

# A Path to Healing



## STEP ONE

# ACCEPTANCE

An excerpt from “5 Steps to Freedom”

By Phil Golding

## WHERE OUR CONFUSION BEGINS

The opposite of self-acceptance is negative self-judgment or self-rejection. This form of self-judgment, more than anything else, blocks us in our efforts to work through and overcome emotional problems.

In my personal and professional experience, all destructive judgement stems from one fundamental belief, or rather *misbelief*, that is forged in children’s minds by the confusion of others. This misbelief is:

**⊘ I am unworthy because I am human.**

By the term “human”, I mean not perfect. For children in particular, the standard of perfect behaviour is measured by others. Furthermore, there are invariably many different versions of what this perfect standard is, depending on who is meting out the discipline. This standard can even change from moment to moment with one individual disciplinarian, depending on his or her changing moods. When we were children, we were often unable to live up to these standards. Sometimes this was because we weren’t given the appropriate training and mentoring, and sometimes it was because we simply lacked ability in that area. Sometimes the standards set for us were actually impossible to comply with.

We are very vulnerable when we are children. We are dependent on our adult carers for our physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. In relation to our mental and emotional wellbeing, as children we depend on our carers for our sense of identity and worthiness. It is essential for our successful development into adulthood that we feel we belong and that we are loved unconditionally. When we don’t receive this vital love and attention, we are liable to be adversely affected in a very deep way.

During our childhood, when we failed to live up to the standards set for us by our carers, some of us suffered abuse, ridicule, and rejection. We were deemed unworthy of love. As a result, we frequently felt sad, afraid, ashamed, abandoned, angry, and so on.

Often the problem is a lack of active mentoring by our carers. They were often pre-occupied and/or absent and not in tune with our essential needs. We felt unworthy of love in this situation as well—not important to our carers. Feelings of loss, abandonment, and loneliness would be particularly strong as a result of this.

Another problem many of us faced in childhood was too much involvement from our carers. As children, we need room to be ourselves—to develop our own unique identities according to our own special potential. When our carers are overbearing and inappropriately controlling, we end up feeling inadequate, incapable and helpless. We tend to remain dependent on others, overly compliant to the demands of others, and unaware of what is uniquely and essentially important for our own needs. Our creativity and self-confidence become stifled. Our sense of what love is becomes highly distorted. There is always an underlying dread that we will be deemed unworthy of love and even abandoned if we dare to think and act for ourselves.

Another situation we can encounter as children is a home environment that is chaotic and even dangerous. We may not have known what to expect from one moment to the next. A sense of all-pervading fear and anxiety known as random conditioning is often the result. One minute we may be stroked and the next we may be beaten, without knowing why. At other times, we may be inappropriately left alone to fend for ourselves for extended periods of time. With this sort of unpredictability, our primal defences have to be on all the time. We need love like everyone else, but we become afraid of it as well. Love, in this situation, becomes a confusing nightmare.

As children, due to our vulnerable, undeveloped minds and resultant deep dependency, we end up taking such negative experiences very personally. We conclude that we must be wrong in some way to be treated in such a manner. In many ways we conclude that we don't deserve love. We take on the beliefs of our main carers, not knowing anything else. As children we are on a rapid learning and developmental path, but we can't yet discern the quality of what we are learning. We are just unconsciously soaking it all up. This is the root of childhood conditioning, positive and negative.

When we take this misbelief into adulthood, no matter how we try to hide this deep confusion from the world around us, it nevertheless pervades and distorts every area of our lives. This condemnation, this withdrawal of love, I believe, is the main root of all continuing rejection of ourselves and others.

This deep misbelief that we are unworthy simply because we are human becomes embedded into our minds. Love is repeatedly withdrawn from us when we are children, often simply for being childish. As children, we are placed in an impossible dilemma. Being children means that we have little capacity to control our instinctual cravings and emotions. We simply can't help ourselves. We are doomed to fail when we are expected to be "good little adults" by well-meaning but confused carers, or carers who are plainly abusive.

As children, we may have also had a character that was sensitive or difficult to manage in many different ways, which can compound the situation. In other words, children often display strong personality traits and emotional dispositions seemingly from birth. We are not necessarily a blank slate before we start. Nevertheless, the weight of responsibility is on parents to equip themselves with the skills for the task of parenthood. It is the parents' challenge to constructively work with and reduce, or hopefully help their child overcome negative traits. It is also an opportunity for the parent

to help the child reach his or her highest potential. Children are children. They cannot be expected to successfully parent themselves.

As powerless, vulnerable children we are so dependent on our carers that we are compelled to try to conform to their confusion no matter how impossible this may be to achieve. In the face of this dilemma, we feel so powerless and unworthy that we are inclined to believe negative judgment about ourselves, even though in our hearts it doesn't feel right.

Naturally all children need guidance and discipline. This is how we learn to take control of our own emotions and needs. All discipline, however robust it may need to be at times, must be wise, loving and compassionate. Otherwise it contains elements of destructiveness.

Of course, the withdrawal of love is where the confusion starts for everyone, and we all then pass it down the line from generation to generation. Because we are all human, no-one is a perfect parent. Coming to terms with our humanness as parents, is one of the real challenges of personal development. In reality, children don't need perfect parents. What children need are parents who are self-aware and who can take care of their own humanness, instead of projecting their fears and insecurities onto their children. Of course, as parents, we are going to frequently make mistakes. What is important though is that we love ourselves enough and accept our mistakes, face them and learn from them. This then becomes the best example for our children. They learn to accept and care for their own humanness.

When we were children, we may not have had an appropriate example of self-care to relate to, so we grew to regard this confusion as a normal way to think. Because of this "normalizing", these self-destructive judgments become embedded deep within our minds where they continue to control us beyond our awareness. These subconscious thought-patterns gain a hold in the early stages of childhood development and grow into distorted beliefs that then control how we feel and act. These misbeliefs then keep our emotional problems on a repetitive loop, creating ongoing difficulties such as conflict, when conflict wouldn't be present otherwise. Our perceptions of reality become distorted. We then continue to create a distorted reality for ourselves throughout our lives until we become aware of these self-defeating beliefs and change them. Until then, we may think that life is against us, but in actual fact it is our own negatively programmed minds that are causing our suffering.

