

HEALING JOURNEY PROGRAM

LEVEL 4: WORKBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Level Four of the Healing Journey Program! You have now worked through 20 weeks of developing coping skills and participating in group discussions through Levels One, Two and Three. We have moved quickly through the material, covering new topics each week. Level Four of the Healing Journey Program (HJP) is an opportunity to review all the ideas and skills that you learned, delve deeper into the practises you found helpful, and consider these practices in the context of your own life and circumstances.

Overview of the Levels

While the Healing Journey has Five levels, the core of the work is learnt in Levels One through to Three. In Level One, “Coping with Cancer Stress,” the emphasis was on regaining control by learning some basic coping strategies for managing the challenges of cancer:

- Allostatic load and its effects of stress on the body, introduction to using the breath for centring and grounding, and an introduction to progressive relaxation
- Healthy thought management and deep inner relaxation
- Mental imagery for healing
- Goal setting

In Level Two, we went deeper into the thoughts and feelings that cancer evokes:

- Journaling
- Meditation
- More guided imagery for healing
- The Inner Healer
- Goal setting, “What matters most in my life now?”
- Letting go of resentments
- Introduction of spirituality into healing

Level Three focused on the psycho-spiritual aspects of healing; building on the skills of the previous two levels:

- Chanting, Divine Light imagery
- Reactions vs responses
- Shifting from reaction to response
- The Iceberg model; letting go of resentments
- Double icebergs
- Unconditional Love
- Our connectedness to each other in contrast to “specialness”

This is a lot of learning material to absorb in 20 weeks! In addition, you also had the opportunity to share your experiences and support others in each group you have participated in. Hopefully, you have also been inspired to access other programs at Wellspring to deepen and expand your self care.

The Structure of Level Four

In Level Four, the practices have been rearranged under three headings: Authenticity, Autonomy, and Acceptance. These three terms emerged from our research on remarkable cancer survivors. The Healing Journey Program was developed at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre over the course of 30 years. Working with thousands of cancer patients during those years, we were able to observe patients who outlived their expected survival. We undertook a research project where we conducted extensive interviews with people who lived longer than expected (details are found in [Appendix I](#) of this workbook). The material from these interviews was put through a rigorous qualitative analysis and three important themes emerged: Authenticity, Autonomy, and Acceptance.

Authenticity

Authenticity can be understood as being aware of one's own experience, needs, and values. It's choosing what is important to you, while discarding other activities for which an unwelcome obligation was perhaps previously felt. However, we first of all know what it is we value, and who we want to be in the world! This requires our attention and exploration. Many of us have not had the opportunity to explore our inner world so deeply; to appreciate what is important to us and understand what gives our life meaning. Authenticity will be expressed differently by different people and in the process of healing through cancer, we can discover what really matters to us and identify how we want to live our lives.

Autonomy

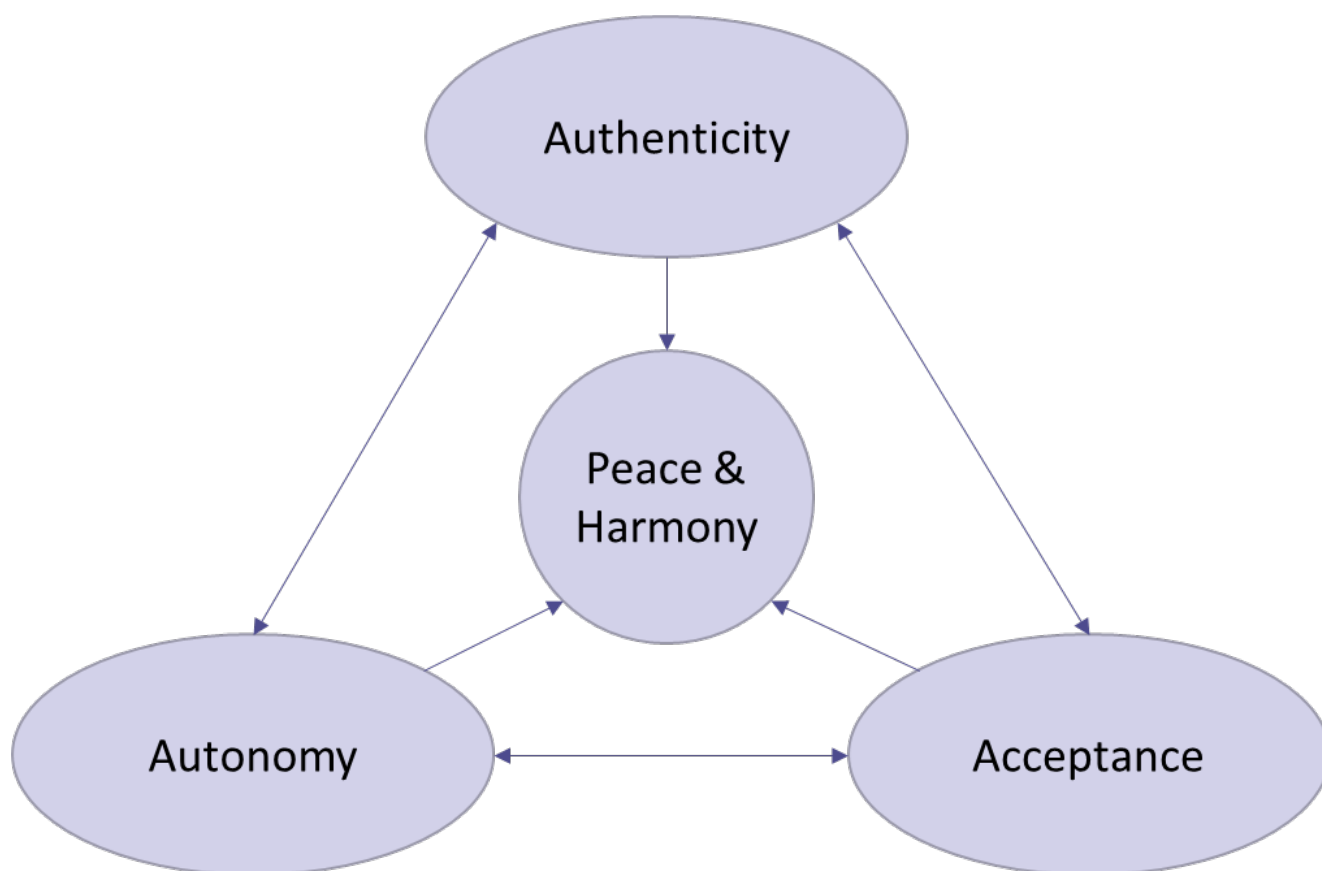
Autonomy reflects our desire to live authentically. Do we feel that we can express our true feelings and needs? Do we value our talents and gifts? Do we give ourselves the time we need to explore the things that give our lives meaning? You may have already noticed that the practices you have learned in the Healing Journey Program have created changes in you and your approach to life. You may be valuing self-care more and saying "no" more often to requests that do align with your healing plan. Some of the people in your life will have been amenable to these changes, others perhaps less so. Autonomy means that you give yourself permission to have personal freedom—making choices that are healing in your life, with or without the approval of others.

Acceptance

Coping with cancer requires that we accept the many difficult realities cancer brings. This is something we talked about in Level Two. Acceptance is not a single act of equanimity, it is an ongoing process of facing the challenges, acknowledging the thoughts and feelings that arise, then adapting to those realities. The Serenity Prayer captures the purposeful effort that acceptance requires of us: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Acceptance may be directed towards ourselves—appreciating the humanness of our imperfections. Acceptance may also be about others in our lives—accepting people as they are. It can be about our circumstances, that there are things we can't change but must learn to work with. As you can see, there is nothing passive about the process of acceptance!

What can we expect from working on our Authenticity, Autonomy, and Acceptance?

Through Authenticity, Autonomy, and Acceptance, we can learn to live a more peaceful and joyful life. It may help us see beyond the daily frustrations and move into a deeper awareness and connection with our spiritual selves. It can enable us to experience different dimensions of love and compassion for ourselves and for others.



Alastair's Perspective

The perspective of Alastair Cunningham, the originator of the Healing Journey Program, is that healing can be found in the spiritual quest. Alastair writes:

“Learning who we are—spiritual beings having a human experience—is simple enough in principle, although difficult in practice for most of us. It is difficult because finding the Self (and the capital S is commonly used to distinguish true from imagined self), requires letting go of our ideas of who we are, established in our personal lifetime and heavily reinforced by the prevailing culture. A lifetime of conditioning has created the sense that the material world, including our separate bodies, is our ultimate reality, whereas the mystics tell us that the world of matter, including our bodies, is only a partial, even illusory, “reality”. Our true being resides in an underlying Divine Ground or spiritual reality, of which we all form a part. (This is discussed further in our Level 3 workbook, and in my Bringing Spirituality into Your Healing Journey, one of many books on the subject).

