

The Personal Transformation Course

Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life

Tim Ong



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Change Your Thinking, Change Your
Life 2010

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Course Materials compiled by Dr. Tim Ong

Personal Transformation Course

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About This Course

The Personal Transformation Course was a year-long workshop, held once a month, that was facilitated by Dr. Ong for two groups of self improvement enthusiasts – one group in Bandar Sungai Long and another in Kelana Jaya, from 2010 to 2011. The materials for the workshop originated from various sources, both old and modern, and are readily available in the libraries, bookshops and on the Internet.

*"Know thyself,
Know thy enemies.
In a hundred battles,
Win a hundred victories."*

Lao Tze

Goal of This Course

The aim of this course is to assist participants in gaining deep understanding of self through a process of self discovery and inner exploration of the mind. It is through self understanding that one is able to transcend the limitations that one has unconsciously imposed on oneself.

The goal, therefore, is to help participants overcome these self-imposed limitations so that they are able to love themselves fully, gain mastery over the self, and eventually live and function beyond the self, i.e. living from the absolute.

Modules

There are twelve modules for this course – one module for each month. Each class lasts about three hours, with a short tea break in the middle of the class.

The modules are:

- Introduction, Life Map, Self-Inventory and Goal-Setting
- Understanding Universal Laws
- Understanding our Mind
- Projections and Mirroring
- Shadows, Resistance and Fears
- Belief System and Mental Habits
- Understanding Emotions
- Forgiveness, Acceptance and Letting Go
- Communication Skills
- Relationships
- Finding Meanings in Life
- Living beyond the Self

This book is a compilation of all the materials used in this course, which includes a write-up by Dr. Ong for each module, some worksheets, diagrams, videos and references to other resources.

MODULE ONE

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

About the Course

The goal of the **Personal Transformation course** is to change the way you think, feel and behave in order to change your life for the better - physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. In the process, you will also notice a positive change financially. The end result is that you will live a life that has more unconditional love and acceptance, and less fear.

*Fearlessness is not only possible,
It is the ultimate joy.*

Thich Nhat Hanh

Ideally, we want to totally eliminate all fears from our lives, and we can only do that when we see ourselves as spiritual beings. As long as we see ourselves as physical beings, we will continue to be attached to our body, which means we will be in fear of our physical death.

Since death is inevitable for everyone, we may as well learn to accept it, and acceptance comes easiest when we see ourselves as spiritual beings. We then see death as just a transition from one physical existence to another. Death is only a change of one physical body to another, much like changing our clothes.

An Inner Journey

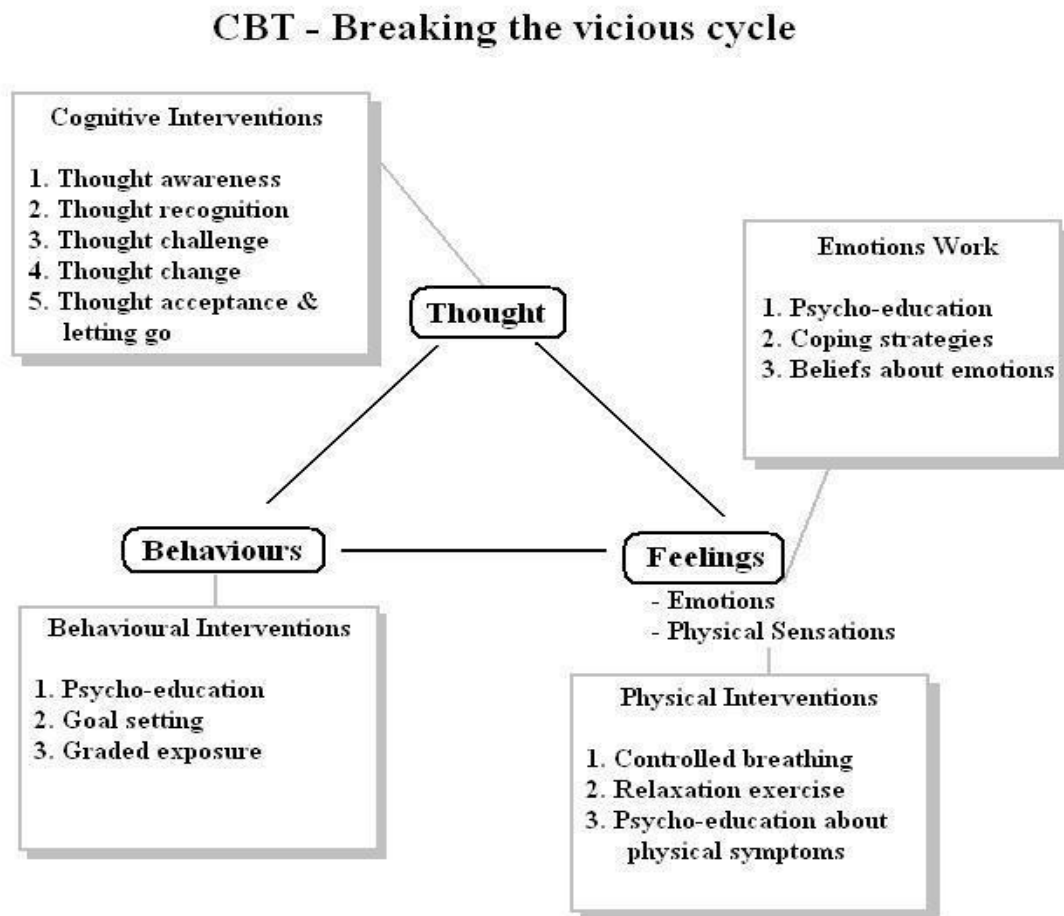
Personal transformation is an inner journey. It involves having the **courage** to look at ourselves truthfully, facing our **shadows** and **fears**, so that we can recognize where we have erred. It is a journey of self exploration, self discover and self knowledge. It is an intimate examination of our mind - both conscious and unconscious - and the way we think, and the **mental habits** that we have acquired.

It is an honest look at how our thinking affects our emotions, and how those emotions in turn affect our behavior. It is here that we will examine, explore and discover the truth to the statement that "mind is the forerunner of all states". We will see and understand how we perceive relative truths and erroneously assume them to be ultimate truths. We will examine why it is impossible for us to actually perceive ultimate truths through an uncultivated and untrained mind.

We will also look at our **needs**, **desires** and **motivations**, and examine our **limiting beliefs** regarding our needs, which in turn arise from a wrong belief about who we really are. Once we have dug deep into the inner core of our being, we will get a glimpse of our true nature, and understand how we have created our lives unconsciously via our own inner **projections** and **mirroring**. Only then can we break the vicious cycles we are caught in and undo the negative mental habits that we have unconsciously acquired.

Having understood the links between thoughts, feelings and behavior, we will then learn and use new skills and tools that will help us to change our mental habits, and right our wrong thinking. To succeed in this, we will need strong discipline and good group support to motivate each group member to constantly and consistently move forward.

The diagram below, extracted from a psychology book on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), shows the links between thoughts, feelings and behaviors, and the various areas and strategies to work with.



Universal Laws

In order for us to be able to completely understand ourselves, we must also familiarize ourselves with the universe we live in, and in particular, the universal laws that govern our lives. We will study in depth about the seven spiritual laws of Hermes Trismegastus, the God of Wisdom of the ancient Greeks. It is believed that Hermes is also Thoth, the ancient God of Egypt.

Our goal of studying these spiritual laws is to thoroughly understand them so that we can then live in accordance with these immutable laws. Only in this way can we achieve our ultimate goal of living a life of peace, contentment and abundance.

Self Rating Scales

Rate yourself honestly from a scale of 0 (worst) to 10 (best) in these areas:

1. **Happiness scale:** How happy or joyful are you with your life at this point?

0 _____ 10

2. **Health scale:** How satisfied are you with the state of your health:

(a) spiritually

0 _____ 10

(b) mentally

0 _____ 10

(c) emotionally 0 _____ 10

(d) physically? 0 _____ 10

3. **Abundance scale:** How satisfied are you with what you have (in terms of materials such as house, car, properties, money or in terms of achievements) right now?

0 _____ 10

4. **Relationship scale:** How happy are you with regards to your relationship with:

(a) yourself
0 _____ 10

(b) your spouse
0 _____ 10

(c) your children
0 _____ 10

(d) your parents
0 _____ 10

(e) your friends and/or colleagues?
0 _____ 10

5. **Contentment scale:** How contented (at peace) are you right now with your life?

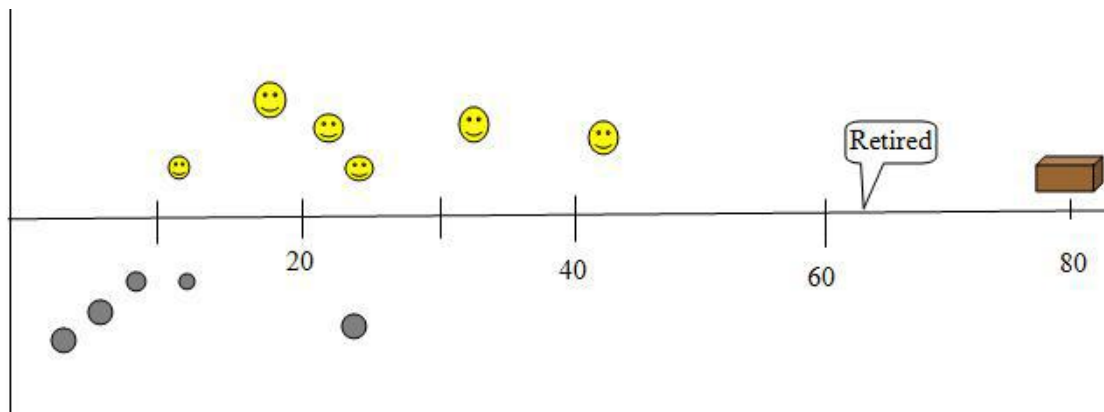
0 _____ 10

Date your self-rating scales. Keep the scoring to yourself and compare it to a similar scoring at the end of the year to see how much has changed in your life.

Life Map

Life is a journey. As in all journey, we have a starting point and a final destination. In addition, our destination is most effectively accomplished when we plan our journey well. We do that by “beginning with the end in mind” (Steven Covey).

Let us start by looking at our journey thus far.



The diagram above is my life map. It is a simple way to see my life at a glance – what had happened in my past and what I hope to achieve in the future. It shows the peak experiences (above the center line) and the trough or bad experiences (below the center line) in my life.

Downs:

- Witnessed a terrible fight between my mother and father, physical and abusive
- May 13 incident, imprint of fear for people in uniform and authority
- Standard One, slapped by headmaster at assembly
- Form Two, slapped by headmaster while coming down from first floor
- Depression, took one month leave from work to travel in China

Ups:

- Top student in school, Standard Six
- AFS experience
- Admission to medical school, University Malaya
- Working life in Sandakan, Sabah
- Dating and getting married
- Started SLBS and spiritual work in the community

Questions:

1. Have you been traveling your life journey with a plan? Or have you been sailing along wherever the winds took you?
2. If you are dying right now, how would you look back at your life? Would you say it has been a successful and fulfilling life? Or has it been a failure?

Begin with the End in Mind

A life map is useful not only to take a quick look at your life. It is also an instrument to see how you want your life to turn out in the end. Thus, by beginning with the end in mind, we can know our final destination and plot our life path accordingly.

The Five Wishes of Gay Hendricks

Imagine that you are at your death bed. Your death is imminent. You look back at your life. Now consider this – has your life been fulfilling and successful? Or has it been a failure? Be totally honest with yourself. You have to be, when you are dying. You cannot hide the truth from yourself; not anymore.

If you have been satisfied with your life, then you need not go further.

However, if you deem your life to have been a failure (up to this point), ask yourself this question:

“What is the one thing you need to do to make your life a success?”

One interesting thing that is notable is that most people, when they break down their life into areas such as relationships, career, health, etc, identify relationships to be an area where they have failed. Whether this relationship is with their parents, their spouse or children, or even with friends, what we realized when we are at our death bed is that the most important thing in our life is not the things we have accumulated (money and properties) but the quality of the relationships we have with others closed to us and with ourselves.

Peace and contentment is experienced when we see our relationships with others and ourselves as warm and fulfilling. If they are not, we find that we have loose ends and unfinished business that we would like to finish satisfactorily. We look for a good closure.

Exercise

1. Do the Five Wishes exercise, write it down on a piece of paper
2. Sharing in a small group
3. Make them (the five wishes) your life goals

FIVE WISHES WORKSHEET

A Guide To Asking The Simple Question That Can Make All Your Dreams Come True

The Gift

In my thirties I received the gift of a question that changed the course of my life. My decision to answer the question created a life blessed with love, wealth and joy...a life in which all my dreams came true. Now, I want to offer you the gift of the question, with the intention that you will use its power to create your own fulfilled life.

The Invitation

Are you willing to receive the gift of the question and use it to create your own fulfilled life?

If you are, transport yourself in your imagination to the end of your life. Imagine you are on your deathbed, and I am visiting you.

The Questions

I ask you: Was your life a complete success?

If you answer "No," ask yourself the main reason your life was not a total success, and write it down in the space below.

The main reason my life was not a total success is because I didn't

_____.

Now write down four other reasons.

My life was not a complete success because I didn't _____.

