



HUMAN BECOMING

PRACTICAL STEPS TO
SELF-RESPECT AND
COMPASSIONATE RELATIONSHIPS

DAVID RICHO, PHD

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*We are put on earth a little space
That we may learn to bear the beams of love.*

–William Blake

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INTRODUCTION

There is a grace-full force in us and in the universe. It is a lively energy that is always at work so that we will become fully human. To be fully human is to be as loving as we can be, as free of ego fear and clinging, and as generous as we can be with our innate gifts and talents. This takes psychological work on ourselves and a spiritual practice. When we are committed to such a program, we feel joy and self-respect because we are fulfilling our deepest purpose in life.

In this booklet I present a collection of excerpts from my books and manuscripts. I chose passages that present practical steps we can take to grow in self-respect and compassionate relating and thereby become more richly human. These bite-size essays are arranged in the order in which they are meant to be worked with. Each reader can decide what fits for him or her and what the best pacing may be for each practice.

I am hoping that some or all of the suggestions will become second nature and that your life will thereby become lighter. Then perhaps the light in ourselves may become a light for others.

The first section is about our identity and how it can become more coherent and effective. Then we look at the givens in the world around us and find ways to say yes to them. Our ego may balk at this and yet we can discover a path to equanimity. This leads us to dealing with our dark side as well as with fear, loneliness, anger, guilt, and hurt. Love follows and blossoms into lovingkindness and compassion. In all of this we explore mindful pausing as a central spiritual practice. Finally, we appreciate how nature figures in as an assisting force and how wholeness is always and already ours. Then we walk confidently to our sublime destiny.

Practical steps are about *doing* things in new ways. But doing is not the whole picture. We are also *receiving* graces that assist us. We become fully human not by our efforts alone but also by the assistance of a higher power than our ego that complements our psychological work and our spiritual practice. Abundant grace is surrounding us right now and can be trusted to help us cross our next bridge or threshold.

WHO WE REALLY ARE

Here are five suggestions that may be helpful in discovering who you really are and in acting that out:

1. Tell those close to you what you feel within yourself and in reaction to them, no matter how embarrassing it may be.
2. If necessary, allow yourself to retreat from a distressing issue long enough to regroup your strengths. Then come back and face the music with more power.
3. Stop and hold every feeling, cradling it, and allowing it to have its full career in you. Distractions and avoidances only alienate you from yourself.
4. Admit your fear, allow yourself to feel it, and then act as if it were not able to stop you. This is how fear turns to excitement about an alternative and how self-esteem increases because you now have the courage to risk.
5. Always be on the lookout for your deepest feelings, wishes, and needs, and act in accord with them.

Here are some ways to know what these are:

- Free yourself from inhibition and clinging.
- Ask for what you already know you want and gradually you will ask yourself—and others—for deeper things.
- Set boundaries in your relationships and you will know a great deal about yourself and your real needs.
- What makes you happy and gives you a sense of fulfillment? What do you do that flows from blissful choice and what is based on a sense of obligation or habit?
- Look at the record: the history of what you have actually done in the course of your life tells you more about yourself than the fantasy of what you wish you had done or what you say you want.

- If you acted with the highest level of consciousness and spirituality, how would your life be different?
- What people you strongly admire have is likely to be what you want too.
- What you want for your children and best friends may tell you what you have always wanted.

Respond to each of the entries in the above list noticing which feelings, wants, and needs come through most frequently.

From: *The Power of Coincidence: How Life Shows Us What We Need To Know*

OUR PERSONAL PURPOSE AND CALLING

There are three levels of potential in the human psyche —psychological, spiritual, mystical. These correspond to the phases of our spiritual development: the liberative way, the illuminative way, and the unitive way. The path begins by releasing ourselves from the burdens and obstacles in our psyche. Our psychological work is here. Then we open ourselves to the light of higher consciousness. Our spiritual practice is here. Mystical union follows as a gift. All three phases are an heroic journey of letting go, opening up, and sharing our gifts with the world. Psychologically that is individuation and spiritually it is sanctity.

Mature religious consciousness is thus not possible without three paths: psychological growth, spiritual progress, and mystical union. The psychological path shows us what helps us become healthy human beings and have more effective relationships. Spiritual progress means letting go of an inflated ego and becoming compassionate. Mystical union cuts through dualisms to release the divine spark in us and in the universe and acknowledges them as one and the same. It is interesting to note that a mystic experience is one in which the sense of time and place disappear. This is precisely what happens to us when we find our true calling. We are absorbed so fully that we lose track of time! Our calling is the work that makes us transcend the moment and be in it fully at the same timeless time.

It takes a lifetime to come to full consciousness of just how wonderful we really are. We may know in the abstract but only gradually does it become concretely acknowledged. It is said that Jesus knew fully who he was only after the Resurrection. This is a metaphor for how *we finally know our own divinity, in a resurrection, a moment in which we arise as a Self from the ashes of ego. We came here to earth not because we were born but in order to be born.*

Our calling to virtue is to strip the ego of its status in our decision-making and to allow an ego/Self axis to flourish instead. In Jungian psychology, this is individuation, a fulfillment of our potential to incarnate the virtues of the Self:

love, wisdom, and healing power. It is an enterprise that is never finished, always in progress. It is a combination of effort we achieve and grace we receive.

Our ultimate goal is to articulate through our life story— with all its talents, gifts, mistakes, shadows, and errors— the eternal life of the Self and to bring the world along. This is co-creation, the work of incarnating a divine life in all humanity.

We are drawn into being by a voice that beckons us to incarnate the divine Self. This happens by a combination of choice and grace, symbolically masculine and feminine forces. The call is from within since God is precisely that Within, the depth of our psychic life. A call is a gripping incentive that impresses the ego into the service of higher consciousness. In other words, our human limitations are upgraded when they are humbly surrendered to a higher purpose than the ego's favorite sports: fear, attachment, greed, and control. We then can hear the inner and irrepressible call to be whole.

An alchemical process can occur whereby the leaden ego is transmuted into the gold of the Self. Our ego and our body are the stuff of the divine work of peace and compassion on earth. The response from us that sets all this in motion is *yes and go*, the combining of surrender and choice.

The timing for all this is unique to every individual. A ship is certainly safe in port but it was not built for that. It is perfect as a ship but not complete as a ship until it sails. There is a time for sitting and waiting for the wind of grace and a time for turning the wheel with effort.

