



5 STEPS TO FREEDOM

*A Path to Inner Harmony and
Personal Growth*



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This work is dedicated to spreading peace and self realization wherever possible.

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Introduction

What I have laid out for you in this small book is a 5-step process for emotional healing, wisdom and empowerment. This booklet is an outline of a workable strategy for personal change. Those in the field of Transpersonal Psychology know such a strategy works for two main reasons.

1. Perennial wisdom

Firstly, we live in a wonderful age where we can gain access to recorded information that human beings have stored down through the ages. There have been scores of great philosophers and sages in every culture throughout history. What they have written can now be studied and compared in what is called a meta analysis. What has been discovered is that their writings and teachings all correlate in fundamental ways. It is like there is a set of "natural laws" that apply not only to physics, but also to consciousness. This has been termed "perennial wisdom", which simply means wisdom that endures. When you apply these laws to your life, you naturally enter into a journey of emotional healing and mental clarity as years of accumulated confusion unravels and falls away.

2. Personal Experience

Secondly, we know such processes work because enough of us have applied these laws of consciousness to our own lives and have experienced the benefits directly. There are still sections in the more orthodox psychology and medical profession that remain skeptical. There is a ten-

dency to believe that evidence can only be gathered through statistical analysis in a laboratory, but the real world does not exist in a laboratory. Those in my field of Transpersonal Psychology regard life as the laboratory, although we still value orthodox scientific research. In addition though, we see ourselves as the experiment. We first apply these principles of personal change to ourselves, because if we can't put this to work in our own lives, how can we expect others to do the same, and how can we possibly know what it is really like? We endeavor to be less the out-of-touch expert and more the living example.

I personally had a difficult childhood for various reasons, which led to chronic depression in my teenage and early adult years. This depression further complicated my life by restricting my ability to make wise decisions on my own behalf, or I avoided making decisions altogether. I was stuck, and afraid to take a risk in life. This resulted in difficulties in my relationships and a career that did not reflect my true potential. At the age of 24 my chronic depression drove me to seek help, and I attended self-help groups regularly for the next twelve years, as well as some counseling. As I learned to put these principles for personal change to work, my life began to improve accordingly. I didn't reach out for as much help as I could have, but I kept steadily growing nonetheless.

Even though I soon learned to function well, whenever I took on a new challenge, my chronic depression would be triggered once again. Finally, after eight years of personal growth work that helped me in many other areas of my life, I decided to spend some dedicated time focusing on my depression and nothing else. Using all that I had learned, I surprised even myself by finally breaking the back of my depression in just few weeks. The final key for me was a deep enough level of self-acceptance, which is the basis of Step 1 in the 5-Step Process.

I have experienced depression at times since then but I now know what to

do about it. It can no longer take a hold of me. You could now say that I am immune to this chronic disorder. Of course I could have overcome my depression a lot sooner if I knew at 24 what I know now, but this was not the case. Besides, my experience has been my greatest teacher where becoming a psychotherapist is concerned. It has helped me learn that every problem can be turned into an opportunity.

A side-benefit to my personal growth work was that as I continued to work on myself, my natural interest in psychology began to blossom. Before I knew psychotherapy was to be my career, I was already well versed in the subject. My own higher consciousness knew this was my calling well before my mind was aware of it.



In-depth therapy and sharing is very important. Where serious emotional difficulties such as depression are concerned, there needs to be a commitment to long-term counseling. Such a commitment should be taken seriously if we expect to get results. Serious emotional imbalances rarely respond to "quick-fix" treatments. There may be some quick results, but the relief is often temporary because the treatment did not reach the required depth. If we have an expectation that the "cure" should be quick, we may assume the treatment is not working if this doesn't happen. Because of this our doubts and anxiety may interfere with our commitment to healing. We may jump from one therapist, self-help group or philosophy to the next without giving any of them the required time and commitment needed to work. Worse still, we may just lose hope and give up.

Instead of looking for the illusive cure, it is more empowering to approach emotional recovery as a change of lifestyle. This new lifestyle must be one of ongoing self-care rather than self-neglect. Life will always have its difficulties, even in normal circumstances. It is unrealistic to think otherwise. Being self-responsible enough to learn the skills of

self-maintenance is essential for a well balanced and successful life.

Your commitment and persistence with a particular therapy or philosophy is as important as the therapy itself. After all, it is your mind and body. Your attitudes are with you always until you change them.

Where our emotional wellbeing is concerned, in our Western culture we have an unhealthy tendency to not reach out for help because we feel ashamed if we do. We think we have failed in some way if we can't do it alone. When we finally do reach out, we often expect the therapist to do all the work.

The "expert" can't be with you 24 hours a day. Counseling is most effective when counselor and client come together as a team. This means working together to move you, the client, through your emotional blocks and to a state of functioning that better matches your potential. The most important aspect of any therapy is to empower you with the skills and ability to take charge of your life in a positive life-enhancing way. This booklet is an introduction into this fulfilling approach to life.

Just having someone to talk to who is detached but caring, accepting, and objective is therapy in itself. However, emotional recovery also needs a pro-active approach if a genuine shift is going to take place. Therefore, an active strategy to tackle our negative thought-patterns and clear our stuck emotions is important. Such a strategy enables you to gain awareness of negative thought-patterns and then learn how to replace them with ones that work for you. Such a strategy is often called a "process". I use what is called a "5-Step Process", which underpins all my counseling and personal development work

This may be a small book, but it has a lot of depth. For it to truly make a difference to your life, it must be studied like a manual; not read like a

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novel and then put on the shelf. For a full understanding it will require time and a willingness to put these principles into practice daily, and in so doing, slowly master them.

The
5 STEP PROCESS



- 1. Acceptance**
- 2. Personal Responsibility**
- 3. Let Go and Tune In**
- 4. Live in the Now**
- 5. Live the Process as a Way of Life**



STEP ONE

ACCEPTANCE

Where the Confusion Begins

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

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

 I am unworthy because I am human.

By the term *human* I am meaning not perfect. For a child in particular, the standard of perfect behavior is measured by others. To further add confusion in the child's mind, there are invariably many different versions of what this perfect standard is, depending on who is metering out the discipline. This standard can even change from moment to moment with one individual disciplinarian, depending on his or her changing moods. These multifarious and often irrational standards that a child is supposed to somehow live up to, I believe, are the root of all continuing

judgments of oneself and others.

This deep misbelief that we are unworthy for simply being human becomes embedded into our minds because love is repeatedly withdrawn from us when we are children 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. We may have also had a sensitive character as a child, which can compound the situation. As powerless, vulnerable children we are so dependent on our carers that we are compelled 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 such negative judgment about ourselves, even though in our hearts it doesn't feel right.

Naturally all children need guidance and discipline. This is how they learn to take control of their own emotions and needs. All discipline, however, must be loving and compassionate otherwise it contains elements of destructiveness.

Of course, this is where the confusion starts for everyone, and we all then pass it down the line from generation to generation.

When we were children, we may not have had any other example of care to relate to, so we grow to regard this confusion as a normal way to think. Because of this "normalizing", these self-destructive judgments become imbedded into our subconscious or unconscious minds where they continue to control us beyond our awareness. These subconscious thought-patterns begin in the early stages of childhood conditioning and develop into distorted beliefs that then control how we feel and act. These dis-

torted beliefs then keep our emotional problems on a repetitive loop, creating ongoing difficulties such as conflict, when conflict wouldn't be present otherwise. This means that our very perceptions of reality become distorted early in childhood. 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.

Now as adults we often think it is the judgments of others that are causing our problems, like it did as a child. However, as adults, it is our own self-judgments, emerging out of our distorted beliefs, that make us vulnerable to the judgments of others. From this position of vulnerability, our survival instincts may then be inclined to judge and attack in return as a form of defence, oblivious to the negative programming in our own minds.

In our confusion we are still relating to life from the position of a powerless child. However, an adult with a healthy self-esteem can shield his or herself from the judgments of others simply by knowing that they are worthy even when they make human mistakes. Even if there is initial confusion, an adult has the power of reasoning and the capacity of consciousness to know what feels right, and to trust that feeling. Unfortunately for many of us, our ability to access these important adult capacities has been impaired due to our level of accumulated confusion.

If it wasn't for self-condemnation, the acute vulnerability in adulthood would not be there in the first place. Without this prior self-judgment, the judgment of another would have little impact. We would simply know that the person doing the judging is perhaps having a bad day and is obviously confused.

Pride and Denial

What is called false pride is another symptom of self-judgment. For example, this is what causes us to deny our part in a conflict. False pride creates in us the need to be right and to see the other as wrong in an unrealistic black and white way of perceiving. We need to feel bigger and better because, deep down, we actually feel less than. Often we know when we are indulging in a game of denying reality, but nevertheless we seem to get locked into a desperate struggle against our own lack of self-worth caused by our own self-judgments. We often feel utterly powerless to change, and at some level of our mind we are reluctant to change due to the false sense of security and power this pride gives us. Usually we are not even aware of this underlying dynamic of self-judgment and pride, which only adds to the seemingly endless confusion.


It is quite normal to assume that our only hope of escape from this nexus of self-judgment 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. This of course is an unrealistic expectation that leads to inevitable conflict and disillusionment. We become locked in a struggle to control and change other people, places and things in order to feel loved.

In reality, relationships succeed, and personal fulfillment is achieved, not 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.

Self-Acceptance is Self-Care

After recognizing that there is a problem, acceptance is the first step in taking action to do something about it. This first step of acceptance is

applied on many levels. Accepting our right to be human is an essential part of Step One.

 *I accept my right to be human.*

As hard as it may at first seem, it is easier, more effective and more empowering to change ourselves rather than try to change someone else. This self-change must come in the form of self-care. It is a conscious loving and caring relationship with our own humanness. We are not changing ourselves to please others or 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.

As was stated in the introduction, there is a strong tendency in our society to feel ashamed when we cannot psychologically function according to the "norms" of our society. Everybody suffers emotional crises from time to time, but when this crisis becomes prolonged for one reason or another, there is a perception that we are unworthy because of it. We think we have somehow failed. We cannot control another's misguided perceptions, but we can do something about our own.

We are like a priceless one-of-a-kind car that has broken down. It would not make sense to regard this car as not worth fixing or that the car is wrong or stupid for breaking down. When this priceless car breaks down it is then a matter of objectively and carefully taking it apart in order to correct the problem. Also, it would be only logical to want to give this car ongoing maintenance, care and attention. For various reasons however, we human beings tend to resist taking care of ourselves, as though we shouldn't need it. We think such maintenance is an imposition on our lifestyle. It is little wonder we end up breaking down.

Often we *do* try to take care of ourselves but we have not learned how to

do this effectively. In particular I am talking about taking care of our emotional life. 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 shut them down or shove them onto somebody else. When we are not doing that, we often use our emotions to beat our own selves up. However, when understood and effectively integrated into our active personality, our emotional life is a source of great wisdom and inner-strength. Before we can take advantage of this potential inner-strength, because of our emotional neglect, we usually need to do some serious healing work first.

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 depression, anger, fear, guilt, shame, anxiety and stress etc. Such outbursts, if allowed to continue unchecked, can lead to substance abuse, 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, and then to learn how to take effective care of our emotional self on an ongoing basis.

Our body/mind is our vehicle for our entire life. Human beings are highly complex and delicate machines that need constant care and attention. We easily get out of tune. This is simply a fact of life. Self-judgment can severely hamper our ability to look at this fact of life objectively. Self-judgment 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. Because of this self-defeating attitude, we may not make the needed effort to find the type of care that is appropriate for us. We must accept our right to be human along with our genuine need

to reach out for help when it is required. This is just common sense.

