

Self-Help Tools For Overcoming

Depression



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Introduction

I wrote this self help booklet to address two very important needs. The first is to provide a resource to people who cannot afford psycho-therapy. As a practicing mental health counselor, I always had a sliding scale fee and was able to make a small dent in providing help to people who could not afford to pay much, or who had no health insurance coverage. However, there were always plenty of people I had to turn away as there are only so many slots in a week. I am sure all therapists are forced to turn away many clients who need help. I therefore became interested in putting together a self-help tool which would help people learn how to be their own therapist, or a tool that could be used for peer counseling. The second reason I wrote this booklet is that, even when people do come to twenty sessions, (the typical number of session insurance covers), or even if they can afford to pay for a full year of therapy, they need to be able to continue using therapeutic techniques on themselves for the rest of their lives, particularly in the case of depression. Achieving and maintaining mental health is a life-long process. I realized that the system of therapy I use with my clients as a professional counselor, which I developed myself over twenty years ago, (called *Integrative Therapy*) is very well suited to be used as a self-help tool.

If you are someone who has recurrent depression, I firmly believe the techniques described in this booklet can help you develop a depression-free

Introduction

(Continued)

life. It can help you to understand what internal thought processes trigger your depressive episodes, and to then develop new healthy thoughts and coping mechanisms.

You will have to invest some time and energy reading through the information in order to understand the basis for the techniques. I recommend you just read a few pages at a time over a two week period so it does not feel overwhelming. I have tried to write it all in lay-person's language, but the human psyche is of course somewhat to a complex subject. I firmly believe your time and effort will pay off.

Understanding Depression

The first step towards understanding depression is to clearly define the word itself. Many people would describe depression as a feeling; the phrase "I'm feeling depressed" is a common use of the word. This is actually a misconception. Depression is actually a condition. The actual feelings associated with the state of depression are sadness, boredom / stagnation, despair or hopelessness, unexpressed anger, and in the physical realm, lethargy. Depression is characterized not only by these feelings, but with associated behaviors such as withdrawal from and non-interest in normal activities, difficulty performing normal life maintenance tasks, and disruption of normal eating and sleeping patterns.

Understanding Depression (Continued)

This distinction between a feeling and a condition may on the surface appear inconsequential, but I have come to conclude that is it, in fact, very significant when trying to overcome the condition of depression. It is much, much easier for a person to tackle the question "Why am I feeling sad? or Why am I feeling stagnated?" than "Why am I feeling depressed?" It is also easier for a person to reflect upon the question "Are there things I might be angry about that I am not expressing?, or "What might be causing me to feel hopeless about my life situation? Another useful thing to know about the feelings associated with depression is that human feelings are a "package deal". Sometimes people feel so overwhelmed by some of their feelings (usually sadness or anger) that they want to shut them off. It is possible for people to shut their feelings off, but what happens is, that not only does the sadness or anger get shut off, but all the good feelings as well such as joyfulness, excitement etc. You can turn your feelings valve off or on (at least for awhile) but you can't turn some on and some off. This is why people who are seriously depressed appear to have no feelings at all; they are emotionally "flat".

The logical second step to understanding depression is to clear up contaminated information you may have as to the causes of depression. The debate that always ensues in

Understanding Depression (Continued)

any discussion about the cause of depression is: Is depression caused by bio-chemistry, or environmental factors?

The correct answer is that it is a combination of both. It makes no sense to propose that depression is 100% bio-chemical, because how would you account for the astronomical rise in depression in the last several decades? Did millions of peoples' biochemistry mutate simultaneously? It is also illogical to conclude that depression is 100% environmental. There are many people whose life situations are extremely harsh, dysfunctional, tragic, etc., who do not end up depressed, and there're, conversely, people who seem to have everything going for them who end up committing suicide. Using the combination theory, the cause of depression can be explained as follows: **There is always a certain percentage of the population who are bio-chemically susceptible to depression. Whether or not these people actually end up depressed depends on the personal environment as well as the socio / political environments in which such people function.**

Applying this reasoning to the astronomical rise in depression in the last several decades we can ask: Are there some profound changes in peoples' social and political and personal environments in the last several decades that might cause those people

Understanding Depression (Continued)

who have a biochemical tendency towards depression to actually develop depression? I would answer a resounding **YES** to that question. Let me give a brief overview of the numerous sociological factors that I believe have contributed to the astronomical rise in depression over the last several decades and then offer some suggestions for what people can do to counteract these socio/political changes. I will also give an in-depth discussion of the personal causes of depression, and propose some strategies for dealing with them.

Before beginning a discussion of the causes of depression in an overview kind of vein, I want to stress that each case of depression is unique. To accurately diagnose what the causes of a given person's depression is, it is imperative that all the possible factors be considered to determine which combination of factors are causing this particular person's depression. It is also important to keep in mind that most "facts" that mental health professionals present in regards to depression are, in actuality, theories. In the remainder of this article I will lay out my personal theories regarding the causes and cures for depression.

I like to classify the causes of depression into two major categories: Sociological Factors and Personal Factors.

Sociological Causes of Depression

Sociological Causes of Depression

I propose that there are six major sociological causes of depression*. I will discuss each of these in detail.

* *I am speaking of depression in the United States.*

- 1) Lack of Belongingness
- 2) Lack of Spiritual Practice.
[not necessarily religious]
- 3) Non-Parents not Replacing Parenthood with an Appropriate Substitution
- 4) Excessive Materialism and Consumption
- 5) The Planetary Environmental Crises.
- 6) Over-saturation with the "News".
- 7) Disenchantment with the US Political System

Lack of Belongingness

There has been a major decrease in people's sense of belongingness in the last fifty years. The following factors have contributed to this decrease: Divorce, long-term singlehood, loss of close knit neighborhoods, breakdown of extended families, job changes

Sociological Causes Lack of Belongingness (Continued)

company closings, geographic mobility, and decrease in church attendance. Consider the fact that up until a few decades ago, people's lives were structured in ways that constantly gave them a sense of belongingness: People used to know and interact with their neighbors. The majority of people lived in neighborhoods where the houses were relatively close together; where they walked to the corner barber, drug and hardware store, high school football game, etc., and in the process interacted with and got to know their neighbors; their kids played with all the kids that lived on their block or the next and they got to know their parents; they belonged to a church congregation; they got together with their extended family regularly; they stayed married to the same person for life; their kids grew up and lived nearby; they often worked for the same company with the same co-workers for thirty years etc., etc., etc. Most importantly, the majority of people did not live alone for any part of their lives; they either lived with their parents, spouse and kids, or with grown children later in life. Looking back even farther in history, people lived in tribes; deeply connected to other tribe members and never spent any time alone.

Contrast this picture with all too typical a life these days: a person divorces and does not remarry, lives alone for decades, has no children, has little contact with his/her extended

Sociological Causes Lack of Belongingness (Continued)

family, switches jobs every five years, relocates to a new city several times, lives in various apartments and then finally settles into a condo development where people pretty much stick to themselves other than a pleasant hello. This provides little if any sense of belongingness. Belongingness is a very strong human need, **People who suffer from depression need to make lifestyle changes in their lifestyle to create more sense of belongingness in their lives.** This may mean geographically relocating to be near your extended family or a close friend. In the last several decades our culture has come to place career advancement as the highest value, and remaining near family as secondary. This in fact may not be the right choice for everyone. People who are susceptible to depression do better when they have a strong support system of social relationships and should arrange their lives so they remain geographically close to their extended family or network of significant friends. Sometimes you can get enough belongingness just by relocating to a neighborhood that has some sense of community. People prone to depression should not live the "suburban sprawl" lifestyle; i.e. living outside the city on a five acre lot. Find a neighborhood where the houses are close enough to one another that there is regular interaction among neighbors. Better yet move to a sub-

Sociological Causes Lack of Belongingness (Continued)

division where the houses are purposely clustered close together with shared green space. Or move to a condo community that has a strong community atmosphere. Some condo communities have regular activities and social events in their community center and friendly neighbors. A new option that is catching on in the United States is called "Co-housing" A co-housing community is a group of people that forms a condominium association and actually plans and designs it's own development; the houses, green space, walkways etc. Co-housing communities also contain a community building with a kitchen and dining area (as well as other recreation rooms) where people can participate in community meals Mon-Fri. Members take turns preparing the meals and doing the menu planning. You own your own home with your own mortgage and then are a co-owner of the complex as a whole just like a traditional condominium development. Co-housing attracts people who are interested in a close knit neighborhood. For more information, check out the Co-Housing Association of the United States website at www.co-housing.org.

Another possibility is to get a housemate. Advertise in your local newspaper or on www.craigslist.org for a housemate and interview people until you find someone that feels like a good match. Even if you do not end up best friends with this person, just a little day to day interaction can make a difference

Sociological Causes Lack of Belongingness (Continued)

in your sense of isolation. *[It's also important to have an adequate support system of friends. I deal with this issue in the section on personal causes of depression.]*

Lack of Spiritual Practice

There is a definite link between a lack of spiritual practice and depression. As I just mentioned, forty years ago the majority of people in the United States belonged to a church or synagogue. Beginning in the late 1960's, participation in organized religions declined. Though there has certainly been a resurgence of the "religious right" recently, **overall** there is still a decrease in church/synagogue participation across the whole population. Significantly less people regularly attend church/synagogue compared to the percentage of people who attended in the 1950's, or decades previous to that. I think it is fine for people to decide that Christianity or Judaism no longer feels right to them and discontinue going to church or synagogue. I am one of those people who parted ways with Christianity quite early in life. However, I think it is important if/when people stop participating in traditional religions, they find some kind of alternative spiritual activities and belief systems to replace those they are discarding. When this doesn't happen, a spiritual void develops in peoples' lives.

Sociological Causes

Lack of Spiritual Practice

(Continued)

If you are someone who has parted ways with traditional Christianity or Judaism you need to develop your own spiritual "practice" to replace going to church/synagogue. What I'm getting at here is, "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater." A spiritual practice can take a variety of forms: silent meditation, reading spiritual books, attending lectures on alternative spirituality, etc. You may want to consider joining the Unitarian Universalist Church. There are Unitarian churches in most major cities and Unitarian associations in smaller towns. Unitarian churches are democratically controlled associations of people joined together for the purpose of spiritual growth, humanitarian actions, and sense of community. Their church principles are very open minded, embracing what you might call basic universal spiritual principles. They draw religious principles from many different world religions and encourage each person to develop their own personal religious creed. Or instead of such concrete mental questing, you might consider something less direct, like going out every Sunday morning for a long hike in a beautiful nature area, or watching a sunrise, or kayaking at sundown. Leave your cell phone and everyday thoughts at home, and focus your mind on such questions as "What do I perceive my spiritual purpose on this earth to be?" or "Do I believe in

Sociological Causes Lack of Spiritual Practice (Continued)

God, and if so what can I do to feel his/her presence more in my life?"

Non-Parents Not Replacing Parenting with An Appropriate Substitution

I am thoroughly convinced that childless people are more prone to depression than parents. Parenting provides a profound sense of meaning in life; it is an extremely powerful, rewarding, and fulfilling experience (though admittedly quite difficult as well). There is nothing wrong with deciding to not become a parent, and of course, a significant percentage of people have fertility problems. **However, when people do not become parents, they need to get involved in some volunteer work as an alternative, in order to satisfy the sense of purpose in life that parenting provides.** When I say this, I do not mean occasional volunteering. I mean making a serious commitment to work every week on some significant "world improvement" endeavor(s). Being a parent connects you in a deep way to the on-going family of humanity. Likewise, working on issues like world peace and justice, poverty eradication, racism, sexism, environmental protection, or quality of life for the elderly, mentally ill, developmentally disabled, terminally ill, etc., helps their mortality by making a contribution to future generations.

Sociological Causes Excessive Materialism

Excessive Materialism and Consumption

Over the last several decades, people have been brainwashed to believe that they need an ever increasing amount of material goods and services in order to be happy. There are several reasons why excessive materialism contributes to depression. The first is that people become addicted to needing more and more "things" and end up having to work more and more hours to pay for them. The forty hour work week is becoming a thing of the past. People have to work more to pay for their huge houses, expensive cars, vacations, dining out, various expensive toys, etc. They therefore begin living at a frenzied pace that leaves no time for psychological rejuvenation, connecting with friends, etc. People that become addictive about material things also often end up with serious credit card debt. When people carry credit card debt that is inappropriate to their income level, they develop feelings of hopelessness and low self esteem which can eventually lead to depression.

The second way that leading an overly consumptive lifestyle contributes to depression is that, at some deep sub-conscious level, people are aware that they are consuming more than their fair share of the planet's resources. The planet's energy and resources are finite, and need to be distributed in ways that allow everyone on the planet

Sociological Causes Excessive Materialism (Continued)

to enjoy a decent quality of life. In decades past, people used to be encouraged to tithe a portion of their income to charity. There was more of a mentality that when you had "enough", you should give to the less fortunate, not figure out more and more ways to spend your "disposable" income on yourself for more "toys" and luxuries. Charitable giving is extremely spiritually rewarding, yet it is becoming less and less common.

I firmly believe that Americans need to simplify their lifestyles and return to the idea of tithing a portion of their income to charitable purchases. Tithing gives a person a sense of purpose and meaning which is a great antidote for depression. Volunteer work is only half the picture. Charitable organizations have bills to pay and they need real live money to pay them. The deep sense of pride you get from making a financial donation to a worthy cause far outweighs the momentary joy of buying an additional luxury for yourself.

The Environmental Crises of the Planet

If a person is haunted by fears that the planet itself may become incapable of supporting life due to an energy shortage when the fossil fuels are gone, nuclear disasters, water or air pollution, depletion of top soil or aquifers, ozone

Sociological Causes Environmental Crises (Continued)

depletion, global warming, etc., he/she can develop a sense of futility. It's hard to get the sense of being connected to future generations if you fear humanity will become extinct. Thus, the planetary environmental crises can weigh heavily on you without you being conscious of it. Most of these world environmental problems were not issues fifty years ago (or at least the average person was unaware of what was brewing).

There are things you can do on a personal level to counteract feelings of impending environmental disaster. They may seem insignificant, but they do in fact help counteract feelings of hopelessness.

- 1) Drive an energy efficient car and reduce unnecessary driving. Use mass transit and car pool when possible. Reduce air travel.
- 2) Recycle.
- 3) Purchase items with as little packaging as possible and shop at second hand stores. Given unwanted items to resale organizations rather than tossing them in the dumpster.
- 4) Educate yourself about the environmental ratings of local and state politicians and vote for "environmentally conscious" candidates.

Sociological Causes Environmental Crises (Continued)

- 5) Live in an appropriate sized house.
- 6) Make an annual donation to an environmental organization.

Al Gore is a walking testimony of how much impact one committed person can have in helping to solve our environmental crises.

Over Saturation with News

Satellite TV and the Internet makes all the troubles of the world constantly visible to us. **If you are prone to depression, limit how much news you watch or read about.** It's good to be informed about the state of the world, but do not overly saturate yourself with depressing information. Get your news from newspapers or periodicals like **Time** or **Newsweek** where you are in control of which articles you read instead of being bombarded via your television with sensationalist (usually negative) news that it's really not crucial that you know about. Also make sure to read news periodicals that tend to have an upbeat orientation such as **Utne Reader**, **The Wilson Quarterly**, etc. Or you might find it helpful to watch **The News Hour with Jim Lehrer** rather than traditional "Headline News."

Sociological Causes Political Disenchantment (Continued)

Disenchantment with the US Political System

Since the Watergate scandal of the 1970's, the sense of trust that Americans feel in their political leaders has been on a downward spiral. In the 1980's it was unveiled that Reagan traded arms to Iran in exchange for the release of American hostages, in the 1990's Bill Clinton's sexual infidelities with a White House Aide were revealed, and in the 2000 elections the polling practices in Florida left many Americans believing that George Bush Jr. was fraudulently elected. During George Bush Jr.'s terms of office there has been further eroding of public trust regarding the nuclear weapons factories that never materialized in Iraq, and the atrocious torture practices sanctioned by Bush at the detention camp at Guantanamo Bay.

As a result of all this corruption exhibited by public officials in the last forty years, 51% of eligible Americans no longer choose to vote. This is a very serious problem. We have so many people disillusioned with the US political system, that non-voters outweigh voters. I believe that this pessimist political climate contributes to some people's depression.

If you suffer from depression, and one manifestation of that depression is that you no longer vote, you need to stop feeding your pessimism by casting a ballot.

Sociological Causes Political Disenchantment (Continued)

Withdrawing will only make you feel worse. Non-voters feed corruption, and enable incompetent people to get elected and re-elected. Not only should you vote, but you invest some time in finding a candidate research organization that makes voting recommendations you can trust, and begin educating yourself about the voting records of your local politicians and state representatives and senators. With a very small investment of time and energy, you can get the information you need to cast votes for political leaders who have integrity and who possess the right skills to address our national and global problems. Take time to sign petitions, and perhaps consider working, in some small way, on a political campaign. Another possibility is to generate more voters within your circle of acquaintances; motivate a few non-voters to become voters. You will be surprised how these small efforts on your part can help you to stop feeding your sense of hopelessness about the political system.

That sums up my overview of the sociological causes of depression. I suggest you take some time to mull all this information regarding sociological causes of depression over for awhile to determine which of it seems applicable to you. Then make a plan for counteracting these sociological causes of depression. I will now move on to discuss personal causes of depression.

Personal Causes of Depression

Personal Causes of Depression

The following are the major personal causes of depression:

- 1) Bio-chemical imbalance
- 2) Lack of Self-Awareness
- 3) Stress Factor Overload
- 4) Unresolved Anger/Grief
- 5) Lack of Adequate Support System
- 6) A traumatic, dysfunctional, neglectful, or abusive childhood

I will discuss each of these, and you can make a determination as to which apply to you.

Bio-Chemical Imbalance

It is actually impossible to determine what percentage of people who are suffering from depression are depressed due to biochemistry. Strangely enough, there are no tests for calculating a chemical deficiency. Psychological chemical imbalance is determined by inference -- if you exhibit chronic clinical depression, and are not cured by psychotherapy, it is inferred that you have a chemical imbalance. The problem with this inference-based diagnosis of biochemical imbalance is it assumes that the psychotherapy offered

Personal Causes Biochemical Imbalance (Continued)

to the person suffering from depression was effective therapy. If this assumption is not correct, then some people presumed to have a biochemical imbalance may not in fact have one, but rather were simply not given adequate psychotherapy to cure their depression. I personally believe that many people suffering from depression do not receive proper therapy. Health insurance companies now use "Managed Care" methods and mental health therapy is often limited to twenty-two sessions per year. Due to extensive paperwork being required of therapists, many therapists now do 45 minute sessions. A good many cases of depression cannot be cured in twenty-two sessions of forty-five minutes each. But instead of providing a realistic number of psychotherapy sessions to cure depression, (which would probably be more like a year and a half of weekly sessions of at least an hour in duration), therapists are encouraged to have a psychiatrist prescribe medication to clients whose depression is not cured by twenty-two therapy sessions. In fact there is a lot of pressure on mental health professionals to refer all clients who complain of depression to a psychiatrist to be prescribed anti-depressant medication at the onset of therapy. The reason for this pressure is a fear of law suits. If a client is placed on medication, it lowers the risk that he/she will commit suicide as a result of his/her depression. It may well be that

Personal Causes

Biochemical Imbalance

(Continued)

only a small percentage of people are his/her depression. It may well be that only a small percentage of people are actually at risk for suicide, however just to be on the safe side, many mental health clients are encouraged to take anti-depressant medications. Since the medication seems to solve the depression, most people never get to the roots of their depression in psychotherapy and remain on long-term anti-depressant medication. I do not mean to be implying that there are not people who need to be on anti-depressant medication. If you have a history of serious mental illness in your family particularly psychiatric hospitalizations or suicide attempts, or you personally have been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder or have made any suicide attempts or often have thoughts about suicide, it is highly likely that your depression is caused at least in part from a bio-chemical imbalance and you should remain on medication. You can still use the information in this booklet to work on the underlying causes of your depression. In almost every study that has been done on depression, results show that medication alone is not nearly as effective with depression as the combination of psychotherapy and medication. If you are someone with more mild forms of depression, the cause of your depression is probably psychological in nature. The first

Personal Causes

Lack of Self Awareness

(Continued)

psychological cause of depression I will discuss is lack of self awareness.

Lack of Self Awareness

People who are depressed were often raised in ways that kept them from achieving the necessary level of self awareness to lead a happy life. Every person is unique with unique needs. But it's very easy to be led astray by societal or family pressures to make life decisions that are actually not right for you. For instance, some people thrive on living in New York City, and others need to live on a Montana ranch. People need different kinds of hobbies to fulfill themselves. People need different levels of stimulation and social contact. Some people are meant to be married to the same person for life, others change a lot and need to end their incompatible marriages. Some people are creative and artistic by nature and need to follow those aspirations even if it brings almost no financial success. A given career may be a great choice for one person and a horrible fit for another. If you find yourself repeatedly depressed, but you did not have a noticeably dysfunctional childhood, you may be suffering from lack of self awareness. You may have made some life choices that are not right for you without realizing it. I recommend the following books for increasing self-awareness.

Personal Causes Lack of Self Awareness (Continued)

Reading List for Self Awareness

List Your Self: Listmaking As A Way to Self Discovery (1996) By Ilene Segalove & Paul Velick.

Type Talk: The 16 Personality Types That Determine How We Live, Love, & Work (1989) Otto Kroeger & Janet Thuesen

The Playful Way to Know Yourself: A Creative Workbook to Inspire Self Discovery (2003) by Roberta Allen, Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, MA

How We Choose to Be Happy—The 9 Choices of Extremely Happy People – Their Secrets, Their Stories (2004) By Rick Foster & Greg Hicks, Penguin Group, New York, NY.

In Search of Values –31 Strategies for Finding Out What Really Matters To You (1993) By Sidney Simon, Warner Books, New York, NY

Stress Factor Overload

Another psychological cause of depression is when a person experiences a large number of stress conditions over a short period of time. Though most people can handle a few of these at once, when a person gets bombarded with these kinds of stress factors, one after another, within a one or two year period, his/her psyche can overload, and this stress overload

Personal Causes Stress Factor Overload (Continued)

can manifest itself as clinical depression. The following is a list of stress factors which, if experienced in rapid succession, can cause depression from stress overload:

- Geographic relocation
- Natural death of friend
- Natural death of family member
- Suicide of family member
- Suicide of friend
- Serious illness in family
- Job loss (self or spouse)
- Birth of new child
- Victim of natural disaster
(or someone close)
- Victim of violent crime
(Or someone close)
- Adoption of new family member
- Serious injury
- Serious illness
- Marital/relationship discord
- Divorce or break-up
- Pregnancy
- Infidelity

Personal Causes Stress Factor Overload (Continued)

If, after reviewing this list, you believe you may be experiencing stress factor overload, you should take the following steps to help your psyche recover.

- 1) Get at least ten hours sleep a night if you can (you need extra sleep when under stress).
- 2) Take a short leave from absence from work if possible.
- 3) Do not take on any new projects in any area of your life that aren't absolutely necessary.
- 4) Eat healthy food, and limit your caffeine intake.
- 5) Reduce as many of your responsibilities as you can. Ask for help from friends and relatives.
- 6) Take a one hour solitary walk at least three times a week.
- 7) Create a place and time where you can openly grieve your losses by crying and journaling.
- 8) Join a grief support group. Most Hospices offer these free of charge.
- 9) See a therapist for a few months.
- 10) Have no expectations of yourself other than surviving each day and rejuvenating.

