groceries on the belt. I notice that the cashier is bored and distracted and gives me no notice. Then she cannot find the price for the bread, and she calls for a price check. She is chewing gum, and she shrugs as I look at her. I check my watch. I can see how fast time is passing. I'm going to be late picking up the girls!

2. I think and feel: (fill in the following chart under reaction)

The assistant returns with the price and enters it into the computer. She then asks me how I will pay, and the tape suddenly gets stuck in the machine! I look anxiously at my watch, knowing I will be late.

3. I think and feel: (fill in the following chart under reaction)

She can't fix the tape and must call her supervisor to help her. It takes time for the supervisor to come over. Both of them are struggling to get it to work. I am beginning to think of my two young daughters, in the playground at school, by themselves, looking for me, and I'm not there. Then I worry about a stranger coming up to them, in a trench coat and asking them to help him find his lost puppy.

4. How do I feel? What am I thinking: (fill in the following chart under reaction)

The cashier finally gets it working, looks at me, says, "Sorry about that," and cashes me out. I grab my stuff, run to my car, and drive to the school. I am aware that I am speeding through these residential streets.

5. What's going on for me? (fill in the following chart under reaction)

I get to the school, where I see my girls waiting patiently. Finally, I open the door and snarl, "Come on, get in." They look at me, surprised. The weekend has begun!

TRIGGER
Buying A Chicken at the Grocery Store
Reactions

1. Someone is in the 8-item lineup with 16 items.

2. A product needs a price check.

3. The tape breaks.

4. Imagine the children being unsafe.

5. She was speeding to make up time.

What does this discussion show us? The stress reaction shuts down other parts of our thinking and problem-solving brain. As the stress escalates, so does our reactivity. It snowballs until we create even more stress and behave irresponsibly. Notice how these situations are not particularly threatening. Our interpretations - our thoughts about the situation- create stress. The more stressful our thoughts, the bigger the problem becomes in our minds. The trigger is not really about buying a chicken. It is about our expectations, agenda and unrealistic relationship with time.

Reactions are hard on ourselves and others. It happens so quickly that it seems automatic. The work we have been doing through the levels of the Healing Journey Program is to become increasingly aware of what we are thinking and feeling. Awareness can give us choices in our behaviour. Being mindful allows you to observe and catch yourself if you feel emotionally triggered. By becoming aware of your reaction as it unfolds, you may have a chance to stop the process and shift. We may be well on our way to a reaction before we recognize it or can turn it down. We may not even notice until afterwards. However, when we see it, we want to understand what is happening to us.

Returning to the chart above, let us look at how we might catch ourselves in a reaction and shift it into a response. At what point might you catch yourself? Perhaps it will be when you are well into condemnation: you may hear yourself call the other person a name (either aloud or silently to yourself). What can you do?

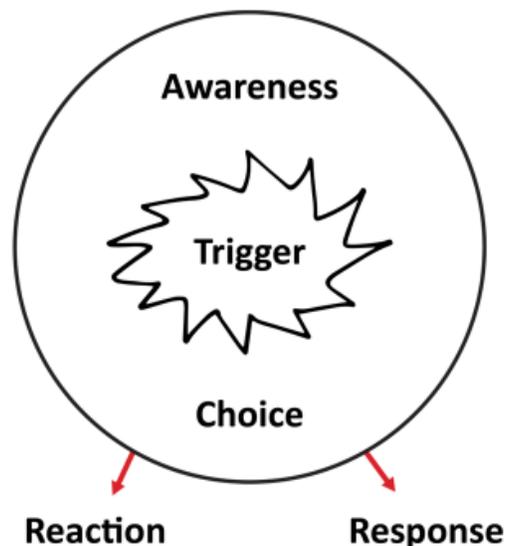
TRIGGER		
Buying A Chicken for Friday Dinner		
Reaction	Strategies to shift from a reaction to a response	Response
1. Someone is in the 8-item lineup with 16 items.		
2. A product needs a price check.		
3. The tape breaks.		
4. Imagine the children being unsafe.		
5. She was speeding to make up time.		

Awareness

We need to identify what a reaction is and how it feels. Then, when we notice that we are beginning to be triggered into a reaction, we can change it to a response.

What are the signs that you are reacting?

- Physical tension: muscles tightening, frown, the tension in your face, heart beginning to race, holding your breath. Others?
- Emotional reactivity: A wave of anger, frustration, outrage, self-righteous indignation, and self-talk that inflames the situation
- Thoughts: blaming others, or even yourself, 'shoulding' (i.e. this shouldn't be happening, they shouldn't behave this way), this is unfair, there are rules! Name-calling, focusing on the other person and not taking any personal responsibility, feeling personal.
- Socially: others are the problem, others are the enemy, an impulse to retaliate.
- Spiritually: total disconnection from something greater than yourself



Once we know how a reaction feels, we can use our coping skills to step in and turn the reaction down. How can we do this?

- Take a deep breath (again and again)
- Ground yourself
- Count to 10
- Pull back
- Stop talking
- Walk away for a moment
- Remind yourself that it is not personal

Other strategies?

How do we know we have moved toward a response? A response feels very different:

- Feeling calm and rational, not emotionally triggered
- Coming from a problem-solving perspective
- Having a larger perspective, seeing a larger picture
- Not needing to blame
- Making thoughtful decisions about the next move
- Not taking the problem personally

What strategies can help us move from reacting to responding? We are working through our thoughts and feelings much as we have done at Levels One and Two:

- Using the breath to bring ourselves into the moment.
- Thought watching. We want to be aware of our thoughts and feelings and process them in a helpful way (rather than rashly acting on them).
- Healthy thought management
 1. Acknowledge the thoughts and feelings.
 2. Express, or release them constructively.
 3. Replace them with more healing thoughts (healing for you and the other person).
 4. Repeat 1 through 3 as needed.
- In session 6 of Level Two, we discussed forgiveness and letting go of resentments, and we used the Garden Gate exercise.

Here are some more examples of triggering situations:

*You're waiting in a clinic for an appointment that you should have had two hours ago. You approach the receptionist and ask when the doctor might be ready to see you. The receptionist responds sharply, "As soon as she can — can't you see you're not the only patient here?!"
You find yourself in a place of condemnation in a heartbeat!*

What are your thoughts?

What are your feelings?

When you return to your seat to wait some more, your thoughts and feelings become even more unruly, creating tremendous tension in your body, thoughts and feelings as you go over the conversation again and again, unable to let it go.

Using healthy thought management, how might we move through this experience?

1. I feel angry, even hurt! I hate waiting for the doctor. I'm worried about what might happen, I'm concerned about test results, I'm tired and scared, and the secretary yells at me!
2. I'm going to journal about this right as I sit here.
3. I wonder what this is like for the secretary. Maybe she's stressed and doesn't know how to cope. It is such a busy clinic; there must be a lot of distressed patients here. She looks frazzled! She is not helping herself or us by being so stressed out. It is not about me. This is about the stress of her work.

In other words, we can shift from a reaction to a response by pulling back and moving into a discernment mode with thoughts like these:

- She is too stressed
- She is not handling it well
- The system is strained
- She needs to take The Healing Journey Program!

Separating the Behaviour from the Person

Reaction and condemnation go together, and it happens when we make the poor behaviour of the other person into *who they are* rather than what they have done. Not only is their behaviour bad, but they are bad too. We all have unskillful moments when we make missteps, say the wrong thing, and lose our cool. It is human to make errors, we all do it, and it is how we learn. However, our errors and mistakes are not who we are.

It is like when we discipline children: we can correct children without a wholesale condemnation of who they are. We can dislike the behaviour while not condemning the person. In this session, we will start with our judgments of others and then move on to the more challenging job of examining how we judge ourselves. Why do we need to let go of condemnatory judgments?

1. They harm our relationships with others, separating us from those around us. They dehumanize the other person and permit us to treat that other person with less respect.
2. They harm our bodies: they put our bodies back into the jungle, experiencing fight-or-flight responses. So there is a robust physiological response when we judge others (and when we are judged).

Type A behaviour pattern, now referred to as coronary-prone behaviour, used to be associated with time urgency and impatience. Now this definition has been broadened to include hostility. It is because acts or feelings of hostility raise blood pressure and stress the cardiovascular system tremendously. So next time you feel angry and frustrated, note how it feels in your body, where you feel the strain.

3. Judgments separate us from the Divine. It can take time to see this, and is hard to grasp at first. We need to realize that to exclude one person is to exclude everyone.

Homework

1. Our habits of judgement/criticism/resentment:

(a) Think of one or more people whom you sometimes resent. List some things about them - their behaviours, attitudes or qualities - that you resent or judge as unworthy, unlikeable, frustrating, or irritating to yourself.

(b) List all the “hassles” of everyday life. How do these inconveniences affect your mental and physical state?

(c) Watch your thoughts as you go about your daily routine. Try to catch yourself “judging,” which includes criticizing others and constantly wanting things to be different from how they happen to be. List some of these thoughts. To consolidate what you have learned, it is essential to write about it and keep it within a journal, to which you regularly add (a ring binder is convenient). Your notes can be in point form or narrative, handwritten or typed, long or short, but your insights will often be lost if you don’t write them down.

2. Competition:

(a) Consider how profoundly our Western lifestyle is based on competition. What areas can you identify it: competition for jobs and promotion, for money, in sport, business, the arts, mass media. What else?

(b) Taking sport or games as a prototype, what is the effect on you if you compete with someone else and “beat” them?

(c) What about if you lose; how do you feel (examine or remember relevant instances and write about their effect on you)?

(d) Do you compete with yourself in any way?

(e) Why do you compete? (For acceptance, recognition, survival, self-glorification, affection, to survive because everyone does).

(f) How is competition related to the judgement of others (and of oneself)?

3. Cancer as “opportunity”:

It is sometimes said that problems, even severe challenges like cancer, are “gifts,” “lessons,” or “opportunities.” However, some have said that if cancer is a gift, it is undoubtedly wrapped in barbed wire! What is your reaction to that? Do you see potential benefits in your cancer or other life crises mixed in with the pain?

Are there examples (of which this may be one) in your life where an initial entirely negative judgement gives way to an assessment that a situation contains unwanted and beneficial aspects?

Review

Read about Mind watching and Journaling in , pp. 57 – 59.



BRINGING SPIRITUALITY INTO YOUR HEALING JOURNEY

SESSION THREE

FORGIVENESS

In this session, we want to revisit our understanding of forgiveness and why it is healing. We also want to review the Trigger Model to recognize better when we are feeling triggered and into a reaction and ways to pull out of that reaction into a response. But first, here are a few reflections on the homework from last week.

Om and Chanting

In Level One, we moved from focusing on the breath with the sound of a sigh to using the word 'Om.' We will build on that strategy by externalizing the breath with a more advanced version of 'Om.' We are going to try chanting.

Chanting is the use of a short musical phrase that is repeated over and over again. The words are often some mantras. Many religions will use chanting, prayers, and hymns. Perhaps you have encountered chanting in a yoga class. In the 1990s, some Gregorian chants were recorded, putting the monks onto the radio charts! It is not about singing well but rather having a tune in your pocket that you can associate with feelings of calmness. It's a helpful technique for shutting down the chatter in your mind, and it is something that you can even hum to yourself through the day or listen to when you are driving. It is about having a larger target for your attention because it's hard to think about other things when you are chanting. If it feels too weird to you, don't worry. Just sit back and listen. If you are game, join in!