Self-care is therefore essential to our well-being. Truly accepting our humanness - accepting that we are still worthy even while we are being human, is essential for being motivated toward self-care. We are unlikely to be motivated toward this healthy self-care while we are busy judging ourselves. Self-care is about having an active loving relationship with ourselves, particularly if we need to change some deeply ingrained self-defeating habits. We can hardly have a healthy relationship with someone we resent. Having a relationship with someone also implies making the time to grow to know them intimately.

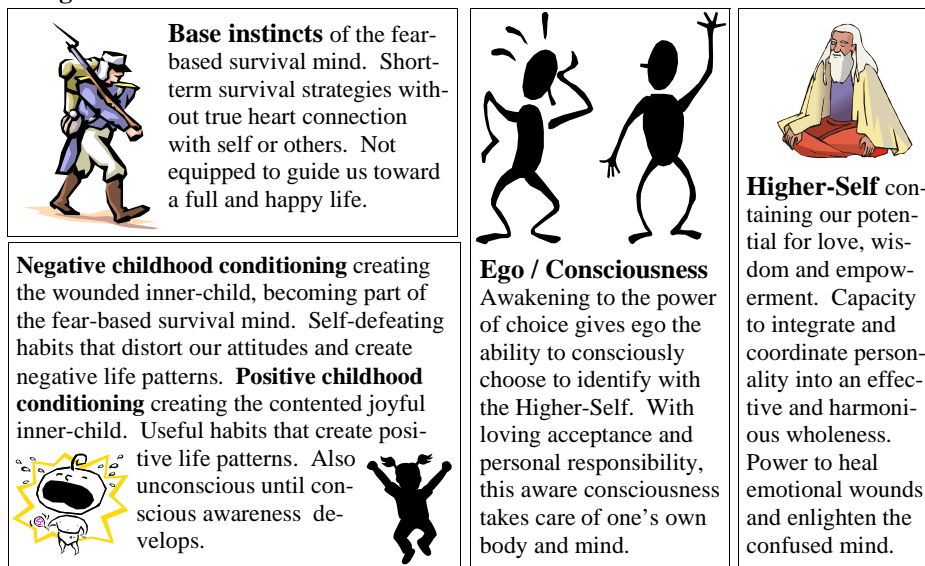


*My ultimate worthiness is beyond question,
no matter how human I am; no matter what
other people may say.*

Know Thyself

In my many years of dealing with my own life problems and helping others with theirs, it has become clear to me that we are more than just complex machines. There is a more intangible or mysterious quality to the human being which I, and many other researches in this field, call "consciousness". To put it simply, consciousness enables a human being to observe him or herself - to be self-conscious in other words. If utilized properly, consciousness has vast, perhaps unlimited, potential for positive improvement in our lives.

Human consciousness is a two-edged sword, however. Consciousness is our human salvation as well as our human problem. To try to define the two sides of our human consciousness, you could say that we have a lower consciousness and a higher consciousness.

Diagram 1. Different Levels of Human Nature

Lower-Self - Survival Mind

The lower-self could be said to respond and operate from FEAR. I also call it the "survival mind" due to it always being in the position of powerlessly struggling to survive against the elements of the world. When our lower-self is controlling our lives, we tend to allow our decisions to be based on what we fear. As a result we tend to build protective walls around ourselves and see the world in a negative light, which may often be far from reality. Because we regard our fear-based beliefs as "true", we don't question them and therefore we live in the restricted boundaries of these limited perceptions. For example, we may have a fear of being criticized and in order to protect ourselves from feeling this fear we isolate ourselves and become a "prisoner" to this fear. This same fear may cause us to lash out at others. We survive, but we certainly don't live in the full sense of the word.

When we are living from the lower-self or survival mind, our baser in-

instincts tend to be in charge and we do not have a real heartfelt connection to our loved ones, the world or even to our own well-being. The survival mind is a short-sighted dog-eat-dog type of approach to life with little comprehension of long-term consequences. It is only equipped to deal with short-term emergencies where “fight or flight” is necessary.

To further compound the obvious limitations of lower-self, the distortions and illusions of our childhood conditioning or programming are overlaid and interwoven into this fear-based reactive type of functioning. The lower survival level consciousness is unable to see beyond this self-defeating conditioning and assumes it is true reality. There is little ability to objectively examine a potentially difficult situation on its own merits. Rather, we end up blindly reacting in old habitual ways that are dictated by our base instincts and this distorted conditioning.

Not surprisingly, when our survival mind is in charge for too long, our life tends to be full of sadness, conflict and disappointment. Frequent poor health and fatigue is often a further consequence.

Often this lower level of functioning is referred to as being unconscious rather than conscious, due to its blind, habitual and often self-defeating nature. Our fear-based survival mind tends to be stuck in the past and therefore remains out of touch with the realities of the present moment.

Let us call this confused and fear-based survival mind the *lower-self*.

Higher-Self

This higher consciousness or growth consciousness responds and operates from LOVE. This higher consciousness is like a higher instinctual self that remains above and unaffected by any distorted conditioning of our childhood. It has the power to embrace this emotional woundedness and mental confusion and actually heal it. It also has the power to em-

brace and redirect the baser instincts of our lower-self so that our higher consciousness or heart is in charge of our life rather than our short-sighted lower-self. This is what people mean when they say “follow your heart.”

Our higher consciousness instinctively knows what is the highest path to take that has the greatest long-term benefit not only for ourselves, but for everyone concerned. Rather than isolating us and building cold walls of fear and mistrust like the survival mind does, our higher consciousness facilitates healing, openness and connection whilst at the same time providing us with a deeper and more stable sense of security and emotional well-being.

When we can connect to this higher dimension of our consciousness, qualities such as compassion, wisdom, courage, insight, joy, serenity, and genuine intimacy can be experienced. We can see the world in a positive but realistic light and we become attractive to others and feel comfortable to be around. We still feel our fears but we are able to push through them rather than allow them to control us. As a result we are able to more clearly see the reality of a particular situation rather than have it distorted by our past fears. This higher consciousness enable us to grow and evolve. It also facilitates good health and vitality.

This higher consciousness represents our ideal self from where we can access our highest potential. It is described as super-consciousness, due to its often mysterious ability to transform our lives beyond the limited reasoning of the ego.

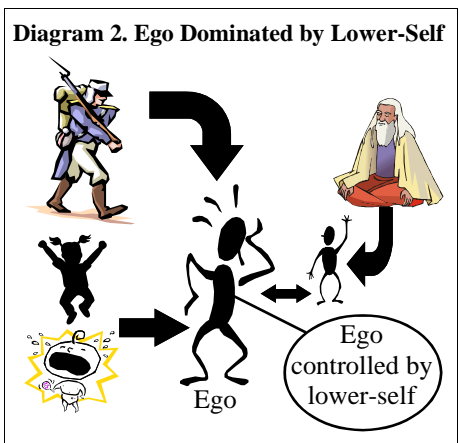
You already access this sublime state of super-consciousness during the most exquisite moments of your life, such as being in awe of a beautiful scene in nature, a spontaneous act of courage or experiencing your own child being born.

Therefore let us call this super-consciousness the *Higher-Self*.

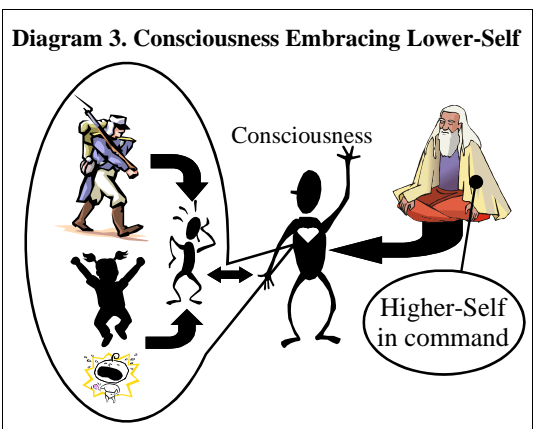
Ego and the Power of Choice

We all experience both these sides of our consciousness to varying degrees. This is not right or wrong, we are simply experiencing human nature. However, as an ego, we can wake up to what our confused lower-self is doing to us and learn how to choose a different path, and it is obvious from which side of our consciousness we would rather operate.

Our ego is our capacity for consciousness that operates in the present moment. I say “capacity” because until we wake up to our power of choice, our ego is all too



often blindly driven by our lower fear-based survival instincts and our distorted childhood conditioning, or lower-self in other words. This is what gives the ego a bad name. The ego is not yet conscious in the true sense until this power of choice is understood and activated. Ego/



Consciousness is like our mind’s managing director, empowered and motivated by the differing qualities of the lower or higher self. Ego is truly awakened and transformed into conscious awareness only when it has surrendered to the greater power of the Higher-Self. Due to the ingrained nature of our old distorted beliefs, this

transition is usually a gradual one.

Therefore, let us refer to this aspect of our mind as *ego* if it is unawakened to its power of choice, and simply as *consciousness* if that choice-realization has occurred.