Why would we bother to contact this underlying substrate of our being? Many will not wish to, feeling content with a purely materialistic life. But for those who do realize their spiritual nature, there are many “benefits”; I put this in quotation marks to indicate that it is not really a question of “benefits” in the worldly sense, but rather a matter of growing up, maturing as a child who grows into an adult. Spiritual realization brings the awareness, the knowing, that death is not the end, that we are not all separate beings but part of a whole, and that our body is a kind of vehicle that we adopt for awhile and lay down as it wears out. This felt understanding brings changes in the perceived purpose of life, which is now less about seeking sensory pleasure or control and more about understanding, connecting with the Divine, and helping others. Will identifying with this Deeper or Higher Self heal the body? A very evolved individual would probably say that this becomes irrelevant, given the eternal nature of spirit, but for those of us struggling on the path, hanging onto a functional body remains important! Our increasing clarity and awareness will certainly enable us to make more informed choices; living longer, or healing from serious disease may depend on finding definite goals for our lives that are important and fulfilling, particularly goals that involve further growth and assisting others.

It is important to recognize that what we aim to give up is not the material world, our families, our bodies, but our attachment to these ideas. And that in turn does not mean ceasing to love and care for others or for our earthly selves. As the mystics tell us, and as I can confirm from my own small experience, when the spiritual connection becomes more central in our lives, we are freed up to love much more. We experience much more peace and joy in the midst of everyday sights and activities. What diminishes is the emotional neediness or craving for sensory stimulation, for control, for rewards in the form of money or overt respect. For a few spiritual geniuses, the journey is completed rapidly; for most of us, it will be a lifetime endeavour, but if we are sincere we will make progress and enjoy enormous improvements in the quality of our mental and physical lives.”

Getting Started

People tend to learn in spirals—experiencing ideas and practices differently every time we revisit them. This is because we are constantly evolving during different stages of our lives. This is why context is very important. For example, healthy thought management may mean something quite different to someone recently diagnosed with cancer than it does to someone who is in Level Four of the Healing Journey Program. The following sessions are something that you might learn something new from every time you return to it.

Before we start working on the healing skills, we want to understand what Authenticity, Autonomy, and Acceptance mean to you. This is a process of self examination and exploration. The group discussion in the session may give you ideas and inspiration—a chance to cross-fertilize with other members of the group. Each week will focus on a different topic that will help you deepen your experience of these concepts in your day-to-day life. We want to keep this work deeply personal, so that is about you in the context of your life now. In previous levels, the workbook included space for you write your experiences. In Level Four however, we are encouraging you to use your own journal (a simple notebook will suffice) so that you can explore as much as you need to, with no expectations in terms of length of your writing. Level Four is about “bringing it home” and “making it real”¹ on a day-to-day basis. We trust that your group will give you a safe and confidential space to talk about your goals, challenges, insights, tips, and successes!

Note to Caregivers

While we will be referring to the “patient’s” experience in these sessions, this work will still be helpful to you as a caregiver. If your loved one is taking Level Four, then your involvement can deepen and enhance their efforts for deepening their authenticity, autonomy, and acceptance. It can give you a shared language to explore and encourage these concepts on a day-to-day basis. As a caregiver yourself, we trust that the previous levels have been helpful you, giving you coping strategies and encouraging your own self-care. Everything you do to help yourself will ultimately help the person you are supporting! Investing in your own well-being is very important—the stress on you is immense and we hope that you can continue your healing work for yourself as well as the person you are caring for.

¹ Calm Your Mind, Warm Your Heart: Real Voices and Techniques to Support You Through the Ups and Downs of Cancer. By Catherine Phillips EdD CPsych (2013). Written by a member of the Healing Journey team, this book contains the voices and experiences of many program participants.

SESSION ONE

WHAT DO AUTHENTICITY, AUTONOMY, AND ACCEPTANCE MEAN TO ME?

In this first session we want to think about what the terms Authenticity, Autonomy, and Acceptance mean to you. This is an exercise that can be useful to you over time; a way of understanding what your specific goals are and checking in with yourself. It is important to be very specific rather than vague because it helps you to get to your authentic self. The following are some questions that might help you explore these ideas.

Grab your journal and begin!

Authenticity

- Are there moments in your life where you feel you are being authentic?
- Are there moments when you don't feel authentic?
- What is it that you value most?
- How do you want to express those values?
- What might block you in being authentic in this context?
- What anxieties or concerns arise for you?
- What might be a first step in expressing your authenticity?

Autonomy

- Are there situations in your life where you do not give yourself permission to be fully authentic?
- What moments in your life did you feel autonomous, and conversely when haven't you felt autonomous?
- What would it feel like to be more autonomous?
- What blocks do you have to feeling more autonomous? Are some of these blocks within you? Are some because of other people? Explore.

Acceptance

- What have you found hard to accept in your life? What have you learned to accept?
- Is it harder to accept things about yourself or is it harder to accept what you view as limitations of other people?
- What would acceptance feel like? What might it open for you?
- What would you like to work on in terms of acceptance in your life?

- What does the serenity prayer mean to you? (God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.)

SESSION TWO

AUTHENTICITY: UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING THE MIND

During the early days after your cancer diagnosis, you probably recall having scary, incessant, and unrelenting thoughts. You worried about what the diagnosis might mean for you and for your loved ones. Hopefully through Levels One, Two, and Three you were able to become more familiar with your thoughts, labelling and expressing them—rather than ignoring or suppressing them. Perhaps you have found journaling helpful as a place to acknowledge and “put to rest” these thoughts and feelings, at least in the short run.

Even if we are skilled at healthy thought management, there will be times when the thoughts and feelings may arise and become difficult, particularly in times of stress. This includes “Scanxiety” which is anxiety about upcoming tests and results. This is all a normal part of the cancer experience, and refreshing our thought management skills is healthy and important. First, we need to start with thought watching.

Thought Watching

Thought watching is simple; taking time to sit and watch your thoughts flowing by in your mind. The quality of being the observer of our experience is very powerful and fundamental to self-help. Remember how we discussed in Level Three that awareness gives us choices? We first need to know where our thoughts are taking us before we can manage them effectively.

Practice thought watching for at least 10 minutes each day for one week. After each thought watching session, write down all you can recall, including themes or patterns to your thoughts. The goal is to become aware of what the mind is doing. It is a way of asking yourself, “How am I *really* doing today?” and taking the time to listen.

Healthy Thought Management

If you become aware of any thought patterns that are related to worry and anxiety, practice healthy thought management.

Remember the steps:

STEP 1

Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings by being aware of what is flowing through your mind. Notice what is driving your mood. If you are sad, angry, fearful, or anxious, follow this to see what you are thinking about that is creating this feeling.

STEP 2

Express your thoughts and feelings. This can be done in many ways:

- Share this with someone you trust who will listen
- Write it out in a journal (more about this in Level Two)
- Exercise—go for a walk
- Listen to music
- Or try any other activity that expresses the feelings you are having

STEP 3

Substitute your thoughts and feelings with something more helpful. Try replacing:

- “There is nothing I can do,” with “I am doing everything I can to help myself”
- “I am scared of chemotherapy,” with “I can ask my medical team for help and support”

STEP 4

Repeat this as often as you need to. This is a helpful tool that you can use in many ways and times. Remember, there are no bad thoughts—just thoughts that are “stuck”.

Meditation

Author Eknath Easwaran says, “We become what we meditate on,” and points out that this includes all the thoughts we entertain in our minds. He writes of the mind being like a “sponge,” soaking up everything we offer it.

If you are having a hard time with meditation, you are not alone. Many participants of the Healing Journey have expressed that meditation is difficult and can be hard to maintain as a practice, particularly outside of the context of the group. It can be very helpful to talk about these challenges with other members of the group.

Remember that meditation is not about having a totally quiet and still mind, rather it is more about watching the thoughts and letting them go. Having a focal point such as counting, watching the breath, a mantra, or an image helps the mind settle. Using a timer is helpful, starting with small intervals of meditation and working up to longer periods as it feels right. Meditation can also take the form of movement such as yoga, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and meditative walking.

- Have you tried any Wellspring programs that have helped you with meditative practices? Explore these ideas in your journal and discuss them with your group.

Here are some suggestions that might enhance your spiritual experience in meditation (and in life generally):

- Have a space set aside for meditation only
- Set up an altar, with meaningful symbols on it—try hanging pictures on the wall or place statues of spiritual avatars around the house
- Use rituals, like safely lighting a candle or incense at the start of meditation
- Try sitting on a cushion on the ground instead of a chair
- Do a preliminary relaxation before meditating
- Start with brief chanting—which can be extended if desired. We can also play tapes of chants in the house during the day, and as we go off to sleep at night
- Try writing or whispering a mantra, keeping the mind focused

SESSION THREE

AUTONOMY: CHOOSING TO DO WHAT I FIND TRULY REWARDING

The most consistent finding from interviews of people who have greatly outlived their prognoses is this: they have learned to live life the way they want to, rather than feeling constantly driven by obligations.