The chant we are using is 'Om Namah Shiva.' It is a Hindu chant, and we use the one from Robert Gass and the *Wings of Sound* because it is accessible and pretty. You can find it on Youtube.



It is helpful to know what a specific chant means.

Om: the sound of creation. The first vibration emerged from the void and silence that existed before creation. It is also the root of the word amen.

Namah: my salutations, or I bow and offer deference.

Shiva: to Shiva, auspicious one. Shiva is the god of destruction and knowledge. His name means explicitly, auspicious, propitious, gracious, benign, kind, benevolent, and friendly.

Aya: can mean “to” or “for” the word to which it is attached. The word “ya” by itself means the soul. This word is a grammatical aspect and also a word unto itself.

In Hinduism, Shiva is the Supreme Lord who creates, protects and transforms the universe. Hindus believe in one God and worship that one God under many manifestations, deities or images. Examples of Hindu deities are Krishna, Shiva, Rama and Durga. Furthermore, Hindus believe existence is a cycle of birth, death and rebirth, governed by karma (a complex belief in cause and effect). Therefore, Shiva is just one aspect of the Divine.

Do we need to believe in Shiva to chant these words? We chant with respect and appreciation, using the chant as a coping skill to encourage peace and calm, just as we used the word Om and just as one might in a yoga class.

Inner Critic

Last week’s homework asked you to observe the judgements and reactions that you experience. This can be an uncomfortable process! Yet, we are learning about the thoughts and feelings we carry with us and observing how they influence our interactions, even our quality of life.

Sometimes we can be tempted to turn that critical voice towards ourselves when we become aware of our judgements: *I must be a real worm to think of others so uncharitably! We do not deserve condemnation any more than other people do.* We want to learn how to replace that inner judge with a kinder, generous, compassionate voice.

Competition

We live in a competitive society, judging others and ourselves by the standards of winning and losing. This bifurcation, or black-and-white thinking, puts us into conflict with ourselves and others. If there is a winner, there will also be a loser. This is not only hard on others but also hard on ourselves. *If I don’t win, then what am I? If I am not the best, is it worth doing?* What might it be like to let go of the burden of having to win all the time?

Daily Hassles

Most of us also live in a busy city, giving us ample opportunity to experience hassles and frustrations. In your homework, you may have noticed that many examples relate to time pressure and trying to get too much done with too little time. Perhaps some examples you found are frustrations because things are not how we believe they should be. The use of the word “should” suggests your belief is being challenged (e.g., “The system should be better, more efficient”).

Sometimes hassles are related to feelings of helplessness, perhaps because we feel there is nothing we can do to change things, feel unheard or unappreciated, or powerless to get what we need. (The healthcare system often instills these feelings as patients wait for appointments, etc.)

Noticing the effects of these feelings on your body and state of mind is essential as it indicates the potential for making healing changes in your life.

Cancer as “Opportunity”

Whether it is possible to experience cancer as an opportunity or a “gift” may or may not work for you. For some people, this is a valuable area of exploration, and for others, it may engender too much grief to consider. So maybe the question directs us back to the Tasks of Grief Model we explored in the Level Two session.

1. Accepting a difficult reality
2. Acknowledging the thoughts and feelings
3. Adapting with coping skills
4. Reinvention

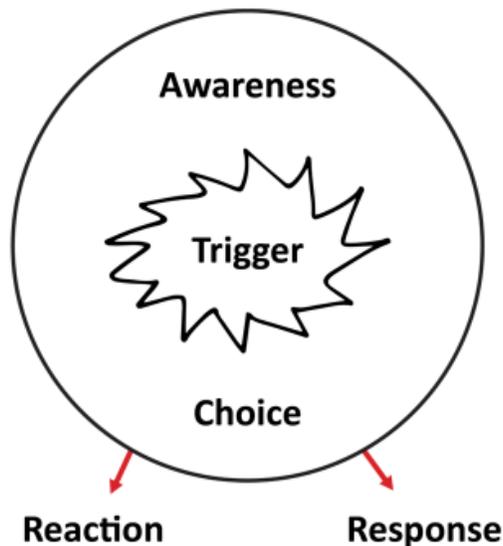
The value of the question about what opportunities cancer offers is at the level of reinvention, i.e. making choices that reflect one’s authentic values and desires. It can allow us to let go of stressors and perceived obligations and embrace the things that give us joy, peace and contentment. In essence, this question of ‘cancer as an opportunity’ asks us to consider the core question of reinvention, knowing what I know now, how do I wish to live my life?’ If this question is too painful or premature, it means that there are more feelings to acknowledge. There may also be some days when this is a helpful question and others when it is too painful to consider. Waiting for test results may not be the best time to view the ‘opportunities’ that cancer can offer!!

This session’s topic is found in Chapter 5, Forgiveness, in Bringing Spirituality into Your Healing Journey.

The Trigger Model

Have you been able to identify moments in your day when you feel triggered and see yourself moving into a reaction rather than a response? How do we know when we are condemning versus discerning, reacting rather than responding? By becoming aware of the emotional heat in our reaction.

A reaction comes from feeling triggered, while discernment is a calmer, more relaxed process that leads us to an appropriate response. The critical part of this process is awareness, which allows us to notice that we are triggered and offers us a chance to shift from condemnation to discernment. When we surround the trigger with a bubble of awareness, we can choose how to manage ourselves.



Becoming familiar with your behaviour, thoughts and feelings when triggered and during a reaction can alert you to what is happening. It shifts the process from automatic to something we know and can manage more skillfully.

Take a moment to consider if there are people or events that 'hook you' into a reaction, triggers that are habitual and predictable. These are your '**Danger Zones**':

Creating your own “I’m Triggered!” profile can be helpful. Think back to moments when you have been triggered into a reaction.

When you are triggered, what happens to you in terms of your:

Body:

Thoughts:

Feelings:

Socially:

Spiritually:

Put a star or circle as the most potent indicator of identifying a trigger reaction. This is your **Trigger Profile**.

Now list the skills you can bring to bear: what helps you shift from that trigger reaction to a calmer, more transparent response mode. Let's call this your **Reset Buttons**:

What can you do at each level to reset yourself from reaction to response?

Body:

Thoughts:

Feelings:

Socially:

Spiritually:

Identifying the 'Danger Zones,' 'Trigger Profile,' and 'Reset Buttons' gives you more awareness and more options for managing your life's stress.

Mentoring Ourselves

Sometimes we are pretty good at shifting away from the judgmental “attacks” on others but less able to offer ourselves the same spaciousness and understanding. This process of identifying these critical, unpleasant thoughts can cause us to become very hard on ourselves. The idea here is not to turn the attack toward ourselves!

Instead, this process requires a supportive and honest voice inside us that guides us in developing more compassion for others and ourselves. One way to think of this is having an internalized mentor.



A mentor is often considered someone in the work world who offers us support and an experienced voice, someone who is like a teacher. But mentors can be found in many places: a friend, relative, grandparent, teacher or some wise person you have met. Have you experienced being mentored well? What was that experience like? What does a mentor offer us?

- Support
- Ongoing voice of experience
- Non-judgment
- Faith and trust in our abilities to get it right, even if it takes time
- A sense of the bigger picture when we are struggling with specifics
- An image of what it is that we can become

Are there other things that your mentor offered you or things that you might imagine a mentor would do for you?

So, what would it be like to mentor ourselves?

What might your internal mentor say if you observed your thought stream and found critical, judgmental thoughts about others?

- I’m noticing some critical thoughts today; what’s happening for you? Are you feeling tired? Are you upset about something? Perhaps you need to take a break and come back to this tomorrow.
- Wow, I’m sensing you are pretty peeved about this situation with your boss! Take a breath; hold on for a moment. Let’s try a different approach.
- I noticed you lost your cool with your mother-in-law. Well, you have been here before. What might be another way to work this through? What’s worked in the past?

It is different from the self-critical voice that might say:

- I'll never get it right; I'm so mean and unkind thinking these things about other people
- I'm such a loser; I'll never be able to do this like other people in the program

One participant described this process as her higher nature, spiritual self, talking with her ego or lower, more childlike self. This model of mentoring yourself may prove helpful to you. It's like our work with the Inner Healer (Level Two, Session 4), but perhaps a little more immediate or accessible.

Forgiveness

The next question is, how do we move toward forgiveness? In the next few weeks, we will work to understand more about the psychological mechanisms that create resentment. We will also examine a model of spirituality that can help us be more open and able to forgive others and ourselves.



We can explore this question: Would this person's behaviour upset me if I had everything I needed and was okay and secure?

Setting the Stage

Sometimes we are more patient and accepting. Other times more irritable. When are you most likely to be triggered or resentful? When we feel depleted, we are less tolerant of others and ourselves. What situations decrease your tolerance? When you are:

- Tired
- Stressed
- Hungry
- Upset or frightened
- Time pressured
- Too much work to do
- In pain

Other situations?

We are more vulnerable to resentment when not in good repair or other factors stress us. We are less tolerant of others when we do not feel safe or don't feel that we have what we need. Thus, self-care becomes integral to making our way in the world! Keeping ourselves in good repair is a social and spiritual responsibility!

What is forgiveness? What is it not?

We worked through a definition of forgiveness in Level 2. What do you recall as being noteworthy about forgiveness?

Forgiveness is not about:

- Giving in
- Being a doormat
- Excusing poor behaviour
- Wielding power over others
- Ignoring how we feel about something (anger, for example)
- Reconciliation

Other ideas?

Forgiveness is about:

- taking some control
- a decision, a choice
- a release, letting go
- about me, not about the other person

Other ideas?

Why is forgiveness valuable?

- It gives us back some control; it unhooks us from the behaviour of others.
- It gives us sovereignty over ourselves.
- It allows us to manage our feelings and not be caught up in the choices of others.
- It allows us to foster a sense of peacefulness in ourselves by removing our desire that people or situations would be different from what they are.

Other ideas?

How do we do it?

The next few weeks will offer various models to explore feelings and compassion, the practice of forgiveness. We can use Level Two's "Garden Gate" exercise as one technique.

What is vital in the Garden Gate exercise?

1. Acknowledging your pain

Acknowledge the hurt you feel, allowing yourself to recognize the pain beneath the anger (takes us back to the grief model, Task #2, Acknowledging thoughts and feelings).

Anger is a natural reaction to pain. Who is the most dangerous animal in the forest? Is it the bear or the wounded bear? The wounded bear is more dangerous because it tries to protect its wound. Anger is like a house alarm. It invites us to explore what is happening if we have been breached, our boundaries crossed. However, it is not something to have going on all the time, that house alarm needs to be turned off, and the underlying problem needs to be corrected. With the alarm going on and on, it is impossible to think or problem-solve. We can acknowledge this pain in our journals, write a letter to the person even if we never send it (this can be helpful when the other person is unavailable or has died), talk to a therapist about it or share it with a trusted friend.

2. Try to understand the other person's behaviour.

Using our experience as human beings, we can use our curiosity and imagination to 'feel our way' into the other person's experience. We are trying to expand our lens to appreciate what might happen to the other person.

Most people do not want to hurt others. Instead, they are caught in patterns of relating. They are unskillful or not thinking, or perhaps they are triggered. If we are honest with ourselves, we know we have had unskillful moments with others.