As a result of this confusion, we think being mistreated by others is the cause of our suffering, as it was when we were children. However, as adults, it is our own self-rejection, emerging out of our own misbeliefs, that makes us so emotionally vulnerable to the perceived or actual mistreatment from others.

This fundamental insight can be very difficult to comprehend at first. We have been so conditioned to blame others for our emotional suffering. On the surface it appears so convincing that someone else or something else is the cause. We think that if only they would behave in the way we think they should, everything would be all right. Sometimes the other person's behaviour is destructive. More often than not though, we have misread the situation. More often than not we are over-reacting to someone's minor human imperfections. More often than not, people don't intend to hurt us, they are just a bit unskilful at times, just like you and I. Most often, the problem is not the other person. The problem lies in our inappropriate reactions to their humanness, and underneath that, to our own humanness.

When this is the case—when it is time to deal with an issue that does need to be acted upon—we are not able to do this effectively. We either overreact or do not act at all. Caring for ourselves and

being empowered is about learning to act, to consciously and confidently respond to life's challenges, rather than blindly and fearfully reacting in ways that just makes things worse.

Thinking that we are a victim and lashing out at others or ourselves or avoiding life's challenges altogether is the sort of thinking that is indicative of the confusion that keeps us in a mind state of believing we are powerless to control our own happiness and wellbeing.

## **THE KEY THAT FREES US FROM SUFFERING**

In our confusion we are still relating to life from the position of powerless children. In reality, an adult with a healthy self-esteem can shield his or herself from emotional suffering, or at least quickly recover, regardless of the negativity of the situation. Those with a healthy self-esteem carry a strong belief in their own self-worth. They are not dependent on others to give them permission to feel worthy. They do not need pats on the back before they can feel good about themselves. They already know they are worthy, even when they make human mistakes, which human beings inevitably do. Because of this strong belief in their essential worthiness, people who have a healthy self-esteem do not indulge in self-rejection and as a result, are less likely to be condemning of others. Those with a healthy self-esteem are psychologically protected by their own self-acceptance.

If it wasn't for self-rejection, acute emotional vulnerability in adulthood would not be there in the first place. Without this prior self-rejection, the condemnation from another would have little impact. We would simply know that the person doing the condemning is perhaps having a bad day and is obviously confused. We would know that no matter what mistakes we may happen to make, we do not deserve to be mistreated. We would know that we do not deserve to be condemned as unworthy.

We can't always have control over the behaviour of another. We can, however, take charge of what we accept into our own mind and heart. We can shield ourselves with our own self-acceptance. Self-acceptance contains the power of love, which is far more powerful than most people realise.

An adult has the power of reasoning and the capacity of consciousness to know what feels right, and to trust that feeling. The only thing that feels right is love. As a result of our level of accumulated confusion, unfortunately for many of us, our ability to access this important adult capacity of conscious-awareness becomes impaired. We become so confused that we think we have to reject ourselves instead of love ourselves. This self-rejection locks us into a position of acute vulnerability. We become isolated from our own higher knowing. In our state of vulnerability, our limited survival instincts may then be inclined to condemn and attack as a form of "defence" in a blind reaction to the negative conditioning in our own minds.

Self-acceptance lifts us out of this unnecessary fight-or-flight reaction. Self-acceptance, lived in a consistent, dedicated way, inevitably dismantles and overcomes self-rejection and all its negative consequences.

A profound degree of self-acceptance is the key that frees us from suffering, whether your suffering comes in the form of depression, stress, anxiety, grief, anger, trauma—in fact any form of mental/emotional suffering—but there are many obstacles along the way to finally turning that key, and almost all of them are inside our own mind. This is why it can be so hard at first to see the true nature of these obstacles, and why it can be even harder to change them.

Don't be discouraged though. The fact that the obstacles are inside your own mind makes the situation easier, providing your healing journey is approached in the right way. It is made easier, because you don't have to waste your time trying to control or change other people. To find peace, happiness, and fulfilment, you only have to look within yourself. Almost all the changes you need to make are within your grasp. Furthermore, the unlimited power which you need to make those changes is within you also.

The more we truly accept ourselves, the more we love ourselves unconditionally. The more we love ourselves unconditionally, the more we heal ourselves. The more we heal ourselves, the more self-aware and empowered we become and the more we are able to act in a way that is for our highest good.

### *Exercise 1*

## **OPENING THE DOOR TO LOVE AND HEALING**

Here is a contemplation exercise that may help you better comprehend the nature of self-acceptance, leading to unconditional love, and how to put it into practice in your life. (Fill in the blanks with the right gender for you to make it more personal.)

Imagine yourself as a newborn baby laying on a bed with you as your adult self looking down at this delicate, vulnerable, and precious being. Now as you are looking down at this beautiful little being, can you say in your heart that there is anything about this baby that is unworthy of Love? Can this baby do anything that makes it truly unworthy of Love? For instance, ..... may frequently wake you up during the night by crying. .... may also dirty ..... nappy a number of times per day. Neither of these experiences is very pleasant to have to deal with as the carer of this baby. Is the baby still worthy of Unconditional Love even when ..... acts this way? Some people actually get angry at this unconscious behaviour of a new born baby. Is the problem with the baby or the carer?

Now your child is one-year-old and crawling around, getting into whatever ..... can reach. Sometimes this little toddler is difficult at meal times, and can still keep you up at night. Your toddler is just doing what a toddler does. Is there anything about ..... that is unworthy of Unconditional Love?

Now your toddler is a delightful two-year-old and becoming a real handful. .... is now walking and therefore getting into more things. There is a lot of boundary testing going on as your toddler exercises ..... awakening self-will in fits of defiance. This little one is also starting to talk in the cute way that toddlers do. Is there anything about this child that is undeserving of Unconditional Love? Would anyone be justified in getting angry at and judging this toddler if ..... accidentally knocked over and broke that prized porcelain jug that you got for your wedding? Again, this child is just doing what a two-year-old does. If the carer gets angry at the child, where does the problem lie—with the carer or the child?