My life was not a complete success because I didn't _____.

My life was not a complete success because I didn't _____.

My life was not a complete success because I didn't _____.

Your Five Wishes

Now, turn those reasons into wishes.

For my life to have been a total success, I wish I'd

_____.

And I wish I'd _____.

I also wish I'd _____.

And _____.

And _____.

(Of course, it's also possible that you might answer my question with a "Yes." In thirty-some years I've only had a handful of people who did so, but if you're one of those, congratulations! For the sake of celebration, take a moment to write down the five experiences or accomplishments that made it a success.)

First and foremost, my life succeeded because I

_____.

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I also succeeded because I _____.
And because I _____.
And because I _____. *And*
because I _____.

Your Path Forward

Now for the really good news: You don't have to wait until the end of your life to turn your wishes into reality! Begin the process by transforming your wishes into right-now, present-tense affirmations you can use to create the life of your dreams.

I enjoy _____.
(Example: I enjoy a loving relationship with a man/woman who adores me.)

And _____.
And _____.
And _____.
And _____.

Remember

Your wishes are living, breathing expressions that can be changed, revised and re-prioritized. Work with them, play with them, use them as navigational tools to guide your way, share them with your friends and family. Above all, enjoy the process!

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ARTICLE

Top 5 Regrets of the Dying **By Bronnie Ware**

For many years I worked in palliative care. My patients were those who had gone home to die. Some incredibly special times were shared. I was with them for the last three to twelve weeks of their lives.

People grow a lot when they are faced with their own mortality. I learned never to underestimate someone's capacity for growth. Some changes were phenomenal. Each experienced a variety of emotions, as expected, denial, fear, anger, remorse, more denial and eventually acceptance. Every single patient found their peace before they departed though, every one of them.

When questioned about any regrets they had or anything they would do differently, common themes surfaced again and again. Here are the most common five:

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.

This was the most common regret of all. When people realise that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled. Most people have had not honoured even a half of their dreams and had to die knowing that it was due to choices they had made, or not made.

It is very important to try and honour at least some of your dreams along the way. From the moment that you lose your health, it is too late. Health brings a freedom very few realise, until they no longer have it.

2. I wish I didn't work so hard.

This came from every male patient that I nursed. They missed their children's youth and their partner's companionship. Women also spoke of this regret. But as most were from an older generation, many of the female patients had not been breadwinners. All of the men I nursed deeply regretted spending so much of their lives on the treadmill of a work existence.

By simplifying your lifestyle and making conscious choices along the way, it is possible to not need the income that you think you do. And by creating more space in your life, you become happier and more open to new opportunities, ones more suited to your new lifestyle.

3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.

Many people suppressed their feelings in order to keep peace with others. As a result, they settled for a mediocre existence and never became who they were truly capable of becoming. Many developed illnesses relating to the bitterness and resentment they carried

as a result.

We cannot control the reactions of others. However, although people may initially react when you change the way you are by speaking honestly, in the end it raises the relationship to a whole new and healthier level. Either that or it releases the unhealthy relationship from your life. Either way, you win.

4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.

Often they would not truly realise the full benefits of old friends until their dying weeks and it was not always possible to track them down. Many had become so caught up in their own lives that they had let golden friendships slip by over the years. There were many deep regrets about not giving friendships the time and effort that they deserved. Everyone misses their friends when they are dying.

It is common for anyone in a busy lifestyle to let friendships slip. But when you are faced with your approaching death, the physical details of life fall away. People do want to get their financial affairs in order if possible. But it is not money or status that holds the true importance for them. They want to get things in order more for the benefit of those they love. Usually though, they are too ill and weary to ever manage this task. It all comes down to love and relationships in the end. That is all that remains in the final weeks, love and relationships.

5. I wish that I had let myself be happier.

This is a surprisingly common one. Many did not realise until the end that happiness is a choice. They had stayed stuck in old patterns and habits. The so-called 'comfort' of familiarity overflowed into their emotions, as well as their physical lives. Fear of change had them pretending to others, and to their selves, that they were content. When deep within, they longed to laugh properly and have silliness in their life again.

When you are on your deathbed, what others think of you is a long way from your mind. How wonderful to be able to let go and smile again, long before you are dying.

Life is a choice. It is YOUR life. Choose consciously, choose wisely, choose honestly. Choose happiness.

Author:

Bronnie Ware is a writer, singer/songwriter, songwriting teacher and speaker from Australia. She has lived nomadically for most of her adult life. Bronnie shares her inspiring observations and the insights gained along the way through the diversity of her work. To read more of her articles and learn about her other work, please visit Inspiration and Chai at <http://www.inspirationandchai.com>.

Homework

Centering in Equanimity

Now that we have taken care of your personal goals in life, here is one goal we have for you for this course. It's called **Centering in Equanimity**.

It is a short meditation on equanimity, about 10 minutes. Do this every morning when you wake up. Sit in a comfortable position and recollect a previous experience when you were feeling absolutely peaceful and tranquil, free from worries and troubles. Bring that familiar feeling of peace and quiet to this present moment, and try to stay in that peace and tranquility for as long as you can. Familiarize yourself with this state of your mind. This is the original state of your mind - your original mind. Befriend this state of your mind. Familiarize yourself with it so that you can always come back to it whenever and wherever you are, when you need to. This is the state from which everything springs forth.

I want you to do this every day for the next 30 days. In our next meeting, we will discuss your experience with this meditation.

MODULE TWO

SPIRITUAL LAWS

The Spiritual Laws

Our goal for this module is to thoroughly understand the Spiritual Laws and how they govern our lives. Only through a thorough understanding of this can we convince ourselves of our spirituality and then to change or replace our present limiting beliefs with more expansive, life-enhancing beliefs.

For this, we will look at the seven spiritual laws of Hermes Trismegastus. A good source for this is the **Kybalion**.

The 7 Spiritual Laws or Hermetic principles are:

1. The Principle of Mentalism

"The ALL is MIND. The Universe is Mental." – Kybalion

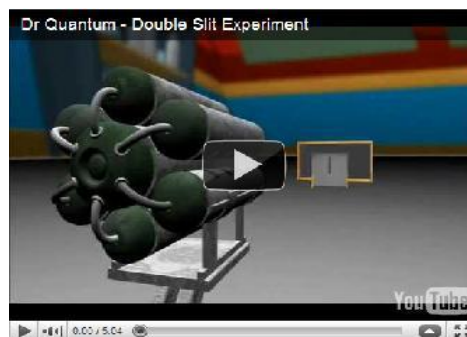
1. Holographic Universe:

.The physical world as illusory or “maya”.

2. The Observer Effect:

If the wave-form requires the presence of an observer or consciousness to collapse into a particle, what does it tell us about the process of creation?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEzRdZGYNvA>



3. The Tao:

*Something there is without form, yet complete;
Born before Heaven and Earth.*

4. Lankavatara Sutra:

... talks about the Universal Mind, the Intuitive Mind and the Individual Mind

5. Mind is the forerunner...

"Mind is the forerunner of (all evil) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with wicked mind, suffering follows one, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox.

Mind is the forerunner of (all good) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with pure mind, AFFECTION follows one, even as one's shadow that never leaves. "

— Buddha (Dhammapada)

6. Absolute Realities and Relative Realities:

According to the Abhidhamma, the 3 absolute realities are (1) Mind, (2) Matter, and (3) Nibbana. Of these, only Nibbana is unconditioned while mind and matter are conditioned realities.

In other religious traditions, the universe is of matter and spirit.

QUESTION: Is Mind and Spirit one and the same?

7. 31 Planes of Existence:

You are re-born to the plane that corresponds to your state of mind.

2. The Principle of Correspondence

"As Above So Below; As Below So Above." -

Kybalion "As Within, So Without"

Allows us to understand how the universe works, and how our mind projects our realities. This explains the concept of **mirroring**. Share and read this article on *Law of Correspondence* by Brian Tracy.

3. The Principle of Vibration

"Nothing rest; Everything moves; Everything vibrates" – Kybalion

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCmGjD9j9bU>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zkox6niJ1Wc>



4. The Principle of Polarity

"Everything is dual; Everything has poles. Everything has its pair of opposites. Like and Unlike are the same. Opposite are identical in nature but different in degree. Extreme meets. All truths are but half-truths. All paradoxes may be reconciled." - Kybalion

Example: Heat and Cold - temperature in varying degree, Love and Hate, Light and Darkness, Hope and Despair

5. The Principle of Rhythm

"Everything flows, out and in. Everything has its tides. All things rise and fall. The pendulum-swing manifests in everything. The measure of the swing to the right is the measure of the swing to the left. Rhythm compensates." - Kybalion

6.The Principle of Cause and Effect

"Every Cause has its Effect; Every Effect has its Cause. Everything happens according to Law. Chance is but a name for Law not recognized. There are many planes of causation, but nothing escapes the Law." – Kybalion

7.The Principle of Gender

"Gender is in everything. Everything has its Masculine and Feminine Principles Gender; manifests on all planes." - Kybalion
... works in the direction of generation, regeneration and creation.

The Concept of Emptiness

This is one of the most important concepts to understand. Our goal in this lesson is to at least understand this concept intellectually, if not experientially. As we continue with future classes, and especially as we put into practice all the tools, skills and techniques that help us to cultivate our mind, we will incrementally begin to taste and realize the reality of emptiness.

As we begin to understand the spiritual universe and the spiritual laws, we can conceptually understand that all things are illusory (maya). However, for our own cultivation and practice, it is more important to understand that even our beliefs, thoughts and emotions are illusory and empty of any intrinsic values or qualities except those that we give to them. As we practice and understand methodologies employed by teachers like Byron Katie, Michael Ryce and Bruce di Marsico, we begin to see and realize the emptiness of reality. It is this realization that sets us free from a life of suffering.

In Buddhism, this concept of emptiness (sunyata) is found in the *Heart Sutra* of the Mahayana tradition.

Our Creative Power

Why is it important to know that we are spiritual beings?

Article: A Spiritual Being

As a spiritual being, your sole purpose here is to manifest and celebrate life with your creative mind – the one and only creative force in the entire universe. If you were to be born in the formless realm (arupaloka) or the realm of form (rupaloka), then all you need to create is your mind. However, because you are born in the realm of action (kammaloka), your manifestation requires not only your mind but also your **action**. You need to act, to put energy and effort into the manifestation.

As a spiritual being, you are governed by the laws of the universe. And the universal law is that **like begets like**. In energetic term, this means that you will attract into your life the same energy that you give out to the world. So it is your energetic essence that is important and that you need to be aware of. You need to look within to recognize that. In moralistic term, it means good begets good and evil begets evil. In the language of kamma, what goes around comes around. It is from this law that you are advised to *do unto others as you would want them to do unto you*. This is called the **Golden Rule**. You get back what you give to others. In this way, the universe is entirely impartial and fair. It does not judge. It does not punish. It does not need to. Justice is served simply because you get back what you give to others.

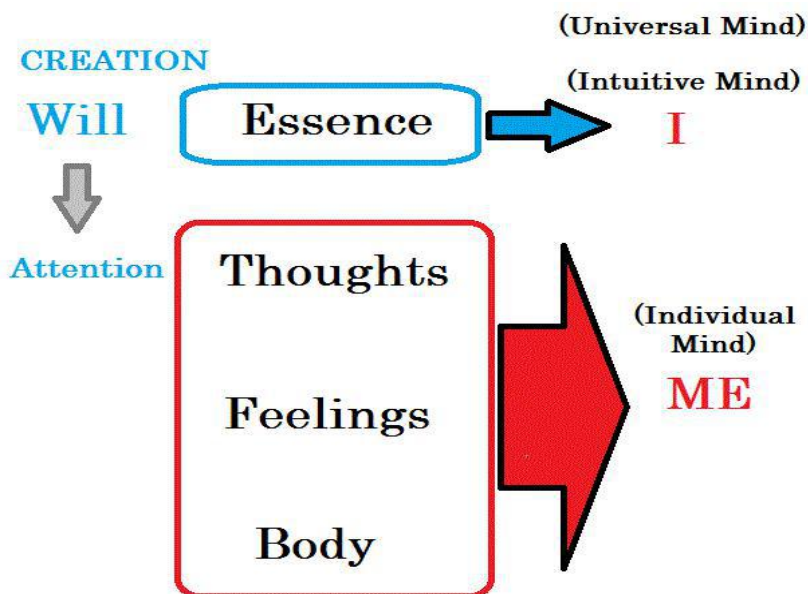
Thus, if you value freedom, give freedom to others. If you value life, give life to others. If you value justice, give justice to others. If you value truth, give truth to others. If you value love, give love to others. There is no need for you to keep tab of what you have given to others. The universe will give them all back to you. This is what is called kamma.

In the realm of action (kammaloka), we are physical beings. Therefore, there are certain additional **perceived needs**, such as the need for physical sustenance, safety, recognition and acceptance. I use the term “perceived needs” because in reality, they are not needs. We only see them as needs because we see and identify ourselves with our physical body, which is fragile and vulnerable to destruction. In other words, we are fooled by our forms. (As spirits, no one can end our lives. We can only end our game of life through our own volition/decision.)