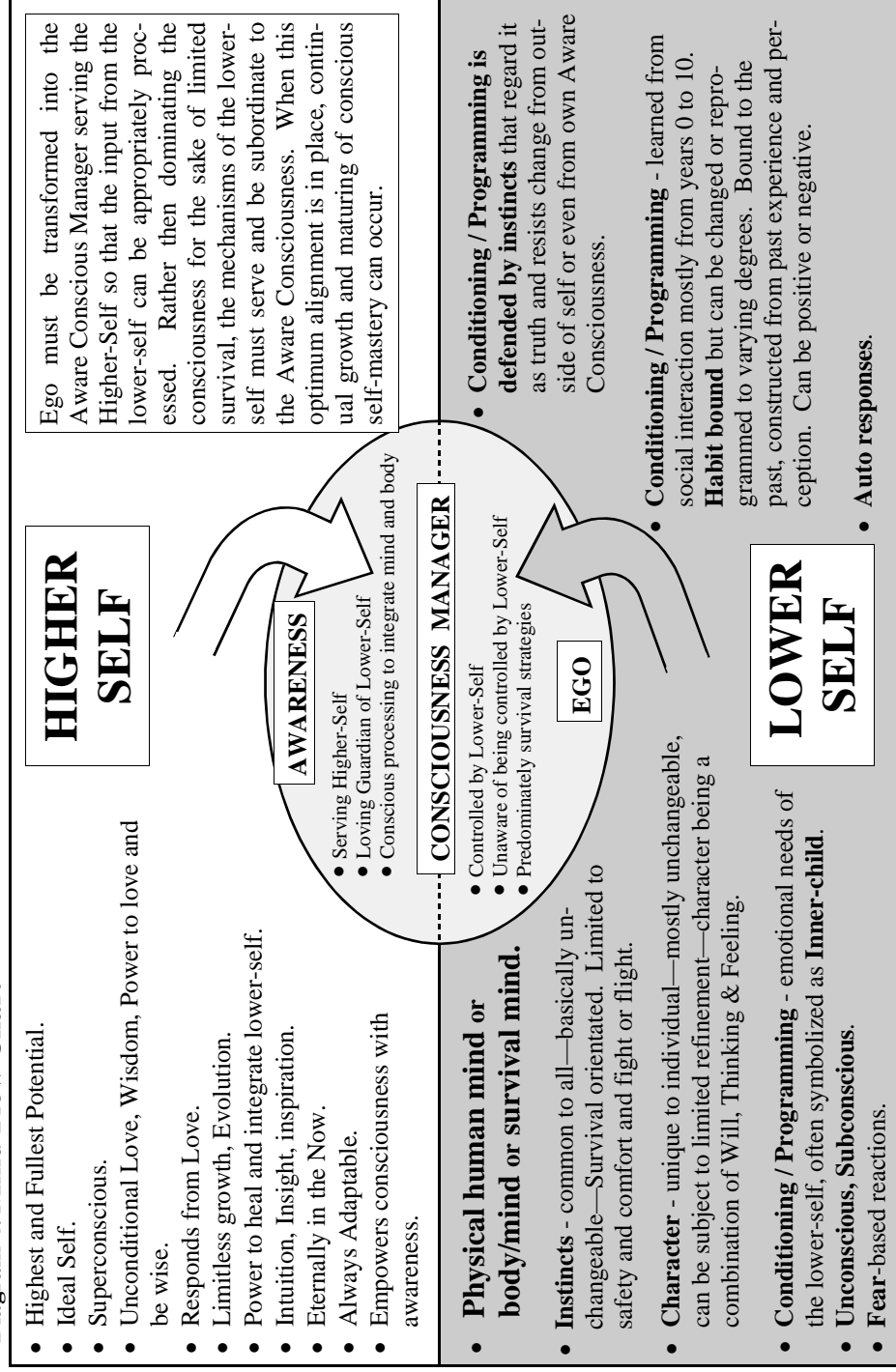


It is normal, once we have awakened to our power of choice, to switch back and forth between ego and consciousness depending on whether we are succumbing to our fears or openly choosing to face them. Throughout our life we are naturally experiencing this anyway, but often with little awareness. To put it simply, when we are living from a consciousness that is aligned to our Higher-Self, we are able to more effectively heal and grow. Our life tends to be more harmonious and balanced, even in the face of life's challenges. When we are living from our ego, our life is likely to be a confusing struggle. Even our successes are often at the expense of other areas of our life and those around us. For example, success in business being at the expense of family life or the environment. When living from ego, learning from our mistakes and life's many challenges is going to be very limited because of pride and denial.

Let us also consider that this present-moment ego/consciousness level of our mind does not have any real power of its own other than the power of choice. Instead, it is like a doorway that the lower-self and Higher-Self flow through. The lower-self and Higher-Self are like two somewhat opposing forces vying for control of the managing capacity of the ego/consciousness. In order to live the life we want it is therefore essential that we consciously align our ego to the better guidance of the Higher-Self.

For another perspective on this framework, see Diagram 4 on page 24.

Diagram 4. Mind Flow Chart



Childhood Conditioning

Of course, childhood conditioning is not always negative. A positive and loving upbringing naturally facilitates greater access to our Higher-Self. This reveals itself in our everyday lives as being naturally positive and loving. In this case our habits are more constructive than self-defeating, but can still lack the power of conscious awareness when real challenges are faced.

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 inborn 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 24 hours a day and can influence every aspect of our thinking, feeling and action. It 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 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 outside changes we make. If this is the case, some form of personality/emotional breakdown can be the result, perhaps leading to antisocial and irrational behaviour, poor decision making, sub-

stance abuse and so on.

Real change is possible, but only if we can access our Higher-Self whenever we need to.

Acceptance—the doorway to healing

To accept someone as they are is to regard them as worthy of love no matter what. This means that as a human being you are 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. Rarely in our life do we experience being loved unconditionally. This is the reality of human confusion and limitation. We cannot control other people. We can however 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 judge ourselves. We need to recognize that this form of negative judgment is an insidious form of violence that poisons our whole society.

Where acceptance is concerned, if we have strong negative self-worth and self-judgment issues, then we find it hard to accept our right to be human. This is without even going to the next step of considering our worthiness of unconditional love. As I mentioned earlier, many of us deny our self-judgment 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. In other words, when we deny our own humanity, we are then naturally prone to deny the humanity in others.

These confused thoughts that tell us we are unworthy of love in countless different ways become a barrier to facing our negative conditioning, which is essential for releasing that emotional dam and thereby healing. These self-attacks are often activated whenever we feel vulnerable, which

creates in us acute emotional pain. Therefore we do our best to avoid looking into ourselves. We keep ourselves continually distracted so as not to feel this vulnerability.

For similar reasons we find it hard to consider that we have a grander side to our consciousness that is so beautiful and powerful.

As human beings we are not perfect due to the confusion embedded in the lower-self. However, we do have the potential of perfection which is the natural state of the Higher-Self. The greater qualities of the Higher-self become the ideals that we can strive towards. In my experience, unconditional love is the ultimate ideal. It is the most transformative ideal to consciously strive for. It is the journey towards living this ideal in our everyday lives that facilitates inner-healing and personal growth—true wisdom and maturity.

Opening the door to Love and Healing

Here is a contemplation exercise that may help you better comprehend the nature of unconditional love and how to put it into practice in your life.

Imagine yourself as a newborn baby lying 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, it may frequently wake you up during the night by crying. Or it may dirty its nappy a number of times per day. Neither of these experiences are very pleasant to have to deal with as the carer of this baby. Is the baby still worthy of unconditional love even when it 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 it 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 it that is unworthy of unconditional love?

Now your toddler is a delightful two-year-old and becoming a real handful. He/she is now walking and therefore getting into more things. There is a lot of boundary testing going on as your toddler exercises its awakening 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 he/she 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—the carer or the child?

Now your child is five, very active and talking fluently. Even though he/she 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 conditioning lie—with the child or the child's carers? Has the child conditioned his or herself? 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 it 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. He/she is full of hopes and dreams for the future and yet still vulnerable and dependent. There is the occasional conflict with various family members as a need for independence is slowly emerging. 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 his/her social group, sometimes in defiance of parental guidance. This leads to frequent conflict. He/she 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 he/she 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 he/she 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 his/her 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 feelings. You are now the adult and this "inner-child" now belongs to you. Your carers did the best they could. Their job is now finished. 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 this unconditional self-acceptance that we can increasingly awaken our consciousness into our highest nature, our Higher-Self.



*By giving myself unconditional love,
I will then have it to give to others.*

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 personal responsibility. I am talking about filling up our inner-tank of love and fulfillment to where it should be. I am talking about returning to a healthy balance. Instead we have a society of people who are continually running on empty. 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 selfishly dependent on others. In other words, self-neglect is actually the cause of selfishness!

I believe, and it has been my long and repeated experience, that if you consciously make an effort to accept your lower survival self and take care of it, like one should lovingly care for a child, you then naturally begin to open up to and experience higher states of consciousness such as compassion and creative motivation. If we don't, we risk living our life being blindly driven to destruction by the endless cravings of a confused inner-child. At the very least, we don't reach our potential.

To be "human" is to have this higher growth consciousness naturally available to us, which enables us to overcome all difficulties if we give it a chance. It is within this side of our human nature that we find an ultimate meaning in life, and we are free to define that meaning for ourselves. Countless individuals who have gone before us have found access to their Higher-Selves and they point the way for us to follow. In most cases it takes some help and persistence though to push through our long held negative perceptions about ourselves, perceptions that, in an ultimate sense, are simply not true.



STEP TWO

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Our confusion about Love

Many of us have learned that being disciplined and responsible means oppressing ourselves with rigid and unrealistic standards that we can't possibly live up to. For example, when we were children, we may have been expected to get things right the first time. We were often criticized or ridiculed instead of being encouraged to learn by trial and error, a much more realistic and healthy approach to learning. Now we think we have to be “perfect” to be worthy and we may be frightened to try new things for fear of being criticized if we make a mistake.


Even when we do manage to live up to these standards, they rarely bring us the happiness we are looking for because they are not designed to meet our own unique needs in each moment. We end up living our life the way we “think” we should, rather than having a life-style that *feels* right, and we deny our better judgment to our detriment. Instead of consciously assessing the best approach according to each situation in the present moment, we are blindly acting out old childhood conditioning as though we have no other choice. We are still unconsciously running our life according to other people's confused expectations.

As a child we were largely powerless over our environment and our circumstances in life. Our choices were indeed very limited. We were so dependent on our carers for love, protection and guidance. As children, when we lack a real emotionally intimate connection with our primary carers, over and above having our material needs provided for, we often grow up still feeling emotionally needy and dependent, or emotionally cut off. Often we are afraid of opening up to love for fear of not receiving it. Like a child, we still think we can't get love unless someone else gives it to us. However, this is not the case. Unlike children, every normally functioning adult has the capacity for conscious awareness. This means we can each tap into our own innate source of love. As adults, particularly where caring for children is concerned, we are supposed to give love. If we don't already have a source of love to give, where are we going to get it from? We can't expect to get all the love we need from our partner. Where is our partner going to get all this love from in order to give it to us? Our partner, and every other adult is in the same dilemma as we are. Even more destructive is being dependent on this love from our children.

Putting Step 1, self-acceptance, into practice frees us from these old self-defeating beliefs and transforms responsibility into an act of loving, patient, and ongoing care for ourselves. We are learning to fill up our own hearts from the inside. We don't need to be so dependent on someone doing it for us. This does not mean we no longer need relationships. What I am referring to is a natural healthy balance of emotional security, which gives us a sense of independence and inner-fulfillment. From this position of inner-balance, it is then much easier to give without becoming depleted.

Being an adult means that we have accepted the responsibility for our own life. As a person of conscious awareness we become the wise parent to our own lower-self, which is always like a child needing guidance.

Loving, patient, ongoing care is what we truly needed as children. This child is still alive within us. None of us had perfect parents and none of us *are* perfect parents. As adults, there is still parenting work left to do on ourselves. This is a fact of life from which no one can escape. Step 2 is about accepting this responsibility of care for ourselves and acting on it for our highest good and for the good of those around us.

 *As an adult human being, I am fully responsible
for all that I feel, think, say and do.*

Step 2 gives us the opportunity to re-examine our attitudes and our tendency to blame others and/or ourselves whenever we feel emotional pain. We can open up to and care for our emotions rather than try to bury them or feel ashamed or angry about them.

When we look at this dynamic more deeply we find that there are two levels to experiencing our emotions.

1. Free Emotional Response

Free emotion occurs in the present moment and is simply a natural higher-level sensory perception, not unlike sight, touch and hearing. Our emotions are continually giving us genuine information about our environment and those we encounter. This information helps us know how to appropriately act in any given moment. For example, you may walk too close to the edge a cliff and you feel a wave of fear rush through you. This is your body/mind giving you an appropriate warning signal. Or on a more subtle level you may feel the presence of anger in the person you are trying to communicate with, and your body/mind feeds you signals that cause you to feel wary. Of course our emotional responses can also be pleasant, such as when we are being shown loving care by someone.

2. Trapped Emotional Reaction

This is old emotional energy that has become trapped within our body/mind's memory network. Most of this trapped emotional energy is left over from our childhood when we did not always have the ability or opportunity to resolve situations that were psychologically damaging to us. As a result we became confused and took on beliefs about ourselves and the world that were not true.

As I mentioned in Step 1, the most common dynamic here lies in the fact that children are spontaneously emotional. Emotions dominate the way these young minds think. When children are happy they are overjoyed, and when they are sad it is the end of the world. Children are naturally emotional beings, which does not change until they are well into puberty and beyond when their rational mind gets a grip, for better or for worse, on their emotions.