Now your child is five, very active and talking fluently. Even though ..... is still quite the bundle of love, there is already some negative conditioning evident in this child's mind. You are already having a tussle with your child's newly forming ego. And yet even now this five-year-old is just doing what a five-year-old does. Where does the responsibility for the child's social conditioning lie—with the

child or the child's carers? Has the child conditioned .....self? Again, is there anything unworthy about this five-year-old child? Is the child still worthy of Unconditional Love, a child who is still so vulnerable and dependent on the quality of care that ..... receives?

And now you are watching yourself as a ten-year-old, playing with friends and going to school. Your child freely interacts with the rest of the family, a unique personality clearly emerging. .... is full of hopes and dreams for the future and yet still vulnerable and dependent. There is often conflict with brothers and sisters as your ten-year-old competes for love and approval. Negative conditioning is clearly visible. Deep behaviour patterns have been well established. Still this ten-year-old is just doing what a ten-year-old does. Is this growing child still worthy of Unconditional Love? If a carer withdraws their love from this child, where does the problem lie?

Now you are watching yourself as a fifteen-year-old, well into puberty and the new social scene. Your adolescent self is spending less time with family and instead seeking peer approval in ..... own social group, sometimes in defiance of parental guidance. This leads to frequent conflict. .... is now experiencing the first forays into dating and relationships with its inevitable excitement and at times crushing disappointment. Your adolescent self is often moody and even behaves a bit oddly as ..... searches for an independent identity. Childhood conditioning is now deeply entrenched and overlaid onto this youth's natural character. Again, your adolescent self is just doing the best that ..... can. Should your adolescent self be judged for that? Should guidance come with condemnation or Unconditional Love?

How would it have been if you were given Unconditional Love all through your childhood? How would it have been if you felt safe to share your deepest fears, emotions, joys, and dreams with your parents all through your childhood and received nothing but loving guidance, caring, wise discipline, and encouragement that never made you wrong as a person? Isn't this what we deserve as children, no matter how many mistakes we made or how confused we may have become at times? How can a child be held responsible for ..... own upbringing? Surely the responsibility lies with the carer.

Even as an adult this same rule applies. Even having to firmly say no to a person's confused and misguided behaviour can be done without withdrawing Unconditional Love.

When you look inside yourself now, you are looking at and feeling this child, a child that is still looking for, longing for that unconditional loving acceptance. You can find this child in your most vulnerable emotions. You are now the adult and this "inner-child" now belongs to you. Your carers did the best they could. Their job is now over. Now it is up to you. How have you been treating your child-self? How would it be if you lovingly accepted yourself unconditionally in a real heartfelt responsible way, instead of judging yourself and mistreating yourself whenever you make a human mistake, or don't supposedly measure up?

Even as an adult we are just doing the best we can. Mistakes are a natural part of being human. This deep form of self-acceptance enables our ego to wake up from its blind judging and blaming and instead consciously embrace and care for this human-self of ours. With self-care, healing and growth are inevitable, along with maturity and wisdom. It is through self-acceptance that we can increasingly awaken our consciousness into higher states where it unites with Unconditional Love and therefore the power to heal the deepest fears and confusions.



After recognizing that there is a problem with the way we are approaching our life, acceptance is the first step in taking action to do something about it. This first step of acceptance is applied on many levels. Accepting the natural reality of our humanness is an essential part of step 1. It is the foundation for healing, and enables us to look at ourselves and life in an effective, constructive, and empowering way.

## **LOVE, THE ULTIMATE POWER**

It is quite normal to assume that our only hope of escape from this nexus of suffering that self-rejection causes is to find someone who is willing to love us unconditionally, even when we are unable or unwilling to love them the same way in return. Surely we should be able to find refuge from suffering in a relationship with some ideal person.

This is another unrealistic expectation that leads to inevitable conflict and disillusionment. We expect others to make us happy. We even demand that they do so. We want someone who is safe, predictable and who satisfies our essential needs. Instead we end up with a human being with flaws, with fears, with insecurities, just like ourselves. This won't do of course, so we become locked in a struggle to control and change other people in order to feel loved, not realizing that we are choking love instead. So many relationships that are full of promise are destroyed because of our human confusion about the true nature of love.

As a consequence of all our confusion, love is regarded as a mystery, but it isn't really. From the perspective of Perennial Wisdom, love can be regarded as a science, and the most studied and mastered science of all. If love is regarded as a universal force, like light or gravity, then we can begin to look at it very differently. You don't need permission from somebody to receive light, freely given from the sun. Gravity is a natural part of everybody's experience. Why can't love be the same? If love is a science, it must have its own physics—a set of natural laws that can be understood and utilised for the benefit of our own wellbeing.

The problem lies in the fact that we have mistakenly come to believe that we can only receive love if someone else gives it to us. This is a natural psychological position for a child. Being a child means we are acutely vulnerable and deeply dependent on our fallible carers. When we didn't live up to the expectations of our carers, we often experienced having their love withdrawn from us. As a result, we felt rejected and abandoned. We are in such a vulnerable state as a child. Our natural attachment needs are so great that we often think we are being rejected and abandoned even when our carers are doing their best to love us. For example, one of our parents may pass away, or suffer a prolonged illness. Even through unavoidable circumstances, we can miss out on the care we need.

If these feelings of abandonment occur too often and remain unresolved, the result is a growing belief that we are unworthy of love. This misbelief then blocks our ability to love ourselves. When this misbelief continues to influence our minds, we develop an even deeper dependency on the love from others. We feel empty and needy of love. We come to believe that others have the power over our love. We remain feeling like a vulnerable child, even in adulthood. We are needy for love, but we are at the same time afraid of it. This fear of not receiving love then triggers our ego defences. We don't love ourselves, and we are afraid of other people because they may not give us the love that we so desperately need. Just as we can put up an umbrella to block out the rays of the sun, we have unconsciously constructed a mental umbrella that blocks out the vital *life-force* of love.