Personal Causes Stress Factor Overload (Continued)

Please note that Stress Factor Overload is different than Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. *[Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a condition of extreme anxiety in reaction to an event or ordeal in which a person experiences or was threatened with serious physical harm. The person keeps re-experiencing the event, has great difficulty sleeping and avoids or is set off by stimuli that remind him/her of the traumatic event. Common events or situations which cause PTSD are war combat, rape or physical assault, natural disasters, witness to violent crime such as drive by shootings, plane crashes, or world events like the 9/11/01 attack on the world trade center, the tsunami disaster of 2004, and Hurricane Katrina. Persons suffering from PTSD should see a mental health professional trained in PTSD healing techniques.]*

PTSD is a separate medical condition than depression. Stress Factor Overload as discussed above, is related to depression.

Unresolved Anger/Sadness

Sometimes, when people face a difficult experience such as divorce or death or job loss, they fight against the feelings associated with the event because they are scared they can't handle the feelings and will "fall apart". Or sometimes when an event, like the death of a parent or close friend

Personal Causes Unresolved Anger/ Sadness (Continued)

happens, a person has so many life responsibilities like taking care of small children that he/she feels he/she cannot take time out to grieve. So the person represses the feelings of anger or sadness. Unfortunately, when people do this, not only do they shut down the feelings they are seeking to avoid, i.e. the anger and sadness, they also shut down all of their positive feelings as well. Feelings come as a package deal, so if you turn off the feeling part of yourself, you also turn off joyfulness, excitement, and energeticness; you become what is known as "emotionally flat". Without the ability to feel positive emotions, you then sink into a state of depression.

The way to work out of an emotionally flat depressed state is to turn your feeling switch back to the "on" position and allow yourself to fully experience the repressed anger and/or sadness about the unresolved event. Even though the sad and angry feelings are difficult and scary to feel, it is necessary to feel them in order to move beyond them. Sometimes it is helpful to see a professional counselor to work through the anger and sadness you may have regarding an event such as divorce or death or other loss. But you also can do it yourself; it just requires setting aside some private time where you don't have to maintain composure and can cry or yell as necessary to work through your anger and sadness.

Personal Causes Unresolved Anger/ Sadness (Continued)

It's sometimes helpful to have a friend present just to validate that feelings are normal and okay.

Inadequate Support System

In this day and age, where people do a lot of geographic relocating, and work long hours in their careers, they sometimes end up with an inadequate number of friends and support people. Though it is true that some people are more social and extroverted than others, everyone needs a few close people whom they can turn to when they are feeling down for a "shoulder to cry on". Even though friends may not be able to help you solve your problems in a logistical kind of way, it still has a very therapeutic effect to just have someone be consoling: "I'm sorry you're having a hard time about your divorce, and I hope you feel better soon." Friends can also share similar experiences: "Yeah, I can remember how emotionally devastated I felt when I got laid off". If you are feeling mildly depressed and suspect that one of the causes might be a lack of close connection with other people, figure out what you need to do to reconnect with friends you have drifted away from. Be the one that reinitiates contact even if it's been a long while. You may get a few rejections, but if you are persistent, you will find someone who is delighted

Personal Causes Inadequate Support System (Continued)

that you want to pick up the friendship again. If you have close people who live far away, learn how to have deep close conversations on the telephone. Long distance calling has become so unbelievably cheap these days that it is very easy to maintain a very close relationship with friends or family via phone. You also need to put yourself in situations where you can develop new friendships. Consider joining a church. If you're not religious, join a Unitarian Church; they openly welcome atheists and agnostics and have many, many social activities in addition to Sunday services that provide opportunities to make new friends. Another possibility is to turn a co-worker into a friend. However, to make your friends into true support people in your life, you have to make sure to be open with them about what's going on with you on an emotional level. If all you do is chit chat about sports, vacations, or good movies, you won't reach a level of intimacy where you both are sharing your deep concerns and getting nurturing from one another. If you are a person who has shied away from close interactions, you have to take things one step at a time to deepen the connection. I'm not suggesting that you start pouring your heart and soul out to a friend whom you've previously only had a very superficial level friendship with. You can just share a little, and if he/she reciprocates, slowly but surely, you can

Personal Causes Inadequate Support System (Continued)

create a close, emotionally supportive, and open relationship with one another.

Traumatic/Neglectful Abusive/Dysfunctional Childhood

The most common, as well as the most complex psychological cause of depression is a traumatic, dysfunctional, neglectful, or abusive childhood. If you grew up in a unhealthy home environment, you received a lot of dysfunctional programming and that negative programming affects you on a day-to-day basis as an adult. Year after year, you operate and make decisions with this faulty programming as your guide, and you inadvertently set your life up such that you cannot get your needs met, you get caught up in self destructive thought and behavior patterns, and eventually you end up clinically depressed. If you never address the dysfunctional programming, you will probably end up repeatedly clinically depressed. Even if you have received psychotherapy, many therapists are not trained in dealing with the underlying dysfunctional programming that causes people to become and remain depressed.

So what can a person who received dysfunctional programming while growing up do to counteract this negative programming and heal from their depression?

Personal Causes Dysfunctional Childhood (Continued)

1) Acquire a solid understanding of how the human personality and psyche develop.

2) Analyze your own personal development so you can be aware of your dysfunctional programming.

3) Track your moods and thought patterns for one month, so you can really get a sense of how your dysfunctional programming is affecting you on a day-to-day basis.

4) Through either self-help techniques (described in the second half of this booklet) or with the help of a qualified therapist (or a combination of both) dismantle the dysfunctional programming and re-program yourself with healthy information (using the information you gather in Step 2 and Step 3).

I have to be totally honest with you. These four steps will take at least a year. Actually, it is a lifelong process, but the initial chunk of work will take a year. That may seem like a long time but it's taken you a lot of years to acquire your programming so it takes some time and effort to do what you might call a major overhaul of your psyche. **However, if you put the time**

Personal Causes Dysfunctional Childhood (Continued)

time and effort into this process, you will be able to lead a medication free and depression free life. This booklet will take you through the first three steps and you will then be armed with all the tools and information you need to work on Step 4.

In the next section, you will find an overview of how the human personality and psyche develop. There are many, many different theories of personality development; this material is based on the school of therapy I created which is called Integrative Therapy.

[Integrative Therapy is an outgrowth of Transactional Analysis Therapy. TA Therapy was developed in the 1960's by Eric Berne, see Appendix A.]

You may find this information a bit dry and technical, but I firmly believe that in order to overcome depression you need to understand how the human personality and psyche develop. If you experience it as difficult to read and digest, only read two pages at a time and reread them as much as you need to before moving on. After the theory section, there is a technique section that shows you how to use the theory to do therapy sessions with yourself, or to do therapy sessions with a friend serving as a coach. Reading the theory of personality development will also help you have more productive therapy sessions if you decide to seek counseling.

Psyche/Personality Development

The human psyche is divided into four distinct parts: The **Innate Self**, the **Programmed Self**, the **Adaptive Self** and the **Discerning¹ Self**. The what you might call “brain energy” moves from one part of the psyche to the next constantly, sometimes within seconds. Each part has different functions and strengths and weaknesses. These personality parts develop very differently in each person depending on the environment in which a person is raised, particularly in the first twelve years of life. The ways in which the various personality parts work together (or clash) also varies greatly depending on the quality of the parental and social training a child receives. However, any destructive programming that a person’s psyche receives while growing up can be dismantled and replaced with new healthy programming. Likewise, even if your personality parts have been out of balance and operating off kilter for years, you can bring them into balance and get them operating properly. You can also train yourself to move the energy of your brain from one personality part to another so that a given part turns “on” so to speak and another part turns “off”.

¹ *dis·cern·ing adj.*

1. having or showing good judgment or understanding, astute. 2. able to recognize and perceive differences. 3. having keen perceptions or insight.

Psyche/Personality Development (The Innate Self)

The Innate Self

The **Innate Self** part of the personality is the first part of the personality; it is all we consist of when we are born into this world. This part is where a person feels all his/her basic emotions: anger, joy, sadness, fear, and all the subtle variations of these four basics. The **Innate Self** is also where a person's basic organism survival urges are. The **Innate Self** is the part of the personality that expresses "I want": I want to be fed, kept warm and dry and safe, held, paid attention to, etc.". As the baby matures, the **Innate Self** is the part that says "I want to have fun, be loved, explore the world, etc."

The **Innate Self** is the source of sexual and sensual pleasure seeking, creativity, playfulness, artistic abilities, and affection. The **Innate Self** is questioning, spunky, adventurous, free-thinking and questing; it feels excited and happy to be alive. **The Innate Self** continually asks things like "Why?" and "Why not?" The **Innate Self** operates have its needs met and its desires from the premise that it deserves to be satisfied. The **Innate Self** is also rebellious, impulsive, self-centered, irrational, reckless, inconsiderate, dishonest & manipulative, demanding, etc. The very deep, primal urges and desires of the **Innate Self** are a force to be reckoned with throughout life. Urges to have sex with an attractive person you meet even

Psyche/Personality Development (The Innate Self)

though you are happily married, the urge to eat a whole quart of ice cream or package of your favorite cookies even though you know you don't want to gain weight, the urge to buy things with your credit card that you really cannot afford to buy, the urge to cuss out or hit someone who really pisses you off etc., come from your **Innate Self**. The **Innate Self** might best be conceptualized as a personality part that is tamable, but that never completely loses its "wild animal" characteristics.

However, though the **Innate Self** can be dangerous, it is also the wellspring of joyfulness in a human being. It is the **Innate Self** that smiles with joy at the taste of strawberry shortcake, or a fabulous cup of freshly brewed gourmet coffee; it is the part of us that exudes a blissful sigh when it glimpses a breathtaking sunset, and the part that rejoices in the beauty of a Mozart symphony. The **Innate Self** remains a part of the personality throughout life; without a functioning **Innate Self** we lose our desire to be alive.

The Programmed Self

As the young child grows, the **Programmed Self** part of the personality develops. The Programmed Self is where all the manners, customs, and rules that the child is taught is stored. The young child's **Programmed**

Psyche/Personality Development (The Programmed Self)

Self is fed a constant stream of Do's/Don'ts, and Should/ Shouldn'ts from many different sources; parents, extended family, teachers, clergy, television, storybooks, etc. The **Programmed Self** is programmed to understand what is acceptable and unacceptable within his/her culture. For instance, the parents/caregivers instruct the young child to eat with a fork, poop in the Porta Potty, not hit his/her siblings etc. The **Programmed Self** is also where "facts" are initially stored by the young child. The young child, through his/her daily interactions with the world, is constantly acquiring facts about everything under the sun. For example, "When I drop a rock it falls to the ground," "When I pick up snow it feels cold," "When I play with my toys too roughly, they break." The child is also fed a constant stream of "facts" from his/her parents and other people he/she interacts with: "If you put your hand on the stove it will burn you." "If you run out in the street without looking first, you might get hit by a car." Along with facts and rules, the **Programmed Self** of the young child is fed a huge amount of opinions, which are often presented as facts. This programming is often in the form of brief but high impact statements that reflect basic world views, life philosophies, and opinions about self in relation to others such as the following: "Life is good", "The world is not a nice place", "You can't trust people", "Love makes the

Psyche/Personality Development (The Programmed Self)

world go round", No matter what you do you always get screwed in the end", "Men are no-good bastards", "Life should feel like a grand adventure", "You can be anything you make up your mind to be", etc, etc., etc. Religious convictions and cultural norms are also part of what is programmed into the **Programmed Self**; values about sex roles, acceptable lifestyles, parenting styles, and values about how to promote the overall well being of the species.

Perhaps the most significant programming the **Programmed Self** of the young person receives has to do with self concept. The **Programmed Self** is told "You are lovable, pretty/handsome, smart, important, a good person, fun, wanted, competent and capable, you're going to be successful, shake up the world, etc", OR conversely "You are unlovable, ugly, fat, stupid, not wanted, not important, a pain in the ass, clumsy, not likely to amount to anything, weird, crazy, incompetent, just like Uncle Henry (who ended up in prison) or Aunt Jane (who committed suicide) etc, etc."

The kind of information that gets fed into the **Programmed Self** of a child varies greatly depending on what kind of family he/she is born into. If a child is lucky enough to be born into a family consisting of fairly happy, mentally healthy, and spiritually evolved authority figures, the information fed into his/her **Programmed Self** will help

Psyche/Personality Development (The Programmed Self)

the young person to become a happy, healthy, evolved adult. Some people, unfortunately, receive almost entirely destructive, contaminated information into their **Programmed Self**. It seems that most people receive a mixed bag of information into their **Programmed Self**. Even in the best of families, some amount of obsolete, inappropriate, or dysfunctional information ends up in the child's **Programmed Self**. There are several reasons for this. The first is that humanity is constantly evolving and thus even well meaning parents will teach their children facts or philosophies that really will not be appropriate to the young person's life when he/she grows up into a different reality than the parents grew up in. Likewise, parents get overwhelmed, preoccupied, exhausted, they make mistakes, get bullheaded at times, etc. This results in parents inadvertently programming their children with information that damages their self esteem, interferes with the child's self awareness, or in general interferes with the child's ability to become as happy and successful as he/she is capable. Obviously, there are all kinds of other people who may also feed contaminated or destructive information into the **Programmed Self** of the child as well; relatives, teachers, neighbors, babysitters, television, other children who are mimicking what they hear from authority figures in their life, etc.

Psyche/Personality Development (The Programmed Self)

The great majority of young people therefore receive both positive and negative information into the **Programmed Self** part of the psyche. The programming happens without the young person doing much questioning about the validity or appropriateness of the information (I will explain why in a moment). Therefore by the age of ten or so the young person has received a huge amount of uncensored /unexamined/unedited information into his/her **Programmed Self**.

The **Programmed Self** continues to receive information throughout life. The **Programmed Self** basically operates like a tape recorder. It constantly records all the theories and opinions it hears; advice from friends, family members or co-workers, theories the person reads, the opinions of talk show hosts spouting their opinions etc. A good way to conceptualize the **Programmed Self** is to think of it as hundreds and hundreds of file cabinets full of information: values, moral judgments, theories, etc. A person's **Programmed Self** is a huge collection of conflicting opinions about most everything.

The Adaptive Self

A third part of the psyche begins to develop simultaneously with the **Programmed Self**. It is called the **Adaptive Self**. The **Adaptive Self**, like the **Innate Self** is emotionally

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based. The difference is, the **Adaptive Self** feels emotions that are conditioned into it by the caregivers. The **Adaptive Self** is very observant and perceptive about non-verbal cues it picks up from parents and caregivers. The emerging **Adaptive Self** in the infant can sense disapproval from the caregivers before it masters language; it begins to memorize what kinds of behaviors are rewarded, which are punished, and which are ignored. In order for the baby to get its needs met, it begins to adapt to the desires of its caregivers. As the toddler masters language, the communications from the caregivers become verbal: "Do this", and "Don't do that." The **Adaptive Self** comes to value the love, caring and attention of the caregivers (in functional, healthy homes) so much that he/she begins to crave their approval and thus tries to curb the unacceptable impulsive desires of the **Innate Self**. [*Children who suffer from Attachment Disorder i.e. children in long-term foster care or orphanages often never form this attachment to their parents or caregivers. This is why these children can exhibit anti-social behaviors (which come out of their **Innate Self**) with no remorse.*]

The **Adaptive Self** in the toddler also begins to figure out how totally dependent on the caregivers he/she is. The adults are very big and very strong and have all the power: They control the food, toys, television, what is

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bought at the store, the car to go desirable places, etc.

The **Adaptive Self** begins to adapt to the rules of the family he/she finds him/herself in. The **Adaptive Self** is told that he/she needs to be a “good” boy/girl: he/she must not hit his/her brothers and sisters, he/she must learn how to share, he/she needs to stop sticking his/her fingers up his/her nose, stop touching certain parts of his/her body, stop yelling and screaming when he’s angry and doesn’t get what she wants, stop touching things and wandering off by himself/herself, etc., etc., etc. The **Adaptive Self** becomes conditioned to feel proud, worthy, pleased, etc when he/she is acting in compliance with the information being fed into the **Programmed Self**. Conversely, the **Adaptive Self** gets conditioned to feel shameful, guilty, fearful, embarrassed, uncomfortable etc., when he/she acts or thinks of acting in ways that are in conflict or disagreement with the parents or caregivers. The **Adaptive Self** in the toddler slowly learns how to behave and not behave in order to stay in the good graces of his/her parents or caregivers.

Initially the **Innate Self** does not have a positive response to all this adapting that the **Adaptive Self** is doing. The **Innate Self** in the toddler may therefore throw the fork he/she is given to eat with on the floor and continue to shove food into his/her mouth with his hands. But if the

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parents/caregivers continue to reprimand the child for not obeying, the **Innate Self** begins to see he/she is fighting a losing battle and lets the **Adaptive Self** take over on behavior choices such as eating. As the socialization of the young child continues, the toddler switches back and forth between operating from his/her **Innate Self** and his/her **Adaptive Self**. For example, when the parents are in the room, both the **Innate Self** and the **Adaptive Self** will, a good percentage of the time, behave as the parents have conditioned him/her to behave or not behave; because both the **Innate Self** and the **Adaptive Self** like to be hugged and kissed, smiled at and played with, etc. Likewise, neither the **Adaptive Self** nor the **Innate Self** like to be ignored, frowned at, yelled at, or spanked. However, as soon as the parents leave the room, the **Innate Self**, which is still the stronger of the two personality parts, often takes control, and the toddler may hit his/her brother or sister, touch things he/she knows he/she is not supposed to touch etc., because he/she knows the parents are not around to punish him/her for disobeying. The **Adaptive Self** feels guilty and scared about this disobedience but is overruled by the **Innate Self**.

The parents/caregivers are quite aware that this rebellious non-conforming part of the personality (the

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Innate Self) still exists in the young child. Therefore, oftentimes parents will reel off a bunch of Do's and Don'ts to the young child whenever the child will be separated from the parents for awhile. These messages are recorded in the **Programmed Self** and the **Programmed Self** serves as a parental watchdog when the actual parents are not around. The **Adaptive Self** will then feel ashamed or guilty when he/she engages in forbidden behaviors even if he/she does not actually get caught doing these things by the actual parents. The **Innate Self** however still looks for opportunities to catch the **Adaptive Self** napping so to speak so it can take over and do what it wants to do.

Let me return for a moment to the **Programmed Self**. Day in and day out the parents and other people in the young child's life feed information into the **Programmed Self**. The **Adaptive Self** hears all this programming and reacts to it. The **Adaptive Self** synthesizes the information it hears in very simplistic ways. The **Adaptive Self** has a few basic compartments into which it classifies its reactions to the information being fed into the **Programmed Self**. The first is a self concept compartment. If the **Programmed Self** is told "You are smart, pretty, important, lovable, capable etc.", the **Adaptive Self** pretty much mimics these statements verbatim, and records them as "I

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statements" inside itself: "I am smart, pretty, important, lovable etc., or conversely I am stupid, ugly, unworthy, unlovable, unimportant, etc.

The **Adaptive Self** also adds to its own self concept compartment through the use of inference. For example, if the young child is repeatedly ignored or neglected, he/she decides he/she is unlovable, and unimportant even though those exact words may not have been spoken by the parental figures. If the **Adaptive Self** in a young girl hears people give lots of strokes to an older sister for being pretty, or an older brother for being smart but never receives any compliments herself, she will infer "I am ugly, or I am dumb" and record that message in her self concept compartment. If parents are really busy due to long work hours or having lots of children close in age, the **Adaptive Self** in the child may infer "No one pays attention to me, therefore I am not lovable or important." If there is a serious illness in the family and a mother has a long stay in the hospital while a child is a toddler, the **Adaptive Self** may infer that something is wrong with him/her; that he/she drove his/her mommy away because he/she was loud or misbehaving. If a parent is seriously depressed, a child may infer that he or she is a terrible burden or a bad kid; that it is his/her fault that mommy is always so sad.

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Children may make inferences just from their observations or from teasing they get from peers. A child who grows up in poverty may conclude he is a bad kid because Santa didn't get him very much for Christmas but Santa gave lots of other kids in his class a whole bunch of great presents. Young adults who are overweight, slow to mature, have bad acne, are poor athletes, or have some minor physical abnormality are often teased in very mean ways, and conclude "I am undesirable, unattractive, unlovable etc." As the young person grows older, the acne, obesity, skinniness, non-coordination, flat breasts, etc., may go away, but the negative self concept in the **Adaptive Self** doesn't get updated. It is quite amazing and sad that the immature reasoning of a small child can impact the self image of the grownup person all his/her adult life.

The **Adaptive Self** also forms his/her self concept from role modeling. If the **Adaptive Self** sees that people in his/her immediate or extended family have college degrees, or are skilled tradespersons, or are running a successful business he/she says to himself/herself "When I grow up I'm going to go to college or "I'm going to be an electrician when I grow up", or "When I'm big I'm going to open a store." Conversely, if the **Adaptive Self** in a young boy looks around and sees that every significant male in his family and extended family is a drunk or

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drug addict that can't hold down a job and is always broke, the child will not create a self concept of himself as being able to achieve much more than that. Likewise, if a young girl sees that all the females in her family get pregnant young, drop out school, and end up working places like Taco Bell, she will probably not see herself as someone who could wait until she is older to raise a family and go to college and become a veterinarian or teacher. (Not to mention a doctor or engineer). Obviously, outside influences like teachers, peers at school, books, television and the internet can provide different role models and help a child from a troubled family escape from the cycle of poverty. The **Adaptive Self** also is affected by what kinds of careers he/she see people of his/her gender having in his/her society, and whether or not he/she sees role models of his/her race and gender in positions of power. If there are no people, or very few people like him/herself in certain kinds of careers, or in positions of power and authority, then his/her concept of him/herself will not include the possibility of those careers, or of achieving a position of power within his/her society.

The second compartment of the **Adaptive Self** is "Everyday Operating Modes". The Everyday Operating Modes compartment is made up of little life philosophies or resolutions/decisions about how the **Adaptive Self** will

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operate in his/her environment in order to:

- 1) Get approval/avoid disapproval from parents and authority figures
- 2) Avoid punishment
- 3) Get taken care of and feel secure
- 4) Get attention (preferably positive attention and praise)
- 5) Avoid getting emotionally or physically hurt
- 6) Get love and affection

The following are examples of **Adaptive Self** resolutions that might be made by a typical kid in a fairly normal, healthy home environment:

"I will use a fork to eat, and poop and pee in the Porta Potty instead of my diaper because when I do I get lots of smiles and hugs."

"In general, I need to obey Mom and Dad and follow their rules because if I don't, they act like they don't like me and yell at me and take away my toys, make me stay in my room, or give me a whack on the butt which hurts."

"However, I will constantly test the rules, especially the ones I really don't like. I will use my intuition to figure out how much I can push them and then back off before they spank me."

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"When I see that Mom or Dad look tired and cranky I will avoid them as much as possible because they bite my head off for no reason."