3. Experiment with letting the grievance go.

What would it feel like to let the grievance go? Would you feel vulnerable? Anger helps us to feel powerful and in control. It makes us feel strong, so we often hold on to it. The problem is that it is a very expensive emotion:

- physiologically (remember the Fight/Flight reaction)
- cognitively it can create rumination and spiralling thoughts
- emotionally it can be all-consuming and create distress
- socially it separates us from others
- spiritually it cuts us off from feelings of peace

What would it feel like to move beyond the grievance? Freeing? Lighter? We often hold onto resentment to make others suffer and change their behaviour. However, it is we who feel the burden of it. Our disapproval rarely works to change the behaviour of others.

4. Repeat as needed!

It can take time to process hurts, and repeated explorations may be required. Notice if it gets easier to release the feelings the more you acknowledge them.

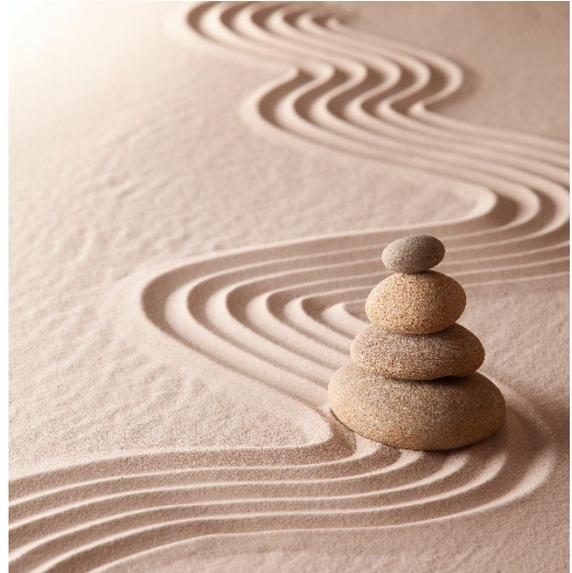
We can also foster our Inner Mentor as a strategy to be more forgiving and compassionate to ourselves.

A Model for Spirituality

What if we are all connected to some larger whole? What would this look like, and how might we understand it? One possible model for spirituality is the Internet. Where is the net? Where is www? Is it one big computer in the sky? Is it like a great big mainframe computer out there somewhere? Is it in some room somewhere?

Most of us do not know where or even what it is, but it is an important part of our lives.

We use it many times a day: We sit down, use a password and log on, and the Internet connects us with all sorts of people, ideas and resources. Most everyone is connected to the Internet, and we communicate through it. We can also access information from the net. (The metaphor falls at this point because connecting with destructive, exploitive and dangerous ideas through the internet is possible.)



So, what would it be like to think of the Divine as the healing internet surrounding us? We may not know where or what it looks like, but we can learn to log on and connect. How do we log on? Through meditation, prayer, centring ourselves, reading spiritual texts or any other activity that gives you feelings of:

- Peace
- Calm
- Support
- Safety
- A sense that everything will be okay whatever happens
- 'Oceanic' sensation of being connected to something greater than yourself

When connected to these feelings, we also become more tolerant, less irritable and more confident. We are more aware of ourselves and able to respond to situations rather than react.

Large and small resentments are like going 'off-line,' losing connectivity and being alone. We lose our google maps and coping apps and can feel lost and out of sorts. However, as we learn to let go of resentments and practice forgiveness, our connectivity gets more substantial, and we have all the resources to cope with what comes up in our lives.

This week's homework will introduce several techniques for practicing forgiveness; separating a person from their behaviour, seeing this person only with love and using a 'love channel.' Experiment with these ideas throughout the week and write about your experiences in your journal.

Homework

1. Separating a person from his behaviour.

Take an individual from the exercise in the last chapter or some other whom you resent and have personal contact with, and try considering the essence of the person as separate from their behaviour. First, think about them, then think about what they do that has annoyed you as if they were a small child or a robot without control over their actions. Does this make a difference to how you view them?

2. Replaying an emotional incident.

Recall a recent instance where someone criticized, made demands upon, or otherwise inconvenienced you. It need not be a dramatic example and might best be a situation with someone you know well.

Now “play through” the incident in your mind, as if through a videotape. Carefully note what you thought and felt at each point, in particular, your reactions to the alleged injustice of it! Then go through it again, but before you begin, fill yourself with light, as in the “Divine Light” exercise below. Repeat to yourself: “I choose to see this person only with love,” or some similar affirmation. Hold on to this feeling, let the other do their thing (on the video), and note any changes in your reaction. You could do this several times, with different examples, in your imagination, and, as the opportunities arise, try it out in “real life.”

3. Using the “love channel”!

Interacting with other people is a complex business; as we all know, “a lot is going on” during the conversation. We can think of having several “channels” connecting us - a judging channel, an angry one, a controlling one, a delighted, pleased and loving one, and so on. We can choose which of these channels we keep open or shut. So, when talking to someone, try consciously to think of just holding the “loving channel” open. Note how this feels. Since only this “good” channel is available, can the other person touch you with any negative emotions?

Review

Read about Mind watching and Thought stopping, as well as the Divine Light Mantra in *Bringing Spirituality into your Healing Journey*, pp. 63 – 65.



[BRINGING SPIRITUALITY INTO YOUR HEALING JOURNEY](#)

SESSION FOUR

ICEBERGS AND ELEPHANTS

We revisited the value of forgiveness, and the last session's homework offered several strategies for practicing forgiveness for others. In this session, we will deepen that practice and introduce a human experience model that demonstrates more happening in an interaction between people than what appears on the surface.

The 'Iceberg Model' invites us to look beneath the surface of people's behaviour to understand what might be driving it. We first describe the "icebergs" of others and how their criticism or defensiveness is coming from a place of their wounds. Then in the next session, we examine how we each have our icebergs!

Om and Chanting

In Level One, we moved from focusing on the breath with the sound of a sigh to using the word 'Om.' We will build on that strategy by externalizing the breath with a more advanced version of 'Om.' We are going to try chanting.

Chanting is the use of a short musical phrase that is repeated over and over again. The words are often some mantras. Many religions will use chanting, prayers, and hymns. Perhaps you have encountered chanting in a yoga class. In the 1990s, some Gregorian chants were recorded, putting the monks onto the radio charts! It is not about singing well but rather having a tune in your pocket that you can associate with feelings of calmness. It's a helpful technique for shutting down the chatter in your mind, and it is something that you can even hum to yourself through the day or listen to when you are driving. It is about having a larger target for your attention because it's hard to think about other things when you are chanting. If it feels too weird to you, don't worry. Just sit back and listen. If you are game, join in!

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It is helpful to know what a specific chant means.

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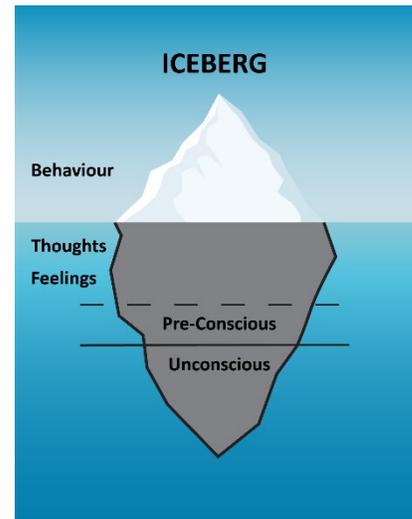
Aya: can mean “to” or “for” the word to which it is attached. The word “ya” by itself means the soul. This word is a grammatical aspect and also a word unto itself.

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Do we need to believe in Shiva to chant these words? We chant with respect and appreciation, using the chant as a coping skill to encourage peace and calm, just as we used the word Om and just as one might in a yoga class.

Icebergs

Sigmund Freud developed a model of the human mind that is now so well accepted that it has become part of our everyday language, for example, the ego and the unconscious. A revolutionary idea in the 19th century, Freud showed us how much of the activity of the mind is below our conscious awareness. He called it the 'unconscious.' But while it may not be a part of our awareness, it still exerts a powerful influence on our behaviour. He used the iceberg model to illustrate how much more is happening in human behaviour than we can immediately see. Psychotherapy is a process that allows us to explore the deeper motivations, thoughts, feelings and wounds that drive our behaviour. Understanding that behaviour is driven by factors often below our awareness can help us see the larger picture, understand our behaviour, and not take the behaviour of others personally.



Deep within us is a world of thoughts, feelings, experiences, memories, beliefs, values, likes, dislikes, fears, pain and shame. Inside each of us is a unique combination of thoughts and feelings derived from our experiences and histories, and this material is played out in our relationships. We are like large icebergs and often in relationships. We think we are dealing with what we see and hear, the surface, which is just the tip of the iceberg!

We shove thoughts and feelings into the unconscious because they threaten or frighten us. They may be fear or anger, the belief that the world is unsafe or that we are unworthy. These are complicated feelings to cope with as we navigate our daily lives, so we relegate them to the unconscious, where they are still active but not within our awareness. One of the times the unconscious 'leaks' out is in our dreams when we are not standing on guard against these emotional threats!

Let's draw an iceberg. About 1/6 of it is visible on the surface of the water. The rest of it is submerged. Icebergs appear very large as they float, so that is a lot of icebergs that we do not see! The iceberg's surface represents the behaviour of others, what they do, say, and act.

For example, let's look at the iceberg of the people who did not show up to support you with your cancer. As a patient or a caregiver, almost everyone who has coped with cancer has been surprised, sometimes by the support they receive and commonly by the support they don't. It is called the 'missing in action' phenomenon. Some friends or family members, who we thought of as close, fail to step up to be a support when it comes to cancer. This can feel very hurtful. What is going on? Let's look at what we see and hear from these people.

Missing in action: the friend who doesn't show up



Behaviour: what we see on the surface

- Sometimes we see nothing except their absence!
- Minimizing your experience
- Forced positivity
- Promising to help but then not coming through
- Offering false reassurance
- Avoiding you
- Pretending like nothing is happening

Other behaviours?

We can become aware of the thoughts and feelings beneath the surface through thought-watching, mindfulness and journaling. Many people are oblivious to this level of experience, but it is possible to expand our awareness to appreciate what is happening at this level. For example, when you consider the friend or family member who is 'missing in action,' what is happening beneath the surface?

Thoughts:

- Oh no, it's cancer!
- I don't know what to say. I don't want to make it worse.
- I don't have time to help.
- I hate sickness.
- I don't want my friend to have to go through this

Other thoughts?

Feelings:

- Scared that I won't know what to do or how to help
- Angry that I am being asked or expected to make things better (remember that anger is usually covering up feelings of vulnerability)
- Scared of hearing what this is like for my friend
- This is overwhelming me

Other feelings?

These thoughts and feelings are beneath the surface and may be accessible to the person. However, we can draw a solid line across the iceberg, indicating the material beneath our awareness. This level of experience goes **deeper** to the core of what drives the behaviours we see. This material is so threatening that it is pushed down deep and not accessible to the conscious mind except through dreams and psychotherapy. What might be active down deep?

- Vulnerability
- Memories of people they have lost to cancer
- Helplessness
- Fear of dying, fear of death and mortality

Other deeper thoughts and feelings?

The deepest fears, or wounds, are deep, beyond awareness.