Unfortunately, evolving into adulthood means that we are liable to forget what it was like to be children. We seldom have patience for children who cannot act like adults no matter how hard they try. When children are judged and rejected for being emotional, for not being able to control their needs or emotional reactions, it puts them in an impossible bind. They desperately need our love, but they can't stop being children without having to endure the wrath of confused carers. Children certainly need guidance, but this needs to come without judgment. At no time should love be removed.

For children, this psychological damage comes in the form of believing they are fundamentally unworthy or wrong for simply being who they are, for simply having emotions, which cannot be true. Such a confused belief is in direct conflict with our own higher knowing, which we all naturally have, even as a child. However, children need our love so much that they choose to believe the judgment over their higher knowing in or-

der to desperately try to please us. There are many other situations in a child's environment that may lead to the child believing he or she is unworthy of love, such as the child's parents splitting up, or suffering the death of a parent. Children naturally take events in their lives very personally. They often blame themselves for situations that have nothing to do with them. If a parent is unaware of what is happening within the child's mind, much confusion can result, which can then be carried into adulthood.

To survive, children begin to create roles and behaviors to please others in ways that don't match their true self. The child's true self is often repeatedly invalidated by the carer. This inauthentic role-playing becomes our persona, an aspect of our ego, and we live these roles so much that we lose touch with who we truly are. The more this persona is created, the more the child loses touch with that higher part of their consciousness. As a result, children frequently experience anger, sadness, despair, shame, and in more extreme cases, disassociate from their feelings altogether to survive. This of course continues into adulthood. We become bound by "shoulds and shouldn'ts" rather than living our life by what genuinely feels right for us. Unhappiness and a lack of fulfillment is the result.

Over the first 10 years of childhood we may encounter these invalidating situations repeatedly. Often situations can be subtle and difficult to isolate. An example of this is if the child's natural character (see Diagram 4, page 24) is very different to his/her parent's character. As a result, the parents may simply misunderstand the child and keep expecting the child to be like them, trapping the child in an ongoing psychological dilemma.

If these disconnections occur, children invariably develop beliefs about themselves and the world that are negative. These negative beliefs then accumulate trapped emotional energy. When these now unconscious be-

iefs are carried into adulthood, they are still going to be controlling the way we approach life, and will cause us to react to situations in distorted ways that unnecessarily create pain and conflict.

As adults we still hold mistaken beliefs such as we are unworthy for simply being who we are. In our subconscious minds, the conflict with our vulnerable wounded emotions remains. This inner-conflict is frequently triggered by our normal free emotional responses that we feel in the present moment. The free emotion then triggers similar trapped emotional memories that have built up over time. When this happens, there is a cascade effect where the emotional charges contained within these associated memories are released into our present awareness. This all happens in a split second and most often we don't recall the memories as such. We only feel the sudden emotional impact. As a result there is an over-reaction - a reaction that simply does not match what is occurring in the moment. Without us even realizing it, old emotionally painful energy floods our minds and distorts our ability to think rationally. This dynamic within us is the root of all conflict in our lives because it distorts the very foundations of what we think is true. We react to the various difficulties in our lives in a manner that harms us and those around us. Our distorted perceptions are continually creating difficulties for us that need not be there.

Like free emotions, trapped emotional reactions can also be pleasant, at least in the short term. These over-reactions can lead to addictions, for example, or falling in love inappropriately. Therefore, trapped emotional reactions tend to be disconcerting because they have a habit of overriding our ability to think rationally and wisely in that moment. We lose touch with reality, in other words.

When problems arise, regardless of what is happening on the surface, underneath our level of awareness old negative ingrained beliefs are being

triggered. This, in turn, causes us to be defensive or attacking. We then start acting from old emotional memories as though it is all happening again now. We are in fact “shadow boxing.”

Because of this confusion we withdraw our love from those we care about the most, such as our partners and children. In other words, those who we depend on most emotionally are the ones who will most trigger our emotional wounds, and in turn, suffer our reactions. We all display this destructive dynamic in some way in our lives, and the degree to which this dynamic is active is the degree to which we cannot function the way we would like.

As I mentioned before, we also try to compensate for our lack of love for ourselves by finding someone else to love us instead, which creates a whole set of problems in itself. Because we lack love for ourselves, we end up needing more from others than they can give. Often they feel pressured and suffocated, and as a result, withdraw from us. Often we push people away because we are afraid we won't get the love that we need so much from others.

It is this pressurized, trapped emotional energy that needs to be released in appropriate ways. The mental confusion that keeps trapping this emotional energy needs healing or "reparenting" through wise counseling and in-depth therapy and/or our own emotional processing. We must learn how to turn off the mistaken belief that we are unworthy of love and replace this confusion with ongoing loving acceptance of ourselves. It is these self-defeating subconscious beliefs that keep negative life patterns

 ***Personal responsibility is taking loving care of my humanness.***

going round and round. When we have given ourselves this essential gift of unconditional love it can then naturally and easily flow on to others.

Therefore, every adult has a responsibility of care towards their own emotional wounds. All normally functioning adults have the ability to give themselves this level of care. What we need is faith in ourselves, and a sensible willingness to reach out for help when needed.

Combining unconditional love with personal responsibility is the key to change; it is the key to overcoming all difficulties in our lives. Steps 3 and 4 are about applying these principles.

 *I am my own loving guardian. I will never give up on myself.*



STEP THREE

LET GO & TUNE IN


Letting Go

Step 3 is about putting steps 1 & 2 into action by actively looking after your inner-self. In other words, taking real care of your lower-self as well as tuning in more effectively to your Higher-Self. It is about learning to process your emotions and undo your mental confusion on an on-going basis while developing a more effective feeling for the silent inner-voice of guidance.

Step 3 is the most important step when it comes to healing our emotions and beliefs and changing our life on a deeper level. Unfortunately it is the step we most often skip over or simply neglect. It is the hardest step for the ego to comprehend. This is because Step 3 takes us above and beyond the ego's limited capacity. Step 3 is not about analyzing, ego controlling or fixing anything. It is about letting go, opening up, allowing, flowing and connecting. It is about building a bridge of healing between the Higher-Self, the ego/consciousness and the unconscious lower-self. Here the aware ego is learning to step aside and simply occupy itself by keeping the door to the Higher-Self held open. This enables the unconditional love of the Higher-Self to do the work of healing the lower-self. It

is a space where the ego must stay still and quiet while it watches and learns about the realities of life. In the process, the ego discovers a power greater than itself.

Before we can effectively connect to our inner-self, we must learn to let go of what prevents this vital connection occurring.

 *Letting go means no longer judging and blaming.*

Judgment and blame ensures that our ego remains the blind plaything of the distorted and heartless beliefs and motivations of an out-of-control lower-self. Where there is negative judgment and blame, love is choked out. Healing and growth is not possible. We remain at war with our own humanness and the humanness of others and at odds with our Higher-Self.

It is important to note that suspending negative judgment and blame does not negate wise discernment, a positive form of judgment, which is essential for responsible choice-making.

Our blind ego thinks that judging and blaming makes us powerful, but in fact the opposite is true. When I judge you, I am holding you responsible for my happiness. This means that I am forever dependent on you to change before I can be happy. If I insist on hanging onto this attitude, I have rendered myself forever powerless to take charge of my own life regardless of what is going on around me.

People who are consistently happy and fulfilled are not simply lucky. Their contentment comes from their willingness to actively take responsibility for their own emotional life.

Letting go is also about letting other people go. To find happiness and fulfillment we must stop trying to control others and take care of our own life instead. This paradoxically has the best effect on others because the power of example is the ultimate motivator.



To be consistently happy and fulfilled I must be committed to taking full responsibility for the care of my emotional life.

Often it is not until we really begin to make an effort to care for ourselves in a genuine way that we discover how deeply ingrained our self-defeating beliefs are. Rather than blindly and unconsciously acting out these negative patterns, we begin to see them as if for the first time, even while these old self-defeating habits still have us in their grip. Our heads are full of beliefs that create attitudes and perceptions that in turn cause us to be out of step with life and out of tune with our core authentic self. That is why we hurt. Through emotional pain our body/mind is trying to bring this imbalance to our attention so that we can consciously do something about it. We have learned to shoot the messenger however, by judging, rejecting and repressing our emotions rather than paying attention to them, just as a wise parent would pay loving attention to a troubled child.

Even though these self-defeating mindsets are clearly hurting us, it is difficult to let them go because they are all we know. They were originally formed by a child's mind in a limited attempt to make sense of a world that loves conditionally, which, ultimately, is not love at all. Our survival mind still assumes that we need these beliefs for protection and to get our needs met. We, as conscious adults, need to replace these old self-defeating beliefs with ones that are more attuned to what will work for us now.

As adults we are no longer children who are powerless over our own lives, even though we often still feel like it. As adults we have the power to learn new ways and develop new choices. Life-skills need to be learned just like anything else, but we won't learn anything new if we are not prepared to let go of, or at least question our old beliefs that keep us down—beliefs that cause us to remain powerless victims.

We become lost when we blame the outside world for causing our emotional difficulties, when in truth our difficulties are caused by the way we think about and deal with the outside world. If we don't do that then we assume we must blame ourselves, which is really where it all starts. To move forward we must re-examine Steps 1 and 2 and recognize that there is no one to blame. We are not bad, we are just confused and being confused is a natural part of being human. If we allow our confusion to rule our lives then we are not going to change for the better. Step 2 is about facing up to this confusion. Step 3 is about taking this confusion in hand and leading it back to reality.

When we are less inclined to judge ourselves and others for being confused, we are more motivated to own our confusion and do something about it. Only then can we gain a clear vision of our true Self and the world around us. Only then will our hearts open enough so genuine processing can begin.



*I accept that everyone is looking for love, just like me.
I accept that everyone is confused about love, just like me.*

Tuning In

- **How do I feel?**
- **What are my needs in this situation?**
- **How am I allowing myself to play the victim?**
- **What can I do to accept full responsibility for my needs and to care for them with loving kindness toward myself and all others?**

Instead of reacting, we need to stop and ask ourselves these questions and spend some time with each one to get in touch with what the deeper answers are. Until we do this, real clarity around our confusion and the problems it causes is unlikely to be found.

Because we are in conflict with ourselves we continually fall into judging ourselves or others. We have become our own worst enemy. Little wonder we spend our lives running away from ourselves. To get away from ourselves we remain in a constant state of "tuning out". We tune out because we are still stuck in that impossible childhood bind. We think we have to live up to some crazy standard that says we are not allowed to be human while at the same time not being able to be anything else. In order to deny our own humanness, we phase out, and we do it in countless different ways, and in ways that have become so ingrained into our society that we call it normal behavior. Smoking and drinking are just two ways. There are also many natural human behaviors that are used in a distorted way to hide from ourselves, such as unhealthy eating, sex, power, status, and entertainment.

Tuning into our emotions and questioning our long-held beliefs is not easy at first. We are shaking up the very things that we thought were our foundations, but if this confusion has been our foundation, we have been living on very shaky ground.

Both action and reaction follow thought. The quality of our lives is determined by the quality of our thoughts. We so little realize what we are doing to ourselves with our thoughts, both conscious and subconscious. Even deeper are the beliefs we hold about ourselves and the world around us. These deeply ingrained beliefs determine the way we perceive everything that happens to us. We blindly assume that our particular perception is the truth and stubbornly defend it, no matter what it is doing to us. We don't stop to think that many different meanings can be applied to any given situation, such as the motives behind what someone says to us. So much of Step 3 is about letting go of what we think we know and allowing reality to reveal itself as it is.