"I will tell the truth because when I lie Mom and Dad yell at me real loudly, sometimes spank me, and tell me I am being a bad boy/girl."

"I will try and do good in school because when I do Mom and Dad tell me how proud they are of me and brag to the relatives about how smart I am and take me out to eat at my favorite restaurant when I get a good report card."

"I will remember the manners Mom and Dad teach me and do them without being told because I feel embarrassed when they correct me in front of people."

"If Mom and Dad won't let me do what I want to do I'll yell and scream to see if I can get them to change their mind. But if I see them getting mad, or if they act like they are going to spank me I'll stop."

"If I don't get my way, I will pout and whimper and tell them they are mean and don't care about me and see if any of this gets them to change their mind. I will keep this up until they threaten punishment."

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"When my parents are busy and not paying attention, or in real happy moods, I will ask them for things that they normally say no to and see if I can wheedle a yes out of them."

These are just some basic examples to give you an idea how the **Adaptive Self** operates.

In a fairly normal, healthy home environment, the operating modes that the **Adaptive Self** creates are, in general, quite useful and fairly happiness enhancing. The **Adaptive Self** runs the child's life such that he/she "fits in" and gets his/her needs met for the most part. In a healthy home environment, there is a positive relationship between the **Innate Self** and the **Adaptive Self**. The **Innate Self** is allowed to come out and enjoy itself. The parents/caregivers do not try to completely squelch the **Innate Self** because they enjoy its unabashed playfulness, creativity, joyfulness etc. The parents just try to tame what they perceive as the dangerous or unacceptable parts of the **Innate Self**; the selfishness, recklessness, dishonesty, or behaviors that would be considered rude or inappropriate in the culture etc. In healthy homes, the **Innate Self** can still even have rebellious moments when it hauls off and hits its brother or sister or sneaks and does something forbidden without being beaten to the point of having its spirit crushed or severely subdued.

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However, in home environments that are dysfunctional, or downright neglectful or abusive, the **Adaptive Self** in the young child develops very differently. Obviously the self concept that develops in the **Adaptive Self** is completely different than in a healthy home. The self concept in the **Adaptive Self** of a child who grows up in a neglectful or abusive home is filled with negativity and self blame:

*" I should never have been born.
No one cares about me."¹*

*"I am stupid, ugly, clumsy and
unlovable."*

"I am weird and crazy."

"I will never succeed at anything."

¹ *Sometimes children who are adopted have this negative self concept. Even if their adoptive parents shower them with love, they struggle to shake the feeling that they should never have been born or if they had been lovable enough their birth parents would have not given them up.*

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The operating modes that the **Adaptive Self** in a child in a dysfunctional/neglectful/abusive home are also very different than in a normal healthy home. The **Adaptive Self** in a negative home environment develops operating modes in response to trauma. The more abusive and dangerous the home environment is, the more resolutions the **Adaptive Self** creates as pain avoidance strategies. In abusive or dysfunctional homes, the **Adaptive Self** becomes the total interface with the environment rather than the **Innate Self** being able to come out within reasonable boundaries as happens in normal homes. The **Innate Self** becomes fearful enough of punishment, or hurt enough from constant disapproval, that it retreats and lets the **Adaptive Self** run the child's life.

The following are examples of operating modes that might be developed in the **Adaptive Self** in a child in a dysfunctional home:

"I will only do what pleases Mom and Dad because their disapproval and withdrawal of love is unbearable."

"I will not question any of the rules because when I do they punish me, or hit me."

"I won't take on any challenges because if I fail I will be laughed at and made fun of."

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"Anytime I meet people who resemble (insert person's name who the child has had very negative experiences with i.e. Uncle Rick), I will always be on guard with them."

"From now on in my life I'm not going to get close to people because they always end up hurting me.¹"

"I better not trust my own intuition or perceptions because lots of times when I've said stuff Mom and Dad have yelled at me really bad and told me I was imagining stuff and that if I didn't stop saying crazy shit like that they were going to beat the crap out of me."

"I'll never let people know what I am feeling from now on".

¹ Please note that this resolution can also be made by kids in fairly normal, healthy home environments if a parent dies unexpectedly. The child can be so traumatized by the loss that he/she does not want to risk emotional vulnerability in the future.

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"It doesn't matter if I have musical talent like my teacher says I have. When I mentioned to Dad that I might want to shovel snow to earn some money for private lessons he said, 'If you earn some money, you can pitch in on the bills around here instead of spending it on fucking music lessons.' So I guess I should just quit violin. Pretty soon he'll probably say he doesn't want me to practice in the house."

A dysfunctional home can also be one where a child is spoiled and/or smothered. The following is an example of an operating modes that might develop in the **Adaptive Self** of a kid in these kinds of homes.

" I'm not going to grow up and start taking care of myself. Even though Mom and Dad say I have to, I can tell they don't really mean it. They always bail me out and loan me money they know I won't ever pay back, let me move back home etc. Taking care of myself seems too hard, I'd rather let them do it so I can spend my time and money on fun things."

As you can see, adapting can still be going on when the person is in his/her twenties.

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Sex role modeling is also part of the operating modes compartment of the **Adaptive Self**. Children either get it from direct programming from their parents/caregivers, or they infer it from watching how their parents and extended family members operate. Sometimes it's oppressive kinds of sexrole modeling:

" Even though it doesn't seem fair, I guess when I grow up I will I have to do most of the housework even if I have a full-time job. Mom says men just hate housework and if you try and make them do it they'll just run off and find a woman who will treat them like a man likes to be treated and then you end up all alone and miserable."

"I can see from watching mom and dad and the other married people I know that men get to have things the way they them want most of the time. I guess when I grow up I better not act too bossy with men or no one will want to date me or marry me".

"I have to learn to stop crying when I am sad, because when I cry, my Dad yells at me meanly and says "Don't be a sissy, act like a man. If you don't stop crying over nothing, I'll give you something to cry about".

Likewise, people create operating modes in the **Adaptive Self** part of their psyche based on their religious

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programming. These (in my opinion) can be both healthy and unhealthy:

" I want to try and be a more forgiving person. If Jesus can be so forgiving even after sacrificing his life, I should be able to practice forgiveness better in my life." (Healthy)

"I'd like to leave my husband because he cheats on me all the time and is a really bad alcoholic, but God says in the Bible that divorce is wrong. So I guess I'll just keep trying to get John to stop drinking. Maybe I'll go on a diet or get my hair frosted so I look better so he won't be as likely or have affairs behind my back." (Unhealthy)

There is a third compartment in the **Adaptive Self** in children in severely abusive homes. It is called "Survival Operating Modes". These are modes that are usually very contrary to the natural impulses of a child, but that must be implemented in order for the child to survive. Some examples of these are:

"I will not cry or flinch when I am hit or beaten because then my parents beat me harder."

"I will fend for myself because no one is taking care of me. [i.e. a four years old who learns how to cook for himself, steal money to buy food etc.] When I grow up I'm never going to depend on anybody for anything."

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"I will pee and poop in my bed every night because when my stepfather comes home drunk and tries to touch my private parts and do nasty things to me that hurt sometimes this makes him say I am disgusting and stink and leave me alone."

We all have an **Adaptive Self** as part of our psyche throughout life. In fact whenever we are using the standard manners and etiquette of our culture we are operating out of the **Adaptive Self** part of our psyche, for example saying excuse me if we burp, wearing clothing that is considered fashionable, addressing people as "Sir" etc. Likewise, when we act diplomatic, or act manipulative in a job interview, we are using our **Adaptive Self** to function successfully in our society.

However, some people operate out of the **Adaptive Self** part of their psyche more than is healthy for them as adults. For instance, a young adult who goes to the college his/her parents want him/her to go to or chooses a career that the parents want him/her to pursue when he/she is really unhappy with those choices, or young adults who won't date someone they really like because they fear their parents' disapproval are operating out of the

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Adaptive Self part of their psyches more than is healthy. In general, when grownup people are afraid to express their real opinions or feelings to people who really have no power over them, and whom they do not need to please or placate, they are operating out of their **Adaptive Self** in ways that diminish their own autonomy and happiness.

As an adult, the decision to operate out of your **Adaptive Self** should be a conscious choice. This choice should be made by the fourth and last part of the psyche which is called the **Discerning Self**.¹ I will describe this part in the next section. The on-going battle I discussed earlier between the **Innate Self** and the **Adaptive Self** diminishes greatly when the **Discerning Self** develops at about age ten. The **Discerning Self** becomes the executive of the personality²; the referee between all of the personality parts and ultimate judge as to which "prompting to act" will be listened to. As I will explain in a

¹ *dis·cern·ing* *adj.* 1. *having or showing good judgment or understanding, astute.* 2. *able to recognize and perceive differences.* 3. *having keen perceptions or insight.*

² *I take this phrase from the work of Muriel James and Dorthey Jongeward in their book on Transactional Analysis entitled Born to Win, (Perseus Publishers, 1996).*

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minute, the **Discerning Self** will have the power and authority to actually intercede messages that the **Programmed Self** sends to the **Adaptive Self**. The **Discerning Self** part of your psyche can examine the operating modes and self concept compartments of your **Adaptive Self** and make new decisions about how you view yourself and how you run every facet of your life.

*[This concept of using the mature, adult part of the psyche to reexamine and re-decide old decisions that were made with the **Adaptive Self** in childhood was introduced by Mary and Robert Goulding, two Transactional Analysis therapists who published a book in 1979 entitled Changing Lives Through Re-decision Therapy. A newer edition of their book is available though Amazon.com]*

The Discerning Self

The **Discerning Self** begins to develop at approximately age ten. This new part has the capability to question the information that is being fed into the **Programmed Self** by various sources in the child's life. The maturing child begins to discover that some of the things that his/her parents or other people tell him/her do not seem to be true. He/she begins to say to him/herself "Mom/Dad/Uncle Joe says "such and such" but I don't think that's

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correct". Or, he/she begins to see that the various adults in his/her life tell him conflicting "facts". Slowly, the child begins to sift through all the "facts" in his/her **Programmed Self**. The facts he/she considers to be true, he/she transfers to this new developing part of him/herself, the **Discerning Self**. The maturation of the **Discerning Self** really accelerates at about age twelve, when the brain of the young person becomes fully developed physiologically and capable of all types of adult reasoning. It is then that the young adult becomes fully capable of evaluating whether the information being fed into his/her **Programmed Self** makes sense or not. The **Discerning Self's** development also accelerates when the child begins to spend significant time away from the parents and is more free of their influence and control. Obviously, the older a person gets, the more information and experience he/she has with which to develop his/her **Discerning Self**. How developed the **Discerning Self** becomes is also dependant on how much the parents allow the child to think for him/her self. In homes where parents are very domineering or repressive, the **Discerning Self** may get little opportunity to develop. There may be so much contaminated information in the **Programmed Self**, that it kind of blocks the **Discerning Self** from receiving healthy, positive information.

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A good way to think of the relationship between the **Programmed Self** and the **Discerning Self** is that the **Programmed Self** is like an "interim director" that is appointed to run the person's life until a permanent director is "hired". The permanent director really can't begin functioning until the brain of the individual is fully mature and capable of all levels of adult reasoning. Babies and young children need their parents to run their lives for them; at adolescence the young person is ready to gradually take over the task of directing his/her own life. The major task of the **Discerning Self**, once it begins functioning, is to begin sifting through all the information in the **Programmed Self** and decide what to incorporate, and what to reject, based on his/her own life experiences, observations, and data collection.

This transferring of power from the **Programmed Self** to the **Discerning Self** is a complex process and really is a life-long endeavor. There is a huge amount of information in the **Programmed Self** that needs to be sorted through by the **Discerning Self**. It is also not as simple a process as tossing out the "bad" and keeping the "good". To some degree the **Programmed Self** is like a set of inerasable tapes. Unfortunately, you can't really destroy any of the tapes in the **Programmed Self**. For instance a forty year old woman reported to me that she went to get dressed for a May

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15th wedding. She decided to wear her nice new dressy white sandals. Then she heard a voice in her head pipe up and say "You can't wear white shoes before Memorial Day". She laughed to herself and said "Where the hell did that old tape come from? It's a beautiful warm, sunny day and these sandals are totally appropriate!!!"

All the **Discerning Self** can do, figuratively speaking, is to move all the tapes of information that it considers inappropriate or false into one big file cabinet and put a sign on this cabinet that says something like: "Incorrect/Obsolete Information" or "Bullshit" for short. Then the **Discerning Self** must move all the information it believes to be valuable and valid into its own file cabinets and label them "Good Stuff" or "Useful Information." A huge amount of stuff will need to be consolidated into a "Not Sure About This Stuff" file cabinet and left in the **Programmed Self**. These ideas and opinions will be sorted through as situations come up. This "Not Sure" file cabinet is also where all new incoming programming goes, because people do continue to be "programmed" by the society they live in throughout their lives. In fact, sometimes as adults, people can get programmed from peer groups, (or just society in general) in just as rigid or even more rigid ways than they got programmed originally from their parents. Cults like the Moonies would

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be an example of this. Most everybody has some amount of rigid adult programming in their **Programmed Self**. Usually it is programming that is in direct rebellion to the original programming from childhood.¹

Once the **Discerning Self** reaches physical maturity and has a few years of experience processing information (say about age twenty-one), it should be intercepting all messages from the **Programmed Self** to the **Adaptive Self** to determine their validity and appropriateness (if all is working optimally). If the **Discerning Self** determines that a message is appropriate such as "Don't cuss out your boss even though he's treating you really badly", it lets the message go through to the **Adaptive Self**, basically stamped with approval from the **Discerning Self**. (Please note that the human brain operates at extremely high speeds so all of this happens in fractions of a second). If the **Discerning Self** determines that the message sent from the **Programmed Self** is not appropriate or useful.

¹ *This idea of programmed rebellious information is another concept that comes from Transactional Analysis Therapy. In TA, the original programming is referred to as "scripting", the rebellion is called "counter-scripting" and the goal is to become "script-free."*

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For example”

“Don’t mention to Aunt Judy when you see her at your cousin’s wedding that you’re getting a divorce, because you know she won’t approve”,

The **Discerning Self** overrides the command or suggestion i.e.

“I shouldn’t feel inhibited to talk honestly about what is going on in my life around my relatives. I don’t share their religious beliefs or many of their values. I have not appointed them as judge of my life. What’s the point of being fakey?” I should just talk honestly about my divorce just like I would other events of my life.”

Even after the **Discerning Self** transfers files of information in the **Programmed Self** to the “Bullshit” file, the messages on the inerasable tapes still play (particularly during stressful situations) and are heard by the **Adaptive Self**. So the **Discerning Self** has to assertively tell the **Adaptive Self** to not listen to the old tape and provide it with an alternative message from its own file cabinets of facts, values, and opinions. As a person goes through life, his/her **Discerning Self** should get more and more adept at intercepting the automatically generated messages between the **Programmed Self** and the **Adaptive**

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Self and be able to “nip them in the bud” so to speak. The **Adaptive Self** will also get used to responding to the information it gets from the **Discerning Self** rather than the old messages from the **Programmed Self** as time goes on.

A huge job of the **Discerning Self** is to examine the operating modes compartments of the **Adaptive Self** and sort through, and throw out any operating modes that are dysfunctional or harmful. Like the sorting out of the information in the **Programmed Self**, this can be a life long process. The **Adaptive Self** is very attached to the operating modes it developed to get its needs met through all the previous years and/or to survive trauma. It has been running the show for a long time and is going to be reluctant and scared to give up its power. The **Discerning Self** really has to gain the trust and respect of the **Adaptive Self** in order to have its cooperation. The best way for the **Discerning Self** to do that is to sincerely thank the **Adaptive Self** for the great work it did though all those years coping with its environment as a very little person in an environment of big, powerful adults. Then the **Discerning Self** has to gently demonstrate to the **Adaptive Self** that it knows of even better and more happiness enhancing ways to do things. With some effort, the **Discerning Self** will convince the **Adaptive Self** that it is acting in ways that are no longer useful and in fact harmful to the adult

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person.

*[I enthusiastically credit Eleanor Feller, MSW, a fantastic therapist I had the pleasure to work with as a client for showing me how to work cooperatively with my **Adaptive Self** instead of trying to negate its value and overpower it.]*

The self concept compartment in the **Adaptive Self** is likewise very entrenched. The information about Self concept was planted in the **Adaptive Self** at a time when it was very vulnerable and knew no better than to believe what it was told. The self concept information has also been reinforced for years. However, the **Discerning Self** is capable of doing a major overhaul of the **Adaptive Self** and actually dismantling its self concept and rebuilding a new healthy one.

Sorting through the **Programmed Self** and the **Adaptive Self** is some serious work, but the work is most definitely worth it. Strangely enough, it is sometimes easier for an adult person who grew up in a seriously neglectful or abusive home to dismantle and rebuild his/her **Adaptive Self** than it is for a person who grew up in a mildly dysfunctional home. This is because the inappropriateness of the information in the **Adaptive Self** of a person who grew up seriously abused is more obvious and blatant than the subtle, insidious information and operating modes in the **Adaptive Self** of a person who had well meaning but domineering,

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overly rigid, or mildly neurotic parents.

The **Discerning Self**, when it takes over running the personality of the young adult, also grants permission to the **Innate Self** to speak freely about it's desires. The **Discerning Self** then takes over from the **Programmed Self** in determining whether the **Innate Self's** desires are appropriate or inappropriate to act on.

How All This Personality Theory Relates To Your Depression

Now that you have a basic understanding of the human psyche and how it develops, it is probably easy to see how many people end up with contaminated / dysfunctional / obsolete information in their psyches. For the first twelve years of life, a human being does not have a fully developed **Discerning Self** and therefore cannot filter information that is being fed into his/her psyche. The **Programmed Self** pretty much just accepts and believes the information that is given from the parents and other authority figures in his/her life and the **Adaptive Self** formulates a self concept and operating modes based on this information. By the time the **Discerning Self** develops, the information in the **Adaptive Self** and **Programmed Self** can be quite entrenched.

Relating Personality Theory to Depression (Continued)

Let me explain the contamination process a bit further. Perhaps you have heard of a "double blind study". This is where they purposely do not allow scientists who are doing research to know which subjects in their study have received which medication or treatment. The reason they set experiments up this way is to prohibit the phenomenon of **people seeing what they are expecting.** This same phenomenon happens with the programming in your psyche. Even though the **Discerning Self** is totally capable of rational and astute judgment and perception, those abilities can be impaired by the entrenched information in the **Programmed Self** and **Adaptive Self.** The **Discerning Self,** without realizing it, is more likely to believe and to unintentionally filter out information that does not match what the **Adaptive Self** and **Programmed Self** already believe.

This is particularly true regarding self concept. I'm sure in your life experience you have met very attractive men or women who are totally convinced they are not attractive or desirable. You've likewise probably met smart people who can't see their own intelligence, and people with incredible talent for greatness who are lost in lives of banality because they constantly downplay their capabilities. When a person with a negative self concept receives compliments or information that suggests they are in fact not dumb,

Relating Personality Theory to Depression (Continued)

or ugly, or unlovable, the **Adaptive Self** somehow manages to invalidate it, ignore it, and come up with all kinds of excuses for not believing it. **The Discerning Self** can get tricked into participating in this negating process.

Life philosophies that are in the **Programmed Self** also tend to get entrenched. If you are told as a child "Men are bastards" or "Women will always cheat on you as soon as you turn your back" you are likely to be super aware and sub-consciously drawn to people who match your expectation and filter out people who don't. Likewise, if you are told "Just when you think things are going well, something shitty will happen", you will be drawn to or create situations that meet these negative expectations. Your **Discerning Self** may not have developed strongly enough to be able to detect that the **Adaptive Self** is creating self fulfilling prophecies about life and relationships.

There are other reasons that information in your **Programmed Self** and **Adaptive Self** go unchallenged by your **Discerning Self**. Most often the rules to live by in your **Programmed Self** have been given with a sense of love and caring from your parents or authority figures. [*Unless you grew up in an abusive or seriously dysfunctional home.*]

Parents say things that they think will protect their children from making bad decisions in life, or going down the

Relating Personality Theory to Depression (Continued)

"wrong" path. Later, as an adult, (when you are capable of re-evaluating the validity or appropriateness of the programmed information in your **Programmed Self** with the **Discerning Self** part of your psyche) you have a predisposition to believe the rules to live by because they were originally delivered with love and caring from a significant person in your life. So the information in your **Programmed Self** remains labeled as true, and therefore your **Adaptive Self** likewise continues to believe its validity.

A few examples of rules to live by that might go unquestioned are:

"Never quit a secure, good paying job to pursue endeavors like music or art."

"Don't live with a man; hold out for marriage. Men rarely marry women they live with. They just enjoy them for awhile and then move on when they get bored."

"You should be a doctor/lawyer/dentist like your father. It's a great career and you have a natural talent for it. You can take over your dad's practice."

Another kind of rule to live by in your **Programmed Self** that is hard to re-evaluate is a fear-based prohibition; That is one where the person(s) who delivered the message felt a lot of fear

Relating Personality Theory to Depression (Continued)

regarding the issue. A few examples would be:

"Never marry outside your race, it only leads to unhappiness."

"Don't be gay, it's unnatural and it's not how God wants people to be."

"Don't be a Women's Libber", no decent guy will want to marry a woman who doesn't want to take his name."

People who suffer from depression often have very negative programming in the **Adaptive Self** part of their psyches regarding their self concept such as "I'm dumb", "I'm unlovable or "I'm unimportant" These kinds of negative beliefs will affect all the decisions you make in your life. You will be drawn to negative relationships where you are not valued or appreciated or in some cases emotionally or physically abused. You may well lack the confidence to make good decisions about education or career choices and end up in jobs that are way below your capabilities. In general, the **Adaptive Self** in depressed people tends to be full of obsolete operating modes that it had to create to survive childhood; the more unsafe the environment was growing up, the more of these operating modes are present in the **Adaptive Self**. The **Adaptive Self** will continue to use them even though the adult person is not in danger of being abused,

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ridiculed, criticized, etc. as it was growing up. The person will live their adult lives in an overly fearful mode; He/she will be afraid to take on the kind of challenges that make people feel good about themselves.

People who suffer from depression also oftentimes have a very stifled **Innate Self**. They may be almost totally out of touch with their desires and passions, playfulness, creativity, etc. A person may operate almost exclusively from his/her **Adaptive Self** personality part. If a person was taught in childhood to feel overly guilty or ashamed about his/her natural feelings, he/she may have learned to only express needs or desires that he/she was conditioned to believe are acceptable. People who are out of touch with their **Innate Self** lose their spark, they lose their sense of joyfulness about being alive. A child who is constantly told "No" to every request stops asking for what he/she wants, and eventually loses touch with the wanting part of him/herself.

People with depression also tend to have dysfunctional information in the **Programmed Self** part of their psyche. Often depressed people have a very rigid set of "Do's and Don'ts", "Should's and Shouldn'ts", and "Cant's" such that every time they come up with an idea to improve their life situation, the idea is instantly shot down by the **Programmed Self**. **The Programmed Self** may also have all kinds of negative

Relating Personality Theory to Depression (Continued)

warped views about life in general and the person continually sees the world through this negative “pair of glasses” without realizing that he/she is being drawn to people and situations that reinforce what he/she already believes and is filtering out contrary information.