The first step towards this kind of autonomy is to define what we want.; what “turns us on”, what “turns us off,” and what prevents us from doing more of what gives us peace, pleasure, and meaning.

At first, it may be hard to imagine what gives you pleasure because cancer is such a hard road to travel. You may subconsciously shut the process down by pointing out the problems or hurdles that make these dreams seem impossible. In these moments, you can practise the process of “recalling yourself,” refocusing and remembering that there is more to you than cancer. Remember, there is no limit to being playful or extravagant in your ideas! What you are looking for is inspiration, ideas, or clues about activities that will feel healing to you.

The following exercise is adapted from psychologist, Lawrence LeShan’s book “Cancer as a Turning Point”². In the back of the second edition there are 29 exercises to help you discover what would be most fulfilling in your life. Here are three activities to get you started:

1. List the activities that “turn you on”. That is, those things that make you feel more alert and alive, relaxed, at peace with the world, with a sense that life is interesting and worth living. The possibilities are endless and will differ for each person. Make your list, without reservation or fear that it might seem silly or trivial to other people. Think about things in the past as well as present activities. Some examples resonate with most people:
 - Walking in beautiful natural surroundings
 - Listening to the kind of music you like
 - Being with someone you love
 - Reading a book by a favourite author
 - Being by the water
 - Eating a good meal with friends
 - Getting your hair done
 - Pursuing your hobby
 - Playing with your pet
2. Now, we need to write a similar list of things that “turn you off”. These are day-to-day activities that drag you down, that make you feel less alive, depressed, overwhelmed, fed up, burdened, bored, or disillusioned. You can acknowledge the hard aspects of cancer and its

² Cancer As a Turning Point: A Handbook for People with Cancer, Their Families, and Health Professionals Paperback by Lawrence LeShan (1994)

treatment, but it is also important to identify any other activities that feel oppressive. Duties and obligations can weigh us down and may not offer any meaningful rewards. Some likely examples are:

- Working out your income tax
- Talking to a particular acquaintance or family member
- Driving in traffic
- Thinking what to make for dinner
- Housekeeping
- Getting your computer fixed

3. The next step is to look honestly at how much of your time in recent months you have spent doing activities from list 1 and list 2.

Consider the following questions:

- Have you made any efforts to change towards doing what you want?
- Why is it hard to change your life towards doing what you want?

LeShan suggests that in framing our answers, we avoid blaming other people or circumstances, and instead identify thoughts and feelings in ourselves that keep us stuck:

“I would feel like a poor provider if I changed jobs and earned less.”

“I believe it would be ridiculous for an adult to spend time at that.”

“I’d feel guilty if I didn’t do that.”

Now put all this together. Perhaps you can make a list of your current and desired activity patterns. Note the obstacles in your own thinking. Recall that to change your life towards what you truly want may be life-sparing.

If some of the ideas you have come up with are not plausible, such as pulling up your roots and moving to a shack by the sea, what are the elements of this image that appeal to you? Perhaps it is the lack of a rigid schedule or walking beside the water. Now ask yourself, how might you make these aspects a reality in your daily life.

SESSION FOUR

ACCEPTANCE: DROPPING GRIEVANCES

The major obstacle to spiritual experience is our habit of maintaining a sense that we are separate beings; little worlds unto ourselves, and as such, liable to constant frustration by the larger world. As you will have found in Level Three, we engage in a constant, internal running commentary on how we feel about people and events around us. We can spend a lot of energy on resentment and wanting things, or people, to be different. This can create a cycle of resentment in other people, which in turn can shut down human connections, including unconditional love.

Alastair Cunningham prefers to use the term grievance, because it unambiguously refers to our reactions to things we don't like.

Resentments are expensive in many ways—they cost us:

- **Physically:** resentments create a stress response, sometimes large, sometimes small, but they inevitably add to our allostatic load (recall the discussion of allostatic load in session 1 of Level One).
- **Psychologically:** resentments take up space in our thoughts and feelings, and are often repetitive and unpleasant. Sometimes, resentments can even turn up in our dreams!
- **Socially:** resentments affect our relationships, disconnecting us from others and inhibiting our experience of unconditional love.
- **Spiritually:** resentments can imprison us in a little cloud of anger and discontent, which we carry with us everywhere. Since resentments are about the past and possible future, they keep us away from the present moment. They prevent us from seeing and accepting things (including ourselves and other people) as they really are. Thus, it effectively stops us from realizing our true nature, as part of the One Mind or Divine Source.

Examining our resentments is an important part of emotional “housekeeping” because they can start to collect in our minds subconsciously. It's helpful to journal regularly about the resentments that are on our mind, so they don't accumulate over time.

Activity one:

Now, turn to your journal and make a list of your own grievances. Some questions to consider are:

- **Grievances about other people:** what they have done, what has seemed unfair, what about you has been neglected, avoided, unappreciated, or overlooked?
- **Grievances about your life situation:** where have you been limited by circumstances apparently beyond your control; what has been unfair or unfortunate, what has frustrated you?

- **Grievances about your health status:** what seems unfair, frightening, or limiting what you can do?
- **Small hassles:** for a period of a few hours or more, watch closely for all the things that frustrate you, however small. E.g., not being able to find something you're looking for, any discomfort in the body, any unsatisfactory communication with someone, discontent with your surroundings, feelings of fatigue, disruptions to your preferred schedules, and so on.

While writing your grievances down, explore your inner reaction to these things; physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually? Write about the nature of your internal monologue generally, for example:

- What does holding these grievances do to me—to my mood, thoughts, and feelings about health, or to my relationship with the Divine Ground?
- How can I drop all of this? Practise watching out for grievances in your daily life. Catch them before they fester into huge resentments. Try using imagery of the Light to dissolve them. Tell yourself, “This was from my unaware phase—I no longer need it”. If you can imagine a divine figure or avatar, lay the resentments at his or her feet and ask that they be dissolved.

Activity two:

Now explore what you will allow into your mind in place of the grievances.

- Repeat the exercise in session 5 of Level Three: “Imagining yourself as totally secure and fulfilled, universally liked and respected by other people, and by God”. Note what this does to your need to express grievance against other people or situations.
- Meditate on the mantra of the Divine Light Invocation:

*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*

Activity three:

If you haven't already become familiar with the book "A Course in Miracles (ACIM)" a 1976 book by Helen Schucman (add in author + reference), now would be a good time to do so. It is not easy to read, but Alastair Cunningham describes it as the most thorough work on healing that he has encountered. For many people, approaching ACIM through other writers is a helpful introduction, including "Introduction to a Course in Miracles"³ or Marianne Williamson's Return to Love⁴ (1996).

Here are some exercises to get you started – you can find these lessons in [Appendix II](#) of this workbook:

- Read Lessons 68 and 69 from [Appendix II](#) of this Workbook (included in the ACIM volume, but easier to read than the main text), and journal on how they apply to you.
- Try this exercise adapted from Lesson 69 of ACIM: After relaxing deeply, imagine yourself surrounded by a dense cloud or fog of resentments and grievances. Now see yourself ascending slowly through this fog, gradually penetrating it. Find yourself on the higher slopes of your "mountain"; perhaps you can reach the peak and look around. See the cloud layer spread out all around, with occasional other peaks emerging from it. Experiment with flying around up there! Then slowly come down again, to ordinary life, but bringing the clearing and light with you. Imagine how daily affairs and other people look when viewed from this light space.

³ <https://www.miraclecenter.org/wp/about/a-course-in-miracles/>

⁴ A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of "A Course in Miracles". by Marianne Williamson (1996)

SESSION FIVE

AUTHENTICITY: LISTENING TO OUR AUTHENTIC “INNER VOICE”

Major spiritual traditions tell us that we have a True or Higher Self inside us that becomes obscured by the raucous clamouring of the Small Self or “ego”. You will remember from Level Three material that the voice of the ego is driven by urges for self-protection and sensory gratification. It uses projection (blaming), rationalization, and other defences to separate itself from others. Self-healing can involve connecting with the Self, the true voice behind this noise of the ego. It is not so easy to tell the difference between the two at first, but one good indication is that the ego’s promptings are usually attended by considerable emotion, often negative (“you don’t need to do that; she’s trying to blame you; this is boring”). The voice of one’s Higher Self, on the other hand, which may register as more of a “knowing” than something verbal, never has negativity attached; the only feelings associated with it are love, joy, and peace.