The deepest level:

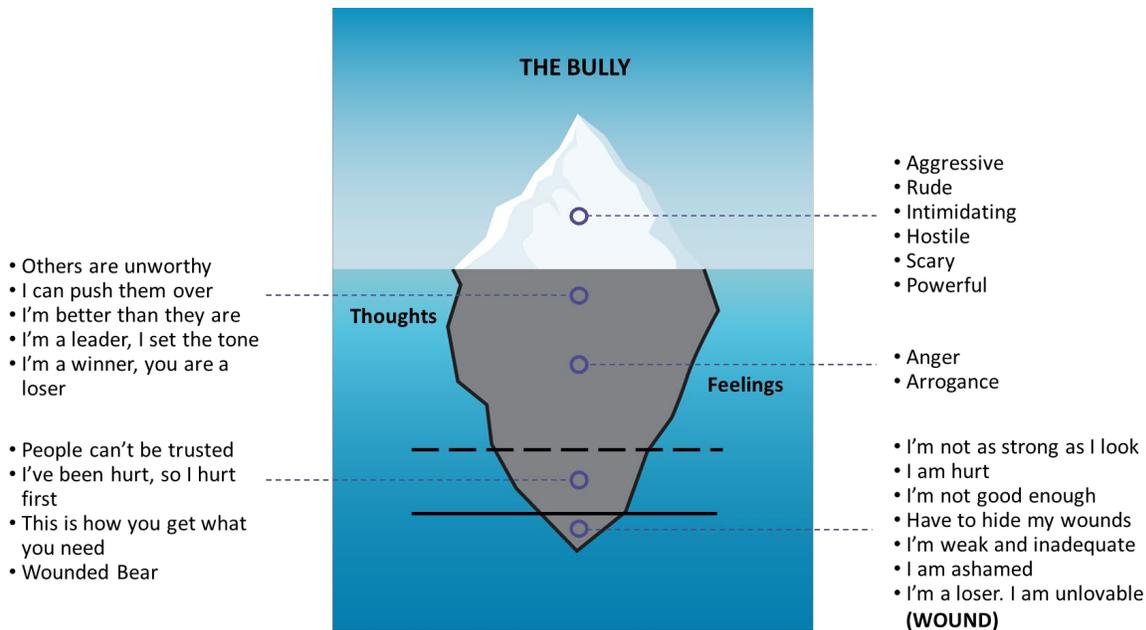
- Fear of dying
- Fear of pain
- Fear of losing my loved ones
- Fear of my mortality
- Existential terror

We follow the iceberg down, using our humanity to appreciate the experience of another. Of course, we may not be entirely correct, human icebergs are not necessarily very transparent, but our work exploring thoughts and feelings gives us insight into ourselves and others.

Does this change our feelings about the friend 'missing in action'? It doesn't change, but it can help us shift from a reaction (that lousy no-good friend) to a response (she must be feeling very scared). Perhaps it helps us not to take their behaviour personally because it is not about you. It is about *their* fear and inability to cope with it. You may say, "Well, I'm scared, too!". Of course, this is true, but you have taken steps to help yourself, to expand your awareness and let yourself go there and acknowledge those difficult feelings. Back to the Grief model, by acknowledging the feelings and the thoughts, we can better accept complex realities (like our mortality) and not shove them down into the unconscious, where they are still active but unseen. We can also move to make adaptations, not feeling helpless in the face of difficult realities.

How does the 'Missing in Action' iceberg change how you feel about unsupportive people in your life?

The Bully Iceberg



Here's another example. We have all known bullies in our lives, at school, work, playground, or perhaps even home. So let's look at the iceberg of bullying.

Behaviour: what we see on the surface

- Aggressive
- Rude
- Intimidating
- Hostile
- Powerful
- Scary
- Violent

Other Behaviours?

Beneath the surface:**Thoughts:**

- These other people are unworthy
- I can push them over (literally or figuratively)
- I am better than they are
- I can be the leader and set the tone
- I am powerful and strong
- No one is going to push me around!
- I deserve to be respected
- I am a winner. You are a loser
- Look at how strong I am

Other thoughts?

Feelings:

- Anger
- Lots of anger

Other feelings?

Going deeper: what might be driving all that anger

- Fear
- People can't be trusted
- Others have hurt me, so I have to hurt them first to be safe
- This is how you get what you need in life

More?

Even deeper . . .

- I'm not as strong as I look
- I have been hurt, really hurt
- I have absorbed the message that I am not good enough
- I have to hide my wounds, or people will hurt me more
- I am weak and inadequate
- I am ashamed

Even deeper . . .

- I'm a loser; I'm despicable
- I am unlovable

The bully has often been poorly treated by others and developed a deep primal wound that they are unsafe and fearful, even unlovable. They are an unfortunate and wounded person who acts out their impotent anger and rage at the world to hide their deep wounds of self-hatred. They are very, very fearful of the world. To hide these feelings of shame and inadequacy, they attack others. The bully's behaviour is armour that protects this place of deep-seated pain. Despite needing healing, love and acceptance, they are too fearful of vulnerability, presenting as ferocious.

Another metaphor is that of a wounded animal: animals are most dangerous when wounded or backed into a corner because they are fighting to protect themselves. They fight off the perceived attacker. The bully's target is often someone who reminds them of their selves, those who are different or vulnerable, people whom they see as vulnerable (like herself, deep down). We are going to explore this further when we look at projection.

Our Icebergs

We have been concentrating on exploring other people's icebergs; now, we will look at how our icebergs are activated. We, too, have wounded places deep inside of us.

Through the process of growing up, there are moments when we feel:

- Isolated
- Inadequate
- Abandoned
- Helpless
- Unloved
- Unlovable!



Even children raised in the most loving homes will have moments when their needs are unmet, and they feel helpless. The first time a baby's cries are unmet (and how can they always be adequately addressed!), there will be feelings of helplessness and fear. Some cultures are more sympathetic to the needs of children than others, but our Western culture has been quite tough on children. The school system has been a part of this for many of us as we grew up, using shame to punish children and to keep them in line.

Social shame is a powerful tool, and it has been used in raising children through the ages. As soon as we use language like "what a good boy!" we also imply that the child can be a "bad boy," which does not discriminate between the behaviour and the person. The behaviour becomes synonymous with the person; thus, we all have deep pockets of shame embedded in our icebergs.

Guilt and Shame

What's the difference between guilt and shame? Guilt is feeling bad about what we did (discernment), and shame is feeling bad about who we are (condemnation). The difference is separating the act from the person. Sound familiar? This is related to the homework you did last week.

We all have places of shame within us, which we strive to protect and hide from the world as if we were the only ones who feel this way! Because these places of pain are so uncomfortable, we cover them up and hide them, or we "give them away," that is, we project them onto other people (more about this next week).

Finding Our Inner Elephant

When we cover up our wounds with armour plating or defences, we hide our true nature; we cover up “the elephant” (from the story about the sculptor in the first session). By gently exploring these places of vulnerability, by peeling away the old worn-out bandages of defence, we can let these wounds heal in the light. We can also relate to the wounded places in others. It is all about compassion for ourselves and others. It is meeting ourselves and others in the fullness of our humanity and appreciating that life is not about perfection. It is a process.

Perfection is an illusion — life was not meant to be perfect, nor were we. The Japanese use the term “wabi-sabi,” which refers to the beauty of imperfection around us. In traditional Japanese aesthetics, wabi-sabi is a worldview centred on accepting transience and imperfection. The aesthetic is sometimes described as appreciating “imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete” beauty in nature.

Letting go of the expectation of perfection for ourselves and others frees us from the tyranny of believing that human beings need to be perfect, that mistakes should never happen, and that we should be ashamed of our growing experiences (making mistakes). We heal by gently acknowledging these places of pain, bringing them into the light and forgiving ourselves for being vulnerable, imperfect human beings.

This week’s homework will be particularly challenging for many. We are asked to acknowledge these wounded places through journaling. You can take it decade by decade through your life, acknowledging the parts of you that you judge harshly or find hard to accept, where you feel shame. While it is a difficult exercise, it can also be incredibly freeing and healing. It helps us become more compassionate toward ourselves and others and more tolerant of each other. As a result, we can become stronger in the broken places.

Homework

This homework is best written in your private journal or password-protected computer to ensure confidentiality and enough space to process these ideas.

1. Investigating guilt:

(a) We carry around a list of grievances or condemnations against ourselves. Moments in life when we have felt unskillful or inadequate. Some of these thoughts have been “given to us” by others who have used judgment to control or shape our behaviour (parents and teachers, for example). List areas of your life where you feel, or have felt, inadequate or incompetent or where you have felt like a failure or incomplete in some way.

(b) We absorb that critical voice of others, and we internalize it. As a result, we can be our own harshest critics. List anything you do or can remember having done about which you experience guilt, self-condemnation, self-hatred or judgement. (If you share your ideas with others, you may need to use a code to list some of these things and keep part of it private).

(c) Can you sense this guilt as an “attack” on yourself? What does it feel like in your body?

(d) Look at the list, reading through slowly, and tell yourself that this is all in the past; these things all had a reason, errors and peculiarities for which you now forgive yourself entirely and that the Divine already forgives them. Remind yourself that every human being makes mistakes, which is how we learn. Affirm that you will “choose only love” when thinking about yourself and your past. See yourself surrounded by light as you do this. Imagine this light as God’s presence all around and within you.

(e) If you like, make a copy of the list, which you can burn while practising self-forgiveness. Write about any shift in feelings that may have accompanied this.

2. Forgiveness of oneself:

See yourself in the light; then see a religious figure, like Jesus, the Buddha, Divine Mother or your Inner Healer (below) embracing you. Imagine as you do this that you are giving up the habit of constantly wanting things to be different.

Or bring your Inner Mentor to mind, and have a conversation with them. What would they say to you? Alternatively, do the Inner Healer imagery from Session 4 Level Two to connect with the compassion part of you that can heal these old internal wounds.

How do you feel about yourself; have the judgment and guilt abated? Is it easier to accept yourself? Is this a passive (apathetic) process (i.e. giving up), or an active one, requiring effort?

Does it bring peace of mind?

3. Draw up the iceberg for someone you resent. Start at the surface of what you see (behaviour) and then go a little deeper to identify some of their thoughts and feelings (using your experience as a human being to ‘feel your way’ into their story). Then go deeper into the thoughts, feelings, beliefs and experiences that motivate these behaviours. Then go deeper into the thoughts and feelings that underpin it. Go as deeply as possible until you unearth the deep wound beyond awareness and drive the person's behaviour.

Behaviour

Thoughts and feelings that are just beneath the surface

More profound thoughts, feelings, beliefs and experiences

Go even deeper

The deepest level of the woundedness

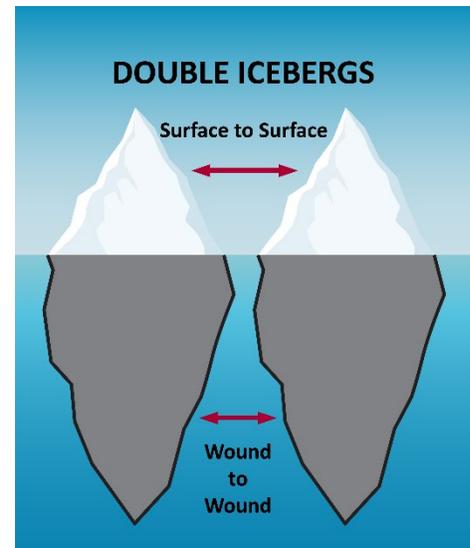
Does this shift your feelings about this person?