We realize gradually that our calling, what gives us bliss and purpose, is actually a metaphor of our deepest identity. This concept is stated by Fra Mauro, a 16th century monk and cartographer: “Gazing at the map...all the diversity of the world is intimated on the parchment, even as diversity is intimated within me. The map and myself are the same.”

My calling is ultimately to name myself in many more ways than one. I am David from New Haven in my ego identity. At the same time I am being itself. My intrinsic nature is the essential Self of the universe. My existential body is 5’9” and 150 pounds and diet can change it. My essential body is pure light and

nothing can change it. From now on, I will have to give my full location, not found on my driver's license, if the angels are to find me.

From: *When Mary Becomes Cosmic*

IN THE HOUSE OF THE HEALTHY PSYCHE

Your healthy mind, which includes every cell of your body, is like a clean, quiet room. It is meant to be presided over by your healthy ego within a spiritual self, and not by anyone or anything else. The house is the universe with all its living beings and lively events— since there is no inside/outside between self and world! In this room, there are no screams of terror or horror, no shame or regrets echoing from the corners. Nor are there graffiti on the walls: “You should or should have!” “You can’t!”

Your room often has visitors but it is not haunted by archaic ghosts or current obsessions. Nor is it cluttered by old grudges or ongoing compulsions. Fear and attachment pass through like hikers that take nothing and leave nothing behind. Grief is acceptable since losses happen in this living room. Yet, this is usually a joyous and welcoming room from which you do not seek to flee and out of which you gather much to give. In it is the love that “makes one little room an everywhere.”

This spacious room has four picture windows facing:

East: the rising sun: what is starting to happen and you are taking hold of.

West: the setting sun: what is ending and you let go of.

North: the north star: the stabilizing spiritual force that you live by, e.g., Buddhist practice.

South: sunny exposure: your lively energy, imagination, playfulness, and spontaneity.

In the center is an unconditional YES to look through each window when the time feels right.

Each of us is poised to expand in every direction.

Your quiet room becomes noisy in the east and west when you fear or resist the dawn of present challenges or the dusk of necessary endings.

It becomes noisy in the north when you have not found a spiritual foundation in yourself.

It becomes noisy in the south when you block your potential, hold back your love, or run from it.

A relationship is healthy when you do not have to shut any windows to be in it. *Who opened my windows? Who closed them? Who showed me where my windows were?*

From: *When Love Meets Fear*

DIALOGUING WITH THE INNER CRITIC

Inner critical voices may be rebuking us for our limitations:

Don't want anything/ Don't go/ Don't give yourself, show yourself, to anyone/ Don't think a man/woman will want you/ Don't let anyone know what you are thinking/ Don't let anyone get too close or go too far/ Don't be enthusiastic about anything/ Don't be exuberant/ Nothing you do matters or will come to anything/ You are inadequate, ineffective, weak, failing, failed, doomed/ Don't be.

When these don'ts are internalized they can become rigid self-defeating mindsets.

Self-negating messages whisper to us in our own voice:

I don't deserve happiness; I may as well put up with abuse; I am a victim; I can't change anything; I am in despair; There is something faulty in my character. I am too wounded. I cannot do that; I will never get to that point; I am too old, too young, too late, too soon, too weak, too poor, etc.

When you hear the inner critic admonishing, reproaching, shaming, or inhibiting you, do not try to silence him/her. Instead, use your active imagination to open a dialogue between him/her and another voice that also exists inside you: the kindly uncle/aunt, or the nurturant parent, or the best friend.

Let this supportive voice that you recall from your past or that you are aware of from life experience, respond to the critic within. Let her defend you, stand up for you, be your advocate. This is your inner assisting force that gives a self-empowering answer to your inner afflicting voice. Since we contain all the opposites, we have both voices within ourselves equally.

It is a matter of letting the kindly voice be heard and letting it gain ascendancy. Shamans in trance became possessed by spirits of dead ancestors who spoke words of comfort and advice to the tribe through them. There is thus a long human history of access to the healing voices within.

At times of dark despair or depression, sit with the disturbing feelings with no attempt to dismiss them.

Pay attention in a cradling way to any dismal spaces in yourself. Visit these dim and uninviting deserts with curiosity and compassion. Let yourself feel as bad as you feel and stay with yourself in a non-abandoning way. You will notice that something shifts, after a while, all by itself. Your lively creative energy will appear in an effortless way.

When you simply remain faithful to your own reality, you evoke the creative forces in yourself that lie just below the permeable surfaces of your psyche. There you find abundant possibility.

Affirmations:

I dissolve the boundaries I have set on my potential, specifically...

I allow myself to see the expanse of my untapped potential, especially...

Where I was contracting, I expand.

Where I was isolating, I connect.

I am happy about all the gifts I have and how they fit me so perfectly.

I consecrate my gifts to the benefit of all mankind.

From: *Shadow Dance: Liberating the Power and Creativity of Your Dark Side*

BUILDING SELF-RESPECT AND LOVINGKINDNESS

The practice of loving-kindness recommends sending/giving/wishing love, compassion, joy, and equanimity to ourselves and others. We beam each of the four in turn, first to ourselves, then to those we love, those toward whom we are indifferent, those with whom we have difficulties or who are enemies, and finally toward all people everywhere.

Loving-kindness also grows in us through action as we practice virtues: the habits of wholesomeness, the building blocks of self-respect, character, and integrity. We begin by taking steps, however small, that lead toward virtue. Interior shifts may follow, and then we are acting virtuously without having to think about it or plan it. The Roman philosopher Seneca wrote of this result: “My goodness now requires no thought but has become habit and I cannot act but rightly.”

A spiritual practice of fine-tuning our virtues focuses on them as specific affirmations and commitments to action. They are not meant to be “shoulds” but gentle invitations that stir and steer us to new possibilities in our way of living. The virtues that equip us to grow in loving-kindness are challenges and opportunities not demands or obligations.

The list that follows may be inspiring but also intimidating. Very few of us can achieve all of these ideals to the fullest. But nonetheless, we can set our bar high and then try making some strides and leaps. Any advance we make, however small, frees us from our familiar fear-based, ego-centeredness and we begin building new habits of healthy love for ourselves and others.

These practices are not strategies by which we seek to gain perfection or happiness but simply what we do and who we are at the heart level. Our destiny is to display in our lifetime the timeless design of goodness that has always been inside us. Virtuous choices that open us to spontaneous honesty and loving-kindness help us do that. We will even feel the results in our bodies. We lengthen and

expand to take our rightful space in the world. We feel a warmth coming through us to others in a physical way. Virginia Woolf expressed it best: “Things are losing their hardness. Even my body now lets the light through.”