We think, feel, speak and act to fulfill these perceived needs. In reality, as long as we live in accordance with the universal laws and not against them, all our needs will be fulfilled anyway. After all, in spirit we are whole and complete. What needs could there be when you are complete? In practice, however, because we do not have faith that the universe will provide for us, we therefore have the need to “take care of our own needs”. Thus, we invest a huge chunk of our time and energy fulfilling these needs, which diverts us away from manifesting and celebrating life creatively.

Since all our words and actions are motivated by our needs, it is important that we are able to recognize them so that we can have more fulfilling interactions and relationships with others. Every one of our interaction with others and with the universe is carried out to fulfill our needs. Recognizing these needs in ourselves also helps us to understand ourselves better, and to know how and why we speak and behave the way we do. Being aware of all these subtleties helps us to become better beings, with the confidence to live our lives creatively and without fear.

I Manifest / Create Realities



GOAL: To live and function from the Absolute. Like the lotus, to be in this world yet not tainted by this world.

MODULE THREE

UNDERSTANDING OUR MIND

UNDERSTANDING OUR MIND

Our goal for this module is to thoroughly understand how our mind works in accordance with the universal laws. We first see ourselves as a spiritual (mind- body) being. We then look at how we experience life and the mental processes involved in such experiences and how our thoughts influence our behaviors. Only when we understand all these can we see where we have erred in our thinking and how we have unconsciously and automatically sustain the vicious cycle and self fulfilling prophecy that had kept us perpetuating the same mistakes over and over again, going against the universal laws. We can then see where we need to change and how we need to change (in our thinking) in order to live in accordance with the universal laws.

Who Am I?

In this session, we explore our true nature. Are we spiritual beings? If so, what is our true nature? What are the inherent qualities of this nature? How much faith do we truly have in these beliefs? Does the way we live truly reflect these beliefs? If not, why not? What is holding us back from living in accordance with our true nature?

Only when we find the courage and honesty to fully explore, analyze, contemplate, test and live these beliefs can we truly have the unwavering and unshakable faith that is needed for meaningful transformation.

Reading Materials:

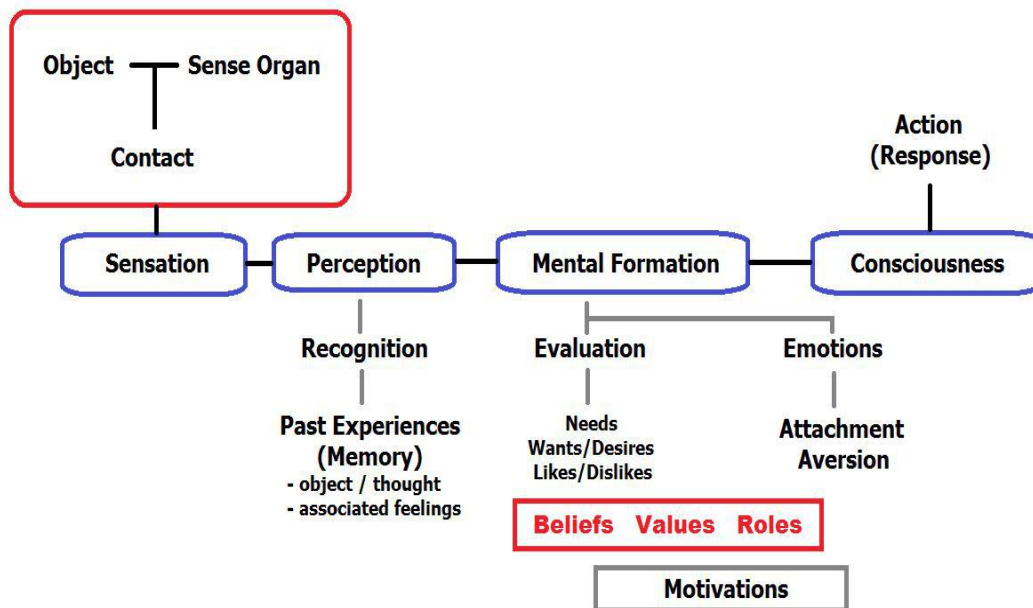
1. *Who am I – An Article*
2. *The Spirit-Mind Link*

Exercises/Games:

1. The Essence Game
2. Who Am I?

The Inner Mental Processes

Understanding Our Mind



Exercise/Game:

1. The Life Game
2. Talking to the Plant

The Judging Mind

The mind we have is one that constantly judges. There are two types of judgment. I called them (a) functional judgment, and (b) personal or preferential judgment.

Functional Judgment allows us to function efficiently. For example, in order to plan our trip from home to a meeting place, we need to judge how long it would take us to reach our destination, the possibility of delay due to traffic jams, etc.

Preferential Judgment is based on our own personal likes and dislikes. They are often the source of conflicts and contentions. This is because each of us have our own preferences, likes and dislikes, based on the beliefs, values and roles we hold.

Definitions:

Belief: a perception of reality

Value: a belief we hold to be true, with considerable emotional investment in it

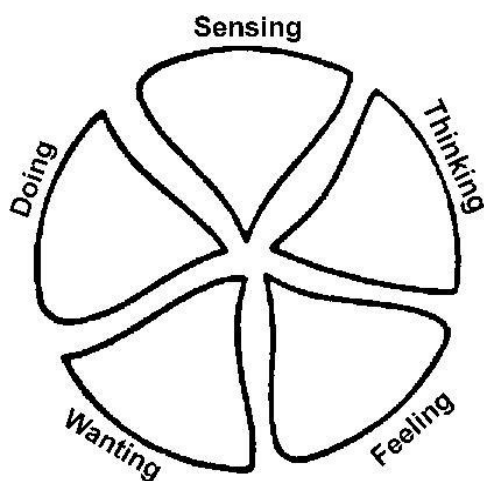
Role: a responsibility or obligation, often dictated by social norms and expectation

Exercises:

1. Every participant pairs off with another
2. List down 2 values of yours that you most cherished
3. Take turns to discuss with your partner why you choose these values, why they are important to you and share some examples of how you used them to guide your behaviors and actions

The Awareness Wheel

The **Awareness Wheel** allows us to see how we experience life through our mind. Although we are a Mind-Body entity, our experiences are mostly mind- base.



The CBT Sequence

The **CBT sequence** allows us to see how our thoughts determine our emotions and behavior. It points out the importance of being aware or mindful of our automatic thoughts, and how changing those automatic thoughts can change your life.



The Fallibility of Perception

Our perceptions are limited, thus we cannot perceive reality as it truly is. We only experience "perceived reality", not reality itself. Below are some of the limitations of our perception:

1. Limitation of our Sense Organs, e.g. eye - limited range of wavelengths visible to us, Dhamma Bar analogy
2. Limitation of our Perspective, e.g. the Blind Men and the Elephant
3. Limitation of our Filtering Processes, e.g. the filters in the camera

(See article on Perception in Appendices.)

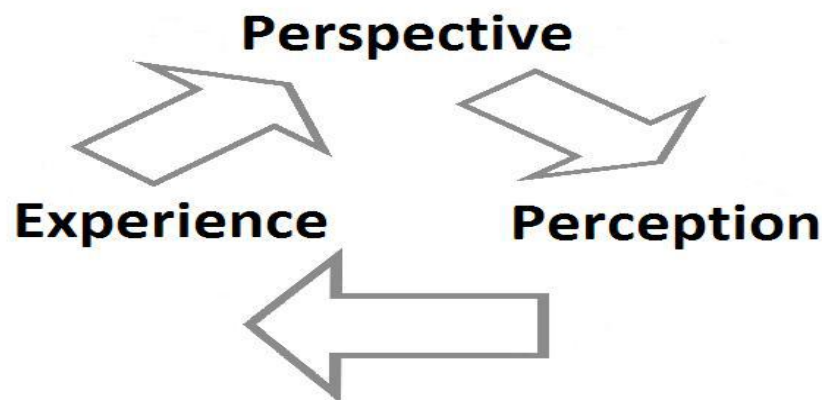
EXERCISE:

1. Show the video PERCEPTION (The Monkey Business Illusion).
2. Some examples of visual illusion

Perspective-Perception-Experience Model

Perspective influences our Perception, which influences our Experience of life. Simply by changing our perspective, we can therefore perceive from a different vantage point, which in turn changes our experience.

[INSIGHT: The higher the perspective, the more wholeness we experience as we perceive the inter- connectedness and oneness of life.]



CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE, CHANGE YOUR LIFE

INSANITY = Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. If our experiences from our present perspective are not giving us the outcome we desire, is it not wise to change the perspective?

INSIGHT: If a thing is good for her, it must also be good for me and for everyone else. Likewise, if it is not good for her, it is not good for me and everyone else. Otherwise, it is not an intrinsic goodness, merely a relative goodness.

As we obtain more details (information), our interpretation of what we see changes

Reframing

Reframing is a term used in neurolinguistic programming (NLP) to refer to seeing things from a different perspective. Steven Covey called it **paradigm shift**. Reframing is used in many methods of healing to improve or change the way we experience our world and our lives, e.g. Timeline therapy, CMI, child-adult perspective, role play, etc.

Exercise:

1. Choose a partner for this exercise. A describes or share a life situation or challenge (relatively recent event, not too extreme or painful) with B. Then using the 16Guidelines card, select one. Now view the same situation from the perspective of the card you have chosen. How does that change it? Then switch roles.

Who am I?

By Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

The modern lifestyle is all about doing. From the moment we wake up in the morning to the time we fall asleep at night, we are constantly looking for things to do. Some of these things we do are necessary but most are there only to fill up the time. Somehow, we find it unbearable or unacceptable to not have things to do. At the other end of the spectrum, there are those of us who would try to squeeze as many activities into a single day as we can, assuming that the more we do the more we get out of our lives.

The modern lifestyle does not allow time for reflections and introspection. To do that, we must first be willing to slow down, uncluttered our lives and set our priorities. We need to examine our values and know what we hold to be precious in our lives. We need to look within, know ourselves and become our own best friend.

One of the best place to start our introspection is to ask ourselves "Who am I?".

The Universe and I

The ancients have told us that the universe we live in is made up of Spirit and Matter. They told us that there is something out there that is beyond our five physical perceptions but is nevertheless very real. For example, in the Eastern teaching of Taoism, there is a paragraph that says:

"Something there is without form yet exist, born before Heaven and Earth"

For thousands of years, human beings have lived with this belief in spirituality. It was only in the last 300 years or so that the emergence of science began to question this belief. The classical physics of Newton and Darwin's theory of evolution show that life can exist without a creator, that life can come about through nature's own ways. In addition, the personal God that was taught in religious institutions – one that was vengeful and demanding, and biased towards one group of chosen people over the rest – became more and more unpalatable to the masses.

Spirituality receded into the background of our lives, replaced by materiality. The achievements of science over matter and the glorification of material wealth by the media hasten the demise of spirituality in modern life.

But spirituality is not dead. It cannot die because it is an inseparable part of our being. Man is not just the body. It is mind (spirit) and body. In fact, between mind and body, it is the mind that has greater influence over the quality of our lives than the body. Psychologists have learned that the meanings we give to the "realities" in our lives has far greater influence over our happiness than the realities themselves. In other words, *it is our perceptions that determine our state of happiness or otherwise.*

Furthermore, quantum physics have shown us that at the quantum level of subatomic particles, reality is really not as predictable as what classical physics have led us to believe about the universe and our lives. Physicists are beginning to realize that the universe we live in is more participatory than we thought, and we – each and every one of us – are the participants that determine the outcome of how the universe evolves.

Thus, it now seems that our mind not only determines the quality of our lives. It also determines the reality of the universe. We are co-creators of this universe we live in.

Not just this physical Body

So now we know that we are not simply this physical body. We are spiritual beings (spirituality being spirit and/or mind that we have not fully comprehend, yet we know is there and is real). Through our mind we experience both the material and spiritual worlds. Therefore to know ourselves we need to know our mind. We need to look inward, to contemplate, to introspect. And when we do so, we will discover our real self and begin to see our lives from a different perspective – one that is healthier, more blissful and more inclusive.

Living a more spiritual life has its benefits

Spirituality provides the meanings to life that determines the quality of our human experience. It also provides a mean to explore the mysterious and the best of human experience. In addition, studies have shown that spirituality increases our sense of well being, boosts self confidence, lowers heart attack risks and add more happiness into our lives. Spirituality also offers a graceful surrendering and acceptance that brings peace in time of grief, loss and sufferings, e.g. terminal illness, death of a loved one, separation, divorce and natural disasters.

It is for all these reasons that I urge you to see yourself differently – as a spiritual being, rather than just this physical body, and therefore live accordingly.

The Spirit-Mind Link

By Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

In spirituality, we talk a lot about spirit and mind. Since these two words form such an important part of spirituality, it is essential that we are clear as to what we mean when we use these words. Are we clear in our own mind what these two words – spirit and mind – mean to us? Are they the same thing, or are they different? If same, what are the sameness? If different, what are the differences?

Let us explore.

Spirit

The word spirit has several meanings. Spirit is often used in spirituality to mean something that is intangible and formless, unable to be perceived by our five physical senses or instruments, and yet is very real. It is the fountain of which everything tangible and material spring from. In the words of the Tao de Ching, it has been said that:

Something there is without form, yet complete;

Born before Heaven and Earth

Spirit is believed to be absolute, everlasting (eternal in time), omnipresent (everywhere in space), omniscience (all knowing). It is creative, intelligent and wise.