Here are some ways to explore the inner voice:

1. Thought watching: take some time to sit quietly, fostering your observer quality to become aware of the mind. Think of things you have to or want to do. What “voices” will guide your actions? Are there residues of a childhood parent or other voices inside of you that pre-empt or shut down your inner voice? One way to identify the parental voice is it often includes the word “should”. Such as, “you should eat your vegetables.”
2. Meditate for a few minutes. Look within; what is going on right now, apart from the inevitable threads of thought that come and go? Can you sense an underlying quiet? Is there any sense of “knowing” in that space? Think of an important question or issue. Repeat it to yourself or write it down, then meditate, in the same way as you usually do, but with an underlying aim of finding some guidance.
3. Try reading a favourite spiritual text, having previously defined a question on which you want guidance, then meditate on this question.
4. Recall times in your past when you have felt that you just “know” what is needed. Remember and write down times when things simply flowed, times when you felt more connected, more aware, more guided by an inner wisdom. Then experiment with consulting this inner voice as you go about your daily tasks. What are the prerequisites for accessing it? Can you allow it to guide you? What interferes?
5. Identify a number of voices inside yourself and give them names. For example, the Critic, the Controller, the Lazy Procrastinator, the Scared Child, and so on. See if this works for you (you will need to look for these subpersonalities while meditating or relaxing deeply). Does your Higher Self have a name? Can you see images of these parts of your mind? Write about all of

this. What does it tell you about the sources of guidance that would be real for you, and therefore capable of leading you to your healed/authentic Self?

6. Try this adaptation of the Divine Light Invocation, an imagery exercise and yoga practice that was taught by Swami Radha⁵. This is the basis of the Light Imagery used at the end of the Healing Journey sessions. Practise it and then write about your experiences.

Either standing or sitting, imagine a beautiful beam of brilliant white light entering through the top of your head and flowing down all around your body. You can then imagine how the light fills you up, filling you as if you were a jug or jar of bright white light. You can then say to yourself the Divine Light Invocation:

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

Let yourself feel the way the light suffuses you with healing energy, at all levels of your being: your body, your mind, your heart and your spirit. You can then repeat the Invocation to yourself again, this time feeling the Light surround you as well as fill you.

7. This Light can also be sent to others who may benefit from receiving Healing Light. As you repeat the Invocation, see the person in your mind's eye, filling up with Light, helped and supported by Divine Light. Then you can acknowledge to yourself, "Every cell of this, my physical being, is filled with Divine Light. Every level consciousness is illumined with Divine Light. The Divine Light penetrates every single cell of my being, every level of consciousness. I have become a channel of pure Light. I am one with the Light. I am Light."

⁵ The Divine Light Invocation by Swami Sivananda Radha (2010)

SESSION SIX

ACCEPTANCE: FILLING OURSELVES WITH LOVE, OPERATING FROM THE HIGHER SELF

“Filling Ourselves with Love” and “Operating from the Higher Self” are two statements that mean the same thing. Much of our work to this point has been identifying and trying to drop obstacles to awareness of the Divine Ground—such as judgement, guilt, shame, old habits of self-protective thought and behaviour, lack of trust, and inattention. This work was called the “emptying” phase. However, we also need a “filling” phase. This involves finding ways to replace the old separateness and self-protection with a new awareness—that we are spiritual beings who just happen to be here in this worldly dream. We need techniques to constantly remind us of our true nature.

Part of filling ourselves is working with our self talk and letting go of the old messages we have absorbed about our worth and value. As children, we too often received messages of judgement and criticism that we absorbed and believed, which is only natural as children look to the adults around them to make sense of the world. However, these criticisms are often a projection of the inner psychological wounds of that adult (remember the icebergs model from Level Three). To love others, it is important to work on loving ourselves.

In our discussion of unconditional love in session six of Level Three we worked on writing a love letter to ourselves. Many of us found that to be a real challenge! We are taught not to be proud or self-aggrandizing, so it can feel immodest to celebrate the “gifts” that we have been given by the Divine. In this session, we return to this exercise of writing a love letter to yourself. Love increases the more we give it away, but first, we need to start with ourselves.

Here are some examples of ways to “fill” ourselves:

- Listen to a musical chant through the day
- Repeat a prayer (e.g., St Francis, see below)
- Use a mala, rosary, or beads to remind yourself of your favourite mantra or prayer
- Set yourself something to remember to do for the whole day, upon waking in the morning, such as “non-reaction” for today, or “being in the Now”
- Attend at least one healing service in a church, temple, or synagogue around town, and write about it!

Additional Reading

Find some inspirational reading—then study and write about it.

- Possible authors are: Thich Naht Hahn, Easwaran, Yogananda, Pema Chodron, Swami Radha, Eckhart Tolle, one of the Christian mystics, Jewish sacred writings.
- Or at first you might find it easier to read some of the interpreters of spiritual ideas: Hugh Prather, Stephen Levine, Ram Dass, Rupert Spira, Gary Zukav, Tom Harpur, Mathew Fox, Marianne Williamson, and many others read daily, reflect, and write.
- If you feel ambitious, you could try ACIM, or the Bhagavad Gita (translations by Juan Mascaro or Eknath Easwaran are good).

Homework

Write the love letter to yourself and we will discuss them at next weeks' session!

SESSION SEVEN

AUTHENTICITY: ACCEPTING GUIDANCE

Many spiritual traditions tell us that, to live a healed life, we need to cease being pulled around by our ego, which seeks only to protect and gratify itself, and instead accept guidance from a “higher” source. This Source is described in various ways in different traditions as God, the Atman, the Higher Self within, the Holy Spirit, the One, and so on. Our view of what the Divine is (see session one of Level Three) will determine the way we think about it. But regardless, the practical issue remains the same: am I ready to allow myself to be guided by a deeper wisdom accessible within myself? A Course in Miracles puts it bluntly: “Resign as your own director”!

You may have a negative reaction to this advice, and that’s ok. Our culture expects a certain level of self centeredness that exalts individual prerogative (“I did it my way”), however, the spiritual search requires that we hand over control. Our thoughts go immediately to what we think we might lose.

Here is the first part of today’s exercise:

- Write down what you are afraid you would lose if you tried to be guided by a Higher of Divine Power, or by your Higher Self?
- Your first set of examples might include: losing control over my activities, the satisfaction of indulging myself with all kinds of little treats and comforts, protection from demands by others
- Your second set of examples go a little deeper: my image of who I am, respect and cooperation from others, my ambitions in life
- Now go even deeper: my sense of being a separate self, my worth

All of us need to ponder and meditate deeply on this for ourselves. If it’s a new idea to you, the most important things to identify will be the immediate fears from imagining that you are asked to relinquish comfort and control. Having identified the ego’s reaction, now look at this possibility rationally and ask yourself:

- Would I be deprived of much that is meaningful if I tried to live under spiritual guidance?
- Does this “letting go” for spiritual purposes mean a change in my activities, or a change in the attitude and state of mind in which I do them?
- Do I believe that doing so would aid my healing?
- What am I prepared to give up (let go)?
- In the process of becoming more spiritually connected, how will I reorganize my life?

This last question is the key for spiritual healing. It means giving up many old patterns of thought and replacing them with connection to a larger Order, Intelligence, Power, or God. Some find this easier

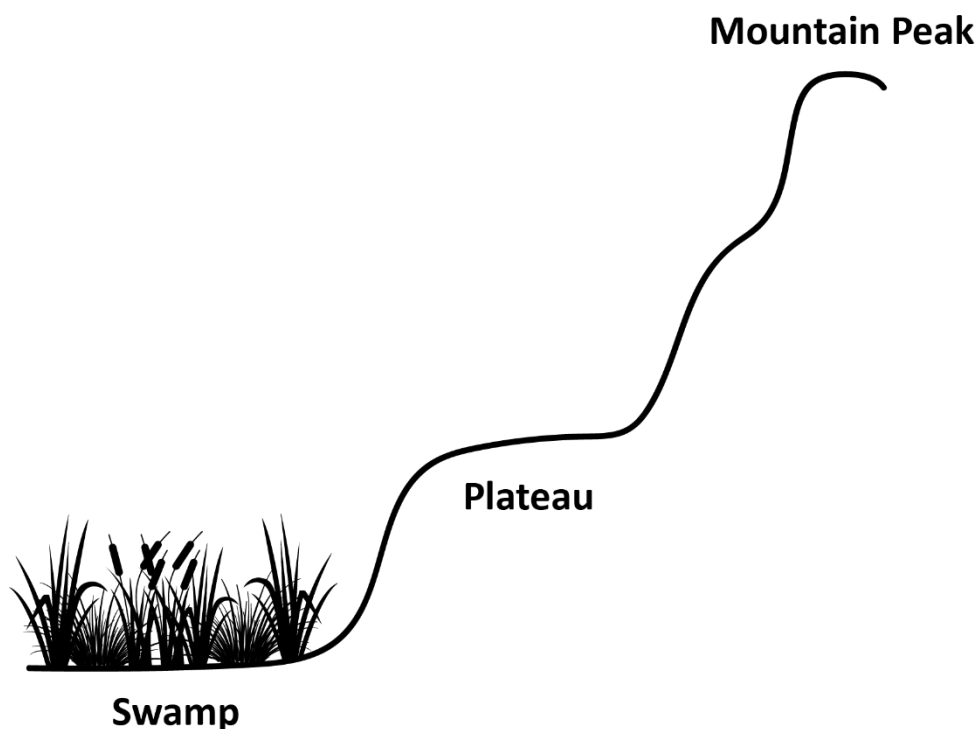
to contemplate through using an image, like Jesus or Divine Mother, as a personal guide. Others may wish to think of filling themselves with Light.