There are many ways to use the list that follows:

- Ponder one virtue each day or each week and look for ways to design your behavior accordingly.
 - Use the listings for meditation on your own ethical choices.
 - Say them aloud as daily aspirations or affirmations, one each day or a few at a time.
 - Consider them to be a checklist on your progress in virtuous living and keep coming back to them.
 - Ask someone you love and trust to give you feedback on how you reflect or do not fully reflect the virtues listed.
-
- More and more, I say yes to the givens of human life: Everything will change and end; things will not always go according to my plans; life will not always be fair or pain-free; and people will not always be loving, honest, generous, or loyal.
 - No matter what happens to me, I am looking for ways to remain personally grounded, i.e., no longer swayed by fear or desire.
 - The events in life and the actions of others impact me, but they no longer have to impinge upon me. I can find ways to remain secure within myself and, at the same time, connected to others.
 - I try my best to keep my word, to honor my commitments, and to follow through on the tasks I agree to do. Accepting my limits and skills is helping me set sane boundaries on how much I offer to do for others, rather than simply be accommodating in order to please or appease others.
 - I want to have an unwavering sense of myself as a person of conviction while still remaining flexible. I am more able each day to drop outmoded beliefs and to become more open and inclusive, the most appropriate stance in this wonderfully various world.

- I am thankful for the set of values that I received in the course of my life from so many sources. At the same time, I am examining the scaffoldings of beliefs, biases, assumptions, and myths I inherited from family, school, religion, and society. One by one, I seek to dismantle and discard those not in keeping with healthy and virtuous living and to cherish those that are.
- I can now measure my success by how much steadfast love I have, not by how much I have in the bank, how much I achieve in business, nor by how much power I have over others. Expressing my full and unique capacity to love is becoming the central focus of my life.
- I am less and less under the blinding influence of the four main streets that direct so many attitudes and lifestyles: Madison Avenue, Tin Pan Alley, Wall Street, and Hollywood Boulevard.
- I am enthusiastically seeking, or have found, meaningful work and projects, and that is the source of my bliss. I keep discovering my deepest needs, wishes, values, and potentials and living more and more, in accord with them.
- I have reason to be proud of some accomplishments. Thoreau wrote in his journal: “A man looks with pride at his woodpile.” My serious commitment to the practices on these pages is my “woodpile.”
- I ask this question as I embark upon any relationship or project: Is this a suitable context for me to fulfill my life purpose? My life purpose is to live out the unique and exuberant potential that is inside me, to love with all my might, and to share my personal gifts in any way and everywhere I can.
- I appreciate how much I benefit from others who share their gifts with me.
- I am willing to work indefatigably to fulfill my life purpose but not to stress my health to acquire standing, status, fame, or fortune, which are the central and often the only values in the ego’s always uneasy world. My focus in life is simply on becoming a good person.
- I am letting go of the need to keep up appearances or to project an impressive self-image. I notice that I am more willing to appear as I am, without pretense and no matter how unflattering. As I settle into the reality of who I am, with pride in my gifts and unabashed awareness of my limits, I notice myself being happier.

- I notice that my behavior and choices no longer have to be quite so determined by what others may think of me. I am giving up my attempts to get others to accept or love me. I do not want to have to change myself in order to fit in. I am gradually becoming committed to portraying myself just as I am, no matter what the reaction of others.
- I no longer let myself be manipulated by flattery, but I do show my thanks when others appreciate me.
- I am not perfect, but I am sincerely committed to working on myself. I am noticing that the more I engage in my personal work, the more do I find myself caring about the world and the part I am privileged to play in its co-creation.
- As I struggle with regret or self-reproach because of the mistakes I have made in life, I am no longer ashamed of my ongoing fallibility. I take it all as a learning experience so I can do better in the future. I make amends wherever I can. My mistakes are becoming a valuable passport to humility and to compassion toward myself and others.
- I keep examining my conscience with honesty but not with shame. I am taking searching inventories not only about how I may have hurt others, but also about how I may not have activated or shared my gifts and potentials, how I may still be holding on to prejudices or the will to retaliate, how I may still not be as loving as I can be.
- I am less and less afraid of free speech, my own or that of others. I am learning to listen carefully to others' feedback rather than becoming defensive or ego-aroused by it. I even want to welcome feedback that shows me where I am less caring than I can be, where I am less tolerant, where less open. When I am shown up as a pretender or called on being inauthentic, I take it as information about what I have to work on.
- More and more, I blow the whistle on myself when I notice myself being phony, untruthful, passive-aggressive, or manipulative. I notice it is possible to come clean right then and there by admitting that I am acting falsely.

- I am becoming more willing to express and to receive feelings, including fear, joy, grief, and tenderness. I am practicing ways to show anger nonviolently, not in abusive, threatening, blaming, or out-of-control ways.
- I can become stronger in asking for what I want without demand, manipulation, or expectation. As I remain respectful of the timing, wishes, and limits of others, I can take no for an answer.
- I forego taking advantage of anyone because of his ignorance, status, position, or financial straits.
- I do not want to use any charms of body, word, or mind to trick or seduce others.
- I am less and less competitive in relationships and find an uplifting joy in cooperation and community. I especially shun situations in which my winning means that others have to lose.
- I am choosing not to push others aside so that I can get ahead. I choose neither to exalt myself nor to abase myself. Instead, I take my turn without complaint at being first, last, or midway in the long series of line-ups that life has in store for all of us.
- I do not knowingly hurt others. If they hurt me, I do not have to retaliate, only open a dialogue and ask for amends. No matter what, I do not choose to hate anyone or hold grudges.
- I act kindly toward others not to impress or obligate them but because I really am kind—or working on it. If others fail to thank me or to return my kindness, that does not have to stop me from being loving nonetheless.
- I never give up on others. I believe that everyone has an innate goodness and that being loved can release it.
- I have a sense of humor but not at the expense of others. I am less and less apt to engage in ridicule, teasing, or sarcasm, or to use “comebacks” when others are sarcastic toward me. I seek simply to feel the pain in both of us and look for ways to bring more mutual respect into our communication.
- I notice how in some groups there are people who are humiliated or excluded. Rather than be comforted that I am still an insider, I want to sense the pain in

being an outsider. Then I can reach out, speak up, and include everyone in my circle of love and respect.