Related to each of these problems is that depressed people often have an underdeveloped **Discerning Self** such that it is not strong enough to recognize and override the dysfunctional rules to live by in the **Programmed Self**, not able to free up the **Innate Self**, and not able to override the negative self concept in the **Adaptive Self**.

The good news is--however the parts of your psyche may be out of balance, deficient, or malfunctioning, you can transform and rebuild them. This booklet contains all the tools and strategies you will need to rediscover and strengthen your **Innate Self**, sort through and “clean house” in your **Adaptive Self**, totally reprogram your **Programmed Self**, and more fully develop your **Discerning Self**.

Examining Your Internal Programming

In order to get in touch with what kind of dysfunctional programming you may have in your psyche that is at the root of your depression, you need to do four things:

- 1) Fill out a Life Inventory to zero in on problem areas of your life.
- 2) Complete a Self Concept Questionnaire.
- 3) Complete some Re-Discovery exercises for your Innate Self.
- 4) Plot your moods for a month.

After you gather all this information you will be ready to either practice some self help techniques or see a professional therapist, or both. You may want to take as long as week to fill out the questionnaires.

Life Inventory

1) How happy am I in regards to friendships in my life?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
Very Dissatisfied Satisfied Very Satisfied

What problems am I aware of?

2) How happy am I with how much I am dating and the kind of people I am meeting? (If Applicable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
Very Dissatisfied Satisfied Very Satisfied

What problems am I aware of?

3) How happy am I in my relationship with my Spouse/Partner or /Significant Other? (If Applicable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
Very Dissatisfied Satisfied Very Satisfied

What problems am I aware of?

10) How satisfied am I with the physical health area of my life i.e. my diet, exercise, life pace, etc?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
Very Dissatisfied Satisfied Very Satisfied

What changes should I consider?

11) How satisfied am I with how I am handling my finances?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
Very Dissatisfied Satisfied Very Satisfied

What changes should I consider?

12) Do I use drugs or alcohol in an abusive way?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
Have a serious problem No problem

What changes do I need to make?

Self Concept/Self Confidence Questionnaire

- _____ People who know me often tell me I am smarter than I give myself credit for or that I have talents I am not using.
- _____ I think I make way more mistakes than most people do.
- _____ When I make mistakes I usually feel that I should have known better.
- _____ I tend to shy away from taking on new endeavors because I am scared or uncomfortable.
- _____ I often doubt the value of my thoughts and opinions.
- _____ I often feel that I am a failure in life. I think I should have been able to accomplish a lot more.
- _____ I don't think people will want to be friends with me because I am not fun or interesting.
- _____ I let people insult me or ridicule me.
- _____ I don't think I am a very nice person.
- _____ I often have trouble expressing or sticking up for my own needs.
- _____ I am reluctant to date because I do not think I am or interesting or fun enough to appeal to anybody.
- _____ I feel like I have so many body flaws that no one would find me attractive enough to want to have a long term relationship with me.
- _____ When my spouse/significant other/boyfriend/girlfriend gives me compliments about my looks, I don't believe he/she really means it.
- _____ When I am in a relationship, I worry a lot that the person will leave me.

Exercises to Get in Touch With Your Innate Self

If you had two million dollars how would you spend it?

If you only had a year to live how would you spend it?

If you could magically not care about what anybody else thought about how you lived your life, what changes might you make?

If society would pay you a \$60,000/year stipend in lieu of you working a regular job with the only stipulation that you had to spend 40 hours a week engaging in tasks that improved the welfare of humanity in some way, what kinds of charity work would you engage in?

Examining Your Internal Programming (Continued)

Questions like these are meant to free up your **Innate Self** to express itself. Though obviously no one is going to offer you two million dollars or a \$60,000/year stipend to do charity work, doing this fantasizing may help you come up with a toned down version of your fantasies and dreams. You can return to your answers to these questions when you are setting goals for your therapy sessions.

To do the questions on the next few pages you need to practice a technique called "**Repetitive Probing.**" It works best if you have someone present to take notes for you. This has to be someone you totally trust to hear your innermost feelings and thoughts. You need to be in a place where you have privacy to get loud because these exercises can get you in touch with intense feelings sometimes; feelings that have been repressed for years and need to be expressed.

Examining Your Internal Programming (Continued)

Repetitive Probing Exercises For Getting in Touch With Your Innate Self

**(This is best done with a person
taking notes for you.)**

Close your eyes and complete each of these sentences at least ten times in a row in fairly rapid succession. Answer with whatever first comes to your mind. You can do more than ten if ideas keep coming to you, but try not to do less than ten. The note taker should scribble your answers down quickly as you say them (you can rewrite them later). You may be surprised how this exercise uncovers unconscious feelings and thoughts that are very useful for you do be in touch with.

I feel sad that...

If I could live my life over...

I have some old anger about...

What I really want is...

I'm so sick of...

If I had more faith in myself...

Some of my favorite ways to have fun are:

Three things I have never done but always thought would be fun to do are:

Examining Your Internal Programming (Continued)

That concludes the exercises. Hopefully they have generated some valuable insights. Sit all this information aside for now. You will come back to it after you finish this booklet and learn how to use the techniques of Integrative Therapy.

The Next Step: Using a Mood Record

It is now time to track your moods. Tracking your moods for a month will provide some very valuable information that I don't think you can get in touch with in any other manner. It will really help you to zero in on the internal dialoging that is happening between the various parts of your psyche. As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, depression is not a feeling, it is a mental state made up of a combination of feelings. The way to alleviate the state of depression is to get in touch with all of the underlying feelings which are triggering the depression. This is not a simple process. The feelings that cause depression are painful and complex and underneath are contaminated thoughts.

On the following pages you will find blank pages of a log that you can photocopy. You need to carry the mood log with you at all times during the month you are tracking your moods. If

Using a Mood Record (Continued)

you like, you can run off a bunch of pages and then take it to Fed-Ex-Kinkos and have it bound like a spiral notebook for about \$4.00. You will need to make an entry into the log approximately every two hours. This may sound like a lot of work, but **overcoming depression and learning how to lead a happy, productive, life is the worthwhile payoff for the effort you put into tracking your moods and feelings.** By making entries at two hour intervals, you will gather very valuable information about what causes you to slip into a depressed state. You will also make an entry right before going to sleep. Keep the log at your bedside. If you wake up for any significant length of time during the night make an entry.

I think that carrying around a mood record is easier for women than men because they have purses. However, men need to do this too. So men (or women who hate carrying purses) just fold a couple pages up and carry them in your pants pocket. Then at the end of the day, unfold it and put the page into a loose-leaf binder.

Using a mood record will also help you get accurate information about what percentage of your time you are feeling positive or at least neutral. People who suffer from depression get engulfed by the sadness, emptiness, loneliness etc. of their depression and they tend to forget that they have good days or periods. The goal is to plot all of your feelings and moods and collect valuable information about what factors

Using a Mood Record (Continued)

contribute to both your good days and bad days. You can then use this information to implement changes that will significantly increase the number of good hours/days, and significantly decrease the bad days.

Each entry should consist of a numerical rating of how good or bad you feel on a scale of one to twenty-five, and one or several feeling words for example "bored, lonely, pessimistic. Then there is space provided for you to make some brief comments. Once you jot down the feeling(s) describe the circumstances and thoughts related to the feeling(s) in a quick sentence. (You may also write a couple paragraphs if you feel inclined.) In a sense, this log can serve as a condensed diary. You can use as many of these pages during the month as you need. On the following page are some sample log entries.

Mood Record

Day	Date	Time	Mood Score 1--25 1 = Low 25 = High	<p>List the feeling(s) you are feeling.</p> <p>ADD COMMENTS (For Example) Who are you with? What are you doing? What are you thinking? What just happened?</p>
Fri	5/2	7:00 a.m.	6	Melancholy. My life feels boring and empty. I dread getting up every morning and facing another day.
		9:00 a.m.	6	No Change
		11:00 a.m.	6	Stagnated. I hate my job but need the money.
		1:00 p.m.	12	Pleasantly Engaged. My boss gave me an interesting assignment and complimented me.
		3:00 p.m.	8	This job is still boring overall.
		5:00 p.m.	5	Lonely, Unloved, Sad. I hate coming home to an empty house. No one to eat dinner with or talk to about your day. This isn't how I expected life to turn out.
		7:00 p.m.	14	Pleasantly Engaged. Took myself out to dinner since I couldn't face cooking. Took the dog to the park which was fun. Wish I was as happy as my dog.

Mood Record Continued

Day	Date	Time	Mood Score 1–25 Low=1 High =25	List the feeling(s) you are feeling. Comments: For Example: Who are you with? What are you doing? What are you thinking? What just happened?
		11:00 p.m.	16	Connected, Cared About. My sister called just to see how I'm doing. We had a nice chat. I'm lucky to have her.
Sat	5/3	8:30 a.m.	6	Directionless, Gloomy. Not really sure what I want to do with this weekend.
Sat		10:30 a.m.	4	Unsuccessful, Regretful, Unhappy. Bumped into a friend I haven't seen in years She seems happy and her life sounds so successful compared to mine. What the hell have I been doing with my life? I don't own a house, I have very little money saved, I keep saying I want to go back to school but I never really do it. I never have fun, I've drifted away from all my friends.
		12:30 p.m.	6	Unproductive, Bored, Unhappy. Trying to clean the house but I feel so crappy I'm not getting much done.

Day	Date	Time	Mood Score 1–25 Low=1 High =25	List the feeling(s) you are feeling. Comments: For Example: Who are you with? What are you doing? What are you thinking? What just happened?
		4:30 p.m.	12	Proud, Productive. I decided Diane canceling is really a blessing in disguise. I have tons of house projects starring me I the face but I find it hard to get up the motivation to get started on anything. I decided to paint my bedroom tonight. I went and got the paint so I am over that hump.
		9:30 p.m.	15	Pleasantly Engaged. Been painting for the last five hours. It's looking really nice. What a relief to get going on this.
		11:00 p.m.	18	Proud. Wow, I could have spent the whole night watching TV and being bored, and instead I painted!!!

If you slip up on making entries into your Mood Record, and don't make entries for a length of time, don't abandon the idea. Catch up your log as best you can with some kind of summary entries before you start back recording every two hours for example:

Saturday June 1: **Mood Score:** 3.
Feelings: "sad, listless"

Comments: Felt so lousy I stayed in bed all day.

Using a Mood Record (Continued)

Sunday June 2: **Mood Score** 18.

Feelings: "pleasantly engaged"
'connected"

Comments: Went to Jason's graduation party with my family. Felt pretty upbeat all day. Nice to see people.

People who suffer from depression are often very out of touch with their feelings (remember depressed is not really a feeling it is a state made up of a number of unexpressed feelings). I have therefore included a **list of feelings** to assist you in pinpointing exactly what you are feeling. The therapist I saw as a young college student, Lee Santiwan, taught me that there are four primary feelings "sad", "mad", "glad", and "afraid" and the whole spectrum of other feelings are sub-categories of these basic four. I have remembered this advice for thirty years!!! I used Lee's theory and have divided my feelings list into these four primary categories. I also added a fifth category called "Uncomfortable" because I find that most of the words I put there don't quite fit into the basic four.

One tricky thing about recording your feelings is it's a bit difficult sometimes to delineate what constitutes a feeling verses a thought. For instance, a person may say "I feel inadequate." In actuality, they feel sad or ashamed, because they think they are performing

Using a Mood Record (Continued)

inadequately in their life, or a person may say "I feel productive today" when they really mean "I feel proud and joyful because I think I am being productive," or a person may say "I feel unlovable" when they really mean "I feel sad and lonely because I do not have a partner right now and I feel pessimistic about finding anybody". However, for the sake of efficiency and simplicity, I have included some "thoughts" in the feelings list because people tend to refer to them and conceptualize them as feelings, and they are very useful barometers of mood. Also please note I intentionally excluded the feeling "sexually turned on" because I think it is better to deal with the whole issue of sexuality separately.

I have created two special feeling words in my list called "**pleasantly engaged**" and "**pleasantly entertained**". You will probably find yourself using these words often as you use this log. Use "pleasantly engaged" when you are just going about the activities of everyday life, and are not experiencing significant sad feelings, anxiety, anger, loneliness, etc. You may not be feeling elated or super happy, but you are pleasantly engaged in whatever you are doing i.e. doing tasks at work, cooking, talking with a friend, playing your guitar, gardening, etc. Use "pleasantly entertained" for activities like watching a movie, TV, concerts etc., if you are enjoying it. If you are watching a lousy movie, or bad

Using a Mood Record (Continued)

TV just to pass the time, you should probably describe your feeling as bored. You may discover after using this log, that you spend more hours in your week than you realized feeling "pleasantly engaged." The goal is to figure out what plunges you into deep sadness, rage, loneliness, listlessness, etc., so that you are no longer able to successfully engage in activities and find them pleasurable. Another goal is to incorporate some peak experiences into your week or month. Feeling "pleasantly engaged" all your waking hours is not enough to make a person feel overall contentment with his/her life. There needs to be hours or days when you feel excited, invigorated, joyous, at one with the world, connected, etc.

However, the journey to a happy, productive life begins with getting a clear picture of what your feeling patterns are right now, and from there, making a step by step plan for creating a more satisfying life. Run off an ample supply of the blank log pages on the following page and begin your month of mood tracking as soon as possible. Also make a copy of the feelings list and keep it somewhere where it is easy to refer to when you are making your log entries.

FEELINGS LIST

SAD FEELINGS

ALIENATED
APATHETIC
BITTER
BORED
BUMMED OUT
DEFLATED
DEJECTED
DESPAIRING
DESPONDENT
DISAPPOINTED
DISCONNECTED
DISCOURAGED
DISILLUSIONED
DISENCHANTED
DISMAL
DISSATISFIED
DOWN
EMPTY
FILLED WITH GRIEF
FILLED WITH LONGING
GLOOMY
HEARTBROKEN
HOPELESS
INADEQUATE
INEFFECTUAL
INSIGNIFICANT
ISOLATED
LISTLESS
LONELY
MELANCHOLY
MISERABLE
PESSIMISTIC
REGRETFUL
REMORSEFUL
REMORSEFUL

SAD FEELINGS (Continued)

SELF-CRITICAL
UNDER-STIMULATED
UNAPPRECIATED
UNATTRACTIVE
UNFULFILLED
UNEMPOWERED
UNFOCUSED
UNHAPPY
UNDESIRABLE
UNIMPORTANT
UNLOVED
UNPRODUCTIVE
UNSUCCESSFUL

GLAD FEELINGS

ADVENTUROUS
AFFIRMED
AFFIRMED
AMUSED
APPRECIATED
ATTUNE WITH THE WORLD
BELONGINGNESS
CALM
CARED ABOUT
CAREFREE
CHEERY
CONFIDENT
CONNECTED
CONTENT
DESIRED
DETERMINED
ELATED
EXCITED
EMPOWERED
EXHILARATED

GLAD FEELINGS (Continued)

ENLIVENED
FULFILLED
GLAD
GLEEFUL
GRATEFUL
GRATIFIED
HAPPY
INSPIRED
INTRIGUED
INVIGORATED
JOYFUL
JUBILANT
OPTIMISTIC
PASSIONATE
PEACEFUL
PLEASANTLY ENGAGED
PLEASANTLY ENTERTAINED
PLEASED
PROUD
RELAXED
SATISFIED
SELF-ACCEPTING
SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT
SENSE OF CAMARADERIE
STIMULATED
TRANQUIL
UPBEAT

MAD FEELINGS

AGGRAVATED
ANGRY
ANNOYED
BELITTLED
BOTHERED
DISGUSTED
ENRAGED
EXASPERATED
FRUSTRATED
IRATE
IRRITATED
MAD
OUTRAGED
UNAPPRECIATED
UPSET
VIOLATED

AFRAID FEELINGS

AFRAID
ANXIOUS
APPREHENSIVE
DISTRAUGHT
DISTURBED
INTIMIDATED
INSECURE
NERVOUS
PANIC-STRICKEN
SCARED
TERRIFIED
TROUBLED
WORRIED

UNCOMFORTABLE FEELINGS

ASHAMED
BURNED OUT
CONFUSED
DIRECTIONLESS
DISORGANIZED
DISSONANT
EMBARRASSED
EXHAUSTED
FRIED
GROSSED OUT
GUILTY
HESITANT
INDECISIVE
OVER-BURDENED
OVERWHELMED
PERPLEXED
SHOCKED
SHY
STRESSED OUT
UNCOMFORTABLE

Inner Dialoguing

Inner Dialoguing –A Self Help Technique That Can Help Heal Depression

You may well decide to seek professional counseling to help you overcome your depression which can be extremely helpful. However, I recommend that you also try to use some Self Help techniques either before you do that, or in addition to seeing a counselor. The technique that I recommend for overcoming dysfunctional programming and re-programming yourself with healthy information is called **"Inner Dialoging"** which is part of the Integrative system of Therapy.¹ I have used this technique extensively for over twenty-five years. **Inner Dialoging** is basically talking to yourself. Talking to yourself may sound like a strange concept but you are actually talking to yourself constantly but you don't realize it. **I will simply be teaching you how to do it out loud instead of silently.** It may feel very awkward and strange at first, but if you stick with it, you will see how effective it is.

The idea behind **Inner Dialoging** is when the various sub-parts of the psyche parts banter and debate with one another, out loud, in a direct

¹ *Various kinds of inner dialoging techniques are used by many schools of therapy besides Integrative Therapy including Psychodrama, Gestalt, Transactional Analysis and Re-Decision Therapy.*

Inner Dialoguing (Continued)

manner, the **Discerning Self** is able to generate wiser and better perspectives, solutions, insights and “ahas” than the person is normally able to achieve. Obviously, to some degree, inner dialoguing happens every day in people who know nothing about Integrative Therapy—it is the way the human psyche operates. However, oftentimes the informal inner dialoguing that people normally engage in, non-verbally inside their own head, is not as balanced as it should be. Sometimes one or more of the psyche sub-parts gets squelched early on in the discussion and a domineering part of the person’s psyche, other than the **Discerning Self** makes the decisions. This domineering part can be the **Adaptive Self**, the **Innate Self** or the **Programmed Self**. The dominating role sometimes actually rotates between the **Innate Self**, **Programmed Self**, or **Adaptive Self** from day-to-day, much like a “King of the Hill” game. When one of these sub-parts dominates the psyche, whenever inner dialoguing starts to happen, the domineering part nips the discussion in the bud so to speak so that it can run the show. In these cases the **Discerning Self** in the person is too weak/underdeveloped to take or maintain control. The purpose of doing formal **Inner Dialoguing** techniques is to teach you how to make the **Discerning Self** part of yourself be in charge of the psyche. Secondly, the formal **Inner Dialoguing** sessions teaches the **Discerning Self** how to

Inner Dialoguing (Continued)

allow and encourage all of the sub-parts of the psyche to express themselves. After you get practice having your **Discerning Self** be in charge in the formal **Inner Dialoguing** sessions, it will learn how to stay in control during the constant inner dialoguing that happens inside your head in your everyday life. You can also continue to do formal **Inner Dialoguing** sessions whenever you are wrestling with important issues in your life. It may feel very awkward and strange at first, but if you stick with it, you will see how effective it is.

Inner Dialoguing is done by setting up four chairs, or stools, (or equivalents such as milk crates or buckets) close enough to one another that it is easy to move from chair to chair. You can buy stacking plastic chairs pretty cheap at IKEA in an assortment of colors. You can also just put different colored tee-shirts or towels on your dining room chairs. You may be using these chairs for years so it's worth investing some time in creating them.



Inner Dialoguing (Continued)



The chairs will represent your **Innate Self**, your **Programmed Self**, your **Adaptive Self** and your **Discerning Self**. I usually recommend that the **Programmed Self** chair be a color such as black or blue as it will often be representing negative programming that you have inside yourself. I recommend the **Adaptive Self** chair be a non-descript color such as gray or brown or beige. Then make the **Innate Self** chair a color that feels joyful to you,

Inner Dialoguing

(Continued)

and the **Discerning Self** chair a color that feels wise and powerful to you. You can also use a multi-colored tie-dye shirt for the **Discerning Self to signify that it synthesizes parts of all the different personality parts.**

When you sit down to do an **Inner Dialoguing** session you need to come up with a goal for the session. The goal should be specific and measurable. Here are some basic templates for creating specific kinds of goals:

I feel this way and I want to feel this way instead.

I am behaving this way and I want to be behaving this way instead.

I want to figure out how to...

I want to do this by this date.

I want to do this for X number of weeks.

I want to refrain from doing this for X number of weeks.

I want to get more in touch with why I am feeling sad, angry, scared, uncomfortable, anxious, guilty, resentful, embarrassed, intimidated, irritated, disillusioned, disappointed, bored, etc.

Inner Dialoguing (Continued)

I want to decide...

I want to come up with a plan to...

You can go back to your Life Inventory, Self Concept Questionnaire and Self Awareness Exercises to get ideas for goals for sessions. If you do not feel inspired to try **Inner Dialoguing** after reading these examples, I strongly encourage you to give it a try anyway. It is much richer and more powerful when you actually experience it than it can be described on paper. **Inner Dialoguing** can be done by yourself or with a coach. As you experiment with using **Inner Dialoguing**, you will develop a sense of when you are better off working on an issue yourself, and when it would be more helpful to use a coach. There are some important guidelines to follow when choosing a coach or for serving as a coach.

Guidelines For Picking Or Serving As A Therapeutic Coach

When choosing someone to serve as your therapeutic coach, or when deciding whether or not to serve as someone else's coach, you need to give VERY CAREFUL CONSIDERATION to whether there is enough **values compatibility** between yourself and the other person. If there is too much of a

Guidelines For Coaching (Continued)

gap in religious, political, or lifestyle values between a coach and the person having the session (the client), it will impair the coach's ability to help the person explore his/her true feelings, consider all of his/her options, and make the right decisions. It is impossible to do value-free therapy; this is true when a mental health professional is doing therapy with a client too.

The other factor that is crucial when you are choosing a coach is that the coach needs to have **no vested interest** in the issues or decisions you are working on. I mean this in both a direct and indirect way. So for instance, you should not work with your sister on whether or not to move across the country to accept a job, if you know she would tend to steer you away from doing that because she would not want you living that far away. You would also not want to work on whether or not you should get a divorce with a friend that you know is in an unhappy marriage and not yet ready to admit or face that fact. Likewise, you should not work on wanting to become more self disciplined with someone who has issues with self discipline. So a given person in your life might work perfectly well as a coach on some issues you want to work on, but would not work well on others. You can use your spouse or significant other, but obviously not for something like "Should I get a

Guidelines For Coaching (Continued)

divorce?" or "I want to figure out why I am depressed" if there is a chance that part of the reason you are depressed has something to do with your relationship with your spouse. If you pick an appropriate coach, he/she can be very helpful and can sometimes help you achieve insights or solutions you could not get to just working with yourself. You can also do **Inner Dialoging** in a small group of up to four people. You can meet weekly or twice a month and take turns being the "client". Having two or three coaches can be very helpful. I have done this with two girlfriends for years; we've helped each other work through an amazing number of issues as we moved through different stages of our lives. ALSO IT IS CRUCIAL THAT THE COACH READS THE MATERIAL ON PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT, since an understanding of the theory is necessary in order to be able to use the **Inner Dialoging** technique properly.