Some religions have made spirit to be personal, such as the God in the Bible. Yet, many of the older religions, such as Hinduism and mysticism, have always maintained the impersonal nature of spirit.

The word spirit is also often used synonymously with alcoholic drinks. It must be made clear that the use of the word spirit in this article is not in reference to this alcoholic link.

Mind

The mind too is formless and intangible. It is also not perceivable by the five physical senses or instrumentation. In fact, mind is only perceivable by mind itself. The nature of mind is also creative, intelligent and wise.

The word mind itself implies awareness and consciousness.

In mysticism, there are differences between an individual mind and the universal mind. While the individual mind is personal, the universal mind is impersonal. It is in reference to the universal mind that spirit is sometimes compared with.

Is mind and spirit one and the same thing?

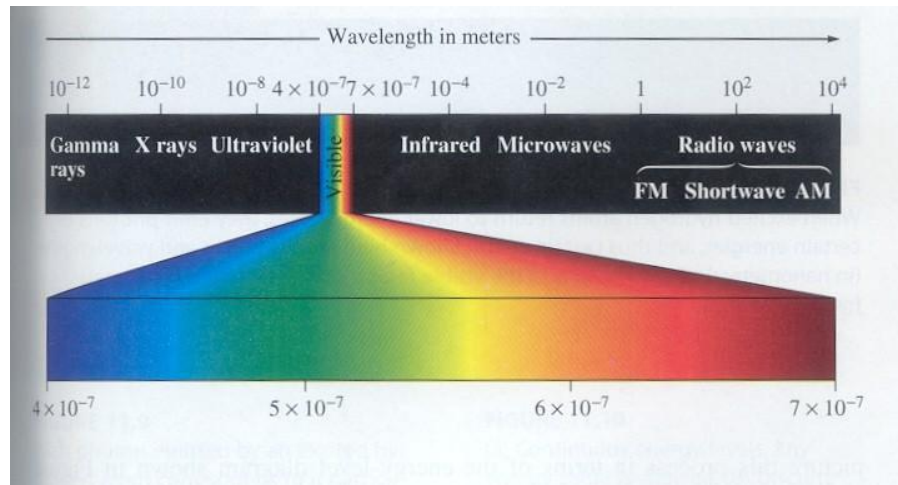
While mind and spirit share many common qualities, it is still not known or stated in any scriptures that they are one and the same thing. They may well be but it would be difficult to prove either way.

Fortunately for us, for practical purpose, it may not be necessary to know the answer to this question. It is simply adequate for us to know that mind and spirit are inseparable, and must function together or not at all. They are like two sides of an inverted V shape roof. When one is removed, the other simply collapsed. To function, both must be there to hold each other up.

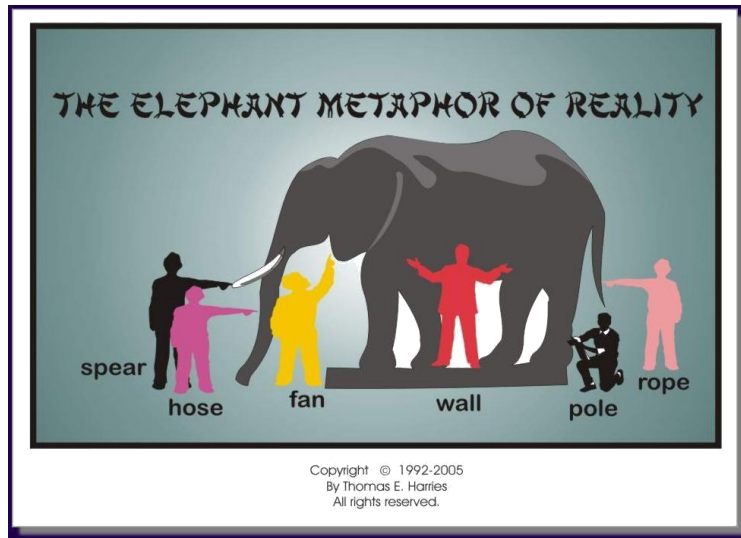
Perception

1. A belief is merely a perception of reality. We must realize that our perception has severe limitations. There are at least 3 ways our perceptions are limited.

- a. We are first limited by the limitations of our sense organs. We can see light only between a specific range of wavelengths but unable to perceive those beyond this range. Further, our eye structure allows us to see an image that is different from the compound eyes of a fly. Our other sense organs are similarly limited.



- b. Secondly we are limited by our perspective. We can see things only from a specific point of reference, very much like the story of the blind men and the elephant.



- c. Lastly, we see things through our own filters. These filters are our mental prejudices, concepts, assumptions, beliefs, experiences and ideas. It is like a camera catching a shot through a certain filter, changing its original colour.



With so many limitations to our perceptions, how can we be absolutely sure that our perception is true? Is it not more likely wrong?

2. **We are deceived by our thinking mind.** Our thinking mind is coloured by our ego or self. It's rich with its own experiences, assumptions, beliefs, concepts, desires and expectations. Ultimately, our thinking mind itself is limiting our life experience. It locks us into a self created reality, a world of our own creation

- an illusion of reality.
- 3. **We can live intuitively beyond the ego-mind.** Beyond this thinking mind is another that serves us intuitively. It has the ability to dip into the all-knowing, all-pervading universal mind. It is free from judgment and prejudices, and is therefore free from error.
- 4. **There is no fear in this mind.** Living like the lotus is then possible – to be in this world but not of this world. We can then live in this physical mundane world and still not be afflicted by it.

Where you find fear, there you will find a wrong belief.

MODULE FOUR

MIRRORING

MIRRORING (PROJECTION)

Our goal for this module is to gain a deeper understanding of the Law of Correspondence, so that we can see Cause as Cause and Effect as Effect. For the most of us right now, we have the habit of seeing Effect as Cause and Cause as Effect, and we respond accordingly. This locks us in a cycle of judging and blaming the external instead of taking 100% responsibility for what happens to us in our lives. The purpose of understanding this process is to break this mental habit so that we take full responsibility for our lives as we learn to see Cause as Cause and Effect as Effect, that is to see things as they really are, without embellishments from our own judgments, perceptions and beliefs.

Emptiness

We begin by reminding ourselves of the emptiness of the five aggregates, i.e. form, sensation, perception, mental formation and consciousness. Each of them is empty of any real substance and has no intrinsic or inherent value or quality, except that which we give to it.

Therefore, all our judgments, needs, desires, wantings, likes and dislikes, including our beliefs and emotions are also empty by nature. They, too, have no intrinsic values except what we give to them.

Our judgments, needs, desires, beliefs and emotions come from the erroneous belief that the external material effects are causes, and the internal mental causes are the effects.

Our task, then, is to rectify this primary error. We achieve this by first understanding it and being aware of it. Then we put in the conscious effort to see cause as cause, and effect as effect through the help of certain simple tools and techniques.

Mental Tendency

Right now, our mind has the tendency and habit of selectively filtering information and allowing only information that validates our existing beliefs to come to our conscious awareness. The rest of this information is stored away, denied and suppressed, in our subconscious and unconscious mind.



In this way, we continue to find evidence to validate our belief that the external material world is the cause of our experiences, and therefore free ourselves of any responsibility for what happened to us in our lives. This is the cunning trap of the ego.

However, like all crimes, there is always a flaw. In this case, whatever we denied and suppressed will eventually get expressed through projection. So whatever drama or story we may have told (lied to) ourselves (and the rest of the world) other than the absolute truth eventually get projected outwardly onto people and events that we attract.

That is why it is said that "As within, so without".

Whatever content within our mind that is less than the absolute truth gets mirrored in our external experiences.

This is not necessary a bad things as it allows us to identify the problem. We know the tree from its fruits. So from the external material effects in our lives, we can recognize the internal mental contents in our mind. After all, they are corresponding mirror images.



Do we have the option of not dealing with this? Not if we want to be free from pain and sufferings. Remember that whatever we resist persists. If we do not deal with all these shadows and fears within our mind, they will eventually arise to haunt us again. This WILL happen, sooner or later, and not necessary on our terms.

The wise thing to do is therefore to confront them, recognize them, acknowledge them, embrace them, and then gracefully let them go. This is forgiveness.

To achieve this, we need to unlearn our old mental habit of seeing effect as cause and cause as effect, and relearn the mental habit of seeing cause as cause and effect as effect. This means ending the drama and stories created by the ego, and familiarizing ourselves in living beyond the limitations of the ego.

Inverted Thinking

Judge Thomas Trowards, the author of The Edinburgh Lectures on Mental Science introduced this term called “inverted thinking”. By this, he means that we should train ourselves to invert the way we think. Instead of seeing Cause as Effect and Effect as Cause, which is what we normally do, we re-train ourselves to see Cause as Cause and Effect as Effect.

This means that we understand that what we experience outwardly is a mirror reflection or a projection of the inner state of our mind. We attract them through the principle of sympathetic resonance. Our unconscious thoughts vibrate at a certain frequency and the energy from this vibration radiates outward and resonate or cause to resonate people and events that are of the same or similar frequency. This collapses the unlimited potentiality of that person or event into a single corresponding reality for us.

In this aspect, our mind serves both as a transmitter and a receiver. In other words, if someone transmits a certain frequency towards us, we receive it and this activates our inner thoughts that resonate with it, resulting in a shared reality for both the person who transmits and the one who receives.

Knowing that we create our own reality through our thoughts, we therefore need to acknowledge our own role in the shared reality and accept 100% responsibility for it. Nothing less will do.

Tools for Transformation

Below are some of the tools we use for transforming our thinking habit. The prerequisites are a willingness to take 100% responsibility for our lives, a determination to see things as they really are and the courage to face our fears and shadows.

Useful skills that help with the processing are mindfulness and letting go.

The tools are:

Michael Ryce's *Reality Management Worksheet*
Byron Katie's *Judge thy Neighbor Worksheet*
Bruce di Marsico's *Option Method*
Ho'oponopono – The Hawaiian System of Healing
The Release Technique of Lester Levenson

IMPORTANT: Intellectual understanding alone is insufficient to bring about inner transformation. It is necessary to actually DO it. You can use either one or any combination of the tools listed above.

MODULE FIVE

FEARS, SHADOWS & RESISTANCE

FEARS, SHADOWS & RESISTANCE

Our goal for this module is to gain a deeper understanding of our fears, shadows and resistance, so that we can bring them up to our conscious awareness. It will allow us to recognize, identify and acknowledge them, an important prerequisite to befriending, welcoming and allowing them adequate and safe expression.

Understanding Fear

Divide participants into groups of 3-4. For each group, allow 20 minutes to discuss about:

What is fear?
What are the costs of fear?
What are the many manifestations of fear?

Elect one group leader to present the group's findings.

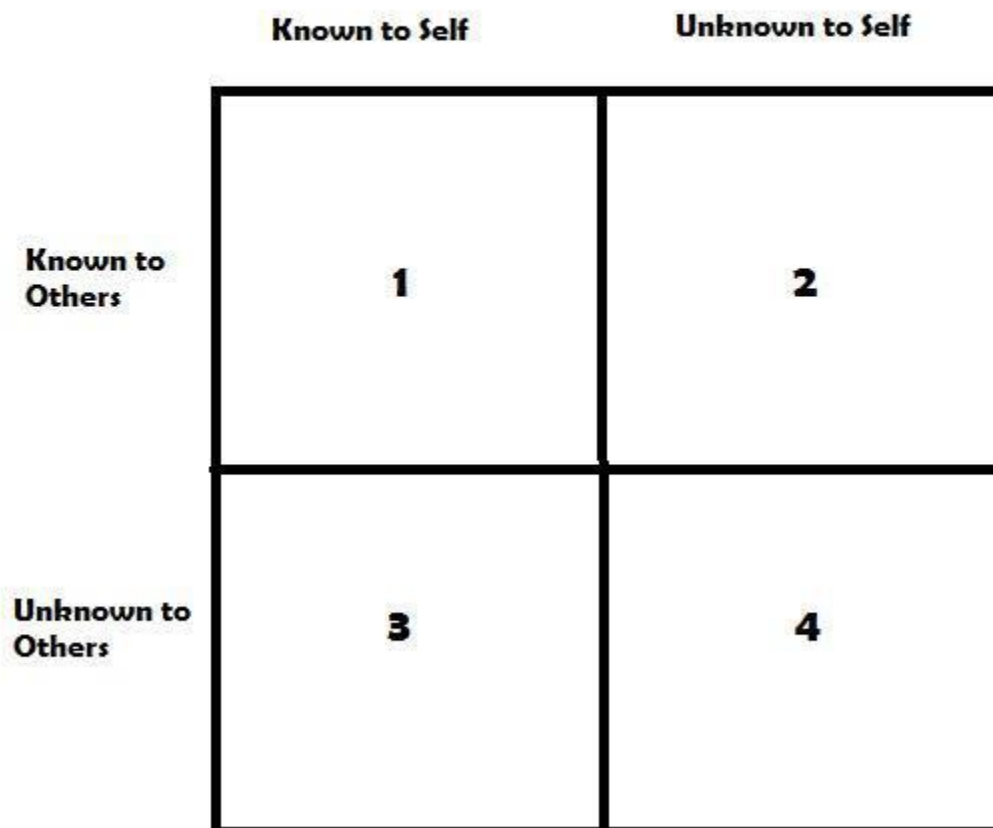
Self-Disclosure

Divide participants into groups of 3-4. For each group, allow 20 minutes to discuss about:

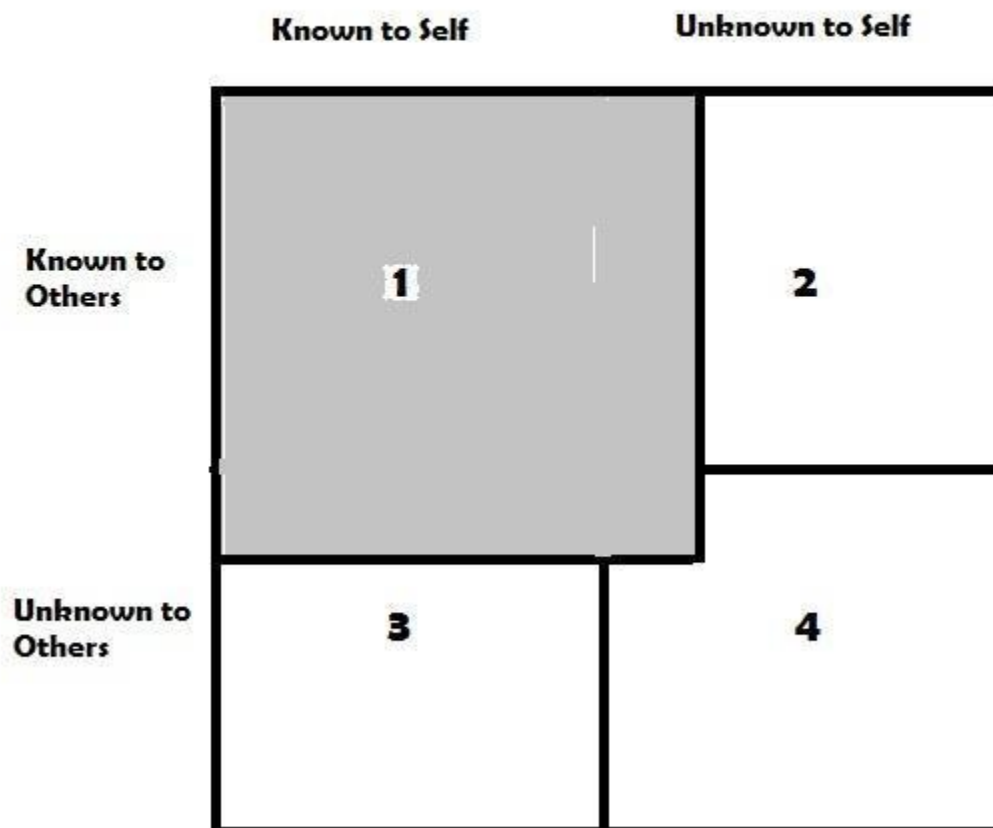
What is self-disclosure?
What are the benefits of self-disclosure?
What are the harmful effects of non-disclosure?
What are the fears of self-disclosure?

Choose a group leader to present.

JOHARI WINDOW

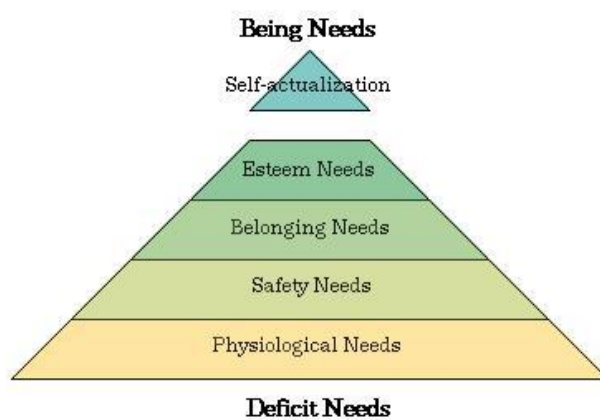


JOHARI WINDOW



Needs and Wants

Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs



Levenson's 3 Wantings

Acceptance
Security
Control

MODULE SIX

BELIEFS & MENTAL HABITS

Beliefs & Mental Habits

Our goal for this module is to understand the power of beliefs and mental habits. We need to know what beliefs are, how they influence our life, how to identify and change them. We also need to know how mental habits are created and what we can do to change them.

Understanding Beliefs

A belief is merely a perception of reality. It is not necessarily real or true, simply a belief that it is true. However, a belief once established and accepted is self-perpetuating, self-preserving and self-validating. In other words, it seeks out evidence to validate its “truth”.

A belief is also heavily invested with emotions. Therefore, it is not easy to convince someone that his or her belief is wrong. For the same reason, it is not easy to let go or replace a belief.

The importance of understanding beliefs is that beliefs are powerful programs that influence our behavior – our thinking, words and actions. They are the programs that run in the background, quite out of reach of our conscious awareness in most instances. They mostly run on auto-pilot to affect our life without availing to us the opportunity to scrutinize their accepted truths.

We can group beliefs into positive, life-enhancing beliefs and negative, self-limiting beliefs. The former are wholesome, inclusive and lead to skillful words and actions while the latter are unwholesome, exclusive and lead to unskillful words and actions.

Having said that, it is important to realize that all beliefs are merely beliefs. They are not absolute truths. In spiritual terms, like everything else, they are devoid of any intrinsic value or quality except those that we give to them. They are empty.

One of the strongest and most erroneous beliefs is that anything or anyone can cause us happiness or unhappiness. The truth is that nothing outside of ourselves is the cause of our happiness or unhappiness. They cannot be the cause simply because they are empty of any intrinsic value. Therefore, the real

cause of our happiness or unhappiness is our own thought. Specifically, it is our belief that causes us to be happy or unhappy.

Therefore, one of the guidelines for spiritual seekers is that if you are unhappy, or if you are fearful, you are in error. The error is in the way you have perceived, interpreted and believed. The error is in your thinking.

This is the basis in the successful work of teachers like Byron Katie (Judge Your Neighbor worksheet) and Bruce di Marsico (Option Method).

Changing Beliefs

The good news is that once a belief is recognized, it can be changed or simply dropped. We can let go of our beliefs but it takes practice. We must first have the awareness to identify and recognize our beliefs. After that, it is a matter of learning new tools and methods to change or drop those unwholesome beliefs.

Techniques that we can use to drop our beliefs are the Release Technique of Lester Levenson, the Belief Closet of Lion Goodman and the Hawaiian healing called ho'oponopono.

Mental Habits

A belief, once entrenched within our unconscious, becomes a mental habit that runs on auto-pilot to influence our behavior.

A belief is entrenched through repetition or through a strong, single, emotional imprint.

An example of a repetitive imprint is when we learn to ride a bicycle. Through constant practice and repetitions, we eventually become good at riding a bicycle. The skill we learned stays with us even into adult life.

Sometimes, a belief is imprinted strongly into our psyche or mind through just a single event. One good example of this is my own personal experience on May 13.

Once a belief is entrenched in our mind, there is a corresponding physical change observed in the brain. This change in the neuronal pathways within the brain is what scientists called neuroplasticity .

Mental habits are due to our mental imprints, which are created out of:

-
- 1. A single, strong emotional imprint (belief)
- 2. Repetitive regular or soft imprints

Core Mental Habits that We need to Change

1. The habit of experiencing life from the perspective of this body, as opposed to the habit of experiencing life from the perspective of the spirit, that is, seeing ourselves as spiritual beings - perfect, whole, limitless.
2. Out of this first mental habit comes the other mental habit of chasing after sensory pleasures and running away from pain, believing that these are our only possible options in responding to life. This closes off the other option of experiencing life without attachment or aversion, of simply observing or witnessing life without judgment or weaving a personal story around it.

Changing Mental Habits

1. Change the habit of experiencing life from the perspective of the body to that of the perspective of the spirit (mind).
2. Change the habit of experiencing life from a judging, discriminating mind to that of the perspective of the non-judging, non-discriminating mind.

Experiencing Life from a Higher Perspective

1. From the perspective of the absolute, learning to live and function from the absolute.
2. Seeing the two different layers of mind:
 1. The Original Mind
 - pure, pristine, unblemished, unperturbed, timeless, spacious, impersonal, intuitive, knowing, luminous, clear
 2. The Judging Mind

- discriminatory, judging, naming, labeling, polarizing, personal, cognitive, learning, cloudy, transient

Watch Your Mental States

Learning to watch and be aware of your mental states is an extremely beneficial skill. Through observing your mental states as they arise, you get an opportunity to:

1. Notice whether you are having a positive or negative mental state
2. Make a choice to feed the Tiger of Unconditional Love or Fear

Remember that whatever you feed grows. The choice you make could create a virtuous cycle (positive) or a vicious cycle (negative).

Two Perspective of Life Experience

1. From the Perspective of the Spirit (Original Mind)
 - Equanimity, Peace, Unconditional Love, Compassion, Joy, Freedom, Liberation
2. From the Perspective of the Judging Mind
 - Insecurity, Fear, Greed, Anger, Delusional, Illusory, Trapped, Fated

Mental Barriers

A mental barrier is a mental threshold that needs to be crossed in order to initiate change. Mental barriers are also called terror barriers. They are what caused us to stay in our comfort zones. They cause us to choose what is known, although undesirable, to what is unknown but may be more desirable in the long run. They are the reason why we fear change.

For a more detailed explanation, take a look at the Stickman concept.

MODULE SEVEN

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

Understanding Emotions

Our goal for this module is to understand emotions – what they are, what causes them to arise and how they influence our lives. We also want to learn how to recognize the various emotions, and acquire skills and tools to deal with and heal negative emotions.

What are Emotions

They are two types of feelings: (1) Physical feelings, and (2) Mental feelings. Physical feelings are often called sensations. Mental feelings are what we refer to here as emotions.

For example, a chest pain is a physical feeling or sensation which is triggered by a stimulation of a pain receptor in the nerve. This pain can be mild or intense, depending on the severity of the stimulation. In most instances, a chest pain also triggers mental feelings, which arise from the thoughts associated with the physical pain. This may be the thought of possible death or hospitalization, and may lead to thoughts of inconvenience and burden to the family and colleagues. These thoughts lead to emotions such as fear, anxiety, panic, depression, etc.

In this case, physical pain gives rise to mental anguish. However, our mental state can also influence our perception of the pain. In a state of fear and panic, a mild chest pain may be perceived as severe, thus aggravating the fear. This sometimes results in a vicious cycle of negative emotions and thoughts.

The Cause of Emotions

The cause of every emotion is a thought. Specifically, the thought is a **wanting** or **desire**, or a wish for something other than what it is.

According to Lester Levenson, there are three fundamental wantings: (1) wanting **acceptance**, (2) wanting **security**, and (3) wanting **control**. All wantings come from the belief in a permanent, ever-lasting self.

Wanting gives rise to two possible outcomes: (1) success – when we get what

we want or when we do not get what we don't want, or (2) failure – when we don't get what we want or we get what we don't want. Thus we generate **hope** for a desired outcome or **fear** of an undesired outcome. When a desired outcome is achieved we feel happy but when an undesired outcome is achieved we feel sad or unhappy. However, in most instances, each of these primary emotions are associated with other emotions.

See Wanterfall Chart.

We are often easily swept away by the force of our emotions. Like a waterfall, once an emotion is set in motion, it can be difficult to stop its advance. Thus, to deal with emotions successfully, we need to be able to catch our thoughts or emotions as soon as they arise, before they gather strength.

The key to understanding and managing emotions is therefore mindfulness.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is defined as constant, non-judgmental self awareness. By non-judgmental, we mean neither approving or disapproving noticing, without the need to identify or personalize the experience. The self awareness should be directed at one's own thoughts and feelings.

Mindfulness facilitates the exploration of your mind, which leads to self understanding. It is an essential skill for your personal and spiritual growth. If in the process of mindfulness, you feel bad about something, it is not always a bad thing as it may mean that you are uncovering something that was hidden from your awareness before. This gives you the opportunity to recognize and heal the emotion.

A non-judgmental attitude towards experiences lead to what the ancient sages called "doing without doing". On the other hand, with a judging mind, the results are either (1) inflating the ego, or (2) deflating the ego. An inflated ego leads to egotism, over-confidence and arrogance, while a deflated ego leads to low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and the tendency to feel guilt or shame (directed inward) or blame (directed outward). In both instances, it leads to a habit of selective self-awareness, seeing only what you want to see. In other words, not perceiving things as they really are.

Key Thought:

*"Nothing which has passed through the filter of judgment
can possibly emerge undistorted."*

Dealing with Emotions

Primary Emotions: (Dr. Gordon Coates)

Positive – Hope, Happiness, Propathy

Negative – Fear, Sadness, Antipathy

Suppressed Emotions:

Feelings that are ignored, controlled, suppressed or repressed

A bottled-up emotion gets infested like an abscess waiting to burst open.

Pool of Pain:

“Unfinished business” that are still stored in our memory

May become distorted or toxic, and may erupt suddenly when present event resonates with it.

Example: Grief

Grief is a natural response to loss. We need to work through it and not around it in order for it to heal completely. It may resonate with some “unfinished business” (e.g. fear of dying) or be compounded by other associated issues (e.g. financial concern).

The usual stages of grief are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. The grieving process varies from person to person depending on: (1) the significance of the loss, (2) the amount of “unfinished business”, and (3) coping habit of the grieving.