- More and more, I look at other people and their choices without censure. I still notice the shortcomings of others and of myself, but now I am beginning to see them as facts to deal with rather than flaws to be ashamed of. I do not laugh at people's mistakes, distresses, or misfortunes. I feel compassion arising instead.
- I avoid Criticizing, Interfering, or giving Advice that is not specifically asked for. I take care of myself by staying away from those who use this CIA approach toward me.
- I am becoming more able to say "Ouch!" to pain and abuse in jobs, relationships, and interactions with others. I want to take action to change what can be changed and to move on when things remain abusive. I do this without self-pity or the need to make others wrong. When I stand up for my rights, I do not have to gloat if I am vindicated nor do I have to seek revenge if I am not vindicated.
- I am making sincere attempts to abide by standards of rigorous honesty and truthfulness in all my dealings no matter how others act toward me. My question is not "What can I get away with?" but "What is the right thing to do?" If I fall down in this, I can admit it, make amends, and resolve to act differently next time. Now I more easily and willingly apologize when necessary.
- I am learning not to be swayed by opportunities for gain, by sweet talk or rhetoric, or by any other seductions to transgress my boundaries or to act immorally.
- I cherish the joy of a good conscience more than what I may gain or what I can get away with.
- I am focusing on becoming consistent: At home or in relationship I want to be the same person I am at work. I choose to show the same respect and sincerity toward strangers as I show toward those close to me.
- In intimate relationships, I put effort into honoring equality, keeping agreements, working through problems, and acting in loving ways. My goal is not

to use my relationship to gratify my ego but to dispossess myself of ego to gratify the relationship.

- More and more, my sexuality expresses love, passion, and joyful playfulness. I am letting go of the guilt and phobias of childhood in favor of a responsible adult style of relating and enjoying.
- I am learning to keep better tabs on my use of food, alcohol, drugs, sex, etc., knowing they can be vehicles of addiction. I am always looking for ways to commit myself to moderation without self-inhibition.
- I am aware of the pain and poverty of those less fortunate than myself. I keep finding ways to respond generously with time, attention, money, and myself.
- Confronted with the suffering in the world, I do not turn my eyes away, nor do I get stuck in blaming God or humanity but simply ask: “What then shall I do?” I respond to pain in others with a plan to help, even if it has to be minimal: “It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.”
- My work on myself is making me more conscious of the political issues of the world. I am learning to question authority. I am looking for ways to work for an end to war, retaliation, greed, hate, and ignorance. I have not given up on believing in the possibility of a transformation of the world and of every political and religious leader.
 - I am committing myself to resisting evil and fighting injustice in nonviolent ways. This is how I focus on restorative justice, not retributive justice.
 - I am distressed and feel myself called to action by the disasters of pollution, global warming, economic oppression, nuclear armaments, and the violations of human rights. I keep thinking globally and acting locally in any ways I can.
 - My love of nature makes me tread gently on the earth with what Saint Bonaventure called “a courtesy toward natural things.”
 - Though I am not always successful in virtuous living, these are the ideals I am shooting for, the values I am placing an intention to live by.

- I appreciate a spiritual energy in whatever love, wisdom, or healing power I may have or show. What is in me is not from me but through me. I say thanks for these encouraging graces and yes to the stirring call to live up to them.

To be human is to be born into the world with something to achieve, namely, the fullness of one's human nature, and it is through the virtues that one does so. . . . The virtues are the only guarantee against a wasted life. –Paul Wadell, C.P.

From: *The Five Things We Cannot Change and the Happiness We Find by Embracing Them* (Shambhala, 2005)

THE GIVENS OF LIFE: THE THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE

Everything Changes And Ends

Suffering Is Part Of Growth

Things Do Not Always Go According To Plan

Things Are Not Always Fair

People Are Not Loving And Loyal All The Time

These are examples not just of the conditions of existing but also of evolving. They are the prerequisites for us humans to be able to unfold with character, purpose, and meaning. They make us the fascinating characters we are; they make our human story the intriguing plot that it is: Only in a transitory world do we keep aiming for the timeless. Only through suffering do we find our inner strength and our need for others too. Only in an unpredictable universe do we expend all the effort we can muster. Only in the face of injustice do we work for justice and act with mercy. Only among people who sometimes hurt or betray us do we find the choice of love over retaliation and thereby grow in compassion.

Taoist Han Hung says: “The biggest risk is to trust that these conditions are all that we need to be ourselves.” Life is continually baffling us with its contradictions. We can be overwhelmed and demoralized by them or we can allow them to pass through us with equipoise. Then we find ways to be both defense-less and resource-full. This ends our quarrel with the givens and we relate to them without blame or anger. Jung suggests “an unconditional yes to the conditions of existence without protest.” Then we find in and through them the best of religion and depth psychology:

EVERYTHING CHANGES AND ENDS

yet can be renewed.

This is our entry into the archetype of resurrection.

SUFFERING IS PART OF GROWTH

yet we keep finding ways to bring good from evil.

This opens the archetype of redemption.

THINGS DO NOT ALWAYS GO ACCORDING TO PLAN

yet we can find the equanimity to say yes to what is and thanks for what has been.

This is the archetype of synchronicity and of a divine plan that makes our destiny a larger one than ever we imagined.

THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS FAIR

yet we can be fair and even generous.

This gives us a sense of justice and strengthens our commitment to fight for it.

It is the archetype of Karma and of atonement and forgiveness.

PEOPLE ARE NOT LOVING AND LOYAL ALL THE TIME

yet we do not have to retaliate but can ourselves act with love and loyalty, never giving up on others.

This is the archetype of unconditional love.

It is a given of life that nothing is permanently and finally satisfying or fulfilling. It is a given of the mind that somewhere there *is* a person or thing that will be permanently satisfying or fulfilling. Such a chimerical belief and the restless desperate seeking that may follow it can be deeply disheartening and self-defeating. Yet we have it in us to accept the stinging given that hurls us back on ourselves. In mindfulness we can say yes to this law of life without bargain or protest. From that position of surrender something wonderfully encouraging can happen. We find that we want a partner who walks beside us in the world not one we hope will cancel its givens for us or provide an escape-hatch from them. We find a pleasing balance between surrendering to the given of unsatisfactoriness while at the same time maximizing our opportunity for contentment. Moderate

need fulfillment, experienced in days and moments, becomes satisfactory. The fear and craving give way to humor and serenity. We have found the felicitous pass between the mountains of delusion and despair.