I cannot stress enough that this technique has a much more profound effect than simply engaging in problem solving on an intellectual level. This work is done on a very deep emotional level and it also uncovers lots of irrational thinking that a person doesn't realize is interfering with his/her ability to solve problems in a rational way. Speaking of emotions, **Inner Dialoging** can bring out some really intense anger and sadness. You therefore want to find

Guidelines For Coaching (Continued)

a place to do it where you cannot be overheard if you want to yell and scream. Not all sessions will get loud, but some definitely need to, to be effective. It is well worth the investment to find a private place to have **Inner Dialoging** sessions. Perhaps you have a friend or family member who lives outside the city on a big lot who you could housesit for when they go out of town for a weekend. Maybe you can find a cabin to rent that is secluded enough that other campers wouldn't hear the noise. Maybe you could rent a music studio. Typically sessions last 1 hour to 1 ½ hours. After defining the goal for the session, simply start by sitting in the chair that seems to have the most "energy", and begin talking.

How Sessions Unfold

What often happens in an **Inner Dialoging** session, is that the **Innate Self** starts off by expressing a desire that really sets off the **Programmed Self**. The **Programmed Self** is then allowed to "rant". This uncovers all the "Should's, Shouldn'ts, Can'ts, contaminated "non-factual facts", etc. stored in the person's **Programmed Self**. The **Programmed Self** will probably have ranting to do that it collected from many different sources. A coach can help you tap into what might be there by asking provocative questions like "What would your mother

How Sessions Unfold (Continued)

or father think of this?" (even if they are dead). Any group of people likely to harbor disapproval for what the **Innate Self** is expressing should be polled i.e. your feminist friends, your religious relatives, your conservative friends, your radical friends, the neighbors, a sibling who always tends to think negatively of you, etc. Don't forget God!!! Whatever you are considering doing, somebody is sure to disapprove and admonish you for the thought!!

If you are working with a coach, if you get stuck, he/she may want to prompt silent personality parts to speak and respond to other parts, or in general help you get things riled up. If you are working by yourself, you need to make a statement such as "Does any other part have something to say about this?" to encourage the various parts of your psyche to express themselves. It is perfectly acceptable for the discussion to get quite heated and loud.

The idea behind **Inner Dialoging** is that just the interplay between the various personality parts can generate "a-has" or new perspectives or possibilities to pursue. When the personality parts address one another directly, and banter and debate, the **Discerning Self** is able to generate wiser and better perspectives and solutions than the person is normally able to achieve. A person may be vaguely aware that he/she feels conflicting feelings and thoughts, but he/she may not have much awareness

How Sessions Unfold (Continued)

about the causes of his/her ambivalence. If you are using a coach, he/she can participate in your session directly. If/when you get stuck, or seem to need additional ideas, the coach can “double” for one of the personality parts¹. The coach stands next to the chair representing the personality part that he/she wants to step in for and takes over speaking for him/her. The coach may have a hunch that a particular personality part is not being expressed.

The coach may take the role of any of the four personality parts, i.e. he/she might try and guess what the **Innate Self** or **Adaptive self** may be feeling and say it for him/her. Or the coach might rave and preach for the **Programmed Self**. The coach might also speak for the **Discerning Self** i.e. to point out the flaws in the **Programmed Self’s** theory or moral code. If the coach’s hunch is correct, as the coach speaks for the personality part, it becomes freed up to start expressing itself, and the coach reverts to observing the process. If the coach’s hunch is incorrect, the coach’s participation usually will rile

¹ *Doubling is a concept taken from Psycho-drama as explained in Psycho-drama—Resolving Emotional Problems Through Role-Playing By Lewis Yablonsky Basic Books (1976). [Note: There are numerous other books on Amazon.com about Psychodrama.]*

How Sessions Unfold (Continued)

things up enough to get the personality part to speak up and get the dialogue moving again.

The coach also makes sure the person is correctly separating out the various personality parts. It's easier for someone on the outside to recognize this. The person doing the work may mistake their **Programmed Self** for their **Innate Self** or their **Discerning Self**. The coach can simply say "That sounds like that part talking, not you" and ask the person to switch to the appropriate chair. If you are doing the technique yourself, you have to just really pay attention to not blur the parts together and make sure you switch chairs when you switch personality parts. It will get easier with practice. When **Inner Dialoging** is used in a group situation group members can use the doubling techniques, or address the personality sub-parts of the person doing the inner dialoging exercise. Another role of the coach is to present new information to the **Discerning Self**. Usually the coach can provide the person with new perspectives because he/she received different programming growing up, and has different overall life experiences as well. This information should not be given in an overly directive way but just as helpful suggestions. During **Inner Dialoguing** the coach might want to make statements like "Have you ever considered?..." Or "I have some experiences that lead me to believe..."

How Sessions Unfold (Continued)

or “Another way to look at this situation or dilemma is...” There is always a thin line with “giving advice.” Rather than using phrases like “I think you should”, or “I don’t think you should”, the coach should use phrases like “It sounds to me like, or “I’m hearing that or “From my experience I believe that...” “My theory about this situation is... ” , etc. When giving new information to the **Discerning Self**, the coach always “leaves room” for the person to disagree with the suggestions. Advice is given in a “food for thought” vein. Whenever the coach gives suggestions, he/she checks in with the person as to whether it seems to “ring true” or “feel right”. If the person states that the suggestion doesn’t feel right, the coach assumes it is not the right recommendation, and the person and the coach brainstorm together to find the right solution or answer to the problem or situation. If you are doing your session alone, and find you need outside information, you can go out and collect information from friends or resource people and then come back to the session a few days later.

The following example sessions are based on sessions I have participated in either as a client, therapeutic coach, or therapist. I have changed some of the details to protect peoples’ privacy. You can do **Inner Dialoging** sessions about many different kinds of issues. After reading these examples, look over your Life Inventory, your Self Concept Questionnaire, and your Re-Discovery

How Sessions Unfold (Continued)

Questionnaire to get ideas for issues you can work on that are at the root of your depression.

On the following pages are examples of inner Dialoguing sessions.

Inner Dialoguing

Inner Dialoguing Example #1

Goal of the Session: "I want to decide what I want to do about a future career"

(In this session the person is working by himself)

Discerning Self:

"I want to decide what I want to do about a future career."

Programmed Self:

"What's wrong with the job you have now?"

Discerning Self:

"Nothing is wrong with it, I just think I might want to do something different."

Programmed Self:

"Like what?"

Discerning Self:

"Like, I'm thinking about maybe taking some classes at the community college in computers."

Programmed Self:

"How in the hell can you take college classes, you had a D- average in high school?"

Inner Dialoguing

Example #1

(Continued)

Discerning Self:

"Well, actually I've checked into it and it doesn't matter what grades I had in high school because I have been out of school for such a long time. I just have to pass the math and English entrance exam."

Programmed Self:

"You'll never pass them. You were never good at book learning. You even failed second grade, remember?"

Adaptive Self:

"Maybe this is a bad idea"

Innate Self:

"I'm sick of being a maintenance person. I end up working sixty hours a week and I am sick of getting up at 4:00 in the morning to plow snow!!!"

Programmed Self:

"What makes you think you can do computer work? You don't even own a computer. This is ridiculous!!!"

Discerning Self:

"Okay I need to stay clear here, and not fall into my usual negative thinking."

Discerning Self:

"Well actually, that's the first step in my plan. I'm thinking of buying a computer system. They are on sale for \$1,000 at Best Buy."

Programmed Self: *"You're going to spend \$1,000 on a computer!!! Do you even know how to turn one on?"*

Inner Dialoguing

Example #1

(Continued)

Discerning Self:

"I don't know much, but there is a beginner computer class I can take through Adult Rec and Ed for \$30.00"

Programmed Self:

"I thought you were saving for a down payment on a house."

Discerning Self:

"I am."

Innate Self:

"But if I could become a computer guy I could make a lot more money and work a forty hour week instead of working 60 hours a week."

Programmed Self:

"Yeah that is a big "If" though! You could end up paying for a class and computer and totally flunk out and end up using the computer to play video games!!!"

Innate Self:

"Geez you are so fucking negative!!!"

Programmed Self:

"No I'm not, I'm just being realistic."

Innate Self:

"No, you're being pessimistic as you always are."

Adaptive Self:

"I feel nervous about this. What if I tell people about this plan and then I can't even pass the entrance exams at the college?"

Inner Dialoguing

Example #1

(Continued)

Innate Self:

"We don't have to tell anybody."

Discerning Self:

[Sits thinking silently for a minute]
"You know that is an excellent idea. I am not going to tell a soul about this idea. I am going to get some books to brush up on my math and English and then take the tests in a few months. I will hold off on buying the computer until I take the entrance tests. If I pass the tests, I am going to buy the computer, I'm sure they will have another sale. Then, when I sign up for my first class, I won't tell anybody until I get my final grade."

Programmed Self:

"I sure hope you aren't setting yourself up for failure. It will be two thousand dollars between the class and the computer."

Discerning Self:

"You know, I may fail. But if I don't try, I will be haunted, wondering if I could have done it. I've saved up a lot of money in the last three years. I deserve to spend some of that money on something to make my life better."

Innate Self:

"Yeah I haven't spent any money on something that excites me in a long time!!!"

Discerning Self:

"Okay we will proceed with our secret plan!!!"

Inner Dialoguing Example #1 (Continued)

NOTE: This is based on a true story. This person had no trouble passing all his classes. Whatever learning problems he had, he grew out of. He was very surprised when he passed the first class. then he passed the second one too, both with excellent grades. At that point he had an "aha" and realized that as an adult, he was not under the shadow of his gifted older brother as he was all through grade school, junior high and high school and could discover his own academic abilities. He went on to be a successful computer network engineer.

Inner Dialoguing Example #2

Goal of the Session: "I want to decide if I should move back to New York".

(The person is working with a coach)

Please note as you read this that most of the discussion coming from the **Programmed Self** is actually programming this person received as an adult, not really programming from childhood. Sometimes as adults, people can get programmed from peer groups, (or just society in general) in just as rigid or even more rigid ways than they

Inner Dialoguing Example #2 (Continued)

got programmed originally from their parents. Cults like the Moonies would be an example of this. It is quite common for most people to have programming in their **Programmed Self** that is in direct rebellion to the original programming from childhood.¹ In a healthy person, all the programming that is received, from all sources, is reviewed and analyzed by the **Discerning Self** and the **Discerning Self** then takes out the valuable, useful, parts and discards the rest.

Discerning Self:

"I want to decide if I should move back to New York to be with my family."

Coach:

"So you have family in New York?"

Discerning Self:

"My extended family live in upper state New York. I have eight brothers and sisters, lots of nieces and nephews, and both my parents are still alive."

¹ *This idea of programmed rebellious information is a concept taken from Transactional Analysis Therapy which was developed by a psychiatrist named Eric Berne in the 1960's. In TA, the original programming is referred to as "scripting", the rebellion is called "counter-scripting" and the goal is to become "script-free."*

Inner Dialoguing

Example #2

(Continued)

Coach:

When did you move to Ann Arbor?"

Discerning Self:

"Thirty years ago!!!"

Coach:

"Wow that's a long time ago, what brought you to Ann Arbor?"

Discerning Self:

"Yeah, it's been a lot of years. The big reason was to get away from my family!!!"

Programmed Self:

"Yeah, so why would you want to go back and be with them now? It's not like they are all that different than they were thirty years ago. Same bullshit as ever!!!"

Discerning Self:

"Yeah, I have mentioned this idea to a few of my friends and they all think I am nuts. I come from a traditional Catholic family. I left the church thirty years ago and have a very radical lifestyle in many ways. I had a child out of wedlock and raised him as a single parent myself. I am the black sheep of my family."

Programmed Self:

"So why would you want to subject yourself to all their negative opinions again?"

Adaptive Self:

"Maybe this is not a good idea."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #2

(Continued)

Coach:

"Well I think we should explore the idea a little more, there must be some reason you came up with this idea."

Innate Self:

[Begins crying.] "Maybe I am just grabbing at straws because I am feeling so lousy. I have actually been very depressed for months. Lower than I have ever been in my life."

Coach:

"Oh I didn't know that. Why are you feeling depressed?"

Discerning Self:

"I think that is a forbidden question according to the theory I've been reading. I'm supposed to get in touch with feelings like anger and sadness, depression isn't a feeling."

Coach:

"Whoops, I forgot, I remember reading that too."

Coach:

"So what are you sad or angry about?"

Innate Self:

"It's more like what am I not sad or angry about."

Innate Self:

[Loudly] "I can't believe that I have been divorced for ten years and have met nothing but losers basically!! Or people I am totally incompatible with!!!"

Inner Dialoguing

Example #2

(Continued)

Unfortunately, I invested three years in my relationship with Bob before I faced up to the fact that there was way too much incompatibility for us to ever get married."

Adaptive Self:

"And now I am fifty and feel very unmarketable. All the guys my age want thirty-five year olds. Or if not that, a fifty year old who is in a lot better financial shape than me. When I think of spending the rest of my life as a single person it makes me wish I'd get breast cancer and die in the next couple years."

Coach:

"You really are feeling pretty down."

Innate Self:

"Yeah I pretty much hate my life. I hate spending holidays alone. I can't afford to visit my family very often or get the time off. My son relocated to the west coast a couple years ago. All I have in Ann Arbor these days is a few friends. And I have a great co-op townhouse. If I move to New York I will be living in a shitty little apartment."

Programmed Self:

"You're dumb to give up your townhouse. You should just get used to being alone. Lot's of women are single these days. It's not as hard as you make it out to be."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #2

(Continued)

Adaptive Self:

"I just go round and round in circlesthinking about this. All my options seem lousy. Maybe I would be no happier in New York, I might regret giving up my life here. "

Coach:

"Have you talked to any of your family members about the possibility of coming back to New York?"

Discerning Self:

"Oh yeah I have talked with my sisters. They are begging me to come back. They would love for us to love near one another and my brothers and parents have been encouraging too. In fact, my parents want me to come and live with them. They have a huge house."

Programmed Self:

"Living with your parents is an absurd idea. I still think the whole idea is a bad one. You would be admitting defeat. It's like you would be crawling back there with your tail between your legs. "

Coach:

"Wait a minute here. You've had a lot of good years in your life here in Ann Arbor. It's not that you weren't successful in your goal to move away from your family and build a life of your own in a liberal town that was more suited to your values and lifestyle."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #2

(Continued)

Discerning Self:

"Hmmm, thanks for adding a more healthy perspective to this situation. Maybe you've hit on the key to making this decision. Maybe my attitude is what is crucial here. I absolutely do not want to go back to New York feeling like my life in Michigan was a failure. Moving here was a great decision for me thirty years ago, one of the best of my life. I could never have become who I really wanted to be as a person if I had stayed close to my domineering family. But at fifty years old I am not very susceptible to their disapproval, or their attempts to try to influence my life decisions, like I was when I was twenty. So now maybe I could appreciate the good things they have to offer me and simply politely refuse their misguided advice."

Coach:

"What kind of good things do they have to offer you?"

Innate Self:

"Well I love my two sisters and my one brother. I would love to live near them and be able to hang out with them and see them whenever I wanted."

Discerning Self:

"And my parents and all my family members really do care about me a lot. And I would enjoy being a part of my nieces' and nephews' lives."

Inner Dialoguing Example #2 (Continued)

Innate Self:

"It would be so great to go to Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners with thirty people instead of being alone!!! If I had a partner here it would be different. I always missed my family. But when I am in a relationship, I can deal with it. But when I have no family and no partner, I just can't deal with that aloneness. I hate it!!!"

Coach:

"So what's happening about developing a new relationship here in Ann Arbor?"

Discerning Self:

"I have dated a few people and I just find no one who would be a candidate for a serious relationship. My girlfriends are having the same problem. I think at this age it takes a lot longer to find a partner than when you are young because everybody's personality and lifestyle are so developed and a lot of people come with a lot of baggage that I don't want to deal with!!"

Coach:

"But you haven't given up on the idea of finding someone, have you?"

Discerning Self:

"No I haven't given up. I am just real discouraged and I think it is going to take way longer than I thought it would."

Innate Self:

"That's why it might be cool to move back by my family. Because I wouldn't

Inner Dialoguing

Example #2

(Continued)

feel so lonely if I had my brothers and sisters to hang out with and spend holidays with. I could be more patient about finding a partner if I was in New York."

Coach:

"I think there is some merit to that idea."

Innate Self:

"I really just can't take the aloneness anymore. I am really starting to sink into a serious depression."

Coach:

"Okay, so it is starting to sound like there are lots of positive points to moving back to be near your family."

Discerning Self:

"Yes, there really are. There are negatives. I will miss my friends in Ann Arbor. But they all have cell phones with free minutes so we can talk as often as we want to. I think we will stay close. It seems like, all things considered, I will be much less lonely in New York. Because though I treasure my friends in Ann Arbor, they have their own lives and families and are never available on holidays. And, though I see them all regularly, I really still have way too much alone time on the weekends now that I am not in a relationship."

Innate Self:

"I think I would like to go to New York. But I absolutely do not want to live with

Inner Dialoguing Example #2 (Continued)

Mom and Dad. I'd rather live in a dive apartment than do that."

Discerning Self:

"Yeah, even though it is appealing to live with them for awhile to save money, I think it would make me bonkers. I think I am better off dipping into my savings and getting an apartment."

Coach:

"So its sounds like you have kind of made a decision."

Discerning Self:

"I guess I have. I have been feeling really down for over a year. I think that is kind of feedback that I need to make a significant change in my life. So I need to really work on the attitude thing. Like when I announce to my family that I am going to move back I need to do it in a very empowered way. I have to radiate the idea that "I've had a great life in Michigan but I think for this part of my life I'd rather live near family again."

Coach:

"Yes the attitude is very important for making this feel like a good decision."

NOTE: This is based on a true story and this person was very happy with her decision to relocate back to be near her family.

Inner Dialoguing Example #3

Inner Dialoguing Example #3

Goal of the Session: "I want to figure out why I am so depressed."

(The person is working with a coach)

Discerning Self:

"I have been feeling really depressed for almost a year and a half."

Coach:

"How badly depressed have you been?"

Discerning Self:

"Well I mean I am able to go to work. But I have no motivation to do anything when I am home. I have tons of unfinished house projects. And I hardly do anything social anymore."

Coach:

"So when did the depression start?"

Discerning Self:

"Well I am sure it is related to breaking up with Jerry four years ago. I really thought we were going to get married and have kids together. We were together for three years."

Innate Self:

"I am getting pessimistic about finding anybody. I am thirty five years old!!"

Discerning Self:

"I have been out on a lot of dates and never feel any chemistry with anybody I meet. I am kind of an unusual person, I

Inner Dialoguing

Example #3

(Continued)

have atypical values and hobbies and don't match with most people."

Coach:

"So you were a lot happier when you were in that relationship?"

Discerning Self:

"Well, in theory. We had a lot of problems which is why it ultimately ended. But I was happy because I thought I was finally going to get to be a mom. I really, really really, want to have kids. [Begins to sob.] I can't even imagine a life without children."

[Person sits quietly for a few minutes]

Innate Self:

"Why can't we adopt a child?"

Discerning Self:

"What on earth? Where did that idea come from."

Innate Self:

"From me, your adventurous self!!! I know single women who have adopted. You don't really have to be in a relationship to be a parent."

Programmed Self:

"Single parenting is horrible. It's bad for the kid not to have a role model and you would be worn to a frazzle and broke."

Innate Self:

"If we adopt a girl we don't need a male role model. There are all kinds of

Inner Dialoguing

Example #3

(Continued)

girl babies waiting to be adopted from China."

Programmed Self:

"What kind of crazy idea is this? When you adopt overseas babies they come from poor mothers who were malnourished and then the kid ends up mentally retarded. You don't know it when they are a baby, and then you are stuck with it!!!"

Discerning Self:

"No actually the babies from China are different. Families are only allowed to have one child and lots of them want males, so they give up the girl babies."

Programmed Self:

"Well I don't know anything about that, but you would be exhausted taking care of a child all by yourself."

Discerning Self:

"It would be a lot of work, there is no doubt about that. But there are a lot of single mothers in the world."

Innate Self:

"When I am doing something that is exciting to me, I have lots of energy. I have no energy now because I hate my life."

Coach:

"She has a good point there. Something can be very exhausting but still be a wonderful experience. I think most people find parenting exhausting."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #3

(Continued)

Would you have any support people in your life if you decided to do this?"

Discerning Self:

"Well I have one friend who would definitely be an enthusiastic aunt. And my Dad might come around to being a Grandpa. He would freak out at first but he loves kids. Too bad my mom isn't alive."

Coach:

"Okay, what about finances?"

Discerning Self:

"You know I make pretty good money these days. I would certainly have to change my lifestyle, but if I was frugal I could afford it. There is lots of good quality daycare in this town."

Programmed Self:

"I can't believe we are even discussing this. You should just be patient and look for a husband and have your own kids."

Discerning Self:

"You know, I didn't even know I was thinking about this until this session. But I have to admit when I look back on my relationship with Jerry, I was a lot more excited about having kids than about our relationship with each other."

Adaptive Self:

"Maybe we are a lesbian."

Discerning Self:

"I don't think so. I don't feel attracted

Inner Dialoguing

Example #3

(Continued)

to women, never have. Maybe I would be into another man more than I was into Jerry. But I am thirty-five and am more than ready to be a mother. If I were to adopt a child, I could always partner up with a man in the future."

Programmed Self:

"That's another thing!!! If you adopt a kid all by yourself, people are probably going to think you are a lesbian!!!"

Discerning Self:

"Hmmm, never thought of that particular twist but I really don't think so. Besides, I don't have anything against lesbians."

Coach:

"Okay we should get back on track here."

Discerning Self:

"Okay. The deal is my biological clock is really ticking about having kids. It would have been great if I could have done it in the traditional way, with a man, but that hasn't happened. There is no urgency to finding a husband but there is to having kids."

Coach:

"So it sounds like you are really considering this."

Innate Self:

"It's a great idea!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Discerning Self:

"I guess I am. Obviously it is not

Inner Dialoguing Example #3 (Continued)

something I will decide today, but I will begin some serious research on this and talk to my girlfriend, the one who would be my support person."

Coach:

"Sounds like a good plan. Good luck."

NOTE: This is based on a true story. This woman did a few more sessions over a period of six months, and then started the process of adoption. Within fifteen months from her application she was matched with a nine month old girl from China. She is extremely happy being a single mom and her Dad became a very devoted Grandpa.

Inner Dialoguing Example #4

Goal of the Session: "I want to figure out why I feel so bored with my life"

(In this session the person is working with a coach)

Discerning Self:

"I am feeling this sense of boredom with my life that I just can't shake."

Coach:

"How long have you been feeling bored like this?"

Discerning Self:

"At least a year, maybe more."

| Inner Dialoguing

Example #4

(Continued)

Coach:

"What have you figured out so far about the cause of the boredom?"

Discerning Self:

"Not much."

Innate Self:

"I know why I'm bored."

Discerning Self:

"You do?"

Innate Self:

"Yes, because I'm not in band playing music anymore."