The release of emotion can be spontaneous or facilitated, and may turn out to be beneficial (healing) or harmful, depending on how it is released.

Emotions that are not properly managed can lead to some undesired effects, such as (1) conditioning – a fixed attitude towards life arising from certain beliefs and associated strong emotions, and (2) conflicts – due to the existence of two mutually exclusive or incompatible feelings. Noticing and understanding is the first step towards freedom from such internal conflicts.

Healing of Emotions

It is essential to realize that emotions, and in particular negative emotions, though often perceived as large and hideous, are of themselves ***harmless***. Emotions can only harm us when we allow them to through our own co-operation with them.

Through ignorance of the fact that emotions are empty of any intrinsic values except those that we give them, we end up identifying and personalizing them, owning them as ours. We end up reacting the the negative emotions by (1) running away (avoid), (2) hiding from it, or (3) reacting with violence (attack). In this way, we are said to have co-operated with our emotions to make them real and become “harmful” to ourselves.

There are four essential steps in healing negative emotions. They are: (1) encourage, (2) explore, (3) express, and (4) evaluate.

Encourage

Most people have resistance towards dealing with their emotions. Thus, the first step is to encourage them to do so, and to re-assure them that it is good for their own healing and growth. Our society has often discouraged emotional expression, so this step of encouragement is to counter or undo this long-held belief. It is no small feat and should be done continuously as a way to reinforce a new belief and habit of exploring and expressing emotions. Three important aspects of this encouragement are (1) reassurance, (2) give permission (it is OK to explore and express feelings), and (3) validation of feelings.

Explore

The exploration of emotions requires that we are able to notice, recognize and confront those emotions. A good way to do that is to write down our feelings and thoughts in a journal. Another way is to talk it out with a trusted friend. Other non-directed approach would be drawing, painting, sand play, etc.

Express

Express comes from the combination of “ex” (outside) and “press”. Thus, to express means “to press out”. Emotions are filled with energy and if not expressed in a healthy way, can “infest” the mind and body in other potentially negative ways.

The benefits of emotional expressions are many, and mainly therapeutic. Among

some of these benefits are:

1. Feelings become more conscious. We learn to become more aware of our feelings.
2. Feelings are felt more acutely but they are also seen more clearly.
3. They are symbolically pushed out or released from the mind-body system. This prevents them from becoming distorted or toxic within.
4. When a negative feeling is expressed, there may be a sense of shame or guilt. This actually provides an opportunity to understand and heal this unhealthy belief.
5. Sharing of feelings with others leads to acceptance.

A common and natural expression of a negative feeling is **crying**. Crying can be triggered by old memories that are brought to the surface due to their resonance with some triggers outside, such as movies, music, books, news articles, etc. It is not always a good thing to stop the crying as it impedes the full expression of emotions that is necessary for healing. Instead, we can facilitate crying by being non-judgmental and supportive, and offering a safe space for its expression.

Evaluate

This evaluation stage requires the use of our rational thinking mind. It is important to remember that we should not intellectualize too much during the earlier 3 stages before externalization of emotions is achieved as it can impede the process. Evaluation after externalization may provide new insights and further options for healing.

Some of the *apparent* repercussions or consequences as a result of externalization of emotions are:

1. Feeling overwhelmed (tissue box effect)
2. Feeling intense shame (need validation, encouragement and reassurance)
3. Urge to retaliate (not therapeutic, strongly not recommended)

The first two consequences, at first glance, seem disadvantageous. However, on closer scrutiny, they are often therapeutic and offer more opportunity for learning and growth.

MODULE EIGHT

FORGIVENESS & LETTING GO

FORGIVENESS & LETTING GO

Our goals for this module are:

1. To understand what forgiveness is and is not
2. To understand why we need to forgive by looking at the healing effects of forgiveness and the harmful effects of not forgiving
3. To adopt a forgiving attitude and to learn to forgive

Forgiveness

When is forgiveness required? Forgiveness is required when:

1. An offender inflicted an injury (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual) onto us, which we perceived as an injustice
2. We inflict an injury onto someone else
3. We inflict an injury onto ourselves

What is forgiveness? Forgiveness is the willingness to let go of the perceived needs to judge and punish the offender and the actual act of doing so.

What forgiveness is not: Please read article on "*The Myths of Forgiveness*"

Why Forgive?

We need to forgive for our own well-being. Forgiveness is essential for our own healing. Keeping the pain, the resentment and the grudge within us only makes the injury worse. Its toxic effects seep into every area of our life, poisoning our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health as well as our relationships with our loved ones and friends.

On the other hand, genuine forgiveness rewards us with lots of benefits physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It opens our heart and mind to better relationships with ourselves as well as others. It is as if the heart is freed from a prison it has created for itself. It makes us stronger, more honest and authentic and helps us to gain inner peace.

A Forgiving Attitude

How do we acquire a forgiving attitude? What exactly is a forgiving attitude?

The normal mental tendency is one that feels it needs to judge and to punish the offender for the perceived injustice. Not punishing the offender feels like an injustice in itself. This attitude makes the mind rigid, vengeful and constantly stressful, and therefore harmful to self.

A forgiving attitude has these three qualities:

1. **Letting go** of the perceived needs to judge and to punish the offender
2. **Taking responsibility** for our own roles, judgments, decisions and choices in that encounter
3. **Accepting the consequences** of those choices

How to Forgive

Forgiveness begins with:

1. An **honest, open and willing** (HOW) heart to forgiveness
2. A readiness to forgive.

How do you know that you are ready to forgive? You are ready to forgive when:

1. You feel that letting go of your pain, fear and sorrow is better than hanging on to them
2. You want to learn about and heal any unhealthy and difficult patterns that stem from a painful past
3. You are ready and willing to embrace life fully

One easy to do forgiveness model is the Forgiveness Sandwich.

The Forgiveness Sandwich

This forgiveness model has four steps, and is compared to a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in which there is a top opening layer of bread, with a second peanut butter layer that is sticky, gooey and rather unpleasant, a third layer of

jelly which is sweet and a closing layer of bread.

Here are the four steps:

1. READY (OPENING)
2. RELEASE
3. RECEIVE
4. REFRAME (CLOSING)

Step 1 – Ready

In this step, we:

1. **Open** our heart and mind to the spiritual process of forgiveness
2. **Invoke** and invite our spiritual guides for help and support, and
3. **Create** a safe and loving space for the forgiveness process.

Step 2 – Release

Here we:

1. **Tell OUR story** about the injury, naming the offender, describing the injury and the sense of injustice felt
2. **Feel the feelings** – all the pain, resentments, fears and frustrations
3. **Release** the pent up energies accompanying the thoughts, emotions, sensations and tears (TEST) that we allow to flow freely without resistance and judgment.

To do this release, we can take deep in-breaths through the nostrils and followed them by exhaling through the mouth forcefully, making appropriate sounds as and when necessary. Or we can visualize an altar of love where we leave all our TEST on the altar and surrender them to the universe.

Step 3 – Receive

In this step, we inhale fresh, clean, healing energy deeply through our nostrils, allowing the energy to fill our entire being, as we:

1. **Refill and rejuvenate** ourselves physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually, and
2. **Replace** whatever we had release earlier with unconditional love

Step 4 – Reframe

In this final step, we:

1. **Let go** of OUR story and our need to judge and punish
2. **Surrender** to the wisdom of the Universe
3. **Be grateful** for the lessons learned

We make a new choice to see the entire injury from a new and higher perspective, one that allows us to grow and be free from the prison we once locked ourselves in before.

Forgiveness is a Process

Forgiveness is a process that is often long and on-going. It is not done and completed in a single session. Take your time to clear out whatever resentments, fears, anger and pain remaining as you begin a new, fresh and more vibrant life.

The Forgiveness worksheet

Step One: Preparing to Forgive

1. Open your heart and mind
2. Invoke your guardian angels, if appropriate
3. Create a safe and loving space

Step Two:

A. Tell YOUR Story

1. Identify the Perpetrator/Offender
2. Identify the injury
3. Identify the injustice/grievances

I am (feeling) _____

with/at/of (offender) _____

because he/she (injury) _____

I want/desire/hope/wish that he/she _____

B. Feel YOUR Feelings

1. Thoughts _____
2. Emotions _____
3. Sensations _____
4. Tears Allow tears to flow freely, if appropriate

C. Release YOUR Pain

1. Make the **conscious choice** to forgive.
2. Inhale deeply through your nose and exhale completely through your mouth. If you feel like making some **sound** (e.g. argh), or shout, or cry, please feel free to do so.
3. Alternatively, you can visualize an **altar of love**, where you leave all your story, pain and desires behind, trusting the universe to take care of them as appropriate and best for all.
4. Repeat #1 – #3 as many times as required.

Step Three:

1. Re-fill yourself with new, healing energy by inhaling through your nostrils and seeing this healing energy filling you physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.
2. Replace existing energy with unconditional love.

Step Four:

1. Let go of YOUR story – Be willing to let go, Make the choice to let go
2. Surrender to the universe – Let go of the need to punish
3. Be grateful for the lessons

MODULE NINE

COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION

Our goal for this module is to understand communication – what it is and what is its purpose. We will also look at the various sources where miscommunication can arise from, what are the common causes of miscommunication and the various ways we can improve our communication skills. In particular, we will look at the skills of active listening, compassionate communication, assertiveness and the various ways of resolving conflicts.

What is Communication?

A simple definition of communication is the process of exchanging **verbal** and **non-verbal** messages. For the communication to be successful, the message must be understood by the recipient in the **same terms** as intended by the sender. Unfortunately, this is not always true.

In fact, it is quite impossible for the recipient to be able to understand the message in the same terms as intended by the sender unless the recipient is a mind-reader. In most cases, there are just too many sources and possibilities for errors due to the various factors intrinsic in the process of communication.

Thus, we should always keep this possibility of error in mind whenever we communicate with another. We should also always set our mind in the most receptive state for open and free communication to occur. This usually means removing our ego, assumptions, beliefs, concepts, desires, expectations and fear out of the equation in the communication process.

The Purpose of Communication

Here is a list of some of the common purposes of communication. They are:

1. **Information**
2. **Understanding**
3. Learning
4. Enjoyment

The first two deserves some elaboration as the first is the most common and the

– second is one of the biggest causes for misunderstanding and conflicts.

Information

This is the most common reason why people communicate – to pass or share information with each other. Information here can refer to general information or personal information.

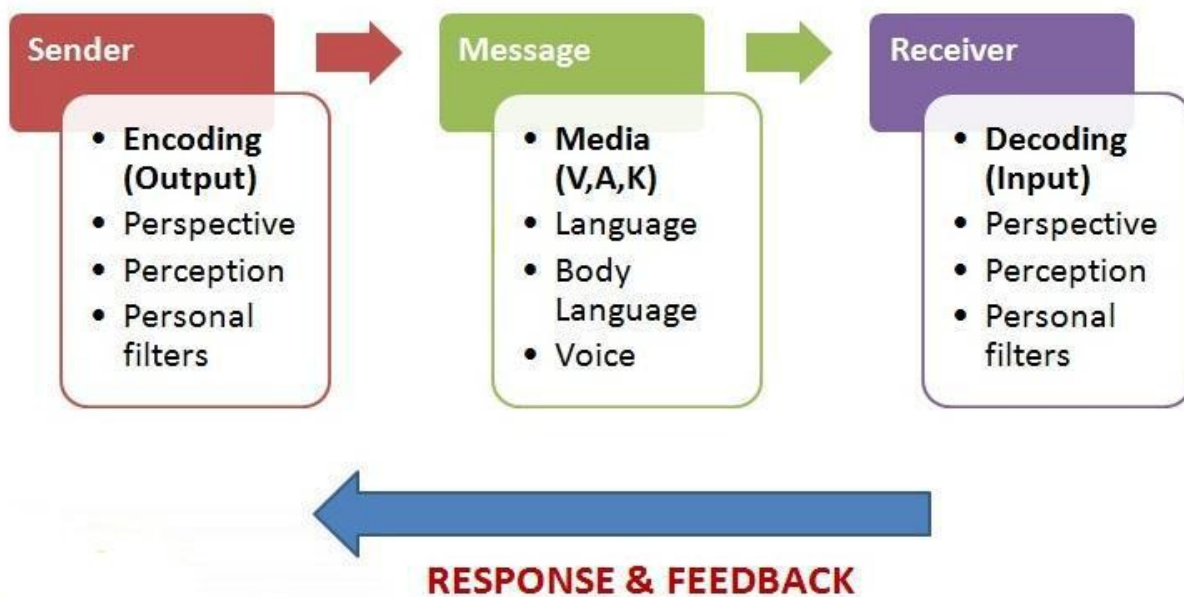
Understanding

We also communicate to understand. Understanding here can refer to understanding the information shared, in which case, it becomes part of learning.

Understanding can also refer to **understanding the person** who is communicating with us. In such instances, we try our best to understand the messages and meanings of the entire communication, through not just the words used but also the non-verbal gestures. We need to put ourselves in the speaker's shoes and to try to interpret the message through the perspective of the speaker.

Done properly, communication can be very successful and satisfying. On the other hand, misunderstanding can and often does occur in communication.

Components of Communication



There are 3 main components in a communication process:

1. The Sender (Output)
2. The Delivery of the Message
3. The Receiver (Input)

Sender

How the message comes out of the sender depends on many variables. In particular, it highly depends on the sender's perspective and personal filters, which in turns influence how he perceives and interprets the event or situation.