Our confusion about love is such a factor in our human experience that our misbeliefs have become ingrained in our collective human psyche. Even with a stable, happy childhood, we are still deeply influenced by this confusion about love. We don't realise that this love that we are trying to get from others is a second hand love, and often a worn-out, neglected love at that—worn-out and neglected because of their self-neglect.

What if our love wasn't actually owned by somebody else? That question requires some deep thought to grasp its significance.

To solve this riddle, we must re-examine the way we look at love. The common mistake we make is in thinking that we should be able to guarantee a sustainable love from another person, place or thing. Let's drop the places and things for the moment. We will look at that shortly. What about getting love from someone else? To lift the veil off this confusion we must deeply examine the above question. How can someone else own our love? Who gave them our love?

If this is the case, we must own the love that belongs to someone else. Where did we get that from? What do we really know about someone else's requirements for love and fulfilment? Do we even know what our own requirements are? If we are really honest with ourselves, we end up concluding that our awareness of this is vague at best. And yet human beings do love, and with great power.

Where I am getting to here is that we don't really know about love with any real awareness until we can truly love ourselves. I am talking here about loving ourselves unconditionally, which means being able to face and accept and work with everything about ourselves, even the parts of ourselves that we would rather hide away from the rest of society.

Occasionally we are fortunate enough to experience being in the presence of someone who does love unconditionally. It feels so wonderful. We feel so accepted and free when we are in their presence. But then they are gone again, and we are once again left feeling empty, even more so after having such an experience. We feel empty because we are looking for this love somewhere outside ourselves.

We so desperately look outside ourselves for love because of the depth of our own self-rejection.

The pressure to perform—to measure up has become so great in our society that our socially-conditioned minds are stuffed full of self-condemnation about all the little and big ways we do not measure up. This also means we blame others for not measuring up, which is really the same thing. We have an inner-tyrant constantly whipping us for our so-called failings. You don't think so? Try this personal experiment and see what you find.

Today, right this moment, make a rock solid commitment to treat yourself and speak to yourself only with loving kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and acceptance. Keep this up for the

next seven days. Keep a little notebook in your pocket or your handbag and jot down every time you put yourself down. When you catch yourself, imagine this human-self that you are putting down is a vulnerable child just trying to grow. Do your best to find a way to mentor yourself and care for yourself in that moment in a kind and constructive way.

Be prepared to be shocked by how many times you put yourself down in a day. Be prepared to discover how unskilled you are at being your own wise, loving parent. Accept that also and just keep learning about yourself and the true nature of love through this process. Keep trying your best to love yourself unconditionally. After all, this is what unconditional love does. Concentrate on accepting your humanness as a part of loving yourself and let everyone else just be themselves.

When doing this experiment, you may get quick positive results. You may, however, also run into confusion and pain. Don't be discouraged by this either, as hard it may seem. What I suggest is happening is that you are running hard up against your self-condemnation programs. They are too strong at the moment to allow you to love yourself and actually feel the benefits of this exercise. The benefits will come if you don't give up, but you may need to reach out for help from a good counsellor or mentor.

What this exercise is about is being the wise, loving parent to your own fragile, vulnerable, confused, and often frightened human-self.

Doing this experiment for a week is just a taste. This won't be enough to turn your life around. Old, bad habits are harder than that to break. It will, nevertheless, be enough to reveal the reasons for much of your emotional pain. To turn your life around, you need to make living the principles of self-acceptance your new lifestyle. When you genuinely do this, you will place yourself in the position to just keep on learning and growing. When you do this, success is then inevitable. See *Exercise 2, "Be Your Own Loving Guardian"* at the end of this chapter for a more detailed description of this exercise.

Given the right love and skilful mentoring as a child, we actually grow up naturally having the ability to genuinely love ourselves in a healthy, responsible way, independent of anyone else. This is the healthy self-esteem that is created by loving and positive childhood conditioning. We have learned to love ourselves unconditionally to a high degree and therefore we are *in love* all the time! This capacity for a healthy self-esteem points to the fact that love can be accessed internally and not only from somewhere outside ourselves.

With the right approach and with persistence, we are able to access love directly from a universal source within our own self. Once we grow to a certain level of mental maturity, or conscious-awareness, to put it another way, we gain the ability to access this universal, internal love, regardless of the wounding and negative conditioning we experienced in childhood, or at any other time? As the adults that we are now, we can identify the confusion about love that has accumulated in our minds throughout our formative years. Armed with this self-awareness, we can literally heal our memories and reprogram our minds to be in tune with the natural laws of love, thus establishing within our minds a healthy self-esteem, even when we didn't receive that in childhood?

I have personally experienced doing just that, and so have countless others throughout the history of humanity, and particularly now in this day and age. I have experienced, along with this rising tide of an awakening humanity, love as a life-force that I can freely access at any time, regardless of how humanly imperfect I may be at any given moment and regardless of my circumstances and conditions.

No one owns my love. All that I need to do to qualify for this Unconditional Universal Love is to exist! That's it! This is the reality for you as well, and for every human being. For many of us,

this is a radical way of looking at love.

We are born from this love, we are born into this love, we live within this love, and we die back into this love.

I am not trying to preach to you here. What I am doing is offering you a scientific perspective on the reality of love as a universal life-force. I am offering you a very powerful hypothesis. Sincerely try the experiment and experience it for yourself.

We can love and heal ourselves because there is something about our human consciousness that enables us to get above our vulnerable, wounded human mind and instead of being controlled by it, we can look after it.

In reality, relationships succeed, and personal fulfilment is achieved, not only because other people love us, but because we possess a healthy form of self-love. This healthy self-love provides us with an inner-peace and openness that makes forming loving and healthy relationships with others a natural outcome. Fear and condemnation forces, controls, and attacks. Love and acceptance encourages, inspires and supports. Which of these spaces would you prefer to live in? Which would you prefer to create, for yourself and for others? The laws of love are very clear when it comes to how we treat ourselves.