SESSION FIVE

DOUBLE ICEBERGS, DEFENCES, AND PROJECTIONS

We have come a long way so far in Level Three. We have unpacked the differences between reaction and response, condemnation and discernment. We have begun to look deeply into the icebergs of others and ourselves, the thoughts, beliefs and experiences that drive human behaviour and found that deep within us is a wounded place. These wounds are part of the human condition. It is the impact of the messages we have received about ourselves and the feelings of guilt, shame and unworthiness that are instilled in us from a very early age. Considering all the fear and shame at the core of the human experience, it is remarkable that we can get up each morning and face the world!

In this session, we will look at how our icebergs interact with other people's icebergs. We will start with a story from one of our leaders.



Om and Chanting

In Level One, we moved from focusing on the breath with the sound of a sigh to using the word 'Om.' We will build on that strategy by externalizing the breath with a more advanced version of 'Om.' We are going to try chanting.

Chanting is the use of a short musical phrase that is repeated over and over again. The words are often some mantras. Many religions will use chanting, prayers, and hymns. Perhaps you have encountered chanting in a yoga class. In the 1990s, some Gregorian chants were recorded, putting the monks onto the radio charts! It is not about singing well but rather having a tune in your pocket that you can associate with feelings of calmness. It's a helpful technique for shutting down the chatter in your mind, and it is something that you can even hum to yourself through the day or listen to when you are driving. It is about having a larger target for your attention because it's hard to think about other things when you are chanting. If it feels too weird to you, don't worry. Just sit back and listen. If you are game, join in!

The chant we are using is 'Om Namah Shiva.' It is a Hindu chant, and we use the one from Robert Gass and the *Wings of Sound* because it is accessible and pretty. You can find it on Youtube.



It is helpful to know what a specific chant means.

Om: the sound of creation. The first vibration emerged from the void and silence that existed before creation. It is also the root of the word amen.

Namah: my salutations, or I bow and offer deference.

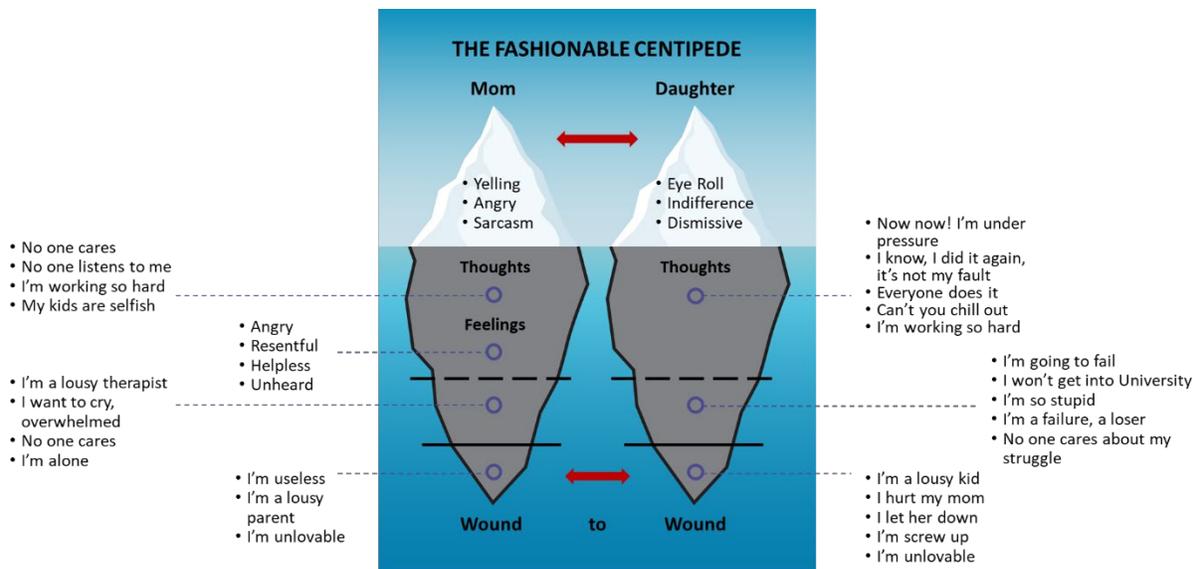
Shiva: to Shiva, auspicious one. Shiva is the god of destruction and knowledge. His name means explicitly, auspicious, propitious, gracious, benign, kind, benevolent, and friendly.

Aya: can mean “to” or “for” the word to which it is attached. The word “ya” by itself means the soul. This word is a grammatical aspect and also a word unto itself.

In Hinduism, Shiva is the Supreme Lord who creates, protects and transforms the universe. Hindus believe in one God and worship that one God under many manifestations, deities or images. Examples of Hindu deities are Krishna, Shiva, Rama and Durga. Furthermore, Hindus believe existence is a cycle of birth, death and rebirth, governed by karma (a complex belief in cause and effect). Therefore, Shiva is just one aspect of the Divine.

Do we need to believe in Shiva to chant these words? We chant with respect and appreciation, using the chant as a coping skill to encourage peace and calm, just as we used the word Om and just as one might in a yoga class.

The Very Fashionable Centipede



I live with two teenage daughters in a relatively small house with little space at the front door. It's a tight squeeze, and when we have four people coming in and out of the house, it gets disorganized and messy at the front door.

It's Friday after another long week, and I have had to drop in at the store and pick up some groceries for dinner. (No, it's not a BBQ chicken, I've learned my lesson on that front!). One of my daughters is at home studying for exams. She is in grade 12 and gearing up for university next year. She's been pretty stressed. I'm stressed, too. I have a massive project at work, and the others working on it don't seem to take my concerns seriously. I am worried about the impact that this may have on the finished product. I'm pretty tired of navigating politics.

I fumble for my keys at the front door. My hands are full with the groceries. I sort of fall in through the front door. I can't see my feet, and all these boots and shoes are at the door. Very fashionable shoes, I might add. It's like living with a couple of well-heeled centipedes! I stumble, trip, and almost fall over them. I land in the kitchen, and I am fuming mad!

What do we see at the surface of my iceberg?

- I yell loudly and swear.
- I nearly broke my neck! Are you trying to kill me?
- You have been told over and over again that you can't leave your shoes at the door!
- Geez, no one ever listens to me!
- This is the last straw!

Upstairs, in her bedroom, my daughter is studying math. Her textbook is open, and notes are everywhere. She is not confident in math and knows she needs a good mark on this upcoming exam. I storm up into her room, continuing with my rant. She looks at me and rolls her eyes.

What do we see on the surface of her iceberg?

- The dreaded eye-roll
- A deadpan, unsympathetic expression
- I know, I know! What's the big deal?
- Mom! Not right now!

And there, the argument begins.

Going deeper into my iceberg, what are my thoughts and feelings?

- Everyone around here is so ungrateful. I work all week, get a meal, and still, no one cares.
- I could have broken my neck
- No one ever listens to me
- Can't you see how hard I'm working?
- I feel angry, really angry and frustrated.
- I have had a tough week at work, and I was looking forward to coming home to a nice meal with the family, and they have ruined it.
- My foot hurts (I stubbed it on the shoes)
- She's not even listening to me now!
- My kids are spoiled and selfish.

That's quite a list; there is probably more going on. But unfortunately, my awareness shut down long ago, and I am in full reaction mode!

So, going deeper...

- No one ever listens to me. I am ineffectual, powerless
- No one is looking after me. I feel helpless
- I am a lousy parent because I haven't raised my kids to care about others
- I feel like I have always had to put work first
- I am a lousy psychotherapist because I know the difference between reaction and response, and here I am, completely losing my cool
- I want to cry because I am tired and overwhelmed, but I'm too mad to cry

Even deeper

- I am helpless, and no one cares about me
- I am a screw-up as a parent, as a professional, as a person
- I am alone
- No one cares about me or my needs
- I don't even care about my own needs
- I am useless
- I am unlovable

Now let's look at the other iceberg.

Thoughts and feelings...

- Oh, Mom, please, not now. I am failing at math. I'm never going to get it
- I know I know, I did it again. I left my shoes out
- It's not my fault. Everyone does it
- You always make such a big thing out of it
- Here we go again. blah blah blah
- Can't you chill out and get a grip
- Can't you see how hard I'm working
- Please, please leave me alone. Go away

A little deeper

- I'm going to fail this exam. I will fail math, which will mess up my transcript, and I won't get into university.
- I'm so stupid I can't even get my shoes right!
- I feel like a failure, a loser
- No one cares that I sit up here and I'm struggling

Even deeper

- I'm a lousy kid. I hurt my mom. I'm an ungrateful brat
- Now I'm going to let everyone down and fail at life by not getting into university
- I'm alone
- I'm a screw-up
- I'm unlovable

So, we think we are communicating tip-to-tip in our icebergs, but we are meeting deep wound to deep wound. Both of us feel overwhelmed and unlovable, unheard and uncared for. So, let's rewind the tape and see how to handle this skillfully.

Take Two: Pushing the Reset Buttons

I am coming home after a tough week. I know that I am tired and overwhelmed, and all I want is a quiet evening with my family. I have picked up a few things for dinner, maybe I should call for takeout, but perhaps I can manage to make a meal. I fumble for my keys and step through the door right into the pile of shoes that is usually there. I stumble, hurt my toe, and swear loudly, and I can hear myself thinking, "Lousy kids always do this. They are such brats..." I can feel the heat in my face and the reaction erupting. The kid upstairs shouts, "I'm up here." I know she has exams. She has been stressed this last week, and so have I. I stumble into the kitchen, sit on the chair and rub my toe. I take deep and deeper breaths and reflect on how I feel out of balance and overwhelmed. It's the shoes, but it is so much more. I am exhausted. More deep breaths. What do I need? A hot cup of tea.



I need to talk to the kid about those shoes because someone will get hurt someday, and it will likely be me. So let me calm down and make that tea. Maybe I can take a cup up to her too.

I go upstairs with two mugs of tea and knock at her door. She is sitting in a pile of papers and looks very upset. She also looks defensive. She heard me swearing downstairs. I bet she knows what happened.

"I thought you could use a cup of tea. I know I could..."

"Thanks, Mom."

"You look pretty overwhelmed. I know. I feel pretty exhausted too. When you have the time, we need to do some problem-solving about that front doorway. It is pretty treacherous. I nearly broke my neck coming in!"

"Oh, Mom, I know. I'm sorry about the shoes. I know I always forget. I'm just really scared about this math test. I can't seem to get how to do the equations. I'm going to fail."

"You sound worried about this exam. Tell me."

"Well, math is not my strength, and I just don't get my teacher. My notes don't make any sense to me. But I have to get my marks up as high as possible. I am worried about getting into university."

Oh, wow, that's a lot. It sounds like it is snowballing. Is there anything I can do to help?

Thanks, Mom, the tea helps, and you know how hard I'm trying.

"I get it. I feel overwhelmed too. Work has been a real bear this week. Let's see what we can do about that math. We can look into it and maybe get a tutor. But I feel pretty upset when I stumble over all those shoes. I feel like no one cares about me. I'm scared I'm going to hurt myself. What can we do about that?"

"It's such a small space, mom. I don't know. Can we talk about it later?"

"Okay, we can have a family meeting and see what solutions we can come up with."

The ultimate solution was a built-in shoe rack. That solution wouldn't emerge out of an argument fueled by reactions.