Since each person's perspective is influenced by his or her own past experiences and learning, which is unlikely to be the same from one person to another, it becomes highly improbable that the intended message will be correctly interpreted and understood by the receiver.

Delivery of the Message

We send and receive messages via all our physical sense organs as well as our mind. Of the 5 physical sense organs, the visual, auditory and touch sensory organs are the most commonly involved in the communication process.

In addition, our messages are conveyed through both verbal or written languages and non-verbal or body language.

In order to be a good communicator, we need to understand and utilize all of these various organs and modalities in our communication process.

Receiver

Like the sender, how the receiver interprets the message depends highly on his or her perspective and personal filters. If the receiver is not aware that his or her own filters can distort the intended message, the likelihood for misunderstanding is high.

So, sources of misunderstanding can arise from the sender, the way the message is delivered as well as the receiver. In addition, understanding and proficiency in the language used and cultural differences can further influence the outcome of the communication.

Successful Communication & Attitude

Successful communication begins with the right attitude. It depends on the willingness of the sender and the receiver to try to understand each other – to literally put oneself in the other person's shoes. If the sender or receiver begins with a hostile and confrontational attitude, chances are that the communication will fail.

Here are some characteristics of communication that does not work:

1. Moralistic judgments
2. Making comparisons
3. Denial of responsibility
4. Demands

Compare the above list with the list of characteristics of communication that works:

1. Active listening
2. Honest, gentle, non-judgmental expression
3. Empathy

The best advice for successful communication comes from Stephen Covey, the author of the highly successful book entitled "7 Habits of Highly Effective People". In this book, the fifth habit of highly effective people is listed as:

Seek first to Understand, then to be Understood

This is a great advice as it puts the communicator in a state of mind that is open, understanding and compassionate, and removes his or her ego from the equation in the process of interpreting the messages. Our ego is perhaps the biggest source of mis-interpretations and conflicts.

Active Listening

Active listening is the **conscious effort** to not only hear what is being said but also to fully understand the message that the sender is trying to convey. It requires a high level of **self awareness** and a **non-judgmental attitude**.

The goal of active listening is to **listen for meaning** with the intention of understanding the real message of the sender.

There are 2 essential components to active listening:

1. Listener orientation
2. Reflective technique

Listener Orientation

This is an attitude adopted by the listener, which has the quality of empathy, genuine respect for the other person, acceptance of the person as he or she is, and a willingness to give undivided attention to the entire communication process. Carl Rogers called this “unconditional positive regard”.

Reflective Technique

This includes simple techniques such as reflection, clarification, paraphrasing, open-ended questioning and encouragement.

When done properly, active listening has these 5 essential elements which the sender can perceive and appreciate:

1. Pay attention
2. Show that you are listening
3. Provide feedback
4. Defer judgment
5. Respond appropriately

Filling in the Gap

This is the mental habit of filling in the gap – unknown variables – with our own assumptions, beliefs, concepts, desires, expectations and fears. It is a big source of misinterpretation and misunderstanding in communication. Being aware of this habit is the first step to avoiding it.

Compassionate Communication

Compassionate communication is a communication process that was first introduced by Marshall Rosenberg in the 1970s as a way to resolve conflicts. It focuses on two main aspects – **honest self expression** and **empathy**.

The goal of compassionate communication (also known as non-violent communication) is to bring about an outcome in communication that is compassionate, respectful and accepting. This usually results in a win-win for all concerned.

The process is based on the theory that all human behaviors arise from the attempt to fulfill certain basic human needs. It proposes that when we are able to identify these needs and the feelings surrounding them, and fulfill them, harmony can be achieved.

There are four components in a compassionate communication process. They are:

1. Observation
2. Feeling
3. Need
4. Request

Observation

Observation here refers to stating the facts, without any embellishments from the ego. It is about non-judging and requires a high level of self awareness. It may seem difficult in the beginning but with practice this becomes easier.

For example, in a scenario where a husband and wife are having breakfast and the husband is reading the newspapers while eating his bread, the wife might say, "I see that you are busy reading the newspapers at the breakfast table."

Feeling

Once you have stated what you observed, identify and express how this observation affects you emotionally. Here you need to be honest with your feeling and at the same time, do not fall back into the old habit of blaming.

In the same example above, the wife might now add, "I am unhappy because I feel like I'm being ignored, as if the news are more important than me."

Need

Every behavior is an attempt to fulfill a need. If you are unhappy, it is because a need of yours has not been fulfilled. Identify this need as clearly as you can.

The wife might now say, "I need you to talk to me in order for me to feel important and not being ignored."

Request

"Would you be so kind as to put down those newspapers and have a conversation with me at the breakfast table?"

For more examples and detailed clarification of how to use compassionate communication, go to the *Center for Non-Violent Communication* website at <http://cnvc.org>

Resolving Conflicts

Misunderstanding and misinterpretation in communication often leads to conflicts. It is therefore useful to recognize some of the coping styles in which people resolve conflicts. Here are some coping styles in resolving conflicts:

1. Avoidance

- It's not a big problem. Why rock the boat?

2. Accommodation

- I'm willing to give up a lot to avoid conflicts.

3. Aggression

- I intend to win this conflict.

4. Compromise

- I'll give in a little if you are also willing to give in a little.

5. Problem Solving

- If we discuss this opening and honestly, every one can win.

Not all of these styles are beneficial in the long run. The first three may avoid or delay conflicts, or kick the can down the road a little, but conflicts are not truly resolved. They may in fact fester and get worse later.

The last two coping styles are preferable as they often lead to more lasting peace. Of the two, problem solving or honest dialogue will give the best outcome for all involved.

Assertiveness

Most people who adopt avoidance, accommodation or even aggression as their coping style in resolving conflicts do so because of their inability to be assertive with regards to their own rights and needs.

Assertiveness is the ability to express yourself clearly and honestly about what you need or want and defending your rights to fulfill them without being aggressive or hostile towards the other. It is not about being confrontational. Rather, it is a state in perspective or paradigm which requires a change in your mind state and attitude.

Here are some tips on how to be assertive:

1. Stick to the facts, not the ego
2. Be firm but not aggressive or hostile
3. Adhere to the Principle of Equality
4. Practice, practice, practice – take small steps

Many people are afraid to be assertive because they fear this could lead to aggression and hostility in a relationship. However, when done properly, assertiveness actually leads to lasting peace because it creates balance, fairness and respect for each other.

Avoiding Negative Communication Habits

Most of us carry with us some old negative communication habits. Among the more common ones are:

1. Belittling our spouse or partner
2. Not paying enough attention to the needs of our own family members
3. Gossiping

With a bit of effort in self awareness and mindfulness, these habits can become history and the results are highly rewarding and satisfying. I highly recommend that you end these negative and often destructive mental habits.

Triple Filter Test

This Triple Filter Test was attributed to the wisdom of Socrates. He apparently used this test as a way to see whether something needs to be said or not. This is a great way to avoid or stop gossiping.

The test requires you to ask yourself these 3 questions before you pass on unverified information to others.

1. Is it true?
2. Is it good?
3. Is it useful?

Is what you are about to say true? If you cannot verify that it is true, then is it a good thing to share this information? If you are not sure whether the outcome will be good or not if you share it, then ask yourself whether it is useful for the listener? If not, then don't say it.

MODULE TEN

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships

Our goal for this module is to understand relationships, how it works and why it is important for our well beings and peace. We will look at relationships from various aspects, such as:

1. Our relationship with those around us, particularly those in our circle of influence, and
2. Our relationship with our Self / spirituality / God / universe

What is a Relationship?

A relationship between two or more persons refers to how each person **relates** to, **connects** to or **associates** with the other person or persons. This association may be by blood (as in a family connection), by marriage, by work or other activities or by a romantic link.

Every relationship is **unique** and distinct from the rest. A mother and child relationship is distinctly different from a husband and wife relationship, which is different from a platonic relationship. Likewise, a friendship can be close or mere acquaintance or restricted to work or certain shared activities.

In every relationship, there is an agreement or **covenant** binding those in the relationship with regards to how the relationship should work. This agreement is often implied or assumed, and always involved a certain degree of **trust**.

Getting into a relationship of any sort puts us in a position of dependence on the other person, thereby making us opens to vulnerability. Therefore, it takes risk and **courage** to be in a relationship. For this reason, the greater the trust the better the relationship is. Conversely, once the trust is broken, the dynamics of the relationship changes drastically downhill.

Relationships are **dynamic** and therefore can change from one form to another. As a relationship changes, the degree of trust, interaction and emotional involvement also change accordingly.

Why Be in a Relationship?

Why do people get into a relationship? What benefits do they derive from it? Why choose to be in a relationship instead of living alone?

People get into a relationship to fulfill certain **perceived needs**. For some, it is the need of security. For others, it is the need for companionship. Some people get into a relationship because of their self-esteem, or rather the lack of it. Many people seek love in their relationships.

Can you recognize what perceived needs you are fulfilling in each one of your relationships?

Work Sheets:

Relationships and Needs
Self Esteem Questionnaire

Fundamentals of Relationships

Ideal Outcome

The ideal outcome of a relationship is one that allows both parties involved to grow positively and spiritually. The way to achieve this outcome is to put the most fundamental principle of a healthy relationship between two persons to work. This fundamental principle is the **Principle of Mutuality**, which is most succinctly explained in the Golden Rule that says "Do unto others as you would want others to do unto you". Following this **Golden Rule** results in mutual respect, empathy, fairness and positive continuous growth for both parties in the relationship.

Opportunity for Growth

Every relationship should be seen as an opportunity for mutual personal and spiritual **growth**. Once this attitude towards relationships is adopted, every relationship becomes an opportunity to learn about self in a deep and meaningful way. This is because each relationship reflects certain aspects of our **shadows** that are often hidden from our conscious awareness. Relationships, therefore, become the **mirror** that shows us our innermost dark beliefs, desires, fears and judgments. They reveal them to our conscious awareness so that we can do something positive

to challenge, change and clear them.

Self Acceptance

How much we truly accept ourselves is often revealed in our relationship or interaction with others. The degree of our self-acceptance towards our own shadows is proportionately reflected in the degree of our acceptance towards others. Therefore, the more intolerance we show towards others' mistakes, weaknesses and differences from us, the more we reveal our lack of self-acceptance towards our own shadows.

Worksheet:

Mirror
Masks

Choices, Decisions and Responsibility

For a relationship to grow and benefit all parties, it is essential that everyone involved recognizes the need to take full responsibility for all his or her choices, decisions and actions, big or small.

Each time we make a choice, we carve a new path into our future. Every decision, including the decision to not make a decision, has a corresponding consequence. So do not be fooled into believing that not making a decision is a save option. It is not necessary so. In fact, very often, it only means that we are giving away our power to shape our own life. Thus, instead of being the master of our own life, we allow ourselves to be subjected to "fate".

You will note that decisions made in the space of unconditional love often result in positive outcomes while those made in fear have negative repercussions. Therefore, when making important decisions, knowing whether that decision is motivated by love or fear can make a difference to the outcome.

Spiritual Relationships

Your relationship with your Self, your spirituality, others and the universe is a spiritual relationship. It is a deeply personal and sacred relationship. You have a choice to make this spiritual relationship a dominant part of your life or you can continue to ignore it. Either way, you will be making a choice that will have drastically different outcome.

ARTICLE

How to Cultivate a Spiritual Relationship

By Dr. Tim Ong, M.B.B.S.

What is a spiritual relationship?

A relationship is how we relate to another. A spiritual relationship is a relationship that aims for the highest good for those in the relationship. It is one that facilitates our spiritual growth.

Here are some tips on how to cultivate a spiritual relationship with another.

1. A Spiritual Being in Physical Experience

Most people believe they are physical human beings, with perhaps some tendency or inclination to seek a spiritual experience. Living with this belief automatically limits our spiritual experience for it puts our spirituality in the backseat.

Instead, choose to believe that we are spiritual beings in physical manifestation. This choice automatically brings your spiritual experience into center stage, and you will begin to see every relationship as an opportunity for spiritual growth.

Remember, whatever you choose to believe in, you're right, for a belief is merely a perception of reality.

2. Free Will

As a spiritual being, we have free will and complete control over our life. However, this is only true IF we have full control over our mind. The more mindful or conscious we are, the more free will we have.

Therefore, in every situation in a relationship, we have a choice as to how we choose to respond. We have the freedom to respond positively or negatively. Responding positively not only helps us to grow spiritually but also offer the other person an opportunity to do so as well. When we respond negatively, we miss an opportunity for growth.

3. Do not judge

To judge implies that we are superior to another. It implies that we know better or are more evolved. This is the working of the egoic mind. Every time we judge, we validate and strengthen our egoic mind.

Our egoic mind is the proverbial devil in disguise. If it cannot win by force, it will try to win through cunning and trickery. It is so good and subtle at this that we are

often fooled by it.

To judge also implies that we are forcing our own beliefs, concepts, desires and expectations on another. In other words, we are not honoring their free will.

Each time we judge another, we are doing ourselves and the other person a disservice. We are perpetuating a negative tendency that continues to validate our egoic mind. At the same time, we encroach on the other person's space and choice, and are more likely to create a resistance in him or her, rather than a positive respond.