We can examine and take a lesson from the lives of certain famous people who supposedly had it all, but suffered depression, loneliness and self-neglect, such as Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Tammy Wynette and Michael Jackson, just to name a few. They were so loved and admired by so many people. What they also had in common was that they did not love themselves. They did not accept their own humanness.

Whenever we choose to accept ourselves as we are, we experience love. We are literally “in love”. The love is always there. We are just opening up our hearts and minds to it and letting it in. In this atmosphere of self-acceptance, we can more effectively love others unconditionally, because we are not so afraid of not getting love. We are less afraid of not getting love because we already have it direct from the universal source of love. In such moments, we can also better receive the love that is offered to us by others. We can give them the freedom to be human, to be themselves, which makes giving and receiving love much easier.

This is about learning to be comfortable, happy, and free in your own skin. By cultivating this healthy form of self-love, every other aspect of your life is also enhanced.

## **SELF-ACCEPTANCE IS RESPONSIBLE SELF-CARE**

Often I hear people remark, “Isn’t all this talk about self-love really just about being selfish. Surely we should concentrate on loving others.”

I am not talking about selfishness, I am talking about self-responsibility. I am talking about taking adult responsibility for our own emotional wellbeing. I am talking about the importance of establishing a healthy self-esteem that flows from a sustainable internal source. This does not take from anyone or anything.

The goal of a healthy self-esteem has become misunderstood and regarded as an excuse for self-indulgence. It has become associated with, and appropriated by, the belief that the more we believe in ourselves, the more material things we should give ourselves. The trouble here is that material things cannot sustain emotional fulfilment, but we have been led to believe that it can. This misbelief has been driven by consumerism and has led to social degradation on many levels. To be “normal” now means being a successful consumer. The social consequences have been, for a start, an

increase in crime. “If I can’t get it, I’ll have to take it.” Another consequence is depression on an epidemic scale. “I can’t have it, or I have lost it, therefore I have failed.” A third consequence is self-indulgence. “I have plenty of money, so that makes me worthy, so I can have all that I want, and I have to keep having it because enough is never enough.”

To gain enough in order to keep getting enough, we have invented the rat-race where education and work is concerned. Fulfilment has become externalized to something outside us that we have to get, and you can throw relationships, sex, power, status and so on in there as well. We have turned life into a commodity, and in the process we have become consumer junkies.

The result of this approach to self-improvement is a society of people who are continually running on empty, where real love is concerned. When this is the case, we try to fill ourselves up by taking from others, or from the environment in destructive ways. This taking, this unhealthy dependency and endless materialism, loses touch with the important things in life. For instance, we think our children need more and more sophisticated toys rather than the essential life-blood of unconditional love. As a result, we confuse our children so much that they become dependent on more and more material things without realizing that it is unconditional love that they are really longing for. In the process, they don’t learn how to love themselves and instead stay dependent on other people, places and things. When self-esteem is dependent on something external, it is always on very shaky ground. We become disconnected with the very core of our own greater self and self-neglect is the inevitable result. In reality, a lack of responsible self-love leads to selfishness and self-indulgence.

I believe, and it has been my long and repeated experience, that if we consciously make an effort to accept our vulnerable human-self and take care of it, like one should lovingly care for a child, we then naturally begin to open up to, and experience, higher states of consciousness such as compassion and creative motivation. If we don’t care for ourselves in this healthy, sustainable way, we risk living our lives being blindly driven to destruction by the endless neediness of a confused inner-child. At the very least, we won’t reach our potential.

## **REPROGRAMMING OUR CHILDHOOD CONDITIONING**

There are many factors that influence our lives and many of these factors are beyond our control, such as the environment we were born into, the forces of nature, or even our natural born character. The inevitable conditioning of our childhood can appear to be like another of these uncontrollable factors of our life, and indeed old habits can be hard to change.

Our childhood conditioning is a major determining factor in our lives, and for most people it is perhaps *the* major determining factor. It is with us twenty-four hours a day and can influence every aspect of our thinking, feeling, and action. It greatly determines the quality of our attitudes, which determines the quality of our relationships and choices in general. The negative side to this conditioning is the dominant cause of our fears and insecurities. Because this conditioning is so ingrained in us, we often assume we were born this way, as though it is a fixed part of our character, but this is not so.

In an attempt to overcome the negative influences of this deep childhood conditioning, we are likely to try many things, such as moving to a new location, getting a new job, looking for a new relationship, going on a diet, and so on. Sometimes this is enough. Often it isn’t. Often our conditioning continues to interfere with our lives, creating the same old results, no matter what changes we make. If this is the case, our self-defeating conditioning must be reprogrammed into

belief systems that are self-loving and life-enhancing. These new positive belief systems must become the new habits that our minds rely on.

If the old self-defeating programs are allowed to continue on unabated, some form of emotional breakdown can be the result, perhaps leading to antisocial and irrational behaviour, poor decision making, substance abuse, and so on. It is essential to heed the warning signs and reach out for help.

As hard as it may at first seem, changing our conditioning is most definitely achievable, but it must be approached in the right way. This self-change must come in the form of ongoing self-care. It is a conscious loving and caring relationship with our own humanness. We are creating a new, accepting, caring environment of self-awareness and self-love for our inner-child (vulnerable human-self) to grow up in.

Be aware that we are not changing ourselves to please others or to just conform. We are learning to make positive and empowered decisions on our own behalf—decisions that lead to self-respect and therefore respect from others.

One way of looking at this human self of ours is to recognize it as a most amazing, sensitive, powerful, one-of-a-kind creature, a bit like the horse we depended on in the past. Unlike the horse though, or the car we drive today, we can't trade this one in. This human-self, along with its mind, is our vehicle, and our home, for our whole life. It does not make sense to regard our human-self as not worth looking after. When this priceless self is not running as it should, it is then a matter of objectively and carefully examining it in order to correct the problem. Also, it would be only logical to want to give this most precious self ongoing care and attention. For various reasons, however, we human beings tend to resist taking care of ourselves, as though we shouldn't need it, as though someone else should be magically doing it for us. We think such maintenance is an imposition on our lifestyle, particularly when it comes to caring for our own mind. It is little wonder we end up breaking down.