By tuning into ourselves and contemplating the four questions at the beginning of this passage, the reality of any situation will have a chance to be revealed.

Changing the way we react to life's circumstances can still be hard to do because we can easily lose our way. We need to stay focused on the life-enhancing principles of Steps 1 and 2, acceptance and responsibility. We need to stay motivated to continually care for our emotional life and in so doing gain a good feel for this new way of thinking and acting. To do this effectively we often need help to learn how to relate to and take care of our own painful emotions, which we have been habitually avoiding or abusing for so long.

Emotional Healing—The Art of *Being*

To effectively work with and process emotional energy, we need to learn how to *be* with emotions, to open our heart and mind to them and allow them to freely flow through us. Initially, when we do attempt to work with emotions, we tend to try to “fix” them or analyze them away. This method has only limited success and reaches the problem only on shallow levels. What needs to be understood is that emotions are meant to be felt.

They are like energy waves. If allowed to flow freely the way emotional energy is meant to, it passes quite quickly once having delivered its message to our consciousness. Emotions themselves don't really need fixing because that is not where the problem lies. The problem lies with our distorted thinking patterns. It is our distorted thinking patterns that cause, accumulate and perpetuate emotional energy. To uncover these self-defeating unconscious beliefs we need to literally follow the feeling trail. This allows the unconscious to be raised into conscious awareness, revealing beliefs that are often deeply hidden from normal investigation.

With our new attitude of loving acceptance of our humanness and a firm commitment to care for our emotional reactions, these beliefs can be safely re-examined and corrected. Often healing happens quite automatically because we are consciously re-entering this vulnerable inner-space with a loving heart, something that was missing when the incident first occurred.

Emotional healing is very much like entering an emotional time-tunnel that leads into various memories. Sometimes these old memories resurface quite vividly, sometimes we only feel the waves of releasing emotions. It is like we return to the scene where we find our past child, adolescent or adult self stuck in the difficult situation that created the confusion and emotional wounding. This confusion and trapped emotion became buried in our subconscious because there was no one there for us at the time with enough skills to help us process the hurt.

By returning to these past memories in your own mind with an open loving heart and a more enlightened attitude, you can literally be there for your own child-self in a way that enables your inner-child (the emotional needs of your lower-self) to be freed from the confusion and emotional stuckness. It also helps to imagine your aware, conscious, adult self actually stepping into this scene with your helpless child-self in order to take

loving care of this precious child. You can allow your child to perhaps have a good cry, to get out those pent-up emotions within your own imagination as you just be there with the child, providing acceptance and safety. Of course this child is within you and these emotions are going to be felt by you now and released through you now. Keeping open your compassionate heart to your humanness in this way enables these emotions to be released safely and effectively. You may have a good cry but feel a lot better for it.

This is valid for both women and men. In general men like to think they are not afraid or hurt. They have been taught to bury their feelings in order to be warriors and workers. Unfortunately this denial of feelings also destroys relationship intimacy. They deny their vulnerability by covering it up with anger. However, anger is fear projected outwards, which is covering over a vulnerable human self in need of love. This is a boy who has been deprived of emotional intimacy and shamed and bullied if he tries to enter this space. He quickly loses touch with the fact that it even exists and suffers the emptiness and confusion that men feel. The community then suffers the consequences of this confusion as men try to be dominant to feel safe. I have noticed that unnecessary anger is an increasing problem with women also, who are trying to regain and assert their power. Power must come with love and wisdom. Otherwise it only adds to the problems in our society rather than being part of the solution.

When our compassionate heart is consciously held open to our trapped emotional energy, once the emotional backlog is cleared a little, space is then available for the intelligence of the Higher-self. This is called insight, which reveals a more positive and empowering perspective on the past situation. Inevitably your inner-child/human-self feels loved again and safe again and regains self-worth. Do not underestimate how powerful this process can be.

This process is not about self-pity as is often assumed by those who are unwilling to step into this open-hearted compassionate space. Self-pity is about believing we are a victim, which means we must be holding someone at fault for the way we feel rather than recognizing that it is our own confusion that is the problem. There may be issues that need to be addressed concerning another's behaviour, but until we deal with our own confusion, we are likely to approach this issue as an upset inner-child rather than an empowered and mature adult. This process is therefore about self-responsibility, about self-care. You are caring for your lower-self, your own mind in other words. You are filling yourself up from the inside.

The most effective healing for children is to help them know that they are loved, that you accept them and love them no matter what. By giving them permission to safely feel and express their emotions, they quickly move through this energy. They then feel safe and trusting and are ready and open for guidance. Then you can give them a pep-talk and guide them back out into the world again. The wounded memories in your own mind are no different. The feeling of finally coming home to a safe and loving place and to a warm pair of arms to hug you is no different either. You are giving yourself an inner hug.

Trying to "fix" emotions is like telling emotionally distraught children to "pull their socks up and get on with it" without actually connecting with them on a heart-to-heart level first. This actually buries the emotion, erodes trust and destroys intimacy. Neither is it good to pander to the child's emotions, or adult emotions for the same reasons. This just creates weakness and selfishness behaviour such as self-pity and self-indulgence at the expense of others. A process has a beginning, a middle and an end. If properly handled, emotions can be effectively and efficiently processed, leading to insight, wisdom and inner-strength. It is essential that your emotional life is respected and properly looked after.

Your world will literally come alive as a result.

Our emotional mind is very deep and very complex. There are no quick fixes. Healing one memory often opens the door to another. It is an ongoing journey of self-care and self-maintenance.

While we are judging ourselves for simply being human, we are always going to want to tune out from ourselves, and while we continue to tune out, we will never get beyond our self-defeating behavior patterns. Our self-defeating beliefs will be free to merrily go on controlling our lives and robbing us of our potentially bright future in the process. These confusions are suffered by children because they have a survival investment in having others take care of them. Being emotionally dependent is necessary for a children. Children need looking after. However, such an approach to life clearly does not work for an adult. It keeps us locked into behavior patterns that bring us unhappiness.

More Tuning In

Considering what has been covered so far, tuning in is done of two levels:

- 1. Connecting to our Inner-Child**
- 2. Connecting to our Higher-Self**

1. Connecting to our Inner-Child

One of the most effective ways of looking at emotional pain, particularly trapped or past emotions, is to see it as our own child-self stuck in the past, calling out for help. Being an adult means that this child now belongs to us. We are responsible for our own lower-self. After all, this past pain is now coming from the confusion in our own mind, which just gets stirred up by situations around us. Being the only one responsible for this pain now may not seem just. Every adult is in the same boat, however, even though not everyone accepts this fact. Those of us who do

are more likely to find happiness and fulfillment.

Justice for past abuses can still be pursued, but despite what we assume, gaining justice does not necessarily give us deeper healing. Furthermore, when we think we are fighting for justice, we are often only looking for revenge, and when this is the case, we have an investment in not healing, because while we are still the victim we can still justify our need for revenge. Without exception, this type of thinking harms ourselves and our loved ones, and rarely achieves anything of value. Justice needs to be pursued for its own sake. Emotional healing does not depend on it.

Therefore, whenever we tune out it is like we are abandoning our own self, which just perpetuates the emotional wounds that we carry around. By tuning in instead, and by giving ourselves the time and space to feel, and to grow in acceptance of these feelings, it is like our child-self is finally being heard and given a safe and loving home to effectively grow up in.

When we are not heard as children, particularly on an emotional level, when people don't take time to connect to us for whatever reason, we literally feel like we don't exist. We develop beliefs which conclude that we are unworthy of their love and unworthy of love in general. Now we can validate our own existence, which is the root of self-empowerment.

Stepping into this new way of *being* can take some guidance, because we will run up against our distorted beliefs time and time again. This is not a bad thing though, because each time we do it is an opportunity to see ourselves in a better light. We then have the opportunity to consistently feed into our subconscious mind the new beliefs that work in our favor. In other words, we naturally get better at spotting these self-defeating beliefs and turning them around. Sooner or later our old habits turn into new ones that work for us rather than against us.

Being an adult means we must learn to effectively parent the child that is still alive within our memories. One of the wonderful spin-offs of building this type of relationship with ourselves is that everything we learn that helps us to make a real connection with our own vulnerable selves also works where connecting to our loved ones is concerned, which is perfectly logical when you think about it. For many people, making a real heartfelt connection with themselves is one of the most special and profound events in their life. This in itself can be life-changing. For those of us who suffer chronic depression, for example, this can be the very thing that breaks the grip of the depression for good.

2. Connecting to our Higher-Self

In my experience, confusion sets in when, for whatever reason, we get out of touch with our higher growth-orientated consciousness. When we tune into ourselves and feel, with a heart committed to acceptance and loving kindness, we are learning to take care of our child-self, our human-self. As we are doing this, and at first without even knowing it, we are also tuning into our higher growth consciousness. We are actively shifting our ego identity from that of a powerless child to that of a caring and empowered parent. Instead of just acting out our emotional baggage, we are increasingly taking caring of it. We naturally begin to align our consciousness to our Higher-Self. It is automatic because acting on behalf of love aligns us to its source and naturally strengthens this vital connection. If we put in the effort and persistence, we can really feel our inner-wisdom and power coming through, and sooner or later we find ourselves feeling a deep unconditional love that seems to come from nowhere. This is part of that heartfelt connection that I spoke about at the end of the previous passage.

Despite what many people say, you don't have to be special to experience this inner-source of unconditional love. You can have this experience as a normal part of your life. It is as easy as taking the time to lovingly care

for yourself, in particular your emotional self, and making this an essential part of your lifestyle. As you pay attention to the task of lovingly caring for yourself, your connection with your Higher-Self grows as it simply becomes a natural part of what you would call common sense. Many people have this without even realizing it. The rest of us have to make the effort to learn this self-love. That special feeling of unconditional love, more often than not, just creeps up on us. Occasionally we are able to look back and really see how far we have come, which often surprises us. John Lennon wrote in one of his songs, "Life happens when you are busy doing other things." I would change this around a bit and say life works for us while we are busy lovingly caring for ourselves, because when we are putting this into practice, we are showing our best side to the world.



I have what it takes to heal my confusion and fully care for my own wellbeing.



STEP FOUR

LIVING IN THE NOW

The next stage of the process is putting what we have learnt and what we choose into action everyday. This has two important effects. Firstly, by living what we have learnt, we soon discover that there is more to learn. We gain a better feel for any given issue and can look deeper into it. Secondly, we are able to experience the benefits of our increasing ability to better take charge of our lives through positive conscious choice rather than emotionally reacting out of hurt and fear. This increasing self-mastery naturally gives us more confidence. Living in the now aligns our life to reality and simplifies it as a result.



In every moment I have the power of choice, and the opportunity to learn from the experience of every choice.

The Uselessness of Regret and Worry

One of the things we discover while we are learning to care for ourselves is how much time we devote to regretting the past and worrying about the future. In this context guilt can be seen in the same light as regret. Of course both activities are a complete waste of time. While we are caught up in this type of thinking, we are tuned out from the present moment.

We are busy being lost in an imaginary world that is trapped in the past where we are always a powerless victim, or a least powerless to act in the real world. This type of thinking keeps our wounds alive and provides us with no space to grow.