4. Do not blame

To blame also implies superiority over another. To blame another also means we do not take responsibility for our share in the relationship.

A relationship is a two-way thing. It takes two to tango. You cannot clap with one hand. This means that in a relationship, both are equally responsible for the outcome.

When we blame another, we are actually saying, "It is your fault, not mine."

However, we should also remember not to blame ourselves. Since every relationship is an opportunity for spiritual growth, take every situation as an opportunity to learn and evolve. There is no need to blame oneself or others.

5. Acceptance

Learn to accept ourselves and the other person, together with all the strengths and weaknesses. We are here to evolve into a spiritual being with full consciousness in our physical manifestation. Each of us are here for certain unique lessons.

Through acceptance, we help each other to grow. Through acceptance, we let go of our tendency to judge, blame and control.

In cultivating a spiritual relationship, we are BE-ing unconditional love.

Author:

Dr. Tim Ong is a medical doctor with keen interests in self improvement, mind science and spirituality. He is the author of [From Fear to Love: A Spiritual Journey](#) and a contributor to **101 Great Ways to Improve Your Life: Volume 3** together with other authors like Ken Blanchard, Byron Katie, Mark Victor Hansen and Les Brown.

Primary Love Needs

In **Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus**, author John Gray pointed out that men and women are different in some very important ways. Not knowing these differences can lead to mis-communication and misunderstanding.

One of the major differences in the sexes is in the primary love needs of men and women.

Women	Men
1. Feeling cared about (implying specialness) 2. Feeling understood 3. Feeling respected 4. Feeling their partner's devotion 5. Feeling validated 6. Feeling reassured	1. Feeling trusted (implying competence) 2. Feeling accepted 3. Feeling appreciated 4. Feeling admired 5. Feeling approved of 6. Feeling encouraged

5 Love Languages

In addition, each of us differs in the way we express love. According to Gary Chapman, the author of **The 5 Love Languages**, individuals express love in 5 possible ways:

1. Words of Affirmation
2. Touch
3. Quality Time
4. Act of Service
5. Gifts

It is important to note that we express love according to our own love language, assuming that this is how best to express our love to our loved ones. The problem with this assumption is that our loved ones may have different love languages, thereby making it likely that they may not interpret our expression of love correctly or as intended.

To know your own love language or that of your spouse, go to:

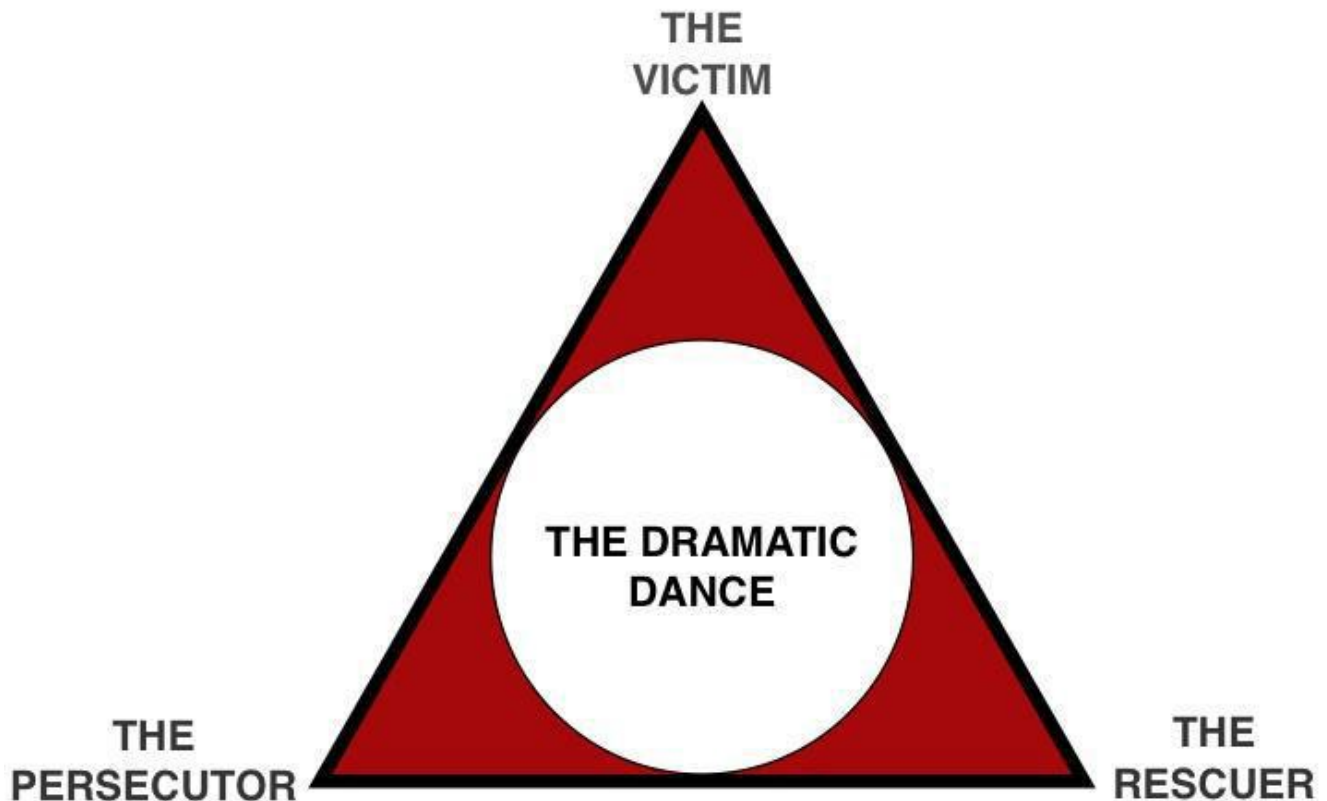
<http://theselfimprovementsite.com/tools/>

Common Relationship Problems

Parent / Spouse / Child / Friend

No:	Issues	Remarks
1	Money	
2	Communication	
3	Chores	
4	Roles and Responsibilities	
5	Trust	
6	Sex and Intimacy	

Karpman Drama Triangle



Key Words

Responsibilities
Roles
Power
Boundaries

Unconscious beliefs – who you are, what the world is, how you relate to the world, how the world relates to you, how others treat you – drive your behavior and how you relate to others.

This inner script or internal frame of reference may be formed by the time you are five years old.

The way out of this drama is to take full responsibility for your life.

MODULE ELEVEN

FINDING MEANINGS IN LIFE

Finding Meanings in Life

Perhaps we come into this life with a certain propensity or inclination towards someone or something. Perhaps we were born with a certain passion, talent, skill or goal. Or perhaps we are not.

If you find your passion early in your life, you fall among the lucky minority. For most others, part of the journey of self discovery is the journey to discover what we want to do or achieve in our lives.

We do not come into this world with a pre-written script. Instead, our life is an extremely dynamic and fluid journey, shaped by the choices and decisions we made, and the actions we take. Therefore, if you want to find meanings in your life, do not search for a pre-written script. Instead, take charge of your life by deciding for yourself what kind of life you want to live.

Most people find meanings in life in simple, intangible things – in the values they uphold, the quality of their relationships and the beauty of the goals they strive for. One way to find meanings in your life is to move forward into your future – at your death bed – and see how you would like to be remembered and what kind of life would be considered a successful and fulfilling one for you.

Worksheet:

Introduction to the 16 Guidelines of Life
<http://16guidelines.org>

How We Think	How We Act	How We Relate to Others	How We Find Meanings
Humility	Kindness	Respect	Aspiration
Patience	Honesty	Forgiveness	Principles
Contentment	Generosity	Gratitude	Service
Delight	Right Speech	Loyalty	Courage

16 Guidelines of Life



The 16 Guidelines for Life are a set of practical and straightforward tools for developing happiness and meaning in everyday life. It is the first project of Essential Education, a non-profit organisation that aims to help people develop their natural capacity for compassion and wisdom. The 16 Guidelines are featured in a book, *16 Guidelines For Life: The Basics* by Alison Murdoch and Dekyi-Lee Oldershaw, first published in 2005.

The 16 Guidelines are not a prescriptive doctrine or a set of commandments. They are offered as opportunities to explore one's own life experiences and to see whether the 16 Guidelines can help to improve the quality of that experience.

How we think



Thoughts lie at the root of every word we speak and every action we perform. Just as an athlete trains her body, we can train and transform our minds, and in doing so shift our habitual patterns and explore new ways of living: Humility, Patience, Contentment and Delight

How we act



Human lives are composed of billions of actions which take place every minute of the day. How you choose to act, therefore, defines and colours the quality of your experiences: Kindness, Honesty, Generosity and Right Speech

How we relate to others



It does not take much effort to see that the happiest people we know are those who acknowledge their interdependence, and who nurture warm and appreciative relationships with the people around them: Respect, Forgiveness, Gratitude and Loyalty

How we find meaning



Your search for meaning will depend on your ability and willingness to explore new and unfamiliar territory. It is a challenge to venture deep into yourself and find out how to create a happy and fulfilling life: Aspiration, Principles, Service and Courage

Who wrote the Guidelines?

In the seventh century AD, the great Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo had an unexpected change of heart. Abandoning his successful career as a military leader, he introduced a new legal system, built schools and temples, and invited philosophical and spiritual teachers from neighbouring India to teach people how to be happy.

The 16 Guidelines for Life are based on the inspirational values and principles that King Songtsen Gampo introduced to the Tibetan people. They are "ideas to make life better" that played a crucial part in changing Tibet from a warlike nation into a civilization renowned for its peace and serenity.

MODULE TWELVE

LIVING BEYOND THE SELF

Living Beyond the Self

Our goal for this module is to:

1. Understand what it means to live beyond the Self
2. Acquire a new mental habit of:
 - Non-personalization, non-identification
 - Non-Judging
 - Living in the present
 - Living in love

What is it?

“Living beyond the Self” means to be able to go beyond the mundane world of duality (relativity) to the supra-mundane world of oneness (absolute). It is a spiritual ideal or aspiration that is worth striving for as it leads to a permanent state of imperturbability and peace.

To achieve this state of imperturbability, we need to first understand and recognize the **sublime emptiness of life** as the ultimate reality. The goal, therefore, is to live and function from this supra-mundane, absolute state instead of the usual mundane, relative state.

In order to achieve this absolute state, one has to cultivate a new mental habit that is:

1. Non-personalizing or non-identifying with Self
2. Non-judging

In addition, we need to cultivate our mind to:

1. Live in the present moment
2. Respond from love, instead of react from fear

Judging Mind versus Non-Judging (Discerning) Mind

	Judging Mind	Discerning Mind
Cause	Ignorance	Wisdom
Source	Self or Ego	Non-Identification
Nature	Compulsive/Habitual Tendency - Attachment - Aversion	Receptive/Flexible/Adaptable - Acceptance - Letting Go
Expression	Over-confidence (Arrogance) Lack of Confidence/Self Esteem Blame Others or Self (Guilt, Shame) Selective Self-Awareness → Distortion of Reality	Balanced Confidence Humility Acceptance Forgiveness Seeing things as they truly are
Results	Sufferings Discontentment	Peace Contentment Imperturbability

Living in the Present Moment

Living in the present moment means that you are able to stay focus in the present without allowing your mind to go back to the past (past experience, memories, past learning) or move forward into the future (in anticipative fear). Your mind is therefore centered in just one point in time – now. The ability to live in the present moment will free you from past pains and future fears. In the moment of “now”, there is only peace.

Unfortunately, your present mental habit is one that delves into the past or anticipates the future, which results in pain and fear (sufferings).

One effective method to break this habit is to **examine our motivations when we make decisions.**

Were your decisions motivated by fear? If so, the results are likely to be unhealthy as they will prevent you from the spiritual growth you need. Fear validates and enhances your belief in a hostile universe, thereby making the belief true for you.

On the other hand, if your decisions were motivated by love, the results are likely to be healthier and there will be personal and spiritual growth as your trust and faith in a benevolent universe increases gradually.

This simple practice, if done constantly and regularly, can tremendously reduce your fear and increase your faith in the universe, making a happier and more pleasant life a new reality for you.

Another useful mental practice is to **continuously check the state of your mind**.

Is your mind in a fearful state? Is it agitated? Is it unhappy? If so, you are not delving in the present moment. It is either in the past or in the future. Remember that nothing outside of you can make you happy or unhappy without your co-operation. Only you can make yourself happy or unhappy. Knowing this, you can then make the choice to be happy, and to achieve that, you simply bring your mind back to the present. Choose to center yourself in a peaceful mind. Once you have reclaimed the peace in your mind, try to maintain that state of peace for as long as you can.

This simple practice trains your mind to return to its original state of peace frequently. As you become familiar with it, it becomes easier and easier to bring yourself back to a state of peace in your mind.

Imperturbability

If you are able to incorporate these simple mental practices into your daily life, you will find it easier to accept reality as it is and also easier to let go and forgive yourself and others. You will realize that people do what they do because they are ignorant, believing that they have chosen the best decisions possible under the circumstances given to them. Until they are able to see and understand this higher truth about life, and the sublime emptiness of life, they will continue to be subjected to the constant change that is inevitable.

The state of permanent peace and imperturbability can only be achieved once we have dropped all clinging to Self – in our thoughts, feelings and body. Only then can we not be moved and affected by the random thoughts and feelings that are triggered by life itself.

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