In this story, anger catalyzes change. However, anger doesn't do much more than alert us to a problem and our state of mind. Understanding angry reactions as a message or information helps guide us into a response;

- Taking time to become aware of what has triggered the anger
- Resisting the temptation to blame and shame others, or yourself
- Checking in with your own state of mind and self-care,
- Hitting the reset button to take another run at the problem through a response rather than a reaction.

'I' Messages

One of the communication skills that helps unpack a reaction and shift to a response is the use of 'I' messages. 'I' messages are a technique in which we take the responsibility to become aware of our thoughts and feelings and put them into words using the personal pronoun. It is an honest form of communication because we speak about ourselves and the situation's impact. We are not blaming or shaming others. Let's look at the differences between 'I' messages and the blame and shame approach:



"You are such a slob. You can't take care of your things. You are irresponsible and disrespectful. I have asked you a million times to take care of your shoes at the front door. Do I have to kill myself to get your attention? Break my neck?..."

Well, you get the idea. The anger slips out as condemnation and blame. The recipient of this attack will go into fight/flight/freeze. They may react back at you with a litany of their own judgements. Or they may shut the conversation down and leave, physically or emotionally. Or they may freeze, that is, take in what is being said and take it to heart. A fourth reaction is to appease, that is, to try to make it better, not because it is an act of caring but to shut down the attack. None of these reactions will lead to a solution, nor will the angry person feel heard.

Here is the message but using the word I:

"Wow, I nearly tripped over all those shoes. I could have broken my neck! We have discussed this before, but I don't feel we have found a solution. I must say, I am feeling pretty discouraged and unheard. What can we do about this problem?"

The second conversation does not blame her; it honestly describes how she feels. No one can say to her, "No, you don't feel that way," because it is her feeling that she is describing. It takes practice to learn to use 'I' messages especially when you are angry, but if we start to take responsibility for ourselves spiritually, we need to:

- learn to push the reset button
- pull back
- become aware of your feelings and identify for yourself what is happening
- use 'I' messages in response.

I Hear You

A second helpful communication skill is called reflective or active listening. Too often, we hear someone, but we don't take the time to let them know that we heard them. Or we think we are getting what they are saying, but we never check it out with them to see whether we got it right. Frankly, most of us don't listen well and often formulate our responses before the other person has finished speaking, or we interrupt others, assuming we know what they will say. Here is an example of active listening:



Mom, I can't worry about the stupid shoes right now! I'm studying hard, and I don't think I will pass this exam.

Ok, I hear you. You are working hard at this math, and you are worried about the exam

Yes! I haven't done well in this class all year and hate the teacher. None of my notes make any sense!

No one gets how strung out I feel.

Oh, wow, I can see it. I can feel how stressed you are. Is there anything I can do to help?

The tea helps Mom, thanks.

Notice there isn't any immediate solution to the problem. Listening in and of itself helps us cope better. In time a solution may arise. If we responded with the following;

- You should have gone to the teacher sooner if you didn't understand!
- We will get you a tutor
- You're a smart kid, and you'll get it
- Well, you don't have to be so bad-tempered
- You always worry, and you always do well

None of these comments help her feel heard, understood or supported. None of them help her acknowledge her feelings and accept the hard reality that math is challenging. Adaptations can come, such as a tutor or other support, but at the moment, acknowledging what you hear is an important step in the process. Do you hear it? There it is again, the grief model. Active listening slows the conversation, moves us to a response, not a reaction, and lets the other person know we hear them. In your group, you may have more discussions about useful communication skills.

Psychological Defenses

Let's return to those icebergs and look at what happens to those deep wounded places triggered by conflict and reaction.

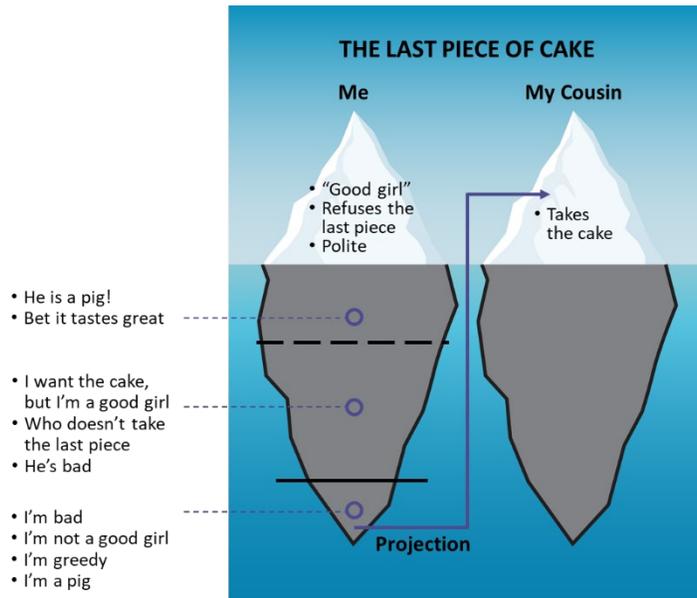
Freud understood that these deep primal wounds existed in all of us but that on a day-to-day basis, they are too painful to face. Thus, he and his colleagues understood that we develop psychological defences to protect ourselves from deeply unconscious beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and fears. Here is a list of the most common ones:

Dozens of different defence mechanisms have been identified. Some are used more commonly than others. Here are a few common defence mechanisms:

1. **Denial:** This is one of our most common defence mechanisms. It requires us to ignore or deny a difficult reality. We don't have to deal with it if we don't acknowledge it. This is a relatively primitive defence, as anyone with cancer will appreciate. Most hard realities can't be denied for long. The reality will keep emerging, or the consequences will be so significant that they will be felt eventually. Nevertheless, this defence mechanism is also one of the most widely known. The phrase "They're in denial" is commonly understood to mean a person avoids reality despite what may be evident to people around them.
2. **Repression:** When we have thoughts or feelings we deem unacceptable, we must move them out of our awareness. In this case, we are using repression. We are stuffing these thoughts and feelings beneath our attention into the unconscious. Think of it as a solid line drawn across the iceberg. Although we can become aware of the material above that line, the material below that level is not readily available. However, this triggering material can come up in dreams or may influence some of the choices that we make in life. They may influence behaviours, and they may impact future relationships. You may not realize the impact this defence mechanism is having.
3. **Projection:** the mind is clever in protecting us from thoughts, feelings and beliefs that we find unacceptable. So rather than acknowledging them in ourselves, we push them onto others. For example, in the Centipede story above, the mom attributed her feelings that she was a lousy mother to her daughter by thinking she was a lousy kid. We will do an iceberg of projection in a moment.
4. **Displacement:** This is commonly referred to as 'kicking the dog'! In the centipede story, part of the mother's reaction was her anger and frustration at work, and since it is not safe to lose her temper at her colleagues, she displaced her anger at a safer target, a family member. Likewise, road rage is a form of displacement; someone has a hard day at work and holds it together until they go home. Then, someone triggers them by cutting them off, so all the pent-up (suppressed) rage comes pouring out, endangering everyone as they roar in their car.
5. **Sublimation:** This is considered a healthy defence mechanism in which we redirect the psychological energy towards a healthy activity. People who take up physical exercise to blow off the energy of a difficult work situation use an adaptive coping strategy—or redirect this energy towards a creative activity such as music, art, or sports.

An Iceberg using Projection

The Last Piece of Cake



As a little girl, I would go to grandma's to have tea. She would use her pretty tea cups and have a special cake. I looked forward to this. I would wear my best dress and behave like a 'lady.' I knew the rules of how to act like a good girl. Say please and thank you, and never take the last piece of cake. We were supposed to have one piece and then leave the rest. My cousin was about five years older than me, a tall boy with a long reach and a voracious appetite. After our tea and cake, there was always one piece left, and Grandma would ask who would like the last piece. Well, my cousin would say yes and wolf it down. I would be furious and call him all sorts of names in my head, mainly that he was a "pig."

At the top of the iceberg is a good girl doing everything she thought she was supposed to do. Sit politely, speak when spoken to, drink her tea politely and not grab the last piece of cake. However, deep down in the iceberg, someone wanted that second piece of cake. She could imagine how good it would taste. One piece doesn't seem to be enough. However, she was conflicted because "good girls leave the last piece of cake," and she didn't want to appear piggy. But deep down, she felt very greedy and piggy. She wanted that cake so badly. But good girls don't take the last piece.

He was invited to have the last piece in her cousin's iceberg, and he took it. Down into his iceberg, there was no conflict. He was a growing boy, and he wanted a second piece. He was asked if he wanted it, and he took it. His little cousin didn't want it, so he had it. No problem.

Back to the good girl iceberg, she calls her cousin all sorts of names in her head. He is greedy. He is a piggy. He said YES! He is terrible, and he took it. He broke the rules. He is a greedy pig!

That is projection. The unacceptable feelings are projected onto the cousin. I can't be a good girl and have the last piece. So, I will remain the good girl and project all my desire for that cake onto my cousin.

This is a simple example, but you can see how complicated it can get. Can you think of any time when what you dislike in someone else is also in you? Or perhaps only in you?

Homework

1. **Remember a recent experience when you felt triggered by an interaction with another person.** Build a two-iceberg model of what was happening beneath the surface. Keep on the lookout for defences such as projection or displacement.

Iceberg #1	Iceberg #2
Behaviour on the surface	Behaviour on the surface
Thoughts and feelings just below the surface	Thoughts and feelings just below the surface
Deeper thoughts, feelings, beliefs	Deeper thoughts, feelings, beliefs
Unconscious wound	Unconscious wound

2. **Finding what we resent in others in ourselves:**

Consider some qualities or attitudes in one or more people you resent (borrow from previous sessions' exercises if you like). Now try to find some evidence of these qualities in yourself. If you find yourself detesting or "attacking" some quality in another person, try to sense how you may be attacking it in yourself: "Part of me detests what another part is doing."

If this is difficult, think instead of qualities or habits in others that irritate or frustrate you. Next, focus on the way these things make your life more uncomfortable. Now note whether or not you are, to some extent blaming your discomfort on them. This is a form of projection: saying that you cause my discomfort or inconvenience. Can you see how you could “take back” the responsibility for your mental state by “owning” your reaction and changing it?

Think of (and write about) examples where you tell yourself: “I’m not getting what I need from this person or situation.” Is this a projection of your frustration with yourself or with part of yourself?

3. Imagining yourself being secure.

After relaxing deeply, imagine feeling secure and fulfilled, universally liked and respected by others and God. How does that feel inside? Now, continuing to be aware of this feeling, look back at one of the persons or situations that you resented. Do they bother you now? This is potentially a practical exercise which should be diligently explored: it can show us quite convincingly that our frustration with others depends on our dissatisfaction with ourselves. But, more than that, it can show us how our projection creates our world!

4. Attempting to stop judging others.

This is a different version of the exercises from the preceding chapters. Pick someone with whom you interact daily and towards whom you cherish some resentment. Resolve to try and drop this feeling: practice seeing them surrounded by light in your imagination. Tell yourself that when you meet them, you will have only one of many possible “channels” open - the one that allows love and understanding to flow between you. (The other channels for hate, anger, fear and unpleasant emotions remain closed). Observe what your interactions are like over the week. Since only this “good” channel is available, can the other person touch you with any negative emotions?

5. Practice your communication skills, such as “I” messages and reflective listening.

SESSION SIX

LOVE

We are making a significant shift in this session; we will focus on love. We use the word love for so many things. I love pizza, I love Saturdays, I love flowers, I love my children, I love my partner, I love a lot of things, and I love pizza! How can we use a single word to describe so many relationships? We come back to the need to define our terms. What are we really talking about when we talk about loving someone?