Yet the world of nature, howsoever ruthless its givens, nonetheless comes through with clues to our conundrums. Its metaphors are richly assisting forces. Here is one: In the midst of the seemingly boundless barrenness of the Sahara an oasis may suddenly appear to the traveler. It is not a mirage. Its palms and water are real and they grant him refreshment. Yet even among the breezes and in the reviving shade the sheik cannot —and does not want to— stay at this oasis forever. Soon he will accede to the given of life that nothing is permanently and finally satisfying or fulfilling. The hospitable sanctuary and the generous waters of the oasis can be enjoyed for a day or days but not forever. They will cloy and his heart will long for what comes next. The desert and what lies beyond it, whatsoever its mystery and hardship, beckons, and it cannot be evaded or renounced.

Journeying is built into us no matter how beautiful our home. The need for change excites us no matter how pleasing our present circumstance. Perhaps those innate human themes make for just such givens as the world hands us. This may be what George Herbert meant by the lines in which God says of the newly created Adam: “Yet let him keep the rest, but with repining restlessness, let him be rich *and* weary....”

From: *How Be To An Adult in Relationships*

THE F.A.C.E. OF EGO

The arrogant ego that fights intimate love is the face we keep trying not to lose. This F.A.C.E. of ego is Fear, Attachment, Control, and Entitlement—the most vicious enemies of intimacy. Attention and appreciation are lost in the self-centeredness of entitlement. Acceptance and allowing cannot happen when control takes precedence over equality or when attachment to one's own version of reality dominates. Authentic affection cannot easily be shown when fear is a driving force.

The F.A.C.E.-lift that happens when we are resource-full lets fear become excitement. Then we may act *with* fear but not *because* of it and we are no longer afraid to show our fear or our vulnerability.

Unconditional love is love without the conditions—the F.A.C.E.—of ego. Such love is free of fear. Attachment turns into healthy bonding in committed and intelligent ways. We establish and maintain ties but do not become possessive nor do we let ourselves be possessed. Control becomes the efficiency that respects the other's boundaries and gains his respect. Entitlement becomes self-nurturing assertiveness that gracefully bows to the fact that we do not always get what we want. That admirable quality not only brings us the respect of another person but self-respect too.

We can also look at it this way for a quick check on ourselves when we feel our ego being aroused.

THE PRACTICE OF TRANSFORMING THE ARROGANT EGO

The ego was never meant to be annihilated only dismantled and rebuilt in a more constructive way. Then and only then does intimacy become possible. It takes dissolving instead of solving.

<i>When I feel:</i>	<i>I choose instead to:</i>
FEAR	LOVE
ATTACHED	LET GO
CONTROLLING	GRANT FREEDOM
ENTITLED	SEE MYSELF AS EQUAL

Every one of the characteristics of the neurotic ego is a form of pain: It hurts to be on guard and yet always wounded. It hurts to be so frightened of spontaneity that we have to hold our reins tight and be constantly controlling. It hurts to be so terrified of the conditions of existence that we have to demand an exemption from them. It would be a great tragedy if we were to die having successfully saved face in all our relationships. Yet no matter how bad something about us may be, there is a positive dimension in it. There is a kernel of goodness, an untapped potential behind each element of:

Fear	Prudent caution and intelligent assessment of danger
Attachment	Perseverance and commitment to stay through hard times
Control	Ability to get things done and be efficient at addressing, processing, and resolving
Entitlement	Healthy self-esteem and standing up for one's rights

Here are the gentle and healthy innovations that happen to each of the negative features of the ego when we let go of having to act it out its agenda in arrogant and neurotic ways:

AS I LET GO OF HAVING TO:	I BECOME MORE ABLE TO:
<p>Get my way Be noticed and appreciated by everyone Insist my misdeeds be overlooked Insist I not be shown up or shown to be wrong Be utterly devastated if I lose face Make demands on others Win, be loved, be respected, and be given preference Have to get back at others Assert the implacability of ego.</p>	<p>Cooperate with others. Ask for, give, and receive appreciation. Apologize and make amends. Do my best and still be open to feedback Admit an error and protect myself from being shamed Ask for what I want and be able to accept No for an answer Do my best, ask for rightful credit and let go Have a sense of justice that asks for redress or amends without the need to punish. Discover the indestructibility of soul.</p>

From: *How Be To An Adult in Relationships*

BEFRIENDING OUR SHADOW

The Jungian archetype of the Shadow includes all that we abhor about ourselves and all the wonderful potential that we doubt or deny we have. We project these negativities onto others as strong dislike and project our positive potential as admiration. We can re-member and restore these capacities to our psyches. We explore our dark side as a source of creativity and untapped potential. How does our dark side manifest, go into hiding, and emerge to hurt or liberate us? What is evil and how do we protect ourselves from it? What is the shadow in our family, relationships, religion, and in the world? We learn ways to make friends with our shadow both positive and negative so that our lost life can be restored and renewed. Inner foes become allies; dark angles within us become archways of light.

To befriend the positive PERSONAL shadow, use this triple A approach:

- *Affirm* that you have the quality you admire or envy in someone else.

This can be a simple declaration or affirmation such as: “I am more and more courageous.”

- *Act* as if you have that quality by making choices that demonstrate it.

• *Announce* it: Tell everybody you know that you are making these changes and ask for their support.

These are three *steps* we take. They are usually followed by *shifts* in our personality; we begin to act in wiser, more loving, and more healing ways with no further need for effort. This is the grace dimension, the spiritual assistance to our work.

To befriend the negative PERSONAL shadow, here are five A's:

• *Acknowledge* that you have all the attributes humans can have, that you contain both sides of every human coin. Acknowledge that you have the specific negative traits you see in others that evoke a strong reaction of repulsion in you.

The urge to observe coexists with its opposite impulse to expose.

- *Allow* yourself to hold and cradle these as parts of yourself.

Acknowledge that they may have gone underground for a legitimate purpose and

are now ready to be turned inside out and become something more creative and empowering in your life.

- *Admit* to yourself and to one other person the fact of these shadow discoveries about yourself.

- Make *amends* to those who may have been hurt by your denial of your own shadow: “I saw this in you and it is in me. I have blamed you for what I am ashamed of in myself.” Make amends to anyone you have hurt by any underhanded ways your shadow has impacted him/her.