To extend the horse analogy a little further, our conscious-awareness is like the rider, the owner of the horse. We didn't train the horse. It was given to us already trained, just like we didn't bring ourselves up so much as being brought up by others. By the time we are adults, our conditioning is ours to reckon with. In the same way, it is like we are given this horse that somebody else trained, without being given adequate training in horse riding. Like the owner and rider of the horse, we need to get to know our own mind and learn how to care for it and manage it. It is no good complaining about this fact. It just is the way it is. The good thing is that we have the ability to do this, and facing the challenge and committing to it gives us the opportunity to develop invaluable life-long skills. There is nothing to lose by accepting this commitment and everything to gain, such as the control over our own lives and future.

Computers are a good analogy as well. As a computer, our human potential seems to be unlimited. The limitations are in the programming. Even though we have been programmed by someone else, as an adult, our capacity for conscious-awareness gives us the ability to be the computer and the computer programmer, both at the same time.

Often we *do* try to take care of ourselves but we have not learned how to do this effectively. When it comes to looking after our own mind, our emotions are often what are most difficult to handle. For too many of us, appreciating and looking after our human emotions is a mystery. The usual way we seem to treat our emotions is to run away from them or shut them down or shove them onto somebody else. We must learn how to skilfully manage and care for our emotional life. When

properly understood and handled, emotions are a wonderful opportunity for great wisdom and inner-strength.

There is often a backlog of emotional energy waiting to be cleared, due to years of self-neglect. It is advisable to consciously and carefully let out the build-up of this emotional dam before the dam bursts with inevitable negative consequences. These negative out-of-control emotions may include fear, depression, anger, guilt, grief, shame, anxiety and stress etc. If allowed to continue unchecked, an emotional build-up can lead to substance abuse and other forms of addictions, relationship conflict or breakdown, child abuse, feelings of suicide, and other such serious consequences. In my experience, help is initially needed in order to safely release this emotional pressure. Further help is then needed to learn how to take effective care of our emotional self on an ongoing basis.

Because of our great potential, which comes with great complexity and sensitivity, we easily get out of tune. This is simply a fact of life. Self-rejection can severely hamper our ability to look at this fact of life objectively. Self-rejection says that we have failed in some way if we have to stop and do some maintenance on ourselves. This is an attitude that needs to be carefully examined. As a result of this self-defeating attitude, we may not make the needed effort to find the type of care that is appropriate for us and then stick with it. We must accept our humanness, along with our genuine need to reach out for help when it is required.

To accept someone as they are is to regard them as worthy of love no matter what. This is essential for the success of any intimate relationship or real friendship.

You must become your own best friend, your own loving guardian. This means that as a human being you regard yourself as worthy of unconditional love always, no matter who you are, what mistakes you have made, or what anyone has ever said about you or done to you. You must be your own essential source of unconditional love. This is the foundation of emotional health. This conscious approach to yourself and your life, along with a never-give-up, always open to learn attitude ensures that the positive reprogramming of your mind is inevitable.

## **CARING FOR OUR EMOTIONS**

Rarely in our life do we experience being loved unconditionally. This is the reality of human confusion and limitation. We cannot control the misbeliefs of other people, but we can make a choice to love ourselves unconditionally. But here again we run up against our own human confusion and limitation. We have become habitually and blindly convinced that we should reject ourselves. We need to recognize that this self-rejection is an insidious form of violence that poisons our whole society.

Many of us deny our self-rejection by blaming others for our emotional pain. Nevertheless, the root of blame is non-acceptance of our humanness and our essential worth as a human being. When we deny our own humanity, we are then naturally prone to deny the humanity in others.

This self-rejection becomes a barrier to facing our negative conditioning and the emotional pain it causes. The problem, therefore, essentially lies with the way we sum up every situation. It is about what we believe each event means in relation to our own worthiness. When we suffer, we are unwittingly summing up these situations in ways that cause our own pain. Our ongoing confusion then causes us to hang onto this pain, because we don't understand that it is self-inflicted. As a result of this unconscious self-abuse, we do our best to avoid looking into ourselves. When we do, we are beaten up by our own self-rejection. In order to function, we keep ourselves continually distracted in

an attempt to avoid feeling this self-inflicted pain. This is another very important concept that requires a lot of thought.

As a result of our lack of awareness of what we are doing to ourselves, we look for the cause of our pain in the things that are happening around us. We think it is the way others treat us, or the things we miss out on, or the thousand other things in our lives that “appear” to be causing our pain. All the while, the pain is really caused by what we think of ourselves in relation to our daily circumstances and conditions. This is why blaming the world never seems to resolve anything. This is why, as human beings, we feel so vulnerable at times.

Of course we need to deal with the various matters that confront us in our daily lives in order to protect our livelihood and wellbeing. Being able to manage our own affairs effectively and peacefully, however, totally depends on how deeply we understand that our worth as human beings is without question, no matter what the circumstances or conditions. When we understand this fundamental reality, our deep primal fear of being cast out and deprived of love subsides. We are in love all the time, because we live and function within the embrace of our own loving regard for ourselves. We have woken up a greater dimension of ourselves that has the power to be the representative of Universal Love to our own vulnerable human-selves.

When we are practicing self-acceptance, we are able to recognize that any thought that is not about loving ourselves unconditionally is confusion and should not be believed. Self-rejection is like the confusion of a child still learning about life. As a parent, we are not going to take for granted everything our five-year-old child says to us. Children naturally get confused, and so do our adult minds, because most of our embedded programming occurred when we were children. We are all still learning about life. This learning does not stop just because we walk around in adult bodies.

Observe, without judging, how a small child thinks, and you will gain more of an understanding of what is going on in your own subconscious mind when it emotionally reacts.