SESSION EIGHT

AUTONOMY: DECIDING WHERE TO LOCATE OURSELVES IN THE “TERRITORY” OF THE MIND

Spiritual growth is the cultivation of a new kind of awareness. We can use the word “territory” as a metaphor of the mind, comprising of three environments—swamp, plateau, and mountain.

The “swamp” is that part of the mind driven by emotions, especially by fear or anger. The “plateau” is a flat land, easy going, which encourages us either to drift or to get busy and distracted from the task of healing. Another—perhaps seldom visited—part of our mental terrain is “mountain,” a high ground in which the air is clear and still, and from which our vision expands enormously. We all have these territories, as well as other parts of the mind, which we are free to visit at any time. It is our choice whether we spend most of our time in the swamp, racing across the plateau, or on the mountain slopes.



Swamp

This is the area in which we feel pulled around by strong feelings, where the power of choice and rational decision-making seems harder. When we are angry, it can seem easier just to go with the anger, rather than shake it off. We can feel the same way about fear.

Here are some activities to help get you out of the swamp:

1. Describe the situations and thoughts that put you, or keep you, in your swamp. Rather than trying to address these important issues off the top of your head, use relaxation and imagery to create remembered scenarios, and reflect on them. Some helpful tools are using The Inner Healer, trying meditation, or possibly discussing this with others. For at least the next week, monitor your reactions during the daily round of activities—to get a “real life” insight into how you put and keep yourself in your swamp.
 - a. Consider anger. These may first be expressed as irritation, resentment, frustration, or impatience. What events “make” you angry? (Be sure to look at even the small hassles of daily life.) When you are feeling irritated, what do you do that you don’t like? What keeps you in that state?
 - b. Consider fear. What are you anxious about? Possessions, family, behaviour of others, health status, other possible future events, your “responsibilities”? What keeps you in that state? Is there sometimes a vague sense of unease, and if so, what thoughts cause it?
 - c. Consider shame. What qualities about yourself do you dislike or feel ashamed of? What thoughts contribute to this feeling?
 - d. Consider other emotions. What other emotions can you treat in the same way: sadness? jealousy?
2. Now consider in detail what you do; how you think and behave, when driven by these “swampy” feelings. Consider them one by one.
3. Having looked at what you may wish to drop (the “emptying” phase of the work), now consider how you could change your reactions to the same situations by choosing to locate yourself on higher ground. What would your reactions be then? What does that feel like? The best way to go about this exploration is to pick or imagine times when you are feeling “swampy,” then use some of your tools to change the location or feeling.
 - a. For example, if you are anxious, you might choose relaxation as well as imagery, or possibly the Inner Healer. If you are angry, the “resentments” exercise is excellent; the Divine Light, meditation, prayer, or replaying scenes on an inner video. Write about

your experiences and come to some conclusions about what you can and will do in future both to avoid the swamp and to escape when you find yourself in it.

The Plateau

This is even terrain that can often distract us from a healing state of mind. Perhaps the most common way is to get absorbed in “busyness,” walking fast, head down, cell phone at the ready, being very “important”! Or some people may find themselves on a “plateau” with no urgent challenges, concluding that there is nothing to be done. This can cause people to drift, trying to forget about healing and personal growth—inertia, in other words. Both may seem different, but they have in common the unconscious aim of avoiding what is truly important to us.

Consider busyness first. It may be related to work, social engagements, hobbies or pastimes, keeping up with the news, or attending to others’ needs. If we persist, we may blunder into a jungle of engagements or responsibilities that can effectively cut us off from the Light. The process of analyzing what puts us into this mode is much the same as for swamp mentality.

Here are some activities to help you to move from the plateau to the mountain peak:

1. Describe the situations (and consequent thoughts) that get you into “busy” plateau mode. Again, use daily monitoring and active imagination to create scenarios, then ask yourself:
 - a. What activities do I pursue that are not important and do not contribute to my personal growth and healing? (Consider paid employment, if any, social activities, attention to the media, attention to others’ needs, home maintenance etc.).
 - b. What puts me into the busy mode? How do I think and behave when in that mode? Why do I stay there when I get into it? What are its satisfactions?
 - c. What am I afraid might happen (what would others think of me, or would I think of myself) if I dropped the busyness? What would that say about the meaning, significance, or importance of my life? Am I using it as a way of escaping from looking at other important or fearsome issues in my life?
2. If by contrast, when you have no immediate problems, your tendency is towards inertia rather than busyness, ask yourself similar questions:
 - a. What thoughts do I have that create this feeling of inertia? (It is understood that where there are serious physical symptoms of disease, it may not be possible to pursue this work)
 - b. What do I think and do when I’m in a “dropping out” or drifting mode? What makes it easier to stay there than to get out of it?

3. Now imagine moving to higher ground, and looking back at yourself, obsessively busy, or inert.
 - a. How do you view these behaviour patterns from this vantage point? Pick times (or imagine them) when you have felt either busy or inert, then use some of your tools to gain clarity on why you do what you do, and imagine changing the location or feeling. For example, if you are very preoccupied with busyness, you might use relaxation along with imagery, the Inner Healer, imagining an ideal day, meditation, prayer, and reflection.
4. Consider how the swamp and the plateau territories relate to you. For example, do you use busyness because of fear? Write about your experiences and come to some conclusions about what you can and will do in future to avoid busyness or inertia, and some ways to escape when you find yourself in these modes.

The Mountain

The self-healer would like to reside on the higher slopes for much of the time, however, this does not mean that we should expect to always be on the mountaintop. One of the features of this “territory” metaphor is that it acknowledges that we will be in different territories at different times in our life, and need not berate ourselves when we find ourselves in the swamp or plateau. However, as we cultivate a healed state of mind, we will find ourselves spending more time on the mountain.

1. Describe how it feels when you finally reach the mountain peak.
 - a. What are the rewards? How does it affect your daily life?
 - b. What helps you climb the mountain? Think of thoughts, behaviours, techniques, and circumstances.
 - c. What stops you from reaching the mountain peak? Think of any hurdles you face to get there.

Now, write a summary statement of the things you learned from this entire “Territory of the Mind” exercise.

Moving On

We hope that Level Four has given you the opportunity to review and assimilate more healing skills, particularly at the spiritual level. All these exercises have value, and as discussed in the introduction, over time we come to these skills at different points in our lives and we experience them differently. A strategy that once seemed less relevant can become pivotal and important at another point in life.

Where do we move on from here? Hopefully you will be considering taking Level Five of the Healing Journey Program which is a close reading of Eckhart Tolle's book, *A New Earth*⁶. We place Tolle's book into the context of coping with cancer, and we use the models that you are now familiar with from the Healing Journey Program such as healthy thought management, reactions vs responses, letting go of resentments, and the iceberg model. We are also hoping that you will access the programs at Wellspring that can support your physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being.

What follows are some extra projects for your consideration as well as a final word from Alastair Cunningham. The appendices include a chart of specifically spiritual healing practices, the abstract, and a link to the original study that identified Authenticity, Autonomy, and Acceptance.

Suggestions from Alastair Cunningham

"I hope that you have experienced healing while going through the four levels of this course. Whether or not any physical disease has been affected, you will, I'm sure, have become more aware, more tolerant, and more able to design your own life from this point on. The work you have been doing is the work of our lives, really, although only a minority of us are fortunate enough to be exposed to it. Having learned this from my own spiritual teachers and experiences, it has been a natural thing to try to pass it on. Most of us need support to keep going on this path, "work of our lives" not withstanding! I'd suggest that you try to find groups with similar aspirations. They need not have anything to do with physical healing. Body-awareness methods like hatha yoga, tai chi, and Qi Gong are a valuable complement to the mental work we have been doing. Look for organizations, leaders, fellow travellers who belong to some well-established tradition: examples might be yoga centres, Buddhist temples, or meditation groups of long standing. Find out whether the leaders exemplify what they teach in their own lives. No large sums of money should be demanded of you. You need not feel immediately comfortable in the setting, but you need to be sure you are accepted, that nobody is moving on trying to get something from you; rather, an authentic spiritual or personal growth institution will be focussed on giving, on helping you. With time, perhaps quite quickly, you will begin to feel an undeniable urge to help others in your turn."