Programmed Self:

"Oh shit, not this topic again. We've thrashed this idea around and around. That is just something you have to let go of and move on with your life. You are 48 years old. That is too old to be in a band."

Discerning Self:

"Yeah, I'm aware that I have a lot of disappointment about not playing music anymore but I'd have to agree. The music business is real competitive these days. No one would want to come and see a band of old farts with pot bellies who are going bald."

Coach:

"The Rolling Stones are still playing to packed houses and they are older than you."

Discerning Self:

[Laughs]. "Yeah. Well I am a decent

Inner Dialoguing

Example #4

(Continued)

musician, but not in a class with the Rolling Stones."

Coach:

"What kind of band were you in and what kind of music did you play?"

Discerning Self:

"I did mostly rock, but some mellow stuff from the 1930's and 1940's too. I was in several bands. We never made it big in a national sense, but my one band was a pretty hot item for quite a few years in southeastern Michigan. We never lacked for gigs. It was a cool seven piece band with saxophone, piano, drums, base, guitar, congas, and harmonica."

Coach:

"Wow, sounds pretty impressive. So how did you get out of music?"

Discerning Self:

"Well, it's fun when you are young, but by your mid-thirties, it starts to take a toll on you. Plus we all knew we didn't really want to be professional musicians, it's just too competitive. So we all ended up getting day jobs to get health insurance and pension. So then it becomes grueling to work all week at your day job and then play music Thursday through Sunday."

Coach:

"So then you stopped playing altogether."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #4

(Continued)

Discerning Self:

"Yeah pretty much. That band broke up. I dabbled a little here and there for a few years but I haven't played in a band for a long time."

Coach:

"So which instruments did you play? Do you still play your instruments anymore?"

Innate Self:

"I played guitar. Then I taught myself piano, and I played the harmonica. I also was the vocalist in some of the bands. I took voice lessons for while. I don't have a vocal range like a lead singer that makes it really big, but I am pretty solid. I've been told I have a great stage presence. I play a little when the spirit moves me. I'm definitely rusty, but I haven't like totally lost my ability to play any of the instruments. I still have a piano in my living room and guitars sitting around."

Coach:

"Wow it sounds like you have an incredible amount of musical talents and skills, I can see how you would be feeling sad not to be using your musical talents anymore."

Innate Self:

"Yeah, my day job pays the bills, but it is can get really boring year after year"

Inner Dialoguing

Example #4

(Continued)

teaching the same stuff over and over again to kids who really have no interest in learning because their family life is so dysfunctional. I feel like I am more of a babysitter than a teacher."

Coach:

"The thought comes to my mind of you finding some different ways to play music."

Discerning Self:

"Yeah but I'm not really in touch with any other musicians anymore."

Coach:

"Well what about putting an ad on craigslist.org? It's totally free. Wouldn't cost you anything to try."

Discerning Self:

"Yeah but when they found out how old I am, I doubt they would be interested."

Coach:

"First of all, you really don't look your age. Secondly, I think an older musician can add stability to a band of younger folks. You may be right that a band made up of totally fifty years olds wouldn't be as marketable as a younger band. But a young band with a few older members would not be a problem."

Discerning Self:

"That's a good point."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #4

(Continued)

Coach:

"Another thought that comes to mind is trying to find some opportunities to play music where you don't get paid. Sounds like you make a fine living. You don't really need to do it for money anymore. Wouldn't that open up more possibilities?"

Innate Self:

"Hey you've hit on something here. You do have one musician friend who is still playing. Didn't your friend Marty tell you he was doing pro bono gigs at nursing homes doing old 1930's stuff with his guitar and a drum machine? I bet he'd love for us to join him with an electric piano. And I love to sing those old songs!!!"

Adaptive Self:

"That sounds really boring."

Coach:

"Tell me more about it feeling boring."

Adaptive Self:

Playing for a bunch of old ladies-- I don't want to lower my standards that badly. I think I would rather just ride on the memories of what I used to have. I was in some pretty hot bands. It would be an insult to play for free. If I can't have what I once had, I didn't want anything. You have to be young and sexy to be a musician. I used to have women falling all over me when I was young. Now they'd

Inner Dialoguing

Example #4

(Continued)

just think of me as an old fart”

Coach:

“You know it sounds like you are really struggling with the whole aging issue. I know what a struggle it is myself.”

Adaptive Self:

“Hell, yeah I am struggling. I hate getting older, it’s a real drag. My ex-wife told me that was one of the reasons she was leaving me, that I was so negative about getting older, like I was just sitting around waiting to die.”

Coach:

“Wow, so you really are having a hard time with it. Just curious, what were your parents like as older people. Are they still alive?”

Discerning Self:

“No they are both deceased. But now that you mention it they didn’t handle getting older very well. I remember them as pretty happy people when I was younger but they seemed to get more and more unhappy as they got older. They did not adjust to it well at all.”

Coach:

“So you had no role model of how to lead a happy productive life in later years.”

Discerning Self:

[Thoughtfully] “No, I sure didn’t. I

Inner Dialoguing

Example #4

(Continued)

never noticed the connection. Maybe that is where I got the negativity my ex accused me of. Hmm, this is very interesting. I guess I really don't understand how people continue to feel happy as they age."

Innate Self:

"They keep doing fun things like playing music instead of sitting around bemoaning that they aren't twenty five and shooting down every fun idea I come up with!!!"

Coach:

"Sounds like you have a real fun deprived part over there!!!"

Discerning Self:

"Yeah I guess so."

Coach:

"Well as I said, this aging thing is not easy for anybody. I think the baby-boomer generation has a particularly hard time with it. We just want to stay young forever. But we can't. The people who lead happy, productive lives in the later decades of their lives are those who can remember the past in all its glory and be thankful for it, but don't get stuck pining away for what once was."

Coach:

"Of course all this is easy to say and not so easy to do. One thing that is very helpful is to actually talk to and spend some time with older people who are

Inner Dialoguing

Example #4

(Continued)

still really enjoying their lives. That would be particularly helpful to someone like you whose parents were poor role models on this particular issue. You know, there are people in every field who do the greatest work of their lives in the last decades of their lives. You may have more music in you that still needs expressed than you realize."

Discerning Self:

"You are making some really good points. I don't want my later years to be like my parents' last decades were, they were miserable."

Innate Self:

"So what about the idea of calling Marty up for a first step?"

Discerning Self: *"I guess I could do that. I have nothing to lose."*

Innate Self:

"Hurray!!!"

Innate Self:

"Okay, and we have to organize all our sheet music. You almost threw it all out awhile back. We need to organize it all by category. It will take days I'm sure. But now that I have a goal it's easier to face working on it."

Discerning Self:

"You know maybe I do have some contamination that I wouldn't enjoy playing music if I wasn't young and

Inner Dialoguing

Example #4

(Continued)

sexy. Though I certainly enjoyed all the female attention back then, it was really the actual music that was most important to me. [Turns to coach] You have been a great help."

Coach:

"It was a pleasure. I hope I didn't come off as "holier than thou" about the aging stuff. Doing this session with you has made me think about what I might need to do to get off my duff and do more creative, meaningful things with my spare time!!! It's always easier to see

another person's issues with a lot more clarity than our own."

Discerning Self:

"I agree with that statement!!! No you didn't come off in a bad way at all."

Innate Self:

"You just said what had to be said to get us unstuck!!!"

NOTE: This is based on a true story. This person ended up forming a three piece band with his old friend Marty and he does charitable gigs at nursing homes and takes great pleasure in it. He even gets paid sometimes because word got around that they were good, and nursing homes have budgets for entertainment events. Another thing that he did to work on accepting his aging was to blow up several pictures of himself in his heyday with his favorite

Inner Dialoguing Example #4 (Continued)

bands into real nice posters which he then framed and hung in his living room. These served as conversation starters with people and he could talk about that important part of his life with people in a celebratory way, without the sadness.

Inner Dialoguing Example #5

Goal for the Session:
I want to decide if I should break up with Paul.

(The person is working with a coach)

Discerning Self:

"I am feeling really unhappy in my relationship with Paul."

Coach:

"What's going on?"

Discerning Self:

"Well let me give you a little background. It's been about nine months since I ended my twenty-year non-married partnership with Ron."

Coach:

"I wondered how long it had been, I lost track."

Discerning Self:

"Well there were lots of good things about my relationship with Ron, but there were some significant ways that I was really unhappy."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #5

(Continued)

Coach:

"Can you tell me more about why you were so unhappy in your relationship with Ron?"

Discerning Self:

"Well to be honest, a big thing was the sex. I was never very sexually happy in that relationship. We got together when I was pretty young and I didn't know that much about sexual chemistry or compatibility. I fell in love with Ron because I thought he was a fantastic person; he was brilliant, funny, really nice, nurturing, we matched well on values and lifestyle. Seemed like we wanted a lot of the same things out of life."

Innate Self:

"But as the years went on our sex got less and less frequent. We were affectionate, but I just didn't have much interest in sex and his sex drive was not very high either. So I would hear stories from my girlfriends about their satisfying sex lives and I started to feel really sad that mine was so lousy."

Discerning Self:

"Eventually other problems developed in the relationship too. Ron got really, really involved with his career and started to have to travel a lot. I really didn't like that. Then he got fanatical about physical fitness and started doing triathlons. He was spending a real lot of hours per week training. So between his career and his physical fitness, he

Inner Dialoguing

Example #5

(Continued)

was giving me way less attention than I needed."

Discerning Self:

"Well to make a long story short I started an affair with Paul. He was someone I worked with and had known for years. The sexual chemistry was amazing. I felt like I was a totally different person. I lost weight, bought all kinds of sexy clothes. Paul seemed to have all the qualities that Ron didn't. He smothered me with attention. We would have sex like three times in a weekend which is more that Ron and I did in six months. I had lots of orgasms, I loved kissing him. He was fun, we played cards a lot, and he loved to fish, so I'd go on fishing trips with him."

Innate Self:

"So I left Ron for Paul. Ron was devastated. It was a very hard breakup after sharing our lives for twenty years. It wasn't bitter, just incredibly sad. It really blindsided him and I felt really guilty."

Innate Self:

"Well after dating Paul seriously for about six months, I started to notice problems."

Discerning Self:

"For one thing the intellectual chemistry wasn't there. He wasn't dumb, but just not a real deep person. There were a whole lots of things I just couldn't

Inner Dialoguing

Example #5

(Continued)

engage him in conversation about."

Innate Self:

"And more importantly, I started to realize he was kind of mean to me."

Coach:

"What do you mean by mean? Was he emotionally or physically abusive with you?"

Innate:

"Never physical. I guess emotionally but not in a direct way. Maybe not even intentionally or at a high level. But there is just this constant lack of appreciation. Like I will spend hours cooking us a nice dinner and he will barely compliment me. Or I dress up for his family outings-- I mean I spend a long time putting together an outfit that looks really good on me and do my hair and makeup real nice and he barely notices, or acknowledges that I look nice."

Discerning Self:

"And I'm realizing he just makes little snide comments about me on a regular basis. And another huge thing. I realize he has a drinking problem. At first I just thought he was a social drinker. But now I see that he drinks way too much and way too often."

Coach:

"These are some real serious things."

Innate Self:

"And he's fat and much lazier than I

Inner Dialoguing

Example #5

(Continued)

realized. Ron was too much of an exercise maniac and now Paul doesn't like to do anything active. I find myself watching way too much TV with him. At first it was fun, we were real cuddly. But it's lost its thrill."

Coach:

"Boy it's starting to sound like you really haven't made much of a net gain here. The bottom line score on each of these relationships seems about the same, just different good and bad points."

Innate Self:

[Begins sobbing.] "I know. Now I've ended a twenty year partnership and I am still miserable. I am no happier than I was. In fact, I feel much worse. I am starting to feel seriously depressed. I think it is easier to live without sex, than to live without someone appreciating you and being nice to you. Ron was always nice to me [crying]. He respected me and always gave me lots of compliments. And he was so thoughtful, he still sends me flowers on my birthday."

Coach:

"Would you consider going back with Ron?"

Innate Self:

"I don't know, I am so confused."
[Thinks silently for a few minutes].

Discerning Self:

"No, I don't think going back with Ron is

Inner Dialoguing

Example #5

(Continued)

the answer. There were wonderful things but I really don't want to spend the rest of my life in a sexless relationship. It is not something that can be fixed. The sexual chemistry is just not there. I feel more like a friend to him. Maybe that's what I felt for years but I just didn't acknowledge it. I don't think I can go back."

Coach:

"But it sounds like Paul is not the right choice for a new partner."

Innate Self:

"No, I know he isn't."

Adaptive Self:

"But I don't want to be alone. I hate to be alone! I don't think I can handle it after living with someone for twenty years."

Innate Self:

"I hate being alone too. I was happy that I was able to go right from Ron to Paul."

Programmed Self:

"Yeah, that wasn't really very cool going behind Ron's back and having an affair after he treated you so wonderfully for all those years."

Adaptive Self:

"I know I still feel guilty about it. I just don't know if I would have ever gotten up the courage to leave Ron if it meant facing aloneness."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #5

(Continued)

Coach:

"Well it can't be undone now. I think we need to focus on the here and now. Although it wouldn't be at all healthy for you to stay with Paul while you look for someone else if it is affecting you in negative ways emotionally, which it really sounds like it is. And it's true, it's not a very moral way to end a relationship."

Discerning Self:

"Yes I know. So how do people handle aloneness? To be honest I have had very little aloneness in my life. I lived with someone before I got with Ron when I was eighteen. I have spent almost no time alone in my life. It scares the shit out of me, more than you can possibly know."

Coach:

"I don't think it is easy for anyone. But the bigger tolerance you can build for it, the better job you will do at finding a good partner. If you can wait it out and say no to all the wrong choices that come your way and wait for a right choice, it will pay off. It sounds to me like you can do better than Ron or Paul. Not that Ron wasn't a nice person, but sounds like not a good choice for a romantic/sexual partner. Sex is important and I support you not wanting to live without it. And you should most definitely not have to put up with someone being emotionally mean to you just to get a good sexual

Inner Dialoguing

Example #5

(Continued)

relationship. There are more options in this world than these two men!!!"

Discerning Self:

"Yes I know there are."

Coach:

"Have you ever thought of getting a housemate?"

Discerning Self:

"No not really."

Coach:

"Well it would really help take the edge off of the aloneness just to have someone that you are living with even if you don't become close friends. And it could bring in some income."

Discerning Self:

"I guess I could consider that, my sister has had housemates for years and years."

Adapted Self:

"But there will still be so much empty time. [Crying]. I don't have enough things to fill my time, I will go nuts if I am not in a relationship."

Coach:

"Yeah, having a bunch of empty time would not be good for you since this will be your first time being alone. Have you any ideas of how you could fill your time?"

Discerning Self:

"Well I could get a second job."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #5

(Continued)

Innate Self:

"That doesn't sound very fun."

Coach:

"Are there any part time jobs you could take on that would be kind of fun? Since you're doing it more to fill your time than to make money?"

Discerning Self: *"Hmmm, that's an idea."*

Innate Self:

"I don't want to work for \$5.00/hr!!! That sounds yucky. I have a better idea. What if I try for a decent paying part-time job but I say that all the money I earn I can use to take vacations."

Coach:

"Now that's a creative idea. What kinds of places would you travel to? Would you be able to enjoy traveling alone?"

Innate Self:

"Well it kinda wouldn't be alone, except for the flights. I have good friends all around the country. On all my Spring and Christmas vacations I could visit people and I could take two trips on my summer vacation."

Discerning Self:

[Addresses Innate Self] *"So you wouldn't mind working extra if this is how you could spend the money?"*

Innate Self:

"Not at all. I would much rather have a

Inner Dialoguing Example #5 (Continued)

second job than sit home alone."

Coach:

"Okay, so where are we at about the original goal of this session deciding if you are going to break up with Paul?"

Discerning Self:

"Well this is all related to that goal. If I do not have a very specific, workable plan for how I will deal with the aloneness, I will change my mind and go back with him. Or just jump into another relationship that will probably be no better."

Coach: *"Okay, I see the connection. Do you feel like you have a workable plan?"*

Innate Self: *"I think so. I'm still scared to break up with him."*

Coach: *"Well I've sure found in my life that I've had to push myself to do a lot of things that I felt very scared about doing."*

Discerning Self: *"Yeah that is a good point."*

Innate Self: *"I just really can't live with the insults anymore. I am starting to feel really shitty about myself from lack of nurturing and compliments. I considered trying to work on this with Paul, but I really think it is an ingrained personality trait. And then there is the lack of intellectual chemistry."*

Inner Dialoguing

Example #5

(Continued)

Discerning Self:

"And I really don't feel good about the drinking problem. He has no direction or goals for his life, I think it's partially because of the drinking."

Coach:

"Okay, one other thing. You should talk to your closest friends about your plan and explain to them how hard it will be for you to cope with the aloneness. Request help from them, like ask for permission to call them if you are freaking out. Or can you have a standing monthly date with them?"

Discerning Self:

"That is a great idea."

Coach:

"Are you okay with stopping here?"

Discerning Self:

"Yes you have been a great help."

Note: This person did end her relationship with Paul. She stuck with her goal to not date anybody for six months and did earn money and did lots of traveling. She placed an ad on craigslist.org for a housemate and found a nice woman who worked out well. She also adopted two cats from the Humane Society which helped with the aloneness. After she met her six month goal of facing her aloneness, she placed an ad on Match.com and is taking her time finding a new partner. Ron hooked

Inner Dialoguing

Example #6

up with another partner fairly quickly and that helped with the sadness about the breakup of the twenty year relationship. She and Ron actually were able to remain fairly close friends.

Inner Dialoguing

Example #6

[In this example the person is working by himself]

Goal of the therapy session:

"I want to decide if I should accept a job offer making \$20,000/year less."

Innate Self:

"I want to quit my current job. I am sick of the commute. I hate spending three hours of every day cooped up in a car in rush hour traffic. Sometimes I think I am just going to snap. I have no energy for anything fun, I am often even too tired for sex" There's got to be more to life than this".

Programmed Self:

"How can you think of quitting such a good paying job. You're not twenty-two anymore you know !!! You have a family to think about. The kids would be so disappointed if they had to give up their piano lessons and soccer camp. And you promised Karen she could remodel the kitchen next Spring. You've gotten two promotions in the last

Inner Dialoguing

Example #6

(Continued)

year! Who knows what this new company might really be like. Why take chances when you have such a secure job? There's a lot of engineers out there that are laid off you know."

Adaptive Self:

"That part of me is probably right. I guess I'm just being selfish. I don't want to be a lousy father or husband. Maybe I'm just immature and don't want to grow up. There are so many people who would give anything to have the job I have and here I am being ungrateful about it."

Self Acting As Therapist:

*"Okay what does my **Discerning Self** think of what these two parts of me are saying?"*

Discerning Self:

"Well, let me think about this. I do indeed want to be a good father and husband. I don't want to be irresponsible about supporting my kids. I love my kids more than anything. But you know I am so tired and grumpy all the time from this exhausting job that it seems like I never play with them anymore. I constantly have to bring work home; I can see the look of pain in their eyes when I say I can't give them attention. Sometimes I think they're are going to be all grown up one day and I am going to feel like I never shared in any of it. I guess I'm beginning to feel I'd rather be remembered as a dad that had time to

Inner Dialoguing

Example #6

(Continued)

play catch in the yard than the dad who bought the piano lessons and soccer camp. Maybe I have been buying into other people's definition of what being a good father and husband means?"

Programmed Self:

"I don't think Karen is going to be happy about this idea of you giving up a great paying job. Just think of how disappointed she will be when you tell her she is not going to be able to get the kitchen remodeled like you promised her."

Adaptive Self:

"God, I feel so confused. I feel like I am damned whichever way I go."

Self Serving As Therapist:

"Okay I need to ask myself how I can get out of this position of feeling like I can't find solutions to dilemmas."

Discerning Self:

"Well, wait a minute, I think I could talk to Karen about the idea of us re-doing the kitchen ourselves-- a toned down version. It could be some real quality time together. I know she really wants a new kitchen but I've been also picking up that she is really not feeling very happy about how little couple time we have these days. And our sex life is practically non-existent. I think the sex life of a marriage is real important. She may not be complaining, but I know too many guys making big money whose

Inner Dialoguing

Example #6

(Continued)

wives end up leaving them for a guy who pays attention to them.”

Innate Self:

“This new job sounds so interesting. The reason I chose to get an engineering degree is because I wanted to have a job that challenged me. If all I cared about was earning money, I could have just been a dentist and taken over my dad’s practice. The job I have now is really like white collar factory work.”

Discerning Self:

“Wow, I guess I wasn’t in touch with until now how much I am really hating this job despite how well it pays. I guess when I first got it, I got all caught up in the prestige of it. I never pictured making \$80,000 a year. But the fact is, we can live quite comfortably with me making \$60,000 a year. Karen makes \$35,000; what’s become of us that we can’t live okay on \$95,000 a year? We lived on \$20,000/year when we were in college!!!”

Programmed Self:

“You better think about this and not just do anything impulsive!”

Discerning Self:

“I am not an impulsive person. But I do care about feeling joyful about being alive. I don’t want to become a money earning robot. I think I’ll talk all this over with the kids and Karen and explain to them how much I would really like to take this job, despite the

Inner Dialoguing Example #6 (Continued)

pay cut. If they can get behind the idea, we can come up with a family plan to reduce our spending. Making \$20,000/year less feels pretty scary but that does not mean its not the right choice."

Inner Dialoguing Example #7

[In this example the person is working with a coach present]

Goal of the session is:

"I want to figure out if I should get a divorce"

Innate Self:

"I feel really bored in my marriage. It's like I dread the weekends because then we have to spend a lot of time together. I think my husband is a great person, but we somehow seem to have lost the spark--seems like the spark's been gone for a long time."

Programmed Self:

"You must be nuts to think about going back out in the dating jungle at age 47. Haven't you heard enough stories about all the losers out there? All the guys your age want 30-year-olds. Rick may be a little boring, but he's a good provider, you share a lot of values. Yeah the sex may be pretty infrequent, and not all that great, but how important is sex at this age anyway? If you were going to leave him you should

Inner Dialoguing

Example #7

(Continued)

have done it before you were forty. There's all kinds of women in their late forties out there who can't find men."

Adaptive Self:

"Yeah, every time I think about the possibility of leaving, all these thoughts whirl through my head and I feel really scared and ungrateful."

Discerning Self:

"Well let's think about this. It has been at least two years since I started feeling like I've fallen out of love with Rick. We've tried a number of things to try and rekindle the spark. We took tennis lessons and did some weekend get-always. I've read some "How to Save Your Marriage" books. But if I am really honest with myself, I have to admit that none of these efforts have really seemed to have much impact. I just can't shake the feeling that we are bored with one another in a way that is not going to go away. It's not like it's been a bad week or month, it's a persisting kind of sadness and emptiness I'm feeling."

Innate Self:

"Yeah the other day I put the Carole Kings song "It's Too Late" in my cd player and drove around playing it over and over and singing at the top of my lungs."

Coach:

"Hmmm, I don't know that song, sing a little of it for me, will you?"

Inner Dialoguing

Example #7

(Continued)

Innate Self:

"Sure."