We will deconstruct the concept of unconditional love and compare it to conditional love. At the most basic level, unconditional love has no strings attached. It is pure and requires nothing from the beloved. Conditional love is based on an exchange . . . , if you do this, I will love you. Love is such an essential part of our well-being. We all need to be loved and will go to remarkable lengths to feel it. What would it be like to be loved unconditionally? Is it even possible in human relationships like marriage?

The group will make a chart comparing and contrasting our unconditional and conditional love ideas. To start thinking about this, think about the following kinds of relationships:

- Parent and child
- Marriage
- Teenage love

Unconditional Love	Conditional Love

How do we understand conditional love?

One way to explore it is to imagine teenage love, the early forays into experiencing love. It is powerful and confusing as a teenager, tangled up with expectations, projections and jealousy. It may take the form of expectations; *I will love you if you*. This can be a powerful motivator for young people to meet the expectations of the others, such as having sex, even if they do not feel ready. What do I have to do to keep you loving me? The love relationship may be more about the self-esteem of the lover, seeing their value increased by the social value of the person they are dating. For example, if I am dating the head of the football team or the beautiful cheerleader, I must be something special too. The boundaries between the two people become blurred. Independence is lost. An insecure relationship may demand choices between what one person expects and the other is willing to do. No wonder it is so confusing when you add the intensity of hormones to the relationship!

Compare this to the love a parent may feel for a newborn child. The baby is placed in the parent's arms, and there can be overwhelming love and attachment. The parents only want the best for this infant, for this child to be happy. They will do anything to help this child grow into a healthy, happy person. Of course, it gets much more complicated as the child grows older and expectations creep in. Grandparents may have a different relationship with the child. They bring experience to the relationship. They may have a deeper trust that the child will reach the necessary milestones because they have a larger perspective. They are not responsible for the child similarly, having to teach table manners and toilet training. They can become an essential source of love that comes without the pressures of parenting.



How about marriage? Marriage is a complex confluence of conditional and unconditional love. “I’ll love you forever, but will you please put the garbage out!” Partnering through life will have unconditional aspects to it, even stated in the classic wedding vows; “For richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health,” meaning that the intention is that love shall endure through all the stresses of life. But then, there is always the caveat: “and keep only unto each other,” meaning maintaining a monogamous relationship. Marriage is very complicated, with a mix of deep abiding love, lots of expectations and a liberal sprinkling of judgement. We bring our wounds to a relationship, and they can play havoc with our ability to see each other clearly, through loving eyes.

So, where do we, as human beings, experience this ideal of unconditional love? Maybe we are looking for perfect love from imperfect people, and as we know, we are all “imperfect.” But, perhaps the most straightforward, most unconditional relationship is with an animal or pet. A pet only cares that you feed it, walk it, care for it, and be kind to it. A dog or cat will greet you with pleasure at the end of the day. They never judge you, and they love you for who you are. A person once said that she wants to be the person her dog thinks she is! The bonds between animals and people can be profound and an important source of love. The purity of that love is that there is no judgment and only minimal expectations. If you are not a pet person, take the time to watch the interactions between a dog owner and their pet in the park. You may see that loving bond as the dog seeks out the attention of its owner, and the owner delights in their pet.

Does unconditional love mean approval for all actions? No, as we discovered in our discussions on forgiveness, we can forgive and release. It does not necessarily require reconciliation. There may be people we care about whom we need to let go of to live their lives as best they can. We can send our love out to carry with us through life. And in essence, that is what unconditional love may be; it may belong to the beloved, always there, always dependable, never stripped away. Conditional love, in contrast, is in the hands of the lover. It can be taken away if the other person does not meet the conditions the lover sets. Unconditional love does not mean enabling hurtful or harmful behaviour towards oneself or others, but it means maintaining compassion towards the beloved despite their life choices.

An example is “tough love,” an approach to others, often teenage or adult children making risky life choices or becoming drug involved. The family may have to decide to withdraw their support from that person and let them live out the consequences of their choices. The love is still strong, but they do not collude with the risky decisions the other person makes, for fear that this may enable them to stay with their dangerous choices. Practically, this may mean withdrawing financial support or asking them to leave home until they are willing to get help. Such a difficult and painful thing to do because the love is there but is expressed in a counterintuitive way! I love you so much that I release you to your life and decisions. I am here to help you should you be willing to learn how to make healthier choices, but I will not support you in hurting yourself. In practicing tough love, the family needs professional help to navigate the complex realities of their loved one.

Sometimes it is easier to feel this unconditional love for people we do not know very well because we have no expectations of them, nor do we feel the need to control them through our approval (or lack thereof). In this way, unconditional love can involve a sense of detachment. I care about you but do not need to control your behaviour or choices. Volunteering in various capacities can be actively offering unconditional “love” to others. This is not love in the physical sense but in the spiritual sense of caring and concern. Random acts of kindness also express the same compassion and caring. Learning to listen to others deeply and from the heart has been described as a spiritual practice of love. Taking a loving stance towards the world brings a non-judgemental attitude, with no condemnation and few expectations. It is accepting others for who they are and understanding that, on the whole, we are all doing the best we can with what we have got!

Unconditional Love starts with us!

Accepting ourselves is the root of it. It starts with accepting ourselves, acknowledging our weaknesses and vulnerabilities, and our imperfections. We have been working on letting go of our judgments about ourselves and others. Returning to the story about the sculptor from the first session, we need to “trim away all that is not elephant” to become who we are meant to be.

Why can't we love others before we really love ourselves? Our “unacceptable” parts fuel our judgments of others; we project our self-judgment onto them. We can't feel for others what we do not feel for ourselves. Low self-esteem, self-hatred and criticism translate into the judgment of others.



There is an adage that those who are hard on others are even harder on themselves. That internal voice of self-condemnation and judgement can easily slip out and be projected on others. That voice can also make it hard to feel lovable, which we know is the primal wound humans inflict on each other (think back to those double icebergs). Today's homework is an exploration of love or love towards ourselves. You are being asked to write a love letter to yourself!

What! I can't do that! Most of us were raised to be self-effacing and to never “brag” or think too highly of ourselves. Don't blow your own horn! This often distorts our self-image. We find it hard to acknowledge where our strengths lie and what we are good at. This love letter is not an egoic act of self-aggrandizement. Instead, it is a practice of turning towards ourselves with compassion and honesty. Yes, there are things that you are good at, and there are gifts that you have been given. Maybe our role in life is to identify and develop those skills to give them away to the world to help others and make the world a better place. We are going to discuss this more in our next session. We will also ask each group member to read their love letter out loud to the group. While this is uncomfortable for most of us, it is an opportunity to share the wonders of who we are with each other and to encourage others to find the same beautiful aspects of themselves.

Homework

1. Write a love letter to yourself and bring it to the group, being prepared to read it out loud with your other group members.
 - If this is very difficult and you get stuck, write about three things you like about yourself.
 - Resist the temptation to sneak some judgment into your letter. Try not to say I love this about myself, but . . . ,
 - Perhaps the cancer experience has given you insight into strengths and skills that you have that you hadn't recognized before.
 - If this is still a difficult letter, ask your Inner Mentor or Inner Healer to help! Or you could write it through your pet's or best friend's eyes.
2. Write a love letter to someone you care about and then share it with them. Pass the love around!

SESSION SEVEN

SPECIALNESS

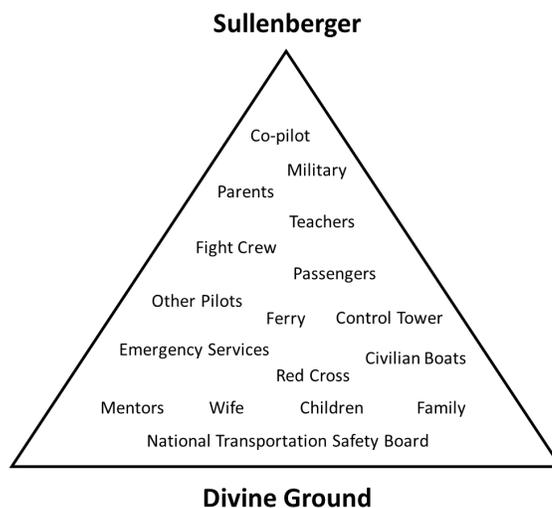
We have done a great deal of exploration so far in Level Three. In our last session, we took on the challenge of identifying the importance of self-love and developing a stance of unconditional love for others. In this session, we will examine the interconnectedness between us all.

We want to look at specialness and how it plays out in life. When something is on special at the grocery store, what does it mean? It is set out separately from similar products, usually at the end of an aisle. It often has a big sign declaring that it is special, and generally, it means that the price has been lowered for a period of time. It is likely not so different from the other products around it, but for this week, it has been designated as special. If we apply that idea to people, then special designates them as separate and different from others, usually in a way that is thought of as good (although how many of us remember the “special education classes” at school where special did not mean good, but differently abled). The concept of specialness infers a judgement that others are somehow less important or needed. Let’s take the example of someone who is seen as a hero.

Captain Sullenberger and the Miracle on the Hudson

January 15th, 2009, was the day that a US Airways Airbus A320 aircraft landed on the Hudson River. Of course, this was a crash landing, but thanks to the pilots' skills and response, all 150 passengers and five crew survived.

The captain, Chesley Sullenberger, was affectionately known as Sully, and after this miraculous landing in the river, everyone wanted to know all about him. He tried hard to avoid all the media that crowded around his house for interviews, which made him all the more interesting. Finally, he agreed to a television interview where he kept eschewing the title of hero. Why? Because he knew that what had happened that day resulted from many forces and skilled people, and he didn’t want to be seen as unique. He wanted us to understand the interconnectivity of the event, that many skilled hands made it possible.



Let’s draw a triangle and put Sully at the top of it. Then, let’s ask, “Upon whose shoulders did Sully stand” in making the Miracle on the Hudson happen. You will deconstruct this in more detail with your group, but let’s take an initial run at it here.

First, Sully identified the importance of all his crew, including his co-pilot Jeffrey Skiles. Both these men had vast amounts of flying experience. In addition, Chelsey Sullenberger was a former military pilot, and both men had almost 20,000 total flying hours each at the time of the accident.

His crew of flight attendants instructed the passengers on what to do and how to stay safe. They kept calm and made sure that everyone was buckled in tight. When they landed in the river, the crew cared for the passengers and helped everyone onto the wing.

The passengers kept calm enough to manage the stress and helped each other out of the plane.

The control tower helped guide the plane into a safe landing. New York ferries, emergency services, and civilian boats on the river that day rushed to the aid of the aircraft to escort the passengers, who were standing on the wings, back to safety. On shore, people were there to receive the cold and frightened passengers with blankets and hot drinks.

Going further along this process, we can identify all the pilots' training. From the day they said they wanted to be pilots, people had given them access to the resources that made it possible. Parents, flight schools, teachers, mentors, and even the military gave Sully the time he needed in sophisticated machines to acquire the necessary hours to become a pilot. The flight attendants also had to be well-trained to do what was needed in an emergency.

The plane was cared for by many mechanics and engineers who maintained its safety. The cause of the crash was a bird strike, Canada Geese flying into the jet engines. Engineers designed the plane to make it possible to survive such a crash. Each time there is an air incident, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigates. The lessons learned from these investigations have resulted in hundreds of recommendations and safety policies. Each flight that takes off relies on these updated safety recommendations by investigators and reconstructionists.