With self-acceptance, we learn to step back enough to see our emotional vulnerability for what it is—a scared, confused child needing help. Instead of rejecting and condemning this child, our confused, vulnerable, and hurting human-self, we can instead have compassion for our own emotional pain. It is then easier to sit with it, to be with it, like we are gently holding this vulnerable child within us. We learn to not believe in the confused thoughts that want to attack ourselves or others, just like a hurt child lashing out. We instead recognise the fear and pain behind the anger and confusion. With this awareness we can explore our vulnerability with activities such as writing things out in our journal, talking it over with a friend/mentor/counsellor, and reading some self-help material. As we are caring for our inner-child, our humanness, with self-acceptance, compassion, and self-responsibility, the blocked up emotional pain can be more effectively freed and safely released. It is easier to let the pain naturally flow and then let it go. Self-rejection and another one of its counterparts, self-pity, are transformed into self-care. Emotional healing is then going to naturally occur. By caring for ourselves in this way, we are providing for our vulnerable child-self, who is still alive in our memories, the love, acceptance and nurturing that we needed when we were that child.

Emotions themselves cannot harm us, no matter how intense they may be. As human beings, we are designed to feel. What does the harm is self-rejection, which increases and prolongs the pain. With self-acceptance, the pain is reduced to its proper proportion, efficiently released and healed. Not only that, we are then able to learn and grow as a result of the experience. It is our conscious-awareness that expands, and it is this conscious-awareness, independent and self-sustaining, that provides a secure environment for our human mind and body. With such an empowered awareness,

life is no longer a problem, but an opportunity. I will talk more about conscious-awareness in the next chapter.

This awareness is essential for releasing that emotional dam. It is essential for the reprogramming of our minds that can be done once this build-up of emotional pain is released.

Once the more intense emotional pain is released, an increasing awareness of the self-attacking thoughts that drive the pain emerges. As we continue on with our lifestyle of self-acceptance, we learn to hold all thoughts up to the light of the reality that we are worthy of love no matter what. We can then ask ourselves, “Am I loving myself with this thought, or am I attacking myself?” We are soon able to identify a self-attacking thought whenever we feel ourselves caught in emotional pain. As a result of this growing awareness, we naturally begin to change the nature of our thoughts. We take more care to treat ourselves with loving kindness. Inevitably we increasingly feel more positive and at peace. The experience of increased self-control, or self-mastery, as it is sometimes called, also arises from this awareness. We can now actively and consciously do something positive about our painful emotions.

This is not some hocus-pocus mystery or magic trick. This is the physics of love. Love heals and brings all things into harmony. Hate, driven by fear and confusion, wounds and destroys. Real unconditional love, however, is no simplistic bit of Hollywood fluff. It requires some real wisdom and dedication to learn how to live it, but live it we can, and our own emotions are telling us all the time what sort of internal environment we are creating for ourselves. It is here that we discover what we really can control in our lives. Potentially we have complete control over our own minds, regardless of our circumstances and conditions. Any step toward making this personal potential real is a step toward happiness and fulfilment.

By making the practice of self-acceptance our new lifestyle, our emotional pain becomes less scary and more approachable, more understandable. As we continue to observe the confusion within our own minds, we come to realise how much we are hurting ourselves with our own self-attacking thoughts. We realise that we spend so much time obsessing about what we think others are thinking about us—all negative of course, or so we think. In reality, it is our own minds playing out a self-created drama in our own heads, which most often has no basis in reality. We begin to really see the emotional consequences of our own thoughts. This can be an uncomfortable realisation, but when we remember to accept our humanness, we realise that we are not bad, we just get confused and this confusion can be overcome.

It is much easier then to see how to appropriately deal with any negative situation that is still occurring in our lives.

I will go further into the dynamics around emotions and emotional healing when exploring steps 2 and 3.

## *Exercise 2*

# **Be Your Own Loving Guardian**

Make good use of your journal while doing the exercise. Writing down your thoughts greatly increases the effectiveness of the process.

Read the exercise through first before you start in order to gain a good feel for the process. Also, make good use of appendix 1 and 2 at the back of this book to help you identify and work with your emotions.

- 1) What this exercise is about is being the wise, loving parent to your own fragile, vulnerable, confused and often frightened human-self. It is realizing that love is something that we can access internally. We are always within the embrace of universal love and we access this love at any time through actively and responsibly caring for ourselves.
- 2) Today, right this moment, make a rock solid commitment to treat yourself and speak to yourself only with loving kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and acceptance.
- 3) Keep a little notebook in your pocket or your handbag that you can use to write down your self-rejecting thoughts as you become aware of them.
- 4) When you catch yourself thinking this way, in that moment or later on that day or evening when you can make time, focus on that thought and feel into what it does to you. Write down what you discover.
- 5) When you are aware of this state of self-rejection, imagine this human-self that you are putting down is you when you were a vulnerable child just wanting to be loved.
- 6) Be open to whatever emotions that are released during this process. Do your best to let them flow. Acknowledging your own pain works the same as when someone else important to us acknowledges our pain. Suddenly we feel safe to let it out. Let it flow and trust that the emotional release will pass naturally and have a chance to heal in the process. Much of this pent up emotion comes from our childhood. We were so small and powerless then. We tend to feel that way again as the emotions are coming through. This can be uncomfortable at first. Remember that you are an adult now with conscious-awareness. Know that your intentions to care for yourself will help this pain to heal.
- 7) Imagine yourself as that child and think of how you would want to be treated and explore this in your journal. Just let this come in any way it comes. After exploring this, write a note to your adult-self telling your adult-self how you want to be treated.
- 8) As your adult-self, spend time contemplating the significance of your relationship with your vulnerable human-self, this emotionally wounded child within you. Contemplate the reality of your responsibility toward yourself and the consequences of not taking loving care of yourself.
- 9) Realise that you did the best you could in the past with the awareness that you had. This also applies to your efforts now. Forgive yourself for your human mistakes and realise that you now have an opportunity to treat yourself differently, and to work toward healing the wounds

of the past. Forgiving yourself is an important step toward living this new way of life. Spend some time writing in your journal about what is coming through for you about this.