*"Stayed in bed all morning just
to past the time,*

*There's something wrong here,
there can be no denying,
One of us is changing, or maybe
we just stopped trying.*

*It's too late baby , now it's too
late, though we really did try to
make it,*

*Something inside has died, and I
can't hide, and I just can't fake it."*

[Person begins crying.]

Coach:

*"Wow, the song really seems to be
expressing what you say you have been
feeling for a long time."*

Innate Self:

*"Yeah I guess it does, Let me do the
last two verses-- it really says it all."*

*"It used to be so easy living
here with you,
You were light and breezy
and I knew just what to do,
Now you look so unhappy, and
I fell like a fool.*

*They'll be good times again for
me and you,*

Inner Dialoguing

Example #7

(Continued)

*But we just can't stay together,
don't you feel it too,
Still I'm glad for what we had,
And for how I once loved you."*

Innate Self:

"God, it's so fucking sad!!!"

Coach:

"Yes, there's no way around it, divorce is always sad."

[Person cries quietly for a few minutes.]
(Coach sends "silent empathy vibes" but doesn't interfere.)

Discerning Self:

"But there is a lot of sadness in staying too."

Innate Self:

"Yeah, I really feel like I am half dead a lot of the time."

Adaptive Self:

"But what if there is nobody better out there? I really don't like being alone."

Programmed Self:

"Are you going to just ignore all the statistics about women your age not being able to find marriage partners?"

[Person pauses and thinks deeply, coach sits quietly.]

Discerning Self:

"But you know what, another way to look at it is "What if I happened to have

Inner Dialoguing

Example #7

(Continued)

become widowed right now at age 47?" Would I automatically say to myself: 'There's no hope, you'll never marry again, you're too old.' No, so It's not like if you aren't widowed by age 40 you're doomed to spend the rest of your life alone, so it's no different with divorce. There are millions and millions of people who remarry at my age. Seems like I'm pretty marketable; I'm in good shape, somewhat financially secure, intelligent, fun, open minded. But, on the other hand I just wish I felt more sure that getting a divorce is the right decision. I feel like I should wait till I feel sure."

[Person sits, and seems kind of stuck.]

Coach:

"I'm not sure getting a divorce is the right answer for you or not, but I can tell you that I don't think you ever feel 100% sure. You divorce on faith, just like you marry on faith. I think the best you can do is give both leaving and staying careful consideration and if leaving repeatedly feels like the better choice than staying, you go with it and simply have faith that it is the right choice."

[Person looks like she has had a sudden "a-ha".]

Discerning Self:

"You know you've made a really good point. I didn't feel 100% sure about getting married twenty years ago either

Inner Dialoguing

Example #7

(Continued)

or about most really big decisions of my life. If I make the requirement be that I feel 100% sure, I'll never leave. I think I need to leave. I think staying is just postponing the inevitable. I honestly think Rick will find someone better suited to him as well. We've just become really incompatible."

Programmed Self:

"Are you sure you can support yourself? You're not rich you know." You're gonna really feel this. I hope you know what you are doing."

Discerning Self:

"Yes, that's true, I am going to really feel it. I'm going to have to get accustomed to being on a much tighter budget. I will give Rick the townhouse because it was his before we got married. At least that will soften the blow a little. I don't mind starting with nothing but a one bedroom apartment. I really am aware of the price tag of ending my marriage, but all things considered, it's worth the price. I just can't go on like this, it's sucking the life out of me. I don't intend to live in an apartment for the rest of my life. I will have to put together a five year plan for finding a better paying job. Maybe I will even relocate to a cheaper town, I really only live in this city because Rick's family is here, and it's where we went to college".

Inner Dialoguing

Example #7

(Continued)

Coach:

"So what kind of timetable are you thinking about?"

Adaptive Self:

"I want to wait until after Christmas. I don't want to be alone for the holidays and it would be mean to Rick."

Discerning Self:

"That sounds reasonable, I will start researching apartments and think about breaking it to him in February. That's a slow time for me at work so it will be a good time to deal with all the stress of the transition. That also gives me four months to make sure I really, really want to do this. I'm almost certain I do, but it just takes some getting used to."

Coach:

"Yeah, I bet. Are you cool with stopping here?"

Discerning Self:

"Yes, this was great session, thanks for your support and help."

Coach:

"You're very welcome, feel free to call me if you need to talk."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #8

[In this example the person is working with a coach.]

Inner Dialoguing

Example #8

(Continued)

Note: The coach has taken some training in peer counseling so she is able to act much like a therapist]

The goal for the session is:

“I want to decide whether or not to break up with Bill”

Innate Self:

“ I want to decide if I should break up with Bill. We’ve been dating for about ten months now. At first I was real excited about him. I really thought we might end up married. He’s definitely the best guy I’ve met in eight years of dating since my divorce. But I’ve really been feeling bored with him a lot lately. It really scares the shit out of me, I absolutely hate to be bored.”

Discerning Self:

“Yes I know you have a very low tolerance of boredom. That’s a big reason most of the previous guys have gotten the ax.”

Adaptive Self:

[Starts to cry] *“ I’m really worried she is going to give Bill the ax because she’s bored and that makes me really sad. I don’t want to be alone for the rest of my life. Eight years is a long time to look for a hew husband”*

Discerning Self:

[To Adaptive Self] *“ So you would be really sad if she broke up with Bill.”*

Inner Dialoguing

Example #8

(Continued)

Adaptive Self:

"Yes. I just don't think we are ever going to find anybody that meets her standards. Pretty soon no one will even want to date us because we will have such a bad record of dumping people."

Innate Self:

"Dammit, don't make me sound so horrible. I don't want us to be alone. I'm just trying to make sure we don't end up with someone who turns out boring."

Coach:

"This boredom thing seems like a really sensitive issue for you. What is making you feel bored with Bill these days."

Innate Self:

"Oh I don't know I guess I get bored with every person I am with. It's not like they are boring people per se. All the men I date are super intelligent, college educated, personal growth oriented people. But I don't know, after a few months, when the initial "high" of getting to know one another fades I tend to get bored."

Coach:

"How often do you feel bored?"

Innate Self:

"Oh maybe a couple times a month".

Coach:

"And how often do you see these people you are dating?"

Inner Dialoguing

Example #8

(Continued)

Innate Self:

"Oh about four times a week."

Discerning Self:

"Hmmm, I can see where you are leading here; objectively it seems like I don't really feel bored a very big percentage of the time. I see the person for over twenty times a month and I feel bored two times out of twenty so that is only 10% of the time. I wonder if that is pretty typical."

Coach:

"It sounds pretty typical to me."

Discerning Self:

*"You know I can talk about this on an intellectual level and 10% really doesn't sound that bad but she [pointing to **Innate Self**] really does have a really intense reaction whenever she feel bored with a lover. Like intense revulsion, even though overall she is feeling great about the person."*

Coach:

"Let's poke around a little and see where this intense aversion to boredom might be coming from."

Discerning Self:

"Okay, I'm game."

Coach:

"Let's try some repetitive sentence completion".

Discerning Self:

"Sounds good".

Inner Dialoguing

Example #8

(Continued)

Coach:

*"Okay finish this sentence ten times:
[Addresses Innate Self] "I get really
freaked out when I feel bored with a
lover because...."*

Innate Self:

*"I get really freaked out when I
feel bored because I hate
being bored".*

*"I get really freaked out when I
feel bored with a lover because
I don't want to screw people
I find boring"*

*"I feel really freaked out when I
feel bored with a lover because
I worry there will be more and
more boring days". [Begins to cry]*

*"And then I'll be like Mom and Dad."
[Starts yelling loudly while crying]*

*"I don't want to be like them, I
don't want to be like them. I
promised myself I would never
be like them."*

Coach:

[In soothing voice] *"Tell me how
about not wanting to be like them."*

Discerning Self:

*"I know what she means. When I was a
teenager my Dad was very sick with
Multiple Sclerosis. He was extremely*

Inner Dialoguing

Example #8

(Continued)

depressed, almost suicidal. My mom was kind of depressed too. I don't think my parents were a very good match for one another to begin with. They got married after only knowing one another four months. Though they liked and respected one another, they were very ill matched. I don't think they felt much passion towards one another. My father was deeply philosophical and my mom hates talking about anything deep. They always seemed incredibly bored with one another, their marriage, and life in general. Then my dad's illness made this all a lot worse."

Innate Self:

[Still crying] *"I remember so many times coming home after being out playing with my friends. I was feeling all happy and excited about life and I would come into the house and I could just feel their gloom and boredom. I felt like it was going to engulf me. I just wanted to run back outside and not come home anymore. I loved them but I hated their depression. I hated being around people who were bored, who didn't find life fun and exciting and interesting like I did."*

Coach:

"Okay this is shedding a lot of light. It sounds like every time you have a boring night with a lover, at some sub-conscious level, you tap into all these old feelings."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #8

(Continued)

Discerning Self:

"And then she wants to run away as fast as she can from the person who she is feeling bored with so she doesn't get engulfed by the boredom."

Coach:

"Oh I see."

Discerning Self:

"Both my ex-husband and the man I lived with for two years told me they lived in fear of me getting bored with them. They both told me that even if we had fifteen great days together I would get really bent out of shape about a bad day. And it's not that they are even bad days per se, not like a fight, just kind of a boring day."

Coach:

"So wow, I guess we have accomplished what I suggested of finding out where the intense aversion to boredom comes from."

Innate Self:

"Yeah I guess so. So now what should we do about it?"

Coach:

"Well, does getting in touch with these old feelings give you any new insights about how you want to deal with Bill in the here and now?"

Innate Self:

"I guess I need to figure out how not to get so freaked out over a boring day"

Inner Dialoguing

Example #8

(Continued)

once in awhile, or I will chase everybody I fall in love with away."

Adaptive Self:

"That's what I was trying to say before."

Discerning Self:

[To Adaptive Self] *"Yes I know, but she didn't have this awareness of where all this was coming from before this session."*

Discerning Self:

"I think an important first step is to share what we have learned in this session with Bill. I think I am really in love with him, and do see the potential for marriage and I need to make sure I don't drive him away by making him fearful that every time we have a boring day, I'm doing to dump him. I notice that he has backed off a little from me emotionally and I know it's in reaction to my acting so cold towards him."

Coach:

"I think that's a great idea. The more people share the baggage their are grappling with from their childhood with their significant other, the better. Otherwise, they have no clue what's really going on when old buttons get pushed."

Discerning Self:

"I also think I need to come up with constructive ways to deal with the boredom. It's not like the boredom isn't

Inner Dialoguing

Example #8

(Continued)

real, it is. I don't need to get all bent out of shape about the boredom, but I think it would be good to think of ways to deal with feeling bored. For instance, I could just ask Bill for some separate time when I start feeling bored. I know from experience that if I go off and just do something by myself, like sew, or write, or do house projects, I work out of the boredom pretty quickly. But if I continue to hang out with my lover because I feel obligated, then the boredom tends to escalate. Most people would probably just naturally say to themselves 'Oh I'm feeling a little bored about being with my partner, I guess I need some alone time.' But when I start to feel the boredom, this alarm goes off like 'Oh, oh, I'm starting to feel bored with this person, does that mean I'm falling out of love with him?' Then I think" "Well I better keep hanging out with him so I can assess how serious this boredom is, and see if it's serious enough that I need to end this relationship and find someone I won't have these episodes of boredom with."

Coach:

"That sounds right on. This is an incredible session. Basically you're talking about re-deciding an old childhood decision that was made in response to trauma. You decided back then that if you ever felt bored in a relationship, you'd get the hell out of there as fast as you could so you would

Inner Dialoguing

Example #8

(Continued)

end up trapped in a perpetually boring, relationship. Now as an adult, you can reassess this and say to yourself: 'Boring days happen in all relationships. As long as they are less than 10-15% of the time spent together, I don't need to be worried that that means the relationship is headed towards a state of on-going stagnation.' This doesn't mean you have to turn off your boredom radar completely. Boredom is a cause of divorce and something to be concerned about. Boring, stagnant relationships don't feel good to anybody. But it sounds like you just need to adjust the sensitivity level of your boredom alarm."

Discerning Self:

"My you put that so well!!!! HmMMM, I guess the original goal of this session was to decide whether or not I want to end my relationship with Bill. The answer is definitely no!!! Having done this work I feel great about him. My doubts about the relationship really were about this old fear of boredom. I think I'm done now, thank you so much for your great insights!!!"

Coach:

"My pleasure. I love doing sessions with people who are willing to get into intense feelings, that's where most valuable work has to be done I find."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #9

Inner Dialoguing

Example #9

[In this example the person is working with a coach present]

Goal for Session:

"I want to decide what to do about my marriage"

Innate Self:

"I'm really depressed about my marriage."

Coach:

"I need to remind you that depressed is not really a feeling. Can you break it down to the feelings underneath?"

Innate Self:

"I am so unhappy. [Voice cracks with emotion]. I've been unhappy for such a long time. And I also feel really, really guilty. I think I am a horrible person."

Coach:

*"Those last two statements actually came from your **Adaptive Self**. Can you move over to the other chair and say them again."*

Innate Self:

"Okay."

Adaptive Self:

"Okay. And I also feel really, really guilty. I think I am a horrible person."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #9

(Continued)

Coach:

"Okay, we should explore both of those important feelings. Let's do the guilt first. What is that all about?"

Programmed Self:

"He doesn't need to start exploring any of that!!! He would be a selfish bastard if he left her. A selfish, heartless bastard! When you marry someone, you vow to stick it out for better or worse. You don't bail when things get difficult!! And you shouldn't be crying either, pull yourself together and act like a man not a whoosh!!!

Adaptive Self:

"Maybe this session is really pointless. No matter how unhappy I feel, I don't see how I could possibly leave her and live with myself."

Coach:

"I don't think we should stop. We're not going to decide that you are going to leave your wife unless you explore all the facts and ramification and morals surrounding that decision very, very thoroughly and decide it is the right thing to do."

Discerning Self:

"Okay". (Takes a deep breath). "Well as you know Cathy was diagnosed with breast cancer about ten months ago. It's only Stage 1 so it's supposedly not life threatening, it hasn't spread to the lymph nodes or anything, but it's still a really serious thing"

Inner Dialoguing

Example #9

(Continued)

Coach:

"Yes, I know your wife has cancer, I'm glad they seem to have caught it early"

Adaptive Self:

"So every time I even begin to consider the idea in my mind of leaving her I feel like I am a real asshole."

Coach:

"I could see how leaving someone with a severe illness could tap into a lot of guilt. So what are the reasons you think about leaving her and when did you start feeling that way?"

Innate Self:

(Gets teary-eyed) "Well, I have been unhappy for a very long time. Cathy and I have basically lived as friends rather than husband and wife for over five years. The passion we once had is completely gone. We stopped having sex a very long time ago. Like many couples, we have stayed together for the kids and because a divorce would be extremely financially devastating to us."

Coach:

"Okay, so it sounds like your unhappiness is not a new thing."

Discerning Self:

"No it is not new but there is a new ramification of it. I regret to say that I began having an affair about a year ago. I know it is not a good thing to do but I just felt so trapped. I didn't feel like I could leave Cathy but I didn't

Inner Dialoguing

Example #9

(Continued)

think I could continue to live year after year in a sexless marriage. I still care about Cathy as a person, and she is the mother of my children, but I do not love her any more in a husband/wife kind of way. I don't know that she loves me either. I don't know that she ever thinks about leaving me because she doesn't have much self confidence because of being so overweight."

Coach:

"Okay, let's get back to the affair. Who is this person? Is it someone you are serious about or is it just a sex thing?"

Innate Self:

"Yes it is a very serious thing. I'm very much in love with Andrea. I was in the process of mustering up the courage to leave Cathy to be with Andrea when Cathy came down with breast cancer. I know it's not just a passing fling because I have been seeing her for over a year and our feelings for one another have continued to deepen. Andrea is not the kind of person who would normally have an affair either. But she sympathized with my situation of not wanting to hurt the kids and how financially strapped I am right now."

Adaptive Self:

"But now I don't know what to do. I would feel like such a worm if I left Cathy at a time like this."

Coach: *"This is a pretty complicated situation. You know I have to be honest*

Inner Dialoguing

Example #9

(Continued)

with you. I think starting an affair when you are married is not a healthy choice. I don't mean to be condemning, but if you had asked my advice on that one before you did it, I would have discouraged you."

Discerning Self:

"I can understand you feeling that way. I don't feel good about it."

Coach:

"But it can't be undone at this point. Tell me more about you were planning to leave Cathy to be with Andrea before the cancer hit. Is that for real? Has something changed with your finances, and what about the kids?"

Discerning Self:

"No it would still be financially devastating. But I think I've finally made peace with that. I would rather live in a cheap apartment with Andrea than stay in my unhappy marriage. At least that is how I was feeling before the cancer happened. As far as the kids-- I can't deny a divorce would be hard on them. But there are lots of divorced families. I would be a very, very committed divorced father. I would continue to see them regularly and would make sure to live within ten miles of them so I could still go to their softball games and dance performances. I think there are also some negative effects on kids growing up in a home where the parents are no longer in love and feeling miserable about their lives."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #9

(Continued)

Discerning Self:

"Obviously, a happy intact marriage is the best option but I don't think it is possible for Cathy and I to be happy together anymore."

Adaptive Self:

"My life is a big mess, I feel hopeless."

Coach: *"I can see how it feels hopeless at the moment but it really isn't. Millions of couples have struggled with the difficulties of divorce and survived it. It is definitely not easy but it is not hopeless."*

Adaptive Self:

"Yeah, but this is a different situation. How many people divorce a spouse with cancer?"

Coach:

"I don't know the answer to that. I know you feel very guilty about the idea of leaving now that the cancer is in the picture. But standing on the outside I have to point out the following: You did not decide to leave Cathy after she was diagnosed with cancer. Your affair was what you might say "postmarked" before her cancer was discovered. To me that is an important distinction. You had already left your marriage emotionally, and physically of course."

Discerning Self:

(Looks like he is thinking very intently)
"That is an interesting concept of my affair being postmarked before the

Inner Dialoguing

Example #9

(Continued)

cancer. When I let that sink in it really does help with the guilt. I can't go back in time and undo the affair. I can't make myself stop loving Andrea, too much water has already gone under the bridge before the cancer became a factor."

Programmed Self:

"This is all a bunch of crap. You should not desert your wife at a time like this!!!"

Discerning Self:

"But do I really have to desert her? I still want to be there for Cathy as she copes with this cancer. But maybe I just cannot be there for her as her husband. Andrea would be very, very understanding of me wanting to go to doctor's appointments with Cathy and helping to care for her. It seems like I could be a support person for her as a friend, as a committed ex-husband. Am I crazy in thinking this?"

Coach:

"No I don't think so. I heard that Cher went back and took care of Sonny when he got cancer, and actually I know another couple where an ex helped a person with a serious illness. It definitely happens. I think people are learning to have much more amicable divorces now that divorce has become so common. Especially when they share children. You will always be a family even if you are no longer married."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #9

(Continued)

Discerning Self:

"Yes, I want that. I still like Cathy as a person, I just can't be married to her anymore. I think once she gets over the shock, she will want us to remain friends. I mean she hasn't wanted to have sex with me for over five years, how can she be resentful if I want to have that with someone else?"

Coach:

"It's not quite that simple"

Discerning Self:

" I know it isn't."

Coach:

"But I suspect that when the sexuality has been missing from a marriage for a long time, it is a little easier to accept a divorce, if it is done in a respectful way."

Discerning Self:

"Wow, something has really shifted as a result of this session."

Discerning Self:

(Turns to Programmed Self) "The world is not as black and white as you see it. My generation did not grow up under the rigid values of Christianity. It's not that I think divorce is a great thing, I don't. I would prefer not to be a divorced family. But I have come to realize that some of the marriages of your generation were miserable; people stayed together because they had to for economic reasons or because of the

Inner Dialoguing

Example #9

(Continued)

social stigma. Cathy is a college educated woman, with the child support I will pay her she will be able to live comfortably. I am not deserting her or the kids. I am ending a marriage that is emotionally dead, at least in a passionate way. You probably are not capable of grasping this but I know I am doing the right thing."

Programmed Self:

"I will never understand your generation."

Discerning Self:

"Now that is an honest statement!!! That is why you cannot run my generation's life!! You can give your input and at times you give me great information, but it is my call on this one."

Coach:

"Great dialoguing between those parts!!! You have done a fabulous piece of work here!"

Discerning Self:

"Okay I have to make a plan for when I will tell Cathy, and of course the kids. I can't thank you enough for giving me that piece about my affair being postmarked before the cancer. I was afraid to tell you about the affair because I thought you would disapprove."

Coach:

"Well as I said I do disapprove. But we

Inner Dialoguing

Example #9

(Continued)

all make mistakes. My life has not been so angelic that I would ever attempt to cast stones at other people. If you had asked me ahead of time, I would certainly have discouraged you. But I see my job as your coach for this session, a year into the affair, to help you make the best decision that can be made. It just doesn't sound like you and Cathy's marriage can be saved at this point. I don't think staying out of guilt about her cancer is going to do you or her any good."

Discerning Self:

"I really feel in my gut that leaving is what I need to do. Not leaving in a deserting kind of way. I just need to tell her: "I can't be your husband anymore, but I still want to be there during this difficult challenge in your life."

Coach:

"Well I wish you luck in this. It is not going to be easy."

Discerning Self:

"No it isn't going to be easy. But now that I am not incapacitated by the guilt, I can put all my mental energies into doing it in as respectful and caring way as I can. Thanks again for your help."

Coach:

"You are very welcome. I'm glad you felt trusting enough of me to share this hard stuff with me."

Inner Dialoguing

Example #9

(Continued)

NOTE: This is based on a true story and the husband did leave his wife and he did continue to serve as a close support person to her through her illness. The transition was rocky as can be expected but in the years that followed Andrea and Cathy actually reached a state of very cordial understanding and acceptance.

Inner Dialoguing

Example #10

Goal for Session:

I want to figure out why I feel a lack of closeness with my father.

[In this example the person is working with a coach present]

Discerning Self:

"I seem to struggle a lot about my relationship with my father."

Coach:

"Can you give me a little background information?"

Discerning Self:

"Well my mom and dad divorced when I was seven."

Programmed Self:

"He ran off with a woman at work and deserted his family!"

Discerning Self:

"Yes, my dad left my mom and married

Inner Dialoguing

Example #10

(Continued)

a woman he met at work. Not sure if deserted is the right word. He always paid child support and he and my step mom visited me regularly and still do."

Coach:

"Divorce is really hard on kids. At seven it must have felt pretty devastating to you."

Innate Self:

(Starts to cry) "It was horrible, totally horrible!!! We were really poor after my dad left and my mom was depressed. She hardly cooked dinners anymore. We just ate cereal and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches a lot."

Coach:

"So your life went through some really hard changes after your dad left your mom."

Innate Self:

(Crying and yelling) "Yes, and it wasn't fair. He went off and had a nice life with his new wife and became a rich engineer and they were never poor like us. And they had a baby together and she had a perfect life!!! But my life was not happy. He shouldn't have left my mom, he ruined our family!!!"

Coach:

"Those are all normal thoughts and feelings to have about your parent's divorce. The feelings still sound pretty raw. No doubt they are affecting your

Inner Dialoguing

Example #10

(Continued)

relationship with your dad in the present day."