The more we work on Steps 1,2 and 3, the more we can see that the only space where we can truly live is in the present moment. Of course old wounds are still with us, so when we feel them in the now, we deal with them in the now. This is called learning from the past, which is the only thing we can truly do with the past, and the past will keep weighing us down until we do. We can also make plans and set goals for the future, but we cannot dictate the results. It would be a safe prediction though to say that our future won't be bright if we spend our time worrying and regretting and beating ourselves up with guilt. Our future depends on how we take care of today, everyday.

The Importance of learning by Trial and Error

Unrealistic expectations placed on children to get things right first time is a very sad and common theme. As a therapist, this is one of the most common stories my clients share with me about their childhood experiences. Once awareness is awakened to the destructiveness of this form of discipline, it is often a shock to my clients to realize how much their lives have been effected by it.

In reality, one of the most joyful and satisfying experiences a child can have is the freedom and encouragement to explore new things. There is a certain thrill about approaching a new project in various different ways, suffering a bit of frustration at times, but with some gentle guidance and encouragement, finally mastering a new skill. If the parental guidance is appropriate, what the child will remember the most is the excitement of achievement. All the mistakes and frustrations along the way will not be regarded as a problem, rather, they will be regarded as the natural step-

ping-stones to success. The child grows up confident in his/her natural abilities and creative power. Disappointments are taken in one's stride without a sense of reduced self-worth.

How different it is when a child is pressured to get a task right the first time and then criticized and ridiculed when he/she naturally lacks understanding or stumbles over new challenges of coordination and problem solving. Fear and shame quickly become a part of the experience, and trying new things soon becomes too hard. Lack of self-confidence and creativity is the inevitable result, along with a retarded ability to effectively face life's challenges.

Other variations of the theme are when the carer does too much for the child, resulting in the child growing up thinking that they always need to be dependent on someone else to face life. The opposite extreme is the neglected child, who experiences little guidance and encouragement from an overly detached and uninvolved carer. When the child runs up against an obstacle that is difficult, there will be a tendency to give up and find something easier. This leads to shallowness and flightiness, an expectation that life should always be easy, resulting in a lack of commitment to relationships, for example.

A lack of emotional intimacy between carer and child and a feeling of not being accepted as they are leaves children feeling unloved and empty, a vessel all too easily filled by the supermarket choice of drugs and other destructive forms of entertainment on offer today.

The Confusion about Discipline

Attitudes toward discipline follow similar patterns. Discipline, persistence and determination are essential for facing life's challenges and creating the life that you want. When a child is disciplined with unrealistic expectations and harsh judgment, necessary guidance becomes oppres-

sive and Soul-destroying. The child either gives up, rebels, or becomes an unthinking conformist or an unfeeling perfectionist on the road to a heart attack before the age of fifty. Depression, anger and anxiety are common consequences.

When the discipline is erratic and contradictory, the child becomes confused and scattered. There can be a lack of consistency in adult life, leading to many disappointments. There is often a lack of sincerity, trust and trustworthiness.

When the child gets little discipline, there is again that shallowness and lack of commitment. Depression and various habits of trying to escape life may develop.

Being our own Parent

Self-defeating habitual behaviour patterns invariably start in childhood. At times if childhood is overly protected there can be a lack of preparedness for future challenges, which may leave us vulnerable to disillusionment and trauma later in life. In my experience though, patterns that start early in childhood are often the hardest to overcome and therefore need the most persistent and effortful countermeasures.

If your life is not working for you for some reason or another, it is essential to stop blaming yourself or other people or circumstances for your predicament. Instead, directly but compassionately face up to your own self-defeating beliefs. Changing yourself is the quickest way to change your world.

At first it can be confusing and difficult. We may have been living out these self-defeating patterns for many years. Our life and the people in it may be representative of these patterns also. When we start making changes in our lives we may run up against resistance from others who

have become dependent on the status quo. There is all too often a temptation to become lost in struggle and conflict trying to change other people and convince them of our point of view. This is a waste of time and energy, and portrays a lack of understanding and acceptance of human nature. It is normal to want to resist change. The ego is always looking for the comfort zone.

The secret is to get on with your own life and not react to other people's reactions. When we just get on with taking responsibility for our own life regardless, people soon get the message. Positive action always speaks louder than words and inevitably gains respect.

Practicing steps 1, 2 and 3 ensures that we stay on track with what is right for us without having to blame others or rebel against them. Step 1 reminds us to accept and face life as it is, and that everyone, including ourselves, has the right to be human and is ultimately worthy of love no matter what. Step 2 reminds us to accept full responsibility for our own life. As a conscious and aware adult, we are the parent of our inner-child/lower-self. We must take our vulnerable and confused self by the hand, get out there in life and live and learn. This includes being humble enough and responsible enough to reach out for help when we need it. Step 3 reminds us that we can't go forward if we don't know what we want. We won't gain a feel for what we want until we are willing to face and open a compassionate heart to our own confused and wounded inner-child. All negative judgment must be suspended, as stated in step 1. This means making time to stop, take some deep breaths to open up, and have a good look, listen and feel inside ourselves. It is like taking time to really connect to and get to know your own child-self. This is true intimacy and it is the greatest gift you can give to anyone. Children crave loving acceptance from their parents. It is what they want more than anything else, even though they may not know how to consciously communicate this to us. This is why most healing occurs in this *heart* space. It is

where the true power to love flows into us and from us to others. This is where our genuine needs are separated from the *neediness* of our wounded inner-child. Step 3 takes responsible care of the neediness and clarifies in our minds what actions we need to take for our own good and the ultimate good of others, whether they understand that or not.

Step 4 is then putting that clarity into action now with persistence and caring self-discipline. It is about positively acting rather than reacting. It is about keeping our lives simple and uncomplicated by avoiding worry and regret as well as any other self-defeating practices such as resentment and procrastination. Practicing Steps 1, 2, 3 and 4 is living and learning a true balance of thinking, feeling and acting while staying focused in conscious awareness. It is staying connected to our vulnerable humanness and the guidance of our Higher-Self.

As we learn to connect with ourselves and be "tuned in" rather than "tuned out", we can act more on our own behalf in the present moment because we are giving ourselves a chance to see through our confusion. We increasingly gain a feel for the right choices to make in each moment of our life that reflect the inner-guidance of our Higher-Self. As a natural result, we achieve more and we grow in wisdom and maturity. Our personal power and discipline naturally increases. Of course I am talking about genuine discipline - the sort of discipline that comes from love, which brings us freedom, not restriction.

The more we work with the other steps, the more we can act wisely in the moment, and the more access we have to our joy and creative intelligence. Our ability to find solutions to problems that once baffled us increases, and we become amazed at the choices that are available to us in life. The most powerful choice we have is how we respond to any given situation. If we respond differently often enough and persistently enough in accordance to what we truly want in our heart, our whole experience of

life transforms.

The Power of Consciousness

The power of consciousness comes from the fact that our Higher-Self rests eternally in the present moment, above and beyond all past conditioning. Pure consciousness, free of ego, is also independent of the base survival instincts of the lower-self. Within this aware consciousness is the knowing that no matter what comes and goes in the turbulent mind, consciousness can remain still and tranquil.

From consciousness comes our ability to observe our life from a higher-perspective and to sense our potential beyond the constrictions of conditioning and environment. Experienced meditators know this power very well. From this powerful seat of observation they can discern the subtlest workings of the body and the deepest dimensions of the mind, as well as the sublime dimensions of the Higher-Self.

Consciousness is the power of choice. Due to the fact that it resides in the now, it has the power to learn and adapt, whereas the lower-self is stuck in habit. When our consciousness aligns with the superconsciousness of the Higher-Self, it is able to discern truth/reality/the natural eternal laws of consciousness. From the power of this knowing, the confusions of the lower-self can be seen for what they are.

However, in its passive state, consciousness has no real power. This is the ego held captive and controlled by the lower-self. The lower-self only displays the pseudo power of fight or flight. This is reflected in the greed, self-righteous aggressiveness and cowardice of our modern society. The real power of consciousness comes into its own when it aligns to the Higher-Self through the principles of Steps 1 and 2. When we choose to accept ourselves as we are and commit to taking personal responsibility to lovingly care for our own mind and body, then a powerful

force is initiated into our lives. Consciousness is like a higher will. In order for it to be a powerful force in our lives, it must be activated. We must actively exercise our power of choice and parent our lives. When we do this, the power of our Higher-Self is accessed and can be channeled into our lives.

The mistake most people make, however, is to wait around for somebody else to take responsibility. This is being stuck in the lower-self and being unwilling to move for fear of not being loved by the outside world. The higher consciousness does not need to be loved by the outside world because it already rests in the eternal love of the Higher-self. Because of that, fear is no barrier to it. This is why, when we face our fears and push through, despite the initial difficulties, we feel a surge of power and euphoria afterwards. If we don't face our fears, we don't access the power that is available to us that enables us to transform our lives.



By choosing to act consciously and positively in all that I do each day, I create a positive future for myself and my loved ones.



STEP FIVE

LIVE THE PROCESS AS A WAY OF LIFE

Human beings have a tragic habit of refusing to take responsibility for the content of their own minds. We are like a car being driven by a confused child who does not have the skills to drive that car and who refuses to accept the reality of the road rules. When we keep crashing into things, we blame everybody else for the problem. When we are not blaming others for our poor driving skills, we are judging ourselves as unworthy, but do nothing or very little to learn better driving skills. However, this does not fit with the rules of the road, the rules of life. Adult human beings are meant to emotionally stand on their own two feet. Instead we judge and blame to avoid facing the pain and confusion that has accumulated in our minds, and punish ourselves and others when we can't avoid this pain. The result, of course, is just more pain. Worse still, we keep passing this pain and confusion down the line from generation to generation. Continuing on in this way ensures that we stay blind to reality and thus never discover the natural laws of life that create peace, harmony, love and fulfillment in our lives.

To make it as clear as I can, below I have summarized these laws of life. Myself and countless others around the world, and also throughout the ages, have spent years researching these natural laws, this perennial wisdom. We have put this wisdom into practice in our own lives and have reaped the benefits.

- ♡ Recognize Unconditional Love as the ultimate life-giving force in the universe and uncompromisingly dedicate yourself to living this ideal.
- ♡ Practice daily a self-awakening, self-healing and self-evolving process that sets you on a journey toward being a living example of Unconditional Love for the benefit of yourself and all beings.
- ♡ All decisions you choose to make, make them for positive heart-felt reasons that genuinely feel right for you. Such decisions are more likely to benefit yourself and all others in the long run. Avoid making decisions that are designed to punish others for your emotional hurts—this is the source of all pain and destruction in the world.
- ♡ You have the right to look after yourself and to say no when necessary. Saying no does not cancel out Unconditional Love. You do not have to judge/hate someone in order to choose not to agree with them or to even associate with them.
- ♡ When you fall out of Unconditional Love, know that you are confused. It is your adult responsibility to honestly face this confusion and heal it.
- ♡ Staying in a state of Unconditional Love depends on no one but yourself. As a being of consciousness, you have total power over your mind. Accessing that power depends on your growing awareness and your willingness to act on that awareness.

There are a thousand ways these laws can be written and they inevitably confront us and throw up a thousand questions in our minds. The reason for this is that these laws cannot be comprehended by our lower-self, because this lower level of mind bases its existence on fear-reaction. Only conscious awareness, aligned to the Higher-Self, comprehends these principles, because this higher mind is centered in love-response. Actively taking loving care of our own humanness is the only way I know to effectively awaken our consciousness to this higher reality, simply because love is the only thing that heals. By consciously caring for our own mind, we get a direct experience of what works in all relationship dynamics. Of course, the process is not completed until we can love every one else unconditionally as well. There are no exceptions if true inner-healing and consciousness evolvment is our goal.