- 10) Contemplate ways to mentor yourself and care for yourself, considering what your inner-child has communicated to you.
- 11) Let your feelings guide you as you explore this new way of caring for yourself. To help you recognise what is for your highest good, consider these new ways of caring for yourself in the long term. Would it be sustainable? Would it enhance your life in the short, medium and long-term?
- 12) Don't be concerned about finding the perfect answers. It is all a journey of trial and error. Any step toward genuinely caring for yourself is going to improve your life. Be free and open to learn from each attempt to act more lovingly toward yourself.
- 13) Write out on a card or in your pocket book your new positive intentions toward yourself and refer to it regularly in order to keep your conscious-awareness active.
- 14) You can even program your mobile phone to give you this message every couple of hours. Regular reminders are essential for reprogramming the old conditioning.
- 15) When you catch yourself again in a state of self-rejection, you have these new strategies to fall back on. When you refer to these new positive intentions in that moment, you will have more clarity of the consequences of self-rejection. You will also have more clarity around how to treat yourself with loving kindness in that moment.
- 16) Continue to put this exercise into practice on a daily basis. Try to see this as your new lifestyle, not some unrealistic quick fix. Recognise that when this is your new lifestyle, you will naturally continue to heal and grow. Happiness and fulfilment are inevitable.
- 17) In order to empower your healing and personal growth, explore ways that you can reach out for help and support. This is also caring for yourself.



## Chapter One Summary

1. The opposite of self-acceptance is self-rejection, which says we are unworthy because we are human. This is the root of all destructive thought—suffering.
2. Repeated thoughts develop into subconscious beliefs that control our everyday perceptions.
3. A misbelief is any belief that contradicts Unconditional Love.
4. As children we are powerless, vulnerable and dependent on our carers.
5. As vulnerable children we are compelled to believe what our carers repeatedly tell us or demonstrate to us, even when it is not true.
6. What we learn to believe as children becomes our social conditioning.
7. Misbeliefs distort our perceptions of reality, which can cause us to act/react inappropriately throughout our life.
8. When we blindly act out our negative conditioning, without knowing it we are attacking our own self with our own misbeliefs.
9. Self-rejection, whether conscious or unconscious, leaves us vulnerable to the negative judgments and actions of others.
10. Self-rejection, whether conscious or unconscious, can lead us to mistake innocent actions of others for something malicious.
11. Self-rejection, whether conscious or unconscious, can lead us to self-neglect.
12. Self-rejection, whether conscious or unconscious, leads to selfishness—an unhealthy dependency on others and material things.
13. The pressure to perform, to measure up, has become so great in our society that our socially-conditioned minds are stuffed full of self-condemnation about all the little and big ways we do not measure up.
14. Misbeliefs of self-rejection can create a build-up of emotional pain that can lead to destructive behaviour.
15. This back-log of emotional pain needs to be released with care and skilful guidance.
16. Emotions and feelings exist to tell your adult conscious-awareness vital information about the state of your mind, and what is going on around you.
17. To effectively manage your life, you must learn to tune in to your emotions and feelings and understand what they are telling you.

18. It is easier to face our fears and insecurities when we accept our right to be human.
19. Self-care is about having a genuinely loving relationship with yourself.
20. A profound degree of self-acceptance is the key that frees us from suffering.
21. Self-acceptance opens the door of our mind to Love and healing.
22. Self-acceptance is a healthy form of self-love.
23. An adult with a healthy self-esteem can shield his or herself from emotional suffering, or at least quickly recover, regardless of the negativity of the situation.
24. Those with a healthy self-esteem carry a strong belief in their own self-worth.
25. Emotional problems are created and compounded by the mistaken belief that we can only receive love when someone else gives it to us.
26. If love is regarded as a universal force, like light or gravity, then we can begin to look at it very differently.
27. Just as we can put up an umbrella to block out the rays of the sun, we have unconsciously constructed a mental umbrella that blocks out the vital *life-force* of love.
28. We don't really know about love with any real clarity until we can truly love ourselves.
29. Our love isn't actually owned by somebody else. We do not have to do anything to qualify for the unconditional universal life-force of love. There is no standard we have to reach.
30. All that we need to do to qualify for this unconditional universal love is to exist!
31. We are worthy of this unconditional love always. We always have been worthy of this love and we always will be, no matter what mistakes we make, no matter what anyone else says to us or does to us or thinks about us.
32. Making mistakes is a natural part of being human.
33. With self-care, healing and growth are inevitable, along with maturity and wisdom.
34. We can't control how others love us, but we can take charge of how we love and care for ourselves.
35. Start by setting a sincere intention to be a loving guardian to your own human-self and be willing to learn as you go.
36. This healthy self-love provides us with an inner-peace and openness that makes forming loving and healthy relationships with others a natural outcome.
37. If we conclude that we are a victim, then we are running ourselves down. We are regarding ourselves as an unworthy, powerless child, rather than an adult who has the ability to take

care of his or her self.

38. Self-rejection is the same as self-attack. These self-attacks are often triggered when we feel vulnerable, which results in acute emotional pain.
39. In contrast, when we are practising self-acceptance, we are able to recognize that any thought that is not about loving ourselves unconditionally is confusion and should not be believed.
40. Observe, without judging, how a small child thinks, and you will gain more of an understanding of what is going on in your own subconscious mind when it emotionally reacts.
41. With self-acceptance, we learn to step back enough to see our emotional vulnerability for what it is—a scared, confused child calling out for help.
42. By staying open to and present with this inner-child, our vulnerable humanness emotions, with self-acceptance and compassion, the blocked up emotional pain can be freely and safely released. It is easier to let the pain naturally flow and then let it go.
43. Emotions themselves cannot harm us, no matter how intense they may be. As human beings, we are designed to feel. What does the harm is self-rejection, which increases and prolongs the pain.
44. As we continue our lifestyle of self-acceptance, we learn to hold all thoughts up to the light of the reality that we are worthy of love no matter what.
45. When we remember to accept our humanness, we realise that we are not bad, we just get confused and this confusion can be overcome.
46. Potentially we have complete control over our own minds, regardless of our circumstances and conditions. Any step toward making this personal potential real, is a step toward happiness and fulfilment.