⁶ *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* by Eckhart Tolle (2008)

APPENDIX I: RESEARCH

Working at the Spiritual Level, Alastair J. Cunningham

The spiritual view, as explained by many enlightened people (saints, sages, mystics) across the centuries and across cultures and religions, is that we are not fundamentally material beings at all: we are non-material spiritual beings. We have chosen to identify with our bodies, and therefore think that we are at the mercy of our biology, and that death is the end. However, the option remains to reconsider our identity, to learn, by direct experience, that we are in fact non-material. Another way to say this is that there is a part of us that is immortal, not subject to biology and death. Becoming spiritually connected seems to promote healing of the body, although this is not invariably the case. What is certain is that achieving spiritual awareness brings peace of mind and ultimately a more peaceful passing. We can make a deliberate choice between these two options:

- I am a simple, biological animal, driven by my body chemistry only, or
- I am a spiritual being, part of the Divine, not bound by time; I appear to be inhabiting a body at present, but I am not defined by it.

We can become aware of our spiritual nature by remaining open-minded and using the wide range of spiritual techniques and written material that have been handed down to us. The work takes place in our minds—it involves an honest, no-holds-barred examination of all of our opinions and habits, followed by dedicated work to replace patterns that are harmful or obstructive with other patterns that will foster spiritual connectedness. Some of the main ideas:

INTRODUCTION

Specific Practices for Spiritual Growth

Level of mind	Desired state	Methods
Sensations	Awareness and control of mind–body connections	Body care Inner body awareness Yoga, etc.
Intellect/ideas	Understanding of spirituality	Reading, reflection, journalling Meetings with fellow-travellers
Stream of thoughts	Awareness and quiet	Mind-watching and quietening: meditation, mantra, silence Practice of non-reaction, acceptance Practice of being in the Now Affirmations, mantra, etc.
Deeper feelings	Love, devotion, oneness	Communion Prayer Devotion, gratitude, trust Focus on particular avatars, like Christ, the Buddha, Divine Mother
Contact with inner wisdom	Being guided by Higher (not lower) Self	“Consulting,” in meditation, etc. Using imagery (e.g., Inner Healer) Dreams
Tailoring life to healing	Constant communion with the Divine Source	Making healing practices the central focus Using ritual, e.g., prayer, chanting, symbols such as statues and pictures Service to others

The Research Informing Level Four, The Qualities of Long Survivors

J. Cunningham, and K. Watson. (2004). How psychological therapy may prolong survival in cancer patient: New evidence and a simple theory. *Integrative Cancer Therapies*, 3, 214–229.)

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15312263/>

Level Four is based on research performed at the Healing Journey Program that examined the psychological characteristics of cancer patients who lived longer than expected as predicted by a panel of oncologists.

The long-term survivors consisted of a group of 10 subjects who had outlived predicted survival by between 2 and 7 years. All of them had been a part of the Healing Journey Program and 6 had been in long term therapy with the team for at least one year. The comparison, or control groups, consisted of 2 sets of patients. The first group of 6 were new registrants to the Healing Journey Program, individuals who had applied to enter the program but had not yet begun it. These people had been informed by their oncologists that they had incurable metastatic cancers. They were chosen to provide some idea of attitudes in the cancer population at large before receiving psychotherapeutic help. The other group were 6 subjects from the 2000 Longitudinal Prospective study of the 22 subjects described in Session 1 of Level One. These were the subjects who were rated as the least involved in the therapy, and who died much as predicted by the panel of oncologists.

Interviews were conducted with each subject asking open-ended questions such as “What are your thoughts and feelings as you review your cancer experience, and how has it affected your life?” This interview material then underwent rigorous qualitative analysis, and three major themes were identified in the long term survivors that were not present in either of the other control groups; Authenticity, Autonomy and Acceptance. What do these terms refer to? The following descriptions and quotes capture the quality of the concepts. (For a more detailed description of the study, analysis and results please see the research paper and link above.)

Authenticity

Authenticity can be understood as being aware of one’s own experience, needs, and values, and choosing what is important, while discarding other activities for which an unwelcome obligation was perhaps previously felt. Examples include the following:

- ***“I don’t see it as a gift, but it certainly was cancer that made me step back and reflect on what I want to do, and why I want to do it, and to make better choices for myself and enjoy life a little bit more.”*** —Participant 07
- ***“It’s just putting it [the cancer] in priority. It’s down there and it’s not that important in life and the things that I value, those are the important things. I guess that’s the gift that cancer gives me, to know what’s important and what’s not.”*** —Participant 27

- ***“As much as possible, and I have to watch this because I can fall into a rut, but I’m doing what I enjoy doing, e.g., I’ve proven I can do housework [laughs] and I don’t want to do it anymore. But I love to garden, or I love to go and take my granddaughter to the park, or just all kinds of things. I have the freedom to do, and I just don’t seem to have the shackles that “oh well I’m duty-bound to do this or that,” and so many times I say to myself, ‘Five years down the road is this really going to matter? Is it going to be more important to me or more important to someone else?’” —Participant 11***
- ***“In some ways it [the cancer experience] was devastating, but in other ways it’s been a growing experience, although I can’t believe I’m saying that [laughs]. It was a gradual realization. I’ve come a long way in some ways, in relationships and what’s important. I think I’m no longer obsessed with worrying about what other people think. I do things because I feel I want to do things, and just generally [I have] closer relationships with people... I’ve stopped wasting time.” —Participant 08***

Autonomy

Autonomy can reflect the more behavioral consequence of authenticity: acting in accord with the self-awareness of what one values. When people act autonomously, they do so with a sense of personal freedom and volition, rather than out of fear, obligation, or undue concern or dependence on others. Examples of autonomy from our interviews are the following:

- ***“I definitely have learned to be more selfish over the years, if you want to call it that, and do the things that I want to do. I guess I don’t take as much nonsense from people as I used to. I was one to follow the rules quite a bit and please everybody. I think I feel more comfortable with my place in the world now than I did before I was diagnosed, definitely. I think just learning all that I have has changed that. I’m learning to accept myself, I guess, for who I am and learning to choose what path I want, and it doesn’t matter about anybody else, it’s what I’m doing.” —Participant 27***
- ***“Now, I even say ‘no,’ but before I would’ve been paranoid to say, ‘no.’ Now I can say ‘no, not today, that doesn’t suit me.’ [Q: Any guilt there?] No, no guilt there. And there was no guilt when I made the decision not to go back to work next year. It’s not what I want to do. I’m very happy with what I do now, and it’s much easier to make a decision on the spur of the moment and go to see a movie because you feel like going to see a movie, or sitting down and trying to sketch even though you know you’re not good at it but it’s so peaceful and pleasant. That’s all.” —Participant 02***

By contrast, the six new applicants to the therapy program and the poor outcome subjects spoke about their cancer quite differently. They spoke of their cancer in terms of the turmoil it created in their lives and a desire to lessen their distress and to heal physically, but there was little or no

discussion of healing in the broader sense described above. Part of this difference may be due to the much shorter time for which they have been living with their diagnosis.

Acceptance

Another mental state described by long survivors could be characterized by the theme of acceptance, characterized by equanimity and social harmony, as well as increased peace/joy, more tolerance and love, and more expression/sharing of feelings.

- ***“I’ve experienced a peacefulness and a joy that I’m not having to run after the whole world and catch it by the tail. I don’t have to do any more, I just have to learn to be.”***
— Participant 10
- ***“I have a lot of joy in my life. I feel very blessed. I’m very often very happy with, and very content with, what I’ve accomplished and who I am.”*** —Participant 07
- ***“I think I’m a whole lot easier to be around. [A friend] told me that when she first met me, I was the most uptight [laughs] type of person, [and] was such a perfectionist. Everything had to be done well and completed, and so I wasn’t an unpleasant person, but I just was not the type of person to go down and sit in the staff room for the sake of sitting there. I’m at a very different place now. I’m a much easier-going person and more tolerant. I was a very judgemental person and so that’s where I think I’ve really grown a lot. I just feel a whole lot freer and sillier and more childlike.”*** —Participant 11

Spirituality

Spirituality was also a theme found in the long-term survivors, practices that helped them experience feelings of peace, calm, love, and connection.