Discerning Self:

"Yeah, I'm sure they are. On an intellectual level I guess I understand why he left, but on a gut level, I still have a lot of anger and sadness about it."

Coach:

"Give me a brief overview of what you have figured out as an adult about why your parents divorced."

Discerning Self:

"My mom and dad met in high school. My mom was this pretty, very vivacious cheerleader and my dad was kind of a nerdy bookworm. It was definitely an "opposites attract" relationship. She got pregnant at eighteen and he decided to marry her. His family was totally against it. They were an upper middleclass family and had disapproved of my mother from the beginning. Abortion was a brand new thing at the time and I doubt it was even considered. They had only known each other six months when she got pregnant."

Coach:

"Okay, what do you remember or know about their life together the seven years they were married?"

Discerning Self:

"They were miserable together. After

Inner Dialoguing

Example #10

(Continued)

the initial passion wore off they really had little to offer one another. My mom was trying to be an artist and was really quite talented. My dad was never appreciative or supportive of her creativity. And she wasn't supportive of him working long hours to building his engineering career either. I think they had very different values."

Adaptive Self:

"They used to yell and scream a lot and even throw things. It was very scary. I used to hide in my closet, when I'd see them start to fight."

Innate Self: *"We weren't really a happy family ever. My dad hardly ever played with me. I remember so many times he would be sitting in front of the TV watching sports. And I'd try and try to get him to play with me and he would just ignore me or sometimes yell at me."*

Innate Self: *"I don't think he loved me. I really don't think he loved me."*
(Crying loudly).

Coach:

"It sounds like he was a pretty unhappy guy in a marriage that never should have happened."

Adaptive Self:

"That means I should have never happened!!! I should never have been born!!!." (Starts crying loudly.)

Inner Dialoguing

Example #10

(Continued)

Coach: *"I'm sorry, I didn't mean it that way."*

[Continues crying softly for a couple minutes.]

Discerning Self:

"It's okay. I know you didn't. You know even though this is ripping my guts out to face, maybe it's what I've needed to face for a long, long time. The sad fact is I really was not a wanted child. Had my mom not gotten pregnant, I'm sure my parents would have realized they were a terrible match and broken up and went their separate ways."

Innate Self:

"Why did I have to be born to them? It's not fair!!!" (Starts to get very angry)

Coach:

"Go with the anger!!! Let it out!!!"

Innate Self:

"It's not fair!!! It's not fair!!! Why couldn't I be my dad's second child with his second wife that he loves and is to happy to have!!! My life was horrible!! I didn't deserve to be left!!! I was a great kid!!! Why didn't he love me?"

Coach:

You were a great kid!!! It had nothing to do with you. He was just so caught up in his anger and sadness about his bad marriage he had no love or little

Inner Dialoguing

Example #10

(Continued)

love to give you. It wasn't about you, it was about him."

Coach:

"You are a very lovable person! I love you! You're so full of life and laughter. You're funny, so smart, such a caring, nurturing person, and someone who lives with such integrity. You are a wonderful addition to this world even if the people who brought you into this world weren't capable of appreciating you."

Discerning Self:

"Thank you. I feel my mom always loved me. I'm just not sure about my dad. My mom was a pretty dysfunctional person in terms of housekeeping, meals, holidays, money and stuff. But I did get love from her. She might have been freaked out to get pregnant so young, but she did bond with me after I was born. I felt loved by her."

Discerning Self:

"That is probably why I turned out relatively okay. At least I had one parent who loved me."

Coach:

"Okay, let's get back to your dad. So in the present time, do you think your dad loves you now?"

Discerning Self:

(Pondering) "You know, I honestly don't know. He has provided well for me. He

Inner Dialoguing

Example #10

(Continued)

put me through an expensive college I chose, and he has always been generous on birthday and Christmas gifts. He and his wife invite me to visit them regularly and have taken me on trips. On the surface they are very nice to me."

Innate Self:

"I wonder if he really does love me or just parents me out of guilt or a sense of obligation?"

Coach:

"That is a real tough question."

Discerning Self:

"But I think I need to know the answer to that question. If I think back to my stated goal for this session, it was: "I want to figure out why I feel a lack of closeness with my father." Maybe there really is no closeness, just the pretense of it. Maybe on a gut level I sense that our relationship is built on guilt."

Coach:

"From what I know about people who have divorced, I suspect your dad has all kinds of mixed up feelings about the divorce and his relationship to you. If he didn't get some therapy, he probably hasn't dealt with his anger or sadness about the divorce very well."

Discerning Self:

"I doubt he ever went to therapy!"

Inner Dialoguing

Example #10

(Continued)

Coach:

"Okay, so how do you want to wrap up this session? You've done a lot of great work today but something as complicated as your relationship with your dad will take additional sessions."

Discerning Self:

"Yes, I'm ready to wrap this up. I am very exhausted, but it is a great kind of exhaustion! I think these feelings have been needed to be released for a long time. I'm not sure what kind of relationship I want with my dad in the here and now. I need to do some real soul searching about it and write in my journal about all the different feelings and thoughts I have. I may need to have a real heart to heart talk with him at some point. I dread the thought of that, but it may be necessary."

Innate Self:

"Thanks a lot . It felt great to get to yell and cry!!!"

Coach:

"You're very welcome!!!"

Coach:

*"One last thing. You probably need to do some strengthening of your **Discerning Self** about this issue of lovability. You need to have your **Discerning Self** keep telling your **Innate Self** and your **Adaptive Self** in very powerful messages that whether or not your father loved you in the past, or loves or doesn't love you in the present,*

Inner Dialoguing

Example #10

(Continued)

has nothing to do with your lovability. It might be helpful to set up some affirmation sessions with your closest support people (including me) and have them tell you how much they love and you and why."

Discerning Self:

"Thanks Coach, that sounds like a great idea!!

That concludes the examples of Inner Dialoguing. In addition to Inner Dialoguing sessions, it is important to work on re-programming your Programmed Self with more positive information than you probably got growing up. On the next page is a list of thoughts and operating modes that tend to promote depression and a list of thoughts/operating modes that promote happiness and well being.

Re-Programming Your Life Philosophies

Re-Programming Your Life Philosophies

In addition to regular Inner Dialoging sessions it is also important to work on putting healthy, positive programming into your Programmed Self to counteract all the negative programming that is there. Usually people who suffer from depression have lots of self defeating messages in their head that they received while growing up and these can affect how they approach life every day and the decisions they make without them realizing it. On the following pages I have made a chart of Positive, Happiness/Personal Growth enhancing life philosophies and some Depression/Stagnation creating kinds of life philosophies. These are just examples to help you get in touch with what kinds of negative statements and operating modes you may be responding to in your head that are feeding your depression and inhibiting you from finding happiness.

I suggest you have a Positive Programming Session with yourself every few months. To do this make a list of problems/issues you are struggling with in your life that you can't seem to resolve. Then ask yourself what you are saying to yourself regarding these issues and write them down. Then write down an alternative message you could say to yourself that would help you move out of your "stuckness" regarding the issue. If necessary, ask other people for ideas.

Healthy/ Happiness Enhancing Proclamations/Philosophies Thoughts & Operating Modes	Unhealthy/Happiness Decreasing Proclamations/Philosophies Thoughts & Operating Modes
Everyone makes mistakes.	How could you have done something like that?
You did the best you could with the information you had at the time.	How could you have been so stupid?
Hindsight is a tool for planning the future not for lamenting about the past.	If only... I wish I would have...
Good things come to those who wait.	Hurry up!!!
What goes around, comes around.	It's a dog eat dog world.
Hate destroys the hater.	I'll get back at him/her when I have the opportunity.
Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.	Go after what you want and screw anybody who gets in your way.
Believe in yourself.	I can't...
Nothing ventured, nothing gained.	What if I fail?
It's better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved.	I never should have gotten into that relationship, now I have to endure all this horrible pain.
Time heals all wounds.	I'll never be able to get over this and feel happy again.
If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.	I quit.
God grant me the courage to change the things I can, the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference.	I'm going to make this change happen no matter what, because I can't be happy unless it happens.
Every day is a gift.	Life sucks.
He who has not sinned cast the first stone.	How could he/she do something like that, he/she deserves to burn in Hell for that.
Experience is the best teacher.	You should have known better.
Every cloud has a silver lining.	Why do so many crappy things happen in life?

Healthy/ Happiness Enhancing Proclamations/Philosophies Thoughts& Operating Modes	Unhealthy/Happiness Decreasing Proclamations/Philosophies Thoughts & Operating Modes
Today is the first day of the rest of your life.	Getting older is a drag. I wish I could be young again.
When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.	This is so horrible.
You have to kiss a few frogs before you find your prince charming.	I've never find anybody, there's just a bunch of losers out here.
Let it go.	Why didn't I ???
"And in the end the love you take is equal to the love you make." John Lennon	How come nothing good ever happens to me? What's in it for me?
Be the change you want to see in the world.	The world is horrible.
If you would be loved, love and be lovable.	My husband/wife should treat me better.
Take time to smell the roses.	I'll relax tomorrow after I get everything done.
Don't sweat the small stuff.	I can't tolerate this. I shouldn't have to put up with this.
Today's failures lead to tomorrow's successes.	How could I have made such a terrible mistake?
If you find 75% of what you're looking for in a partner propose immediately!!!	I'm sure if I keep looking, I can find my soul mate.
One step at a time.	This is taking too long.
The best way to end an argument is to apologize for your part of it.	I'm not speaking to him/her until she apologizes.
"Your children are not your children, they are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself." Kahil Gibran	How can my son/daughter be turning out like this? I worked for eighteen years raising him/her and he/she is throwing his/her life away doing ...
Before you judge a man, walk a mile in his shoes.	He/she is a real asshole.
Clean your room before you go out to play.	I'll clean tomorrow... I'll clean tomorrow... I'll clean tomorrow...

Healthy/ Happiness Enhancing Proclamations/Philosophies Thoughts& Operating Modes	Unhealthy/Happiness Decreasing Proclamations/Philosophies Thoughts & Operating Modes
Live within your means.	I can charge it.
Never forget how to play.	Playing is for children.
Shit happens.	This is so awful!!!!
Two wrongs don't make a right.	He/she deserves this.
A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.	The grass is greener on the other side.
Think before you leap.	I need a new life. I'm moving to ...
Consider the source.	So and so disapproves of how I am choosing to live my life so I guess I better change.
The end doesn't justify the means.	I don't care what I have to do to achieve my goal.
I am thankful for the gifts of all who came before me, and hope I can give something to the world that makes life better for future generations.	I don't give a shit about what happens in this world after I'm dead.
Waste not, want not.	I don't worry about money, I make plenty.
You can't control what happens to you in life but you can control your reaction to whatever life deals to you.	If only this hadn't happened to me, I would be happy.
The darkest hour is just before dawn.	Things are never going to get any better.
Be here now.	I can't wait for tomorrow. Life will be better then.
Sometimes you just have to roll with the punches.	I'm going to fight this to the bitter end.
PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL: Count your blessings. (And really do it)	If only... Why don't I have more than I do? I'll feel happy when... Life is so unfair.

Summary

Summary

That concludes my discussion of the personal causes of depression. I strongly encourage you to try all of the self-help strategies I have suggested, and a year and a half of counseling with a qualified therapist, before concluding that you have a bio-chemical imbalance that requires on-going medication. I am not saying there are not people with bio-chemical imbalances, I just firmly believe that there are a huge number of people being put on maintenance depression medication who do not have an imbalance, and who could be cured from self-help techniques, change in environment, or therapy, If you do choose the medication option, I also strongly encourage you to educate yourself about the many different kinds of medications available, so you can be an informed consumer. All of them work differently on different people; one drug may be extremely effective for one person and actually make another worse. Most of the medications have side effects. An excellent sourcebook about psychotropic medications written for the layperson is The Feeling Good Handbook, by David Burns, (1999) Penguin Group Publishers, New York, NY.

if you suffer from depression, and are looking for a permanent cure, you need to take an active role in figuring out all of the factors contributing to

Summary (Continued)

your depression. To get an accurate picture of why you are depressed, you need to assess both possible sociological factors and personal causes. It is important to read a lot of books and do a lot of exercises that help you get in touch with the dysfunctional programming you may have received while growing up. You may need to get some counseling, and you need to work very, very hard in between your sessions charting your moods, writing in a journal, etc. To overcome depression, you basically need to give your psyche a major overhaul. That is not an easy task, but it is worth the effort. You may or may not need to make big changes in your life, like ending a bad marriage or relationship, changing careers, relocating, creating a new social circle of friends, etc., because you may have made a lot of your life decisions based on unhealthy programming. The last thought I will leave with you with is that depression does not have to be a chronic, recurring condition, but it can be, if you do not get to the root causes of your depression and resolve them.

If You Choose to Seek Professional Counseling

If you do decide to seek professional counseling for your depression, you need to do some "therapist shopping" Unfortunately, many people seeking

Summary (Continued)

psychotherapy do not do this. There can be a misconception that the therapist is the "expert" and the client is the "screwed up person" and therefore the client is in no condition to judge the competence of the therapist. Unless you are suffering from a severe psychiatric disorder, or have a sub-normal IQ, you are perfectly capable of judging a therapist's competence. More importantly, you as the client are the only one who can judge whether the therapist is a compatible fit for you. Psycho-therapy should not be a mysterious experience. If you can't tell whether the therapist is helping you, then he/she is probably not. The majority of people who become psychotherapists are caring, nurturing and reasonably intelligent people, who learned some basic things about mental health and psychological healing techniques in order to obtain their graduate degree and license. However, this does not mean that any given therapist is qualified to help you overcome depression. Not all mental health professionals are knowledgeable about how to actually cure depression. You need to find a therapist who has a special interest in depression and has pursued some additional training in the specific area of depression beyond what they may have learned in one class in grad school. He/she should have a solid understanding of how to recover from traumatic childhood experiences.

There is also definitely an element of therapist/client chemistry, just as there

Summary (Continued)

is in friendships, romantic relationships, boss/employee relationships etc. You should feel that you and your therapist really “click” that he/she is regularly offering you insights about yourself that help you make positive changes in your life. It always feels good to have someone sympathetically listen to you share your feelings and concerns. But you need more than nurturing and supportiveness to overcome depression. You need a therapist who has a solid base of knowledge about depression, and the particular kind of techniques and style that are effective with your personality.

Then there are some generalized good therapist characteristics to look for. I very much believe that the best therapists are those that are very goal and results oriented, who do not let their clients use very many of their therapy sessions rambling from topic to topic without zeroing in on problem solving. I also think good therapists make sure to gather extensive information about their clients’ personal history and current life situation before jumping into actual therapy sessions. Good therapists also develop concrete treatment goals which they allow the client to participate in making, and they refer back to this treatment plan throughout the process of therapy to ensure adequate progress is being made.

You also need to make sure that the therapist you choose is still feeling inspired about being a therapist. Just

Appendix A

like any other field, there are people in the mental health field who get burned out or disillusioned and end up operating at a mediocre level of competence, and there are those who are really committed to being excellent therapists. Good therapists just radiate a sense of inspiration.

Appendix A

Transactional Analysis is a school of psychotherapy developed in the early 1960's in San Francisco, California by a psychiatrist named Eric Berne. Berne became frustrated with Freudian Analysis due to its cost and the fact that patients were expected to undergo five years of treatment to be cured. (Berne was also rejected from the psychoanalytic community because he was considered a maverick.) Berne decided to create a new school of psycho-therapy. He called it Transactional Analysis and outlined his new theory in a book entitled Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy which was published in 1961. Berne's new theory was based on some principles that were considered revolutionary at the time. Berne proposed that:

- 1) A person's mental illness may have no physical/genetic cause, but rather be a result of problematic mental programming he/she received from his/her parental figures and society.

Appendix A (Continued)

- 2) Even a severely disturbed person has a fully functioning healthy part that can be nurtured and strengthened.
- 3) Psychotherapy should not take years and years and cost lots and lots of money like psychoanalysis does.
- 4) Complex psychiatric principles can be explained in simple language and laypeople can understand the principles.
- 5) If patients are not cured, it is not because they are incurable, it's because the field of psychology has not yet figured out the right techniques to help them.

People were very skeptical of Berne's new theory. He was utterly convinced he was right, and ended up going into the back wards of mental hospitals to work with catatonic schizophrenic patients to prove his points. He then published Games People Play in 1964 which became quite popular in everyday culture. He also began holding "think-tank" weekly seminars in Berkley, California inviting other mental health professionals to share insights and expand upon his theories. Many, many gifted psychotherapists joined the ranks of Transactional Analysis and became protégés of Berne such as Jacqui Schiff, Mary and Robert Goudling, Dorothy Jongewood and Muriel James, Stephen Karpman, Claude Steiner etc. Many of them wrote books about Transactional

Appendix A (Continued)

Analysis. Thomas Harris published the very popular book entitled I'm O.K. You're OK in 1967. Born to Win written by Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward in 1978 sold over a million copies within a short period of time. It explained TA principals in very readable, easy to understand terms. Steiner wrote two important books on TA: Scripts People Live in 1974 and Games Alcoholics Play in 1977. Berne died of a heart attack in 1970 at the age of sixty. Another of his important works on Transactional Analysis What Do You Say After You Say Hello was published after his death in 1972.

Around the same time as Berne was introducing TA, a psychiatrist by the name of Fritz Perls was popularizing a form of therapy which he simply called Gestalt Therapy. Perls published Gestalt Therapy Verbatim in 1969 and In and Out of the Garbage Pail in 1972. Perls' theory focused strongly on tuning into what you are feeling in the present moment. Perls also began demonstrating "outlandish" methods to help his patients resolve their mental health issues in his workshops at a prominent therapy institute in California called Esalen. If a client complained to Perls of a recurring headache, Perls would instruct him/her to put his/her headache in a chair and then sit in the chair and speak for the headache and tell him why it was there and what it wanted. Likewise, if a client was tapping his/her foot during a session,

Appendix A (Continued)

Perls would instruct the client to speak for his/her foot.

These methods of Perls proved to be immensely effective and were snatched up like hotcakes by therapists worldwide. TA therapists, in particular, very quickly picked up the fact that these new Gestalt techniques would be excellent tools for use with TA principles. Many TA therapists sought training in Gestalt techniques and began using them to have clients speak from the various ego states [parts of the psyche as defined in TA theory]. The two schools of therapy, Gestalt and Transactional Analysis became very intertwined.

By the early 1970's Transactional Analysis, or TA as it was known, (usually coupled with Gestalt techniques) became probably the most popular form of psychotherapy in the United States. Its principles were used in prisons, psychiatric hospitals, schools, in the corporate world, and by many young aspiring psychotherapists. Private institutes offering training in TA sprung up all over the world and an international organization called The International Transactional Analysis Association had many, many, members in a host of different countries.

I was a very young (22 year old) mental health counselor in 1976 when I was first introduced to Transactional Analysis, both as a client in my own personal therapy, and as a counselor in training. I found it fascinating and read every book I could get my hands on

Appendix A (Continued)

about TA; I read all of Eric Berne's books over and over, and all the other TA therapists as well. I also took a couple workshops in Gestalt techniques. I considered getting certified as a TA therapist but the process was extremely stringent. You had to possess a Master's degree from an accredited university before being accepted into an TA institute for training. Then the TA training was an additional three years and it was quite expensive. So I opted to just study TA on my own and use the principals without being certified. As it turned out, my life took different paths than I expected, and I actually moved out of the field of mental health for fifteen years.

When I returned to the field of mental health to get my Master's degree in the early 1990's, I was surprised to discover that Transactional Analysis had faded not exactly into oblivion but to a fairly low place in the world of psychotherapy. There was still a chapter on Transactional Analysis in the theories class in my Master's program, but hardly any of the private training institutes existed anymore and it was at this point in time very hard to find many therapists who classified themselves as TA therapists. It wasn't as if some other theory had shoved TA out of first place. It was more the field seemed to now contain many different schools of therapy with similar levels of popularity and many, many therapists were now classifying themselves as eclectic; they took whatever they liked

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from each school of thought.

I was able to talk with a few old-timer TA therapists and I subsequently pieced together some other reasons why TA lost the level of popularity and prominence it had in the 1970's. It seems the Transactional Analysis community of professionals can be compared to the Democratic Party in the US. There were many brilliant, dynamic people involved with TA therapy and this eventually led to infighting and a huge amount of hair splitting on lots and lots of issues. The energy that could have carried TA therapy forward got burned up in arguing points. Everyone had their own pet addition that they wanted added to the "the "official TA Bible". Pretty soon the simplicity of the theories and principles, which the originator Berne felt so proud to offer to the world, had become quite complex and cumbersome to learn and practice.

Of course, all mental health professionals were also impacted by economic pressures beginning in the late 1980's. The average person seeking counseling began to have less and less money to spend on things like psychotherapy and health insurance companies covered less and less sessions/year. Therapists therefore did not want to invest a huge amount of money on training such as a Transactional Analysis program at a private institute, because they could not recoup it. So many therapists just settled for the minimum certification

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they could get to become a mental health therapist which is a Master's degree from an accredited college or university.

When I graduated in 1994 with my Master's degree in counseling I pondered exactly how I wanted to classify myself as a therapist. I thought of just calling myself an eclectic but I eventually decided I wanted to develop my own "school of therapy". I didn't delude myself into thinking that it would achieve any particular popularity, but I decided I at least wanted to put together a theory of personality and a collection of therapeutic techniques and create some kind of booklet that I could hand out to my clients and show to colleagues if the opportunity arose. I toiled over it for several years and eventually developed a school of therapy I named Integrative Therapy.

I totally confess that I drew from the principals of Transactional Analysis and some Gestalt principals in creating Integrative Therapy. I don't in any way mean to be engaging in plagiarism. I believe I am simply doing what Eric Berne did; he took Freudian Psychoanalysis, changed the names of the basic personality parts from Id, Ego and Superego to Parent, Adult, Child, added his own insights and deviations, and came up with TA. I likewise changed the names from Transactional Analysis (Parent, Adult, Child) to the Innate Self, Adaptive Self, Programmed Self, and Discerning Self of Integrative Therapy and then added my own twists

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and perspectives. Though Integrative Therapy shares some of the basic principles with Transactional Analysis, there is huge amount of Transactional Analysis theory that I did not incorporate into Integrative Therapy such as games, rackets, scripts, second order structural breakdown of the ego states, stroke theory, etc. I found all that stuff very interesting when I studied it thirty years ago, but what I valued most about TA therapy was the basic premise of separate personality parts that can be isolated and converse with one another, and the idea that what got programmed into a person growing up can be reprogrammed. I would estimate that I used 10% of the theories of Transactional Analysis (and Gestalt) and I significantly modified even that 10%. I most definitely want to acknowledge that I could not have developed Integrative Therapy without drawing from all the ideas of TA and Gestalt therapists who came before me. I am deeply indebted to Eric Berne, Fritz Perls and all the of TA therapists who wrote the books I devoured as a young woman for making me into the therapist I am today (and the person as well). I believe that Eric Berne would be delighted to see that his work continues to serve as a catalyst for other writers in the field of psychology such as myself thirty years after his death.

For those readers who are interested in learning more about Transactional Analysis and Gestalt psychotherapies I have included below a list of the books

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that inspired me as a budding therapist many years ago. Most of the original editions still seem to be available on Amazon.com and some of them have been republished.

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