It is not about getting it right. It is about accepting the validity of the ideals and being willing to have a go every day for the rest of our lives. Any steps along this path bring benefits to our lives. If we persist, despite the confusions of our lower-self, we soon discover how incredibly beautiful life can be, even with the occasional pain and struggle. Getting it right is a matter of a naturally growing self-mastery born out of trial and error and a commitment to never give up on ourselves.

Step 5 is about recognizing and accepting that life is a journey of continual growth in wisdom and maturity. When we accept this level of responsibility in our lives, "the sky's the limit". It is our stuck child-self that says we should be magically happy without actually making the effort to learn how to create happiness in our lives. This confused part of our mind is still waiting for mum and dad to finish the job, but this is not going to happen, and there is grieving we all have to go through around this. Our current loved ones can't do the job for us either. It is too much for one human being to take on that job for another.

Because of our lack of faith and trust in ourselves, we also have trouble trusting others. We only tend to give self-improvement programs half an effort at the most, and then say, "see, I told you it wasn't going to work." Step 5 urges us to confront this confused thinking and finally see that it is this type of thinking that robs us of the life that we deep down know we can have.

We are freer to get serious and take responsibility for our lives when we accept that it is okay to be human. Accepting our humanness also means accepting that we have naturally got what it takes to overcome our problems, even though we don't at first know how to access our inner potential. If we never give up, and refuse to see failure as defeat, but instead just another opportunity to grow, we will find the personal power to manage anything that life can throw at us. In fact, feeling such personal power becomes exciting, and personal growth becomes a natural way of life.

Freedom is a state of mind. You can be restricted physically beyond your control, but your lower-self, your human mind is totally your own. The way you take care of your mind has enormous influence in every aspect of your life. The relationship between your consciousness and the rest of your being, higher and lower, is your life's foundation. From this perspective, life is definitely what you make it. Therefore, from this moment on, take your mind into your own hands as best you can and step into the positive flow of life and start living. If you persist no matter what, you will be amazed by the results.



I am in charge of my life. With Love as my guide I will create peace, fulfillment and abundance.





THE 5-STEP PROCESS

Summary

Step 1. Self Acceptance

Without self acceptance we cannot heal or grow. Often we may feel that our problem is that other people don't accept us, until we stop and realize that this simply points to the ways in which we don't accept ourselves. Every human being has fears and insecurities and gets confused. Every human being has natural wisdom and a deep capacity to love. When we can accept both sides of ourselves, we can then consciously heal our wounded and confused self with our own inner-wisdom. The doorway to our true potential then opens to us. We are then in a better position to accept and work with any challenges that we may face in life.

Step 2. Personal Responsibility

When we combine acceptance with responsibility, self-condemnation is replaced with compassionate caring for our own humanness. Facing our issues is much easier when choosing this approach because personal responsibility simply becomes an opportunity to build a better relationship with ourselves. The result is an increasing inner harmony. Also, unhealthy dependency and conflict is reduced, improving our relationships with those around us.

Step 3. Let Go & Tune In

The key to happiness and empowerment is a harmonious connection to our own self. Getting caught up in judgement and conflict with ourselves and others shatters this connection. As we learn to let go of these negative thought patterns and instead tune into and care for our own needs and feelings, we discover our own power of wisdom and healing. As a result we gain an increasing experience of command over our own lives. As our hearts heal and open, we increasingly attract love and abundance into our lives.

Step 4. Live in the Now

When we get in touch with our needs and feelings, we are increasingly able to achieve the clarity of mind to take wise action on our own behalf. Another benefit of tuning in is that we discover how to learn from the past, set goals and make plans for the future, but live in the now. As a result our life simplifies, and our happiness and vitality increases. Self-empowerment and self-mastery becomes a real experience in our lives.

Step 5. Live the Process

Step 5 is about committing to this new empowered way of approaching life. By working these steps, every problem becomes an opportunity to connect more with ourselves and grow stronger. Our ability to trust and be confident increases. We attract healthier relationships and we better manage those relationships we have. Every day we continue to evolve into our true potential. Every day we have something to give back to the world, for we increasingly have love to spare.

Putting the Process into Practice





5 KEYS TO CARING FOR YOURSELF

1. Daily Journal

Keeping a daily journal is the cornerstone to caring for ourselves. Finding the discipline to keep a daily journal can be difficult at first. Our initial resistance is a good indication as to how much we have learned to habitually tune out from ourselves. We habitually look for love outside of us. We are looking for someone else to take responsibility for us. Sitting down at our journal each day is like sitting down over coffee, as the conscious self, with our friend, our human self. If we resent our friend, we are not going to be motivated to spend time with him/her. When we are caught up in victim thinking, the wounded inner-child, who still lives inside our mind, is running the show. Our inner-child is always looking for someone else to take over the responsibility of caring for it. This is as it should be if we are a child. However, now that we are adults, such thinking is self-destructive. The adult in us must now learn to lovingly care for our own inner-child. Personal responsibility is about caring for ourselves.

Emotional energy must not be allowed to remain stuck in our body/mind. This brings down our psychological and physical health. If this stuckness does occur then the emotions are being held their by confused beliefs. Writing out your issues, feelings and thoughts with the 5-Step Process in

mind will enable you to uncover the confusion and clear the emotional backlog. You will learn about yourself and build stronger pathways between your Higher and lower self in the process.

Your life is your business and you are the manager. It is your responsibility to ensure that you don't end up emotionally and spiritually bankrupt. Love, harmony and abundance is already yours. The doorway to all this is within the heart of you. Your conscious awareness and action is the key. Your daily conscious connection with your human self and your Higher-Self is the foundation, the rock, that your entire life is built on. (See "Creating Self-Awareness" on page 76 for some hints on how to use your journal effectively)

Writing in a journal is about:

- ◆ Getting to know yourself.
- ◆ An opportunity to plan your day.
- ◆ An opportunity to express, get in touch with, and define your emotions.
- ◆ Keeping track of emotional issues that tend to build up and interfere with your peace of mind and wellbeing and to explore ways of taking care of these emotions.
- ◆ Uncovering and challenging self-defeating beliefs/perceptions and negative self-talk.
- ◆ Setting goals and assessing your progress each day without negative judgment.
- ◆ Getting in touch with your Wisdom by simply endeavoring to take responsibility for the challenges in your life. This can come in the form of:
 - Reminding yourself of the principles of lovingly caring for yourself.
 - Letting go of your need to blame or judge situations as

wrong, and focus on what your needs are and how to initiate action to take care of them.

- o Contemplating on the solutions rather than dwelling on what you perceive are the problems.

This is your own personal workbook. No one is going to mark it. You don't have to write things that are profound - we often do when we don't mean to. It is about keeping a focus on your personal growth—keeping ourselves pointed consistently in the right direction. It is particularly about self-acceptance and personal responsibility. If you persist, in a short time writing in your journal will become a treasured and routine part of the day. It is also a good reality check because neglecting your journal is a sure indication that you are neglecting yourself. Keeping a daily dairy is a way of getting comfortable with yourself and once you are settled into the routine it only takes a couple of pages a day to stay in touch.

When you can consistently accept yourself as you are, and keep a daily focus on your life, you can, one day at a time, make great changes in your life.

Meditation

Meditation can also be a part of this process. Meditation is about being totally present and tuned into ourselves without judging what we experience. It is about getting to know ourselves, accepting ourselves and working with what we find. If you combine meditation with journaling and reading, you have for yourself a powerful process that will effectively reprogram your mind and change your life. There are three main forms of meditation: relaxation, concentration and insight/integration. (See the booklet entitled “Meditations for Awareness, Healing, Integration and Worthiness” from the 5-Step Process booklet series)

2. Education and Inspiration

Studying self-care and self-empowerment books is essential to our personal growth and wellbeing. Look at this statement carefully. Note how I used the word "study" and not just "read." When we study something we read it more than once and even make our own notes. It is of little use to read a self-help book like a novel and then expect it to make a difference to our lives. We must study such books, do the exercises and endeavor to put them into practice. If we do this, the same book will reveal more and more to us each time we reread it. This is how we learn anything. The same goes for self-help audio and audio-visual materials. This is the only sure way to reprogram our minds - to kick out those old self-defeating mindsets that keep blocking us from love, serenity, joy, and abundance.

It is also important to make a distinction between "self-care" and "self-empowerment" books. We need to learn how to take care of our inner-selves - our emotions and state of mind - by studying self-care books. We also need to learn how to effectively act and create in the world and to stay motivated, and we do this by studying self-empowerment books.

Few of us stop to think that being inspired is our own responsibility, but accepting this responsibility may mean making the effort to find that person who has the right message for us, and the message we need to hear naturally changes as we change. It is all part of keeping our consciousness focused in the right direction.

Persistent, consistent, focused thought inevitably manifests that thought into physical reality. Your unconscious mind or lower-self is doing this for you all the time but it often creates what you, as the conscious self, don't want. Learn to create consciously and you will have what you want.

3. Counseling/Therapy/Life-Coaching

We are not failing by not being able to do it alone. What prevents us from seeking counseling is often our lack of self-worth. We feel this lack of self-worth in the form of shame. Shame is a very uncomfortable emotion to feel and we cope with this by covering it up with pride. Pride says we have to pretend we are OK when we know that we are really hurting. Pride was created by being expected, as a child, to get things right first time, instead of being able to discover life and ourselves through trial and error, which is the healthy and normal way to learn. We were expected to do the impossible. Pride prevents us from getting the care that we need. Allowing ourselves to stay trapped in negative emotions and self-defeating beliefs is very damaging to our wellbeing. It is literally toxic to our mind and body. Our perceived lack of self-worth is something that we have learned over time. It is a confusion in the mind that can be healed.

We are all limited by our personal experiences and our beliefs. Every athlete who wants to reach a high standard needs a coach. We need to interact with someone who is trained in mental/emotional "fitness" to give us new information and a new perspective. Conscious Living is a skill like anything else, and this skill needs to be learned in order to gain the fulfillment we are looking for. There is no one who would not benefit from working with a personal counselor/life-coach, and most highly successful people do just that.

4. Personal Sharing and Development Groups

Another way our fear traps us into self-destructive cycles is when we believe our mind when it says not to trust anyone. I often hear the statement, "I don't trust anyone I don't know." How then are we going to get to know anyone new? How are we going to learn anything new? We also want people to be perfect in some way that suits our own particular

comfort zone before we trust them. Such fears can only be overcome by learning to trust ourselves to know how to work with any new situation. We can always think of instances when people have hurt us, but when we think of these instances we don't take the next step and look at how we got ourselves into these situations in the first place. Also, the quality of our relationships reflects the quality of our relationship with ourselves. Once again it is time to stop being the victim and start taking care of ourselves.

It is not what happens to us, it is how we feel about it and deal with it that determines the quality of our experiences. Finding a personal sharing group to participate in enables us to be in a group of like-minded people who are making the effort to accept themselves and one another. When we make the effort to regularly attend such a group, we quickly realize that we are not so different after all, that their stories are very similar to our own. We get to hear how they are putting the principles of personal care and self-empowerment to work in their lives and therefore learn from their experiences. We begin to feel more comfortable about ourselves through the loving acceptance of the others in the group and we link up with people who truly know how to care about us, because they are making the effort to care about themselves. We are nurturing ourselves by linking up to a loving community of positive people.