- ***“I’ve tried to bring more of a sense of the sacred into my life. I have a prayer that I often say during the day that kind of centers me and it’s a prayer that you could say to God, or the Spirit Mother. I use that time as a time to express gratitude. It’s a practice that makes me feel calm and warm—a kind of feeling of opening in my heart that, to me, is a spiritual experience. Sometimes I have those feelings toward people around me who I don’t know. Sometimes it’s spontaneous and sometimes I think about it and that evokes some kind of feeling of love for a Being, this sort of female spirit I feel.”***
— Participant 09
- ***“I see God in just about everything, especially in nature. That has been a real, very meaningful part of my life. It’s given me strength I think and hope to go on, and sometimes it’s nice thinking that you’re not in control, even though we like to think we are[laughs].”*** — Participant 27

- ***“I know that God certainly hasn’t forsaken me because he has given me so many gifts. I’ve met the most amazing people along the way and I’ve encountered the most amazing experiences, and I’m still here, and I have the pleasure of watching my children grow up. So he’s really been amazing to me and I’m very grateful for that.”***
— Participant 02

We hope these quotes give you the flavour of what was observed in the study. In Level Four we want to encourage members of the group to think explicitly about what these terms mean to them, and how they might express them in their own unique ways in their day-to-day lives, as well as what blocks them from experiencing life in a more authentic way.

APPENDIX II: A COURSE IN MIRICLES LESSONS

LESSON 68: LOVE HOLDS NO GRIEVANCES

The following is an excerpt from Lesson 68 from A Course in Miracles. If you would like to listen to a voice recording of this, follow this link to the website.



1. You who were created by love like itself can hold no grievances and know your Self. To hold a grievance is to forget who you are. To hold a grievance is to see yourself as a body. To hold a grievance is to let the ego rule your mind and to condemn the body to death. Perhaps you do not yet fully realize just what holding grievances does to your mind. It seems to split you off from your Source and make you unlike Him. It makes you believe that He is like what you think you have become, for no one can conceive of his Creator as unlike himself.
2. Shut off from your Self, which remains aware of Its likeness to Its Creator, your Self seems to sleep, while the part of your mind that weaves illusions in its sleep appears to be awake. Can all this arise from holding grievances? Oh, yes! For he who holds grievances denies he was created by love, and his Creator has become fearful to him in his dream of hate. Who can dream of hatred and not fear God?
3. It is as sure that those who hold grievances will redefine God in their own image, as it is certain that God created them like Himself, and defined them as part of Him. It is as sure that those who hold grievances will suffer guilt, as it is certain that those who forgive will find peace. It is as sure that those who hold grievances will forget who they are, as it is certain that those who forgive will remember.
4. Would you not be willing to relinquish your grievances if you believed all this were so? Perhaps you do not think you can let your grievances go. That, however, is simply a matter of motivation. Today we will try to find out how you would feel without them. If you succeed even by ever so little, there will never be a problem in motivation ever again.
5. Begin today's extended practice period by searching your mind for those against whom you hold what you regard as major grievances. Some of these will be quite easy to find. Then think of the seemingly minor grievances you hold against those you like and even think you love. It will quickly become apparent that there is no one against whom you do not cherish grievances of some sort. This has left you alone in all the universe in your perception of yourself.

6. Determine now to see all these people as friends. Say to them all, thinking of each one in turn as you do so:

I would see you as my friend, that I may remember you are part of me and come to know myself.

Spend the remainder of the practice period trying to think of yourself as completely at peace with everyone and everything, safe in a world that protects you and loves you, and that you love in return. Try to feel safety surrounding you, hovering over you and holding you up. Try to believe, however briefly, that nothing can harm you in any way. At the end of the practice period tell yourself:

Love holds no grievances. When I let all my grievances go I will know I am perfectly safe.

7. The short practice periods should include a quick application of today's idea in this form, whenever any thought of grievance arises against anyone, physically present or not:

Love holds no grievances. Let me not betray my Self.

In addition, repeat the idea several times an hour in this form:

Love holds no grievances. I would wake to my Self by laying all my grievances aside and wakening in Him.

LESSON 69: MY GRIEVANCES HIDE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IN ME

The following is an excerpt from Lesson 69 from A Course in Miracles. If you would like to listen to a voice recording of this, follow this link to the website.



1. No one can look upon what your grievances conceal. Because your grievances are hiding the light of the world in you, everyone stands in darkness, and you beside him. But as the veil of your grievances is lifted, you are released with him. Share your salvation now with him who stood beside you when you were in hell. He is your brother in the light of the world that saves you both.
2. Today let us make another real attempt to reach the light in you. Before we undertake this in our more extended practice period, let us devote several minutes to thinking about what we are trying to do. We are literally attempting to get in touch with the salvation of the world.

We are trying to see past the veil of darkness that keeps it concealed. We are trying to let the veil be lifted, and to see the tears of God's Son disappear in the sunlight.

3. Let us begin our longer practice period today with the full realization that this is so, and with real determination to reach what is dearer to us than all else. Salvation is our only need. There is no other purpose here, and no other function to fulfill. Learning salvation is our only goal. Let us end the ancient search today by finding the light in us, and holding it up for everyone who searches with us to look upon and rejoice.
4. Very quietly now, with your eyes closed, try to let go of all the content that generally occupies your consciousness. Think of your mind as a vast circle, surrounded by a layer of heavy, dark clouds. You can see only the clouds because you seem to be standing outside the circle and quite apart from it.
5. From where you stand, you can see no reason to believe there is a brilliant light hidden by the clouds. The clouds seem to be the only reality. They seem to be all there is to see. Therefore, you do not attempt to go through them and past them, which is the only way in which you would be really convinced of their lack of substance. We will make this attempt today.
6. After you have thought about the importance of what you are trying to do for yourself and the world, try to settle down in perfect stillness, remembering only how much you want to reach the light in you today, —now! Determine to go past the clouds. Reach out and touch them in your mind. Brush them aside with your hand; feel them resting on your cheeks and forehead and eyelids as you go through them. Go on; clouds cannot stop you.
7. If you are doing the exercises properly, you will begin to feel a sense of being lifted up and carried ahead. Your little effort and small determination call on the power of the universe to help you, and God Himself will raise you from darkness into light. You are in accord with His Will. You cannot fail because your will is His.
8. Have confidence in your Father today, and be certain that He has heard you and answered you. You may not recognize His answer yet, but you can indeed be sure that it is given you and you will yet receive it. Try, as you attempt to go through the clouds to the light, to hold this confidence in your mind. Try to remember that you are at last joining your will to God's. Try to keep the thought clearly in mind that what you undertake with God must succeed. Then let the power of God work in you and through you, that His Will and yours be done.
9. In the shorter practice periods, which you will want to do as often as possible in view of the importance of today's idea to you and your happiness, remind yourself that your grievances are hiding the light of the world from your awareness. Remind yourself also that you are not searching for it alone, and that you do know where to look for it. Say, then:

My grievances hide the light of the world in me. I cannot see what I have hidden. Yet I want to let it be revealed to me, for my salvation and the salvation of the world.

Also, be sure to tell yourself:

If I hold this grievance the light of the world will be hidden from me, if you are tempted to hold anything against anyone today.

APPENDIX III: WRITING A LIFE STORY

In the Appendix III you will find a guide to “writing a life story”. This can be a very valuable exercise for people interested in healing change, since it lays out the patterns of our lives up to this point—patterns that may not have been clear to us. This helps us plan for change by avoiding some of the old traps and building on our strengths. As you go through the writing, which can take from one to four weeks, bear in mind the “three A’s” of self-healing. Ask yourself, as you consider each phase of your life so far:

- To what extent was I acting from a true awareness of what I needed (authenticity)?
- How much free choice did I exercise (autonomy)?
- To what degree did I experience and display tolerance, forgiveness, and love for others (acceptance)?

Try not to be saddened if your old self seems far from ideal! We all feel that way when we look back. Use any dissatisfaction, instead, as a motivating force for beginning to evolve.

Guide for Writing a Life Story

The purpose of the exercise is to review and integrate the main experiences and feelings of our lives. One way is to write on each of the twelve topics discussed below. You can write as much or as little as you like: about two pages per topic would be a reasonable goal. In exploring each subject, we will obviously be relying on our memory of past events, but to assist recall we can use any or all of these techniques, which have been divided loosely into “left brain” and “right brain” methods. The two halves of our brain are not symmetrical but are specialized for different tasks. The left side, in most people, is concerned with logical, rational, and verbal thinking: we draw largely on its power to describe past events and to analyze them for recurrent patterns. One useful tool here is to write “letters” (not for sending) to important people from our past or present life, or to put together word “portraits” of them. The right brain deals more with spatial, intuitive, and emotional matters: we will want to use relaxation, meditation, and imagery techniques that encourage the right side of the brain to explore important past events in order to recover the deeper feelings attached to them. A useful right brain approach is to conduct an imaginary dialogue with parts of ourselves, or with remembered figures, objects, or events from our past.

Methods for Working on Self-Understanding (to journal and writing your life story)

Left Brain: sensations or perceptions, and thoughts (written down).

- Recording events, memories, plans
- Reflecting on these—looking for common patterns
- Writing “portraits” of others, or unsent letters to them

Right Brain: emotional and intuitive (record in words an/or pictures while in a deeply relaxed state).