Anyone else we can think of? Well, perhaps the good luck and grace that allowed all these talented people to come together at their best at the moment it was needed. No wonder Sully was reticent to be called a hero. He stood on the shoulders of so many people.

We can do this deconstruction with so many situations; a concert pianist, a surgeon, an astronaut. But ultimately, we all stand on many shoulders, and none of us manage in isolation. Any skill or talent you have has been developed by you but supported by many other people. And in fact, it could be said that the gift you were given came from the Divine Ground upon which we all stand. It is your gift, but it comes through you from something more significant. As Isaac Newton said, "If I was able to see farther than others, it is because I stood on the shoulders of giants."

Why is this important? It means that none of us are special but that we are all important. Each one of us plays a role in making good things happen. When we give the best of ourselves, we may never know the repercussions that are set off. The parent who encouraged Sully to follow his dreams, or the school teacher who taught him math, may never know that their influence helped manifest the Miracle on the Hudson.

We Are All Connected

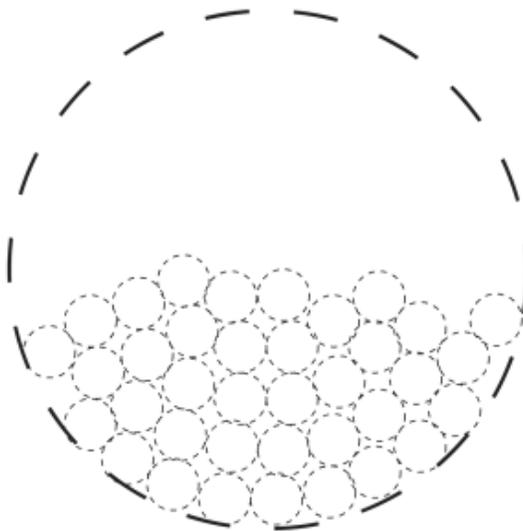
This diagram symbolizes the Divine and our relationship to it. We are all a part of it, connected. When one person creates movement in the circle, others feel and respond. Catherine Mackenzie captures this idea in her novel “Fractured”;

“They say that if a butterfly flaps its wings in the Amazonian rain forest, it can change the weather half a world away. Chaos theory. It means that everything that happens now accumulates everything that’s come before it. Every breath. Every thought. There is no innocent action. Some actions end up having the force of a tempest. Their impact cannot be missed. Others are the blink of an eye. It was passing by unnoticed. Perhaps only God knows which is which.

All I know today is that you can think that you’ve done only the flap of a butterfly wing when it’s a thunderclap. And both can result in a hurricane.”

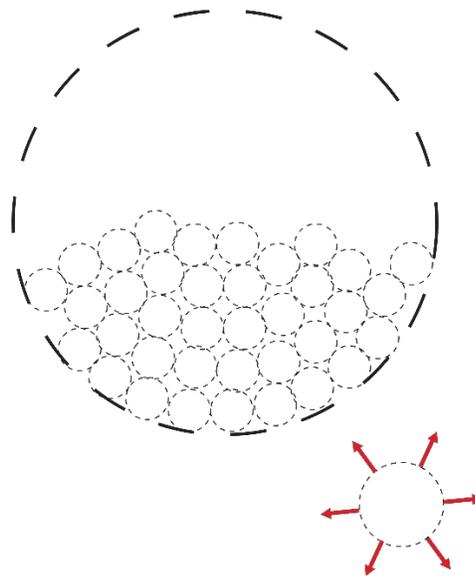
We are all a part of the greater whole; as such, we are all important, but none of us is special or better than others.

A MODEL OF DIVINE



A Model for Evil?

Maybe this model can give us some insight into the nature of evil. In the following diagram, there is a small circle outside the larger whole. It is alone and isolated, disconnected. It is also defensive and wounded, projecting its inner shame onto others around it. It sees others as the enemy and as a threat. It must destroy others because they are not as valuable, important, or “special” as it is.



An example of this would be Adolph Hitler, who instigated World War II and was instrumental in perpetrating the world’s worst genocide. While it is a very complex story, one way to understand it is that the sanctions placed on Germany after WWI annihilated the economy. People needed to blame someone for the misery they were living in. Hitler exploited this need for blaming and projecting and created National Socialism that propounded the superiority of the German people and their special status as “supermen.” This gave the Nazis license to destroy anyone they identified as inferior because they no longer recognized the humanity in others. They scapegoated other groups for their problems. Anyone not fitting the arbitrary designation of “Aryan” was a target of their cruelty. Thus, they systematically destroyed millions of differently-abled people, people of the Jewish faith, Roma, LGBTQ, Russians and others. Over 75 million people died in WWII, in essence, because one group of people no longer saw themselves as part of the greater whole to which we all belong. They no longer felt a kinship or compassion for anyone outside their narrow group. This is one way to understand evil, and it can happen with groups; it can also occur with individuals who see themselves as separate and superior while hiding deep within themselves a primal wound that they project onto others.

Today, Germany is deeply committed to setting an example by modelling integration and inclusion. This can be a challenge in this complex world, but Germany has tried to make amends and is acutely aware of the dangers of seeing itself as separate from the well-being and safety of others. Awareness is the key.

Homework

1. Think of an accomplishment you have achieved. It could be something you are proud of or something relatively simple such as school management.
 - Or you could consider your own cancer experience and how hard you have worked and upon whose shoulders you are standing.
 - This can become an exercise in gratitude and joy, reminding us of how we all stand on the Divine Ground and build upon it.

2. The practice of silence. Choose a period when you would typically be speaking to others. Explain to them what you are doing and maintain silence for three to 12 hours or more. Then, write about what you learned.
 - It can be not easy at first not to engage verbally with others. Just notice what it is like to be silent when with others. Notice how much of our self-image can be caught up with what we say to others. People doing this exercise have noticed many things:
 - the expectations of others to speak is a very powerful force in our lives (telephone, dinnertime, etc.)
 - if we don't talk, we can't control what is going on around us
 - if we don't speak, we are not always validated by those around us; sometimes, we are ignored or infantilized.
 - listening takes on a different quality; we notice more about what others are saying, and at different levels, such as non-verbal cues
 - often when conversing, we are not really listening but just waiting until it is our turn to talk (do we even want to be listening?!)
 - it takes energy to talk (which can be tiring but can also serve as a way for us to discharge pent-up energy or tension)
 - We live in a very noisy and cluttered world. Practicing silence can be peaceful and restorative.

SESSION EIGHT

REVIEW

We have worked through many ideas in Level Three, and it may take time for the skills to feel comfortable or to come quickly. That is expected because we are learning to look at the world and its challenges differently. Levels One, Two and Three are the program's core, after which you can deepen your work in Levels Four and Five. For this last session, we want to review the skills that you have learned and discuss, in your group, any questions or challenges that you have with the skills.

We have listed the skills from Levels One, Two and Three to help you appreciate how far you have come, how many skills you have developed and how they are all connected. You might want to score yourself on a scale of 1 to 5, as we have done in other levels, or scan over the items or even review your journal.

Here is a list of the skills we have covered in Levels One, Two and Three. On the following scale, rate your confidence in using each of these skills to help yourself cope:

- 1 not confident
- 2 somewhat confident
- 3 moderately confident
- 4 confident
- 5 very confident

This is not a test but rather a guide to support you in asking questions in your group and help you focus on skills you want to work on.

Level One

Session One

- ___ Centring and focusing on the breath
- ___ Identifying feelings
- ___ Progressive Relaxation (tensing and releasing muscles)
- ___ Imagining a safe place

Session Two

- ___ Developing a sleep routine
- ___ Managing nutrition
- ___ Exercising while respecting your physical limits
- ___ Watching your thoughts and writing them down
- ___ Expressing feelings
- ___ Replacing uncomfortable thoughts
- ___ Deep Inner Relaxation

Session Three

- ___ A healing image of your immune system protecting you
- ___ An image (or images) of all that you are doing to help yourself
- ___ Healing Light Imagery

Session Four

- ___ Asking for help and support from others
- ___ Expressing thanks and gratitude to those who do support you
- ___ Participate in peaceful, calming activities such as walks in nature

Level Two**Session One**

- ___ Reviewing life events
- ___ Thought watching
- ___ I have started journaling

Session Two

- ___ Meditation using counting
- ___ Meditation using a mantra or repeated word
- ___ Meditation using imagery

Session Three

- ___ Imagery for healing
- ___ Conversation with the cancer
- ___ Drawing my imagery
- ___ Reviewing my imagery

Session Four

- ___ Imagery for meeting an Inner Healer
- ___ Drawing the imagery of the Inner Healer

Session Five

- ___ Imagery for setting goals and priorities
- ___ Making changes in your daily life that reflect your priorities

Session Six

- ___ Identifying resentments that you would like to let go of
- ___ The Garden Gate exercise
- ___ Feeling a shift in resentment

Session Seven

- ___ Exploring spiritual activities
- ___ Bringing mindfulness into daily activities
- ___ Practicing mindfulness meditation

Level Three**Session One**

- ___ Appreciating the similarities and differences between religion and spirituality
- ___ Exploring your understanding of what the Divine is and is not
- ___ Exploring how your sense of the Divine has changed over your life

Session Two

- ___ Understanding the difference between a reaction and a response
- ___ Understanding triggers and where your triggers lie
- ___ Exploring the “Danger Zones” (where your triggers are like to be encountered)
- ___ Articulating your “Trigger Profile” so you can recognize when you are triggered
- ___ Developing a “Reset Button” to help you de-escalate when you are triggered to move into a response rather than a reaction

Session Three

- ___ Developing an Inner Mentor
- ___ Working with Forgiveness: acknowledging feelings, trying to understand the other person, experimenting with techniques such as writing a letter to the other person
- ___ Separating the person from their behaviour
- ___ Practicing using the “Love Channel.”

Session Four

- ___ Single Icebergs
- ___ Exploring guilt, shame
- ___ Exploring woundedness

Session Five

- ___ Double Icebergs
- ___ Psychological Defences such as projection
- ___ ‘I’ Messages
- ___ Active Listening

Session Six

- ___ Conditional and Unconditional Love
- ___ Writing a love letter to myself
- ___ Writing a love letter to others

Session Seven

- ___ Appreciating the concept of ‘specialness.’
- ___ Identifying upon whose shoulders you stand (connectedness)
- ___ Exploring a model of the Divine based on connectedness

It's quite an impressive list of skills you have learned over the 20 weeks of the Healing Program. These constitute the core of the program. It will take practice to incorporate these skills into your life. The more advanced levels of the program will support you in your continued practice and evolution.

Level Four reviews the skills under Authenticity, Autonomy and Acceptance. These three attributes were identified as characteristics of long-term cancer survivors in research conducted by the Healing Journey Program. This level can be done as a home study, or you can join a group at Wellspring and work through the material together.

Level Five of the program is based on Eckhart Tolle's book, *A New Earth*. We use the skills we learned at the Healing Journey Program to explore the concepts of psycho-spirituality presented by Tolle. We also view the book through the experience of cancer.

We hope you have found the work interesting, compelling and healing. We also hope you have found programs at Wellspring to support and deepen your exploration. After a program ends, there can be a temptation to fall off practicing your new skills. Discuss with your group ways in which you can keep your practices in place in your daily life.