- Become *aware* of the kernel of value in your negative shadow characteristic and then treat it as you did the positive shadow above: affirm it as true of yourself, act as if it were true, announce your discovery and program to others who can assist us in following up on it.

As you do this work, do not scold yourself as a critical parent for all your deficits. Have a good talk with yourself as a kindly adult: “I have been controlling and that is wrong of me, but there is a kernel of positive value in that controlling. It is my capacity for getting things done, for organizing, even for leadership. I will now concentrate on and release those wonderful attributes. I will find my positive shadow in my negative shadow!” This is working with what is rather than attempting to eliminate what is, and thereby working against psychic truth. Shadow embracing reverses self-alienation and connects us to our own rainbow reality.

To see your dark side, to see what you are really up to while not shaming yourself for it reconnects you to your true self and reveals its spacious grandeur. Such vision is a form of mindfulness. Turning against the external tyrant is useless. You have to see him in your own mirror: “This face is mine. I accept the fact that there is something dark in every one of my motivations. And I still see the light in me too.” Jung, toward the end of his life, wrote: “I am astonished, disappointed, and pleased with myself. I am depressed and rapturous. I am all this at once and cannot add up the sum.”

From: *Shadow Dance: Liberating the Power and Creativity of Your Dark Side*

HOW TO S.E.E.

Why do some things upset us so much? We sometimes notice that our reaction cannot quite be accounted for by the stimulus we have encountered.

A possible way to proceed when you notice yourself strongly reacting to something or someone—with anger or tears or attraction or repulsion—is to **S.E.E.** what underlies the emotional charge:

Is it **Shadow**? **Ego**? **Early unfinished business**?

Here is an example: A person is curt with me on the phone and it keeps gnawing at me

all day:

- **Shadow:** Am I like that sometimes? Is it in me to treat people that way? Does it bother me that he gets away with it and I do not? Our negative shadow contains all that we strongly detest in ourselves but cannot see. We tend to see this shadow of ours in others: detesting in them exactly what is disowned in us. (Our positive shadow holds our untapped potential. We are admiring in others what is buried and deactivated in us!)

- **Ego:** “How dare he talk to *me* that way. Doesn’t he know who I am? I’ll be damned if I let him get away with this. I’ll get back at him somehow.” These statements give us the clue that the entitled controlling ego is enraged at not getting his way.

- **Early life re-enactment:** “My father talked to me that way and it hurt.” The curtness of today may be triggering a reminder of a similar wound from the past.

It is likely to be the shadow if you cannot believe you could ever be like this!

It may be the ego if you think: “how dare they...” or feel indignant, affronted, competitive or vengeful.

It is often early material if you feel grief or powerlessness or if later you become compulsive/addictive in your reaction.

The way to tell that none of these three is operative is that you can take what happens simply as *information*. Then you speak up assertively, refuse to accept abuse, and feel compassion for people who believe they have to be mean. The event still elicits feeling that you express and but you soon let go of it and move on. You have not been so strongly affected as to lose your own boundaries.

Strong, out of control, or inappropriate reactions are signals of where your work is. They tell you what needs to be addressed, processed, and resolved in yourself. This is how over-reactions to other people can turn into nurturant responses to ourselves.

Can I maintain myself in a circle of love while including all my fears, my wounds, and my inadequacies?

Can I keep others in my circle of love while they scare me, wound me, or tell me I am inadequate?

From Shadow Dance: Liberating the Power and Creativity of Your Dark Side

THE CRADLING TECHNIQUE

It is usually futile to try to fix or omit fear or grief. We make room and time, tune in to what we are feeling, and cradle it, i.e., grant it legitimacy. When we take these steps, a shift may occur: something opens and we are empowered.

Picture the father who stops what he is doing to listen to his whimpering child. He squats down to his level, tunes in to him, and hugs him in his pain. Then the child feels heard and *valued as he is*. Such mirroring equips him with an enlarged sense of his own identity and hence of his own power.

When I feel grief or fear, I sit and let myself feel it all the way, capturing the unique felt sense of it, connecting it to any childhood pain that resembles it.

I sit in my fear and forlornness, accepting its inconsolability, without running to my usual hide-outs: turning on the TV, looking for sex, eating, drinking, taking a tranquilizer, etc. I simply feel and breathe the feeling throughout my body. When the feeling passes, I return to my normal routine.

This is how I nurture myself effectively. Thereby, I am less likely to look for any body or thing to fulfill me or fill me. As I service myself this way, I am no longer so needy. Now I can love needlessly. I get over my fear as I love myself in this self-parenting way! *The more I let myself feel my feelings, the more do I expand my capacity to feel. I even increase my capacity to love maturely!*

Love will no longer mean: you are the right size doll for my cut-out collection but you are who you are and I correctly assess and respect your dimensions. I no longer embellish them to use you as a way of denying or fleeing my ultimate loneliness. When we open ourselves to our feelings, our hearts become soft and accessible to ourselves and to others. The unguarded heart is the only cell from which the prisoner fear can be released.

Fearlessness does not consist in having less fear or no fear but so much more love that we go beyond fear! Fear is the porcupine on the trail as we hike: interesting, but not stopping us and not to be eliminated, since it belongs to the ecology of the psychic path.

Fear-based decisions prevent us from accessing our deepest needs, values, and wishes. We are sometimes driven or stopped by fear because it feels too overwhelming for us. Here is the triple A technique that may be helpful in dealing with fear:

First, *ADMIT* that you feel afraid. This breaks through all the rationalizations by which you talk yourself out of the fear or make it into something else. Instead of saying, "I am kind of uncomfortable around her," say "I am afraid of her." Since our automatic reflex is to deny the extent or reality of our feelings, a good rule might be to admit the fear even more fully than you feel it.

Secondly, *ALLOW* yourself to feel the fear fully, i.e., defenselessly, with no escape, with no attempts to get rid of it. Shake, shudder, do whatever it takes for you to experience the emotion. Let this emotion stay in motion through you. *I let the fear go through me like lightning and I trust that the earth will receive it and disperse it.* When fear goes to ground in this way, we are truly grounded and we feel equipped to face fear from a place of power in ourselves.

Third, and not necessarily immediately after steps one and two, *ACT as if* fear could not stop or drive you. You can act as if you were fearless. This is the truth because you actually contain all human opposites so you *do* have fearlessness inside you. It is only that you have not accessed it. Now you do not act *from* fear, you act *with* fear. (A courageous person is one who feels just as scared as you but *acts* bravely.) This plan adds resource-fullness to your defenselessness.

From: *When Love Meets Fear*

FREEDOM FROM FEARS: AN INVENTORY AND AFFIRMATIONS

It is now clear that each of us feels afraid often. It is understandable that fear is so pervasive in our lives. For one thing, we live in a world that is so often scary! And secondly, most of us were raised in atmospheres of fear. We absorbed fear before we had the chance to say No to it. We are now facing our program of recovery from fear.

Fear may convince us that the worst will happen and that we will be unable to handle it. This is the powerlessness that makes fear so sinister. We rally our power with the conviction that there is an alternative to what the frightened mind has construed and that we do have it within us to handle whatever comes our way.

You may find this worksheet helpful in taking a personal inventory of your fears and in designing affirmations to clear fears. It also serves as a mini-course on fear! It combines the three elements of the “triple A” program to free ourselves from fear: admitting we feel it rather than denying it, allowing ourselves to feel it fully rather than running from it, and acting as if we were fearless rather than being stopped or driven by it.

Read it onto a tape and listen to it daily in your own voice or recite or read it regularly. Form an image of yourself acting out each affirmation you recite. This list is meant for a wide audience so add or delete entries to fit your unique situation:

I trust my true fears to give me signals of danger.

I admit that I also have false fears and worries.

I feel compassion toward myself for all the years I have been afraid.

I forgive those who hypnotized me into unreal fears.

I suggest now to myself, over and over, that I am freeing myself from fear.

I have fearlessness to match my fear.

I trust my powers and resourcefulness as a man (woman).

I trust my abundant creativity.

I trust the strength that opens and blooms in me when I have to face something.

I believe in myself as a man/woman who handles what comes his/her way today.

I know how to rise to a challenge.

I am more and more aware of how I hold fear in my body.

I stop storing fear in my body.

Now I relax those holding places.

I open my body to joy and serenity.

I release my body from the clench of fear.

I relax the part of me that holds fear the most
(jaw, shoulders, neck, etc.).

I let go of the stress and tension that come from fear.

I let go of fear-based thoughts.

I let go of basing my decisions on fear.

I stop listening to those who want to import their fears into me.

I let go of finding something to fear in everything.

I let go of fear and fearing and of believing that everything is fearsome.

I let go of my primitive ways of catastrophizing
(e.g.: a fear belief: it is going to stay this way!)

I am more and more aware of my instant reflex fear reactions.

I am aware that I have habituated myself to a certain
level of adrenaline.

I admit that I (sometimes) (often) (always) choose
the adrenaline rush

that comes with the dramas of fear and desire.

I forego this stressful excitement and choose sane and serene liveliness.

I let go of my obsessive thoughts about how the worst
may happen.

I trust myself always to find an alternative.

I see the humor in my fears.

I see the humor in my exaggerated reactions to
unreal dangers.

I find a humorous dimension in every fear.

I find a humorous response for every fear.

I play with the pain of fear.

I smile at my scared ego with tough love.

I am confident in my ability to deal with situations or people that scare
me.

I am more and more aware of how everything that happens or has
happened is being faced, integrated, and let go of.

I have self-healing powers -and-

I seek and find support outside myself.

I have an enormous capacity for re-building, restoring, transcending.

I am more and more sure of my abilities.

I am less and less scared by what happens, by what has happened, by what
will happen.

I trust myself.

I trust an uncanny timing that I keep noticing within myself:

I love how I awake or change or resolve or complete at just the right
moment.

Nothing forces me; nothing stops me.

I let go of any fear I have of nature.

I let go of my fears of natural disasters.

I let go of my fears of sickness, accident, old age, and death.

I cease being afraid of knowing, having or showing my feelings

I let go of my fear of failure or of success.

I let go of the fear behind my guilt and shame.

I let go of my fear of aloneness or of time on my hands.

I let go of my fear of abandonment.

I let go of my fear of engulfment.

I let go of my fear of closeness.

I let go of my fear of commitment.

I let go of my fear of being betrayed.

I let go of my fear of being cheated or robbed.

I let go of my fears of giving/receiving, beginnings/endings,
comings/goings,

scarcity/abundance, saying No/saying Yes.

I let go of my fear of any person.

I let go of my fear of loving.

I let go of my fear of being loved.

I let go of the fear that I will lose, lose money, lose face, lose freedom,
lose friends, lose family members, lose respect, lose status, lose my job,
lose out.

I let go of my fear of having to grieve.

I keep letting go and I keep going on.

I let go of my paranoia.

I give up my phobic rituals.

I let go of my performance fears.

I let go of fears of my own sexuality.

I let go of fears about my adequacy as a parent or child, as a worker or
manager, as a partner or friend.

I let go of the need to be in control.

I acknowledge control as a mask for my fear.

I let go of my need to be right, to be first, to be perfect.

I let go of my belief that I am entitled to be taken care of.

I let go of my fear of the conditions of existence:

I accept that I may sometimes lose;

I accept that things change and end;

I accept that pain is part of human growth;

I accept that things are not always fair;

I accept that people may lie to me, betray me, or not be
loyal to me.

I am flexible enough to accept life as it is, forgiving enough to accept it as it has been.

I drop the need for or belief in a personal exemption from the conditions of my existence.

I acknowledge my present predicament as a path.

I trust a design in spite of the display.

I let go of more than any fate can take.

I appreciate all the ways that things work out for me.

I appreciate the graces that everywhere surround and enrich my life.

I find the alternatives that always exist behind the apparent dead-end of fear.

I open myself to the flow of life and people and events.

I am grateful for the love that awaits me everywhere.

I feel deeply loved by many people near and far, living and dead.

I feel loved and watched over by a higher power (God, Universe, etc.).

I believe that I have an important destiny, that I am living in accord with it, and that I will survive to fulfill it.

I let myself have the full measure of:

the joy I was meant to feel,

the joy of living without fear.

I let fear go and let joy in.

I let fear go and let love in.

I let go of fears and enlarge my sympathies.

I am more and more aware of others' fears, more and more sensitive to them,

more and more compassionate toward them.

I am more and more accepting of all kinds of people.

I enlarge my circle of love to include every living being: I show my love.

I am more and more courageous as I live my program for dealing with fear:

I let go of control;

I let the chips fall where they may;
I admit my fear;
I feel my fear by letting it pass *through* me;
I act as if I were free of fear;
I enjoy the humor in my fears;
I expand my compassion toward myself and everyone.
I have pluck and wit.
I let go of being on the defensive.
I protect myself.
I am non-violent.
I am intrepid under fire.
I am a hero: I live through pain and am transformed by it.
I am undaunted by people or circumstances that may threaten me.
I let people's attempts to menace me fall flat.
I give up running from threats.
I give up shrinking from a fight.
I show grace under pressure.
I stop running; I stop hiding.
More and more of my fear is becoming healthy excitement.
I meet danger face to face.
I stand up to a fight.
I take the bull by the horns.
I run the gauntlet.
I put my head in the lion's mouth.
I stick to my guns and hold my fire.
An automatic courage arises in me when I *face* a threat.
I dare to show myself as I am: afraid *and* courageous.
I hereby release the courage that has lain hidden within me.
I am thankful for the gift of fortitude.
I let go of hesitation and self-doubt.
I am hardy in the face of fear.

I have grit, stamina, and toughness.
I take risks and always act with responsibility and grace.
I let go of the fear of being different.
I let go of the need to meet others' expectations.
I cease being intimidated by others' anger.
I let go of my fear of what may happen if people do not like me.
I let go of my fear of false accusations.
I let go of having to do it his/her/their way.
I acknowledge that behind my exaggerated sense of obligation is a fear of my own freedom.
I let go of my terror about disapproval, ridicule, or rejection.
I dare to stop auditioning for people's approval.
I dare to give up my act.
I give up all my poses, pretenses, and posturings.
I dare to be myself.
I acknowledge that behind my fear of self-disclosure is a fear of freedom.
I dare to show my hand, to show my inclinations, to show my enthusiasms.
I let my every word, feeling, and deed reveal me as I truly am.
I love being found out, i.e., caught in the act of being my authentic self.
I explore the farthest reaches of my identity.
I dare to live the life that truly reflects my deepest needs and wishes.
I give up the need to correct people's impressions of me.
I give up being afraid of my own power.
I am irrepressible.
I draw upon ever-renewing sources of lively energy within me.
I am great-hearted and bold-spirited.
I dare to give of myself unconditionally -and-
I dare to be committed to maintaining my own boundaries.

I am open to the grace that shows me the difference.

I fling open the gates of my soul.

I set free my love, till now imprisoned by fear.

I set free my joy, till now imprisoned by fear.

I honor and evoke my animal powers, my human powers, my divine powers.

I let true love cast out my fear.

I face fear as Buddha did; I am Buddha in the face of fear.

For all that has been: Thanks!

For all that will be: Yes! -Dag Hammarskjold

From: *When Love Meets Fear*

WORKING WITH ABANDONMENT AND ENGULFMENT FEARS

Abandonment and engulfment are normal fears. Both arise in all of us—though one usually predominates in intimate relationships. It is only when these fears become so intense as to affect our judgment and behavior that they become problematic for us.

Adult relating is in the capacity to commit ourselves without being immobilized by the fear of abandonment if someone pulls too far away, or by the fear of engulfment if someone gets too close. It will seem as if these fears result directly from the behavior of our adult partner, but these are phantom fears from childhood. What is hurting us is gone but still stimulates. We are reacting to the inner landscape of our own past, a landscape ravaged by archaic plunder that has never been acknowledged, restored, or forgiven.

Fears of abandonment and engulfment are cellular reflexes, and we are wise not to take our partner's display of them too personally. These fears are not rational so we cannot talk someone out of them or blame someone for them. Compassion from one partner and work to change by the other partner is the most effective combination. Actually, an adult cannot be abandoned, only left, cannot be engulfed, only crowded! Once we live in the present, things become so much more matter-of-fact and we drop the blame-filled judgments.

FEAR OF ABANDONMENT “THE PURSUER”	FEAR OF ENGULFMENT “THE DISTANCER”
<i>Fear of being alone so that one:</i>	<i>Fear of closeness so that one:</i>
Cannot easily pull back when a partner needs space	Cannot easily make a commitment when a partner needs assurance
Clings or cannot seem to get enough contact	Distances or cannot seem to get enough space
Is overly attentive, overly accepting, overly allowing	Takes a partner’s attentions for granted or feels smothered by them
Willingly shares about oneself	Maintains secrets or a secret life and may become angry at being asked questions
Takes more care of a partner than of oneself	Feels entitled to be taken care of without reciprocation
Feels one can never give enough	Construes giving and receiving as smothering or obligating
Goes along with a partner’s agenda or timing	Insists on being in control and on making the decisions
Has poor boundaries and tolerates abuse or unhappiness or infidelity	Maintains rigid boundaries and has no tolerance for abuse, disloyalty, or deficiency
Is addicted to the partner and keeps giving more	Seduces the other and then withholds
Yearns for continual affection and assurance	Is embarrassed or angered by such displays
Is encouraged by exuberance	Is threatened or annoyed by exuberance
May settle for sex as proof of love or use it to purchase feelings of security	May use frequent sex as a substitute for closeness or may withhold sex to manipulate
May give up appropriate sexual boundaries to please the other and be defenseless against predation.	May use sexual distance or lack of interest as a way of maintaining independence, a defense against vulnerability.

Needs a partner to be a constant companion: “Stay with me.” Seeks connection and closeness Feels at a loss without the presence of a the partner	Needs a partner to “stay put while I come and go:” “Let me be.” Seeks connection not closeness Becomes anxious with extended togetherness
Rationalizes, i.e., makes excuses that enable coping	Intellectualizes, i.e., substitutes feelings with logic
Shows fear, hides anger	Shows anger, hides fear
Walks on eggshells, always compromising	Acts hostilely, creates uproar, or picks fights to establish distance
Has distress in comings/goings	Has distress in giving/receiving
Lets needs become neediness	Makes needs into expectations
Looks like the one reaching out and that looks like love but may really be fear	Looks like the cold one and that seems unloving but may really be fear
May be the one more likely to leave!	May be the one who feels abandonment fears when left!

The left side may indicate the co-dependent and borderline styles, the right side the narcissist style.

STEPS FOR WORKING WITH OUR ABANDONMENT AND ENGULFMENT FEARS

Since every fear is maintained by a belief that we are victims, choice releases its grip. Jung describes the healing power of paradox in this way: “If there is a fear of falling, the only safety consists in deliberately jumping!”

- *Admit* your fears to your self and to your partner.
- *Allow* yourself to feel your fears fully, cradling them acceptantly.
- *Act as if* your fears were not obstacles to closeness or safety