- Pouring out feelings
- Meditation
- Dreams
- Poetry and music
- Guided imagery
 - finding a peaceful place
 - recalling and exploring past events
 - contacting deeper aspects of self (e.g., an Inner Healer)
 - having “dialogues” with people, objects, the body, cancer, situations, and events

Topics for Life Story

Read through the list first, noting the overlap between areas. You will want to spend several separate sessions on this task. Keep your writing in a safe and private place to allow for honest and frank self-expression. This exercise is typically a private exercise that is not meant to be shown to people.

1. **Where Am I Now in My Life:**
Begin by describing, in two pages or more, the most recent period or phase of your life—it could be the most recent months or years. What is the main theme of this period? What has been its most difficult problems, its chief rewards? What feeling or tone underlies it all? Add a “portrait” of yourself as you are now—in a few, brief sentences. Don’t judge yourself morally in any of this work, just explore and record.
2. **Stepping Stones:**
List the eight to twelve major events or stepping stones of your life (or, if you prefer, see your whole life as a branching tree or road and identify the major branching points). Write a brief note on each stepping stone or branching point, its importance in your life, and the feelings it aroused. Speculate on what might have happened if you had taken another road or direction at each point: do you have any desire now to pursue some of these “roads not taken”?
3. **Family History (as it affected you):**
Write brief “portraits” of your mother, father, brothers, or sisters, and any other important family members. Who had the major influence on you, and what was it? What is your relationship to surviving family members now, and how has it evolved? What have been the “roles” played by different family members, including yourself?
4. **Education History:**
Explore and record memories and emotions related to your passage through school, and any higher or subsequent education and training.

5. Career or Life Work:

After first describing your adult occupational history, ask yourself if this has been the major focus of “ambition” in your life, and whether it has satisfied your desire to find meaning and achieve goals. What successes, failures, frustrations, and rewards has it brought? What is the role of your career or job in your life now, and for the future? If you are not doing what you want to be, what would you prefer? (Don’t consider how feasible your ideal occupation would be: the first task is to clarify what it might be.)

6. Major Life Crises and Development of Coping Skills:

How have you reacted to any major crises? What methods have you developed for handling stress?

7. Health and Body Image:

“Body image” is the way you have viewed your body: attractive or unattractive, weak, or strong, overweight or underweight, and so on. Has it been affected by getting cancer? List illnesses and ways of dealing with them prior to cancer, including any mental problems such as anxiety, depression, despair, and habitual boredom. What are your usual moods and what influences them?

8. Sexual Development:

Describe frankly to yourself the development of sexual feelings, interests, and experiences. (This section, and any others that are sensitive, will be kept private. You can lock your life story away, or use a code in writing it.) Also evaluate your present sex life and compare it with what you feel might be ideal. How important has touch been in your life?

9. Interests, Hobbies, and Social and Leisure Activities:

Describe the history of these activities in your life and assess how important they have been and are to you. How much of your time and energy goes into them? Do you see any need for change? What recreational interests (e.g., music, reading, crafts, games, writing, and creating) do you most want to develop? How important have vacations been to you? Do you remember some in particular?

10. Relationships: Loves and Hates:

Describe the history of relationships with others that have been accompanied by intense feelings. If you are presently married or living with someone, explore this relationship. How do you see him or her, and how are you seen in turn? Are your needs met? What would improve the relationship? If you have children, you may wish to consider these interactions also. If you have not had many, or any, strong love relationships, can you find out what has prevented you from forming such bonds?

11. Experiences of Death, and Concepts of it:

Who has been close to you and died, and what were your reactions? Do you believe in a soul that survives death? What experiences underlie this belief?

12. Development of Meaning, Values, and Goals:

Describe what seems of value to you in human life and how your concepts have developed. Include a brief history of your religious or philosophical convictions, explaining why you feel as you do now.

Summarizing

Read back over your life story looking for recurrent themes, and important ideas and feelings. You may have already made a summary of each section. Perhaps now you can draw it all together by asking some general questions, such as:

- What has been the central theme of my life to this point?
- What were its major stepping stones, its achievements, satisfactions, and disappointments?
- To what extent have I “created” my own world?

You may have also been thinking about the most life-affirming direction for your life from now on. This question is central of this course and can be best explored from a sound understanding of one’s life in the past.

APPENDIX IV: RESOURCE LIST

RECOMMENDED AUTHORS

The list of psycho-spiritual books is ever-increasing, so rather than listing specific books we have put together a list of authors, many of whom have written several helpful books and may continue to publish in the future.

Meditation and Spirituality

- Sylvia Boorstein
- Pema Chodran
- Alastair J. Cunningham
- Dalai Lama
- Ram Dass
- Eknath Easwaran
- Tom Harpur
- Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Jack Kornfield
- Jiddu Krishnamurti
- Lawrence LeShan
- Stephen Levine
- Thich Nhat Hanh
- Swami Soami Radha
- Sakyong Mipham
- Rupert Spira
- Michael Singer
- Eckhart Tolle
- Paramahansa Yogananda

A Course in Miracles

- Gerald Jampolsky
- Marianne Williamson

Psychological Self Help

- Brene Brown
- Byron Katie

Recovering from Trauma

- Gabor Mate
- Bessel van der Kolk
- Oprah Winfrey & Bruce D. Perry
- Peter Levine

Recovering from Difficult Childhood Experiences

Lindsay C. Gibson (2016). Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents: How to Heal from Distant, Rejecting, or Self-Involved Parents

APPENDIX V: ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

1. AUTONOMY: WHAT DO I REALLY WANT IN MY LIFE?

Review: The exercise, "On an ideal day in the future" from Level One.

This session builds on Assignment 2 but goes deeper. Try it after having sat in a meditative state for a while. Try to let ideas and feelings come through to you, instead of "figuring it out". Remember to write about each point, anything from a few lines to a page or more.

1. What, in your heart, do you want most of all?
 - a. In terms of how you want to feel?
 - b. In terms of how you want to spend your time, day by day?

Now, go back into the meditative state and continue.

2. What obstacles or problems do you see in the way of achieving what you want in your heart? What stops you from getting it?
3. Now, either through meditating or just thinking about it, what steps can you take to diminish the obstacles? What will you do right away?

You could finish with a meditation or prayer of gratitude (for the insight) and request for help to align your life the way you want it.

Repeat this exercise several times. It is important to become very clear about what matters to you, what "turns you on," even if it is interests or activities that were long ago discarded as impracticable. Let your "deeper mind" tell you, not the internal Critic that has obstructed us for most of our lives. Having achieved some clarity, do some rational/intellectual work to determine what obstacles are in the way of putting your plan into action.

2. ACCEPTANCE: LIVING IN AN ACCEPTING WAY

We have all experienced the difference between an angry reaction to a person or situation, and a relatively calm acceptance—doing what's needed without getting angry or upset. Things play out much more smoothly and effectively when we are in the latter state. This does not mean being passive or resigned; it means acting without unnecessary emotional reaction, which, as you have seen by now, is simply the ego proclaiming its independence and entitlement to comfort.

At the spiritual level, acceptance is sometimes called "surrender". The word is alarming to many in the West because it sounds like abdication of one's rights. The picture of the Divine that is painted by

some religions can be confusing, since the impression may be created that we are somehow like guilty children faced with a wrathful God to whom we must defer. A more helpful model would be to see “God” as a river, in which we are all floating; we have the choice of fighting the current as we try to go upstream, against the natural flow, or of gently steering as we allow the river to carry us downstream, going with the flow. We do need to steer—our active participation is necessary—but this works best if we align ourselves with the much greater power that supports us. A similar analogy is acting from a place on our “mountain” in the territories of the mind map that we looked at earlier.

The ideal strategy, “in spiritual life as in ordinary social life,” is acceptance wherever possible. The mentally healed state is an accepting state. It may be expressed as non-reaction, non-attachment, non-judgement, not holding grievances. We may practise it by being constantly mindful and present in “the Now”. We may also conceive of it as trying to be conscious of and guided by the Divine—learning to “let go and let God,” in the words of the old Christian saying. These approaches all lead to the same state: one of stillness, peace, joy, and love. As Eckhart Tolle says in his profound book *The Power of Now*, “Full attention is full acceptance is surrender”.

1. A simple way to practise full acceptance is to sit in front of a common object (which could be anything at all—a flower, a candle, a book), and just absorb, through half-closed eyes, all details of the object, without letting the mind make any editorializing comments about it. Try this several times, for ten minutes or so at a time.
 - a. Do you get a feeling of knowing the subject of your concentration in a new way?
 - b. How could this be applied more generally in your life?
2. Read the last chapter of Tolle’s book (if you haven’t done so already, you will probably need to read the rest of it first to understand the last chapter). He discusses responding to serious illness and other crises by trying to remain in the present moment, the “now”. He points out that if we can do this, the experience, rather than being unmitigated disaster, can become a gateway into transformation for us.
 - a. Try to apply this to your own experience over following weeks and write about it.