Participating on a weekly basis in such a group is one of the best ways of finding self-acceptance and the life-skills that you are looking for, which is essential for opening up to our own higher wisdom.

5. Look After Your Body

Another obvious tell-tale sign that we are not caring for ourselves is the way we take care of our bodies. I am not going to talk at length about healthy diet and fitness. We all know what this means, and there are countless books on the market that can guide us in this area. As always,

common sense is the key.

Consciously caring for ourselves includes going for regular walks, for example, and making the time to prepare wholesome meals. Neglecting our physical fitness, under-eating or over-eating, rigid and obsessive diets or frequently eating poor quality foods means that we need to accept and love ourselves more.

R&R - Rest and Recreation

We need to make a distinction between rest and recreation. Rest is about the cessation of activity. A round of golf is not rest, it is recreation. Rest is essential for healing and rejuvenation of body and mind. Rest in the form of meditation is one of the best ways to learn how to relax. Relaxation meditation is very easy to do. It is now very common place, so finding a suitable meditation tape/CD or someone to show you some simple techniques takes little effort. Just sitting on a grassy slope looking out over a lake is a relaxation meditation. Some forms of Yoga fit into this category as well. If you can't sit still for any length of time then you need to get in touch with why, because if you don't, you are liable to have a very short life.

Meditation is also about having a restful mind. We can have a restful mind while being active, and indeed this is the goal one would wish to achieve. A restful mind is a mind that has clarity, joy and detachment. Usually we have to start this practice sitting down and doing it in a more concentrated form before we are then able to take it into our daily activities. The 5-Step Process that you are beginning to learn by reading this book is a powerful meditation that we can take with us wherever we go.

Having fun is also essential for healing and rejuvenation. All too often we get on the treadmill of thinking that we can't be happy until we achieve this or that, or until a certain person treats us "properly". Mean-

while we are wasting our opportunity to enjoy life now. Happiness is a choice. It does not depend on outside circumstances. We can literally choose to have fun whenever we wish, and this is essential for inner-healing and personal growth. Our body and mind need to rest and find enjoyment in order to have time to fully integrate our lessons in life and the expansion of consciousness this causes. We need to realize that when our mind changes, our body changes as well. The atomic structure of our bodies is actually going through an evolutionary process. This refinement of the body is driven by the evolution of our consciousness—personal growth in other words. Our body is denser and naturally takes longer than the mind to settle into the new ways of perceiving life.

If we don't make the time to rest and have fun, we soon lose our motivation and vitality, and we may even burn out. Like a restful mind, a joyful mind is a clear mind. A clear mind is a creative mind - one that looks for solutions rather than worries about problems. Furthermore, once you have connected up to your personal sharing group, there is a good chance you will find someone to share fun times with and with whom you can also relate to.



I have everything I need within me and around me to take care of myself and change my life. It is just a matter of looking for it until I find it!



CREATING SELF-AWARENESS

A guide to using your journal

Tuning in

Over the coming weeks, list in your journal all the ways you catch yourself "tuning out" - that is; avoiding paying attention to how you are feeling, whether it is your thoughts, your emotions, or your body you are actively not paying attention to. Remember, whenever you feel disharmony within your body or mind, you can be sure that a belief that is not aligned to reality is in control. Your body/mind is trying to communicate this very fact to you with emotional energy and physical symptoms. Your experience will not change in any real way until that belief has been identified and turned around.

Ways we tune out

For example, some of the ways we tune out are: comfort eating, alcohol, mind-altering drugs, criticizing others or ourselves, TV, video games, sex, sport, severe dieting, using our will to shut down our emotions, continually making light of things, worry, regret, over-working, too many nights out, reading half-a-dozen self-help books at a time, too much reading in general, controlling people or allowing others to control us. Are there any other examples that have occurred to you? Note that what makes these things problematic is the reasons we do them, not necessarily the actions themselves.

Staying with feeling

When you feel confident enough, with an attitude of compassion and caring toward yourself, do your best to stay with your feelings, whether they concern your body or emotions. Allow yourself to stay present with them, follow them into yourself and see where they take you. Each physical feeling has an emotional issue attached to it. Ask your body what this issue is, relax and wait for what comes to you. Do your best to allow the stuck emotion to go free so it can wash through you and out of your system. Allow yourself to fully feel whatever is washing through you, remembering that you are completing a process that you did not have the opportunity to do when the emotion first became trapped within you.

Remember that emotions are pure energy. Releasing them cannot harm you. Only the wrong attitude toward our emotions causes potential harm. We keep them trapped by judging ourselves as unworthy as human beings. Remember that the longer an emotional charge remains trapped within your body/mind, the more chance there is of anxiety, depression, and disease. Also remember that an attitude of loving compassion and caring toward your emotional and physical pain will eventually replace this pain with peace and healing. A few moments of release, even if it takes hours, weeks or months to achieve, can save years of suffering.

Remember that you cannot truly connect to another until you can truly connect to yourself. Furthermore, you cannot truly connect to your Higher-Self until you are willing to connect to your lower-self, your humanness.

Remember those four important questions you need to be asking yourself:

- **How do I feel?**
- **What are my needs in this situation?**

- **How am I allowing myself to play the victim?**
- **What can I do to accept full responsibility for my needs and care for them with loving kindness toward myself and all others?**

Time needs to be taken to really get to the depth of yourself with each question. Question one is about listening to your body, (with an attitude of loving acceptance toward yourself), and being aware of what your body is communicating to you. Try to name the emotions that you are feeling and describe them as best you can. Observe how the physical sensations in your body are revealing where your trapped emotional energy is being stored.

Question two is about how you are trying to get love in any given situation. What need is this child in you trying to fulfill, within your memory and now? Recognize how vulnerable you were then, and even now as an adult. Can you feel this vulnerability now?

Question three is identifying how you are giving your power away by holding other people responsible for your happiness. You may be running on old self-defeating childhood conditioning. The tell-tale sign of this is when an issue is repeatedly playing on your mind. Let it play but then drop the victim story and follow the emotion/feeling instead. This will lead you to the confusion that is embedded within your own mind. This confusion needs to be seen for what it is and dealt with. This is the point where you can start reclaiming your personal power by caring for your vulnerable lower-self.

Question four is where you put your commitment to care for yourself into action. Remember, it is not about having to be so self-reliant that you can't reach out for help. Finding the right help is a part of accepting re-

sponsibility, just like taking our child to the doctor etc. when necessary.

It is essential that you accept your humanness into your own heart as best as you can. You need to acknowledge or feel these needs as a part of taking responsibility for them, no matter how irrational they may seem. A child is not often capable of being rational. A child is a child, and this child is still alive within your memory network. Consciously connecting to your inner-child is helpful where sorting out these needs is concerned.

This commitment to care for your emotional self, and putting this commitment into action tells your Higher-Self that you are serious about accepting the responsibility for your own healing. This gives your Higher-Self the opportunity to help you achieve this goal in every way possible. Your Higher-Self can then guide you because you are now open to this guidance. But this depends always on the degree to which you, yourself as conscious awareness, remain open to your lower-self. You as an ego are the doorway through which your Higher-Self and your humanness can flow together and create healing. Everything depends on your willingness and honest attempts to be there for yourself.

Your Higher-Self does not require you to reach some standard of perfection. You are only required to do the best you can in any given moment, to simply have an honest go. Your Higher-Self is constant and non-discriminating. It is there when you make the connection. Asking yourself these questions each time you find yourself stuck in emotional disharmony will enable you to get to the bottom of things and release yourself from unhealthy dependency on others and the inevitable fear and conflict this brings.

Write down what you discover from each question in your journal to help your conscious awareness work with the issues more powerfully and effectively. It will be there to refer back to so you can gain more insight

later on.

Staying in touch with your thoughts

Are your thoughts judging or criticizing you or others? Are they based in victim thinking - i.e. wanting to punish or blame, falling into self-pity, etc? Take some time to consider different ways of seeing the situation based on you being confused but totally worthy and acceptable, and seeing the others in the situation the same way. How can you change the way you approach this issue by taking responsibility for what you are feeling? How would gently, patiently, and lovingly caring for yourself and those around you help the situation? If you need to say no to someone, can you think of a way to be firm but compassionate at the same time, without compromising yourself? Write down what you discover, negative or positive.

What is underneath?

When you catch yourself tuning out, make time to get in touch with the feelings or thoughts that your mind was avoiding. Carry a small notebook with you wherever you go and jot them down if you can't get to your journal right then and there. Then when you can, spend some time writing down what you have discovered in your journal and spend more time just feeling and getting in touch with it. Write down the way you chose to avoid feeling or chose not to take responsibility for the way you were thinking.

Consequences of tuning out

What have you noticed you are doing to yourself when you tune out? For example:

- ◆ Not caring for yourself
- ◆ Abandoning yourself
- ◆ Disregarding your own wisdom

- ◆ Harming yourself physically
- ◆ Punishing yourself in other ways
- ◆ Repressively controlling yourself
- ◆ Locking your mind in pride and self-righteousness
- ◆ Denying your feelings
- ◆ Judging yourself for being human

What else has occurred to you? What are some of the more specific things that you do to punish yourself for being human? How has your commitment to care for yourself changed since practicing self-awareness? Write down what you have discovered about yourself in your journal.

Inner Wisdom

What insights, ideas, decisions, affirmations and goals have come to you while working this process? Write them down before you forget. Have faith in yourself. As aware consciousness you have a direct connection through your Higher-Self to the wisdom of the ages.

Now find ways to put what you have learned from your higher wisdom into practice.



Other Booklets in the 5-Step Process series:

1. **5 Steps to Freedom:** A path to inner harmony and personal growth. (An introduction to the 5-Step Process and companion to the other booklets).
2. **Turning Conflict into Harmony:** Building a relationship that works.
3. **How to Succeed in Life by Following Your Heart:** Working with a process to create balance and continual progress to achieve your goals.
4. **Meditations for Awareness, Healing, Integration & Worthiness:** Learning and practising meditation.

Books by the same Author:

1. **Open Your Heart & Set Yourself Free:** Emotional Healing, wisdom and empowerment. (Earlier editions are titled "Being Human")
2. **5 Steps for Mastering Life:** Living consciously in the 21st century.

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About the Author



Phil began his own inward journey of personal and spiritual development in 1984. With his natural abilities he soon found himself helping others do the same, with one to one counseling and group work. Over the years, Phil privately studied Existential Psychology, Theosophy, Buddhism, Metaphysics, and Hands-on Healing. He also completed a degree on the subject of Human Consciousness at the University of Queensland, which included Jungian and General Psychology. Phil now works at his own counseling and complimentary therapies center in Brisbane while writing and teaching on the subject of personal and spiritual development using, amongst other frameworks, the 5 Step Process, which he developed himself. The 5-Step Process is closely aligned to the school of Psychosynthesis, developed by Robert Assigioli.

Phil's skills include Transpersonal Psychotherapy, which includes orthodox counseling techniques and psychology training coupled with an extensive knowledge and practice of the ancient and sacred techniques and philosophy of spiritual integration. Phil is also a Dharma and meditation teacher, using contemporary Buddhist and Theosophical frameworks and also the 5-Step Process.

He is a dedicated practitioner of his own spiritual and personal healing, integration and development, which he regards as his most important source of training as a therapist and Dharma Teacher. He regards his life as a living meditation, seeking harmony with life on every level, allowing all life's experiences to be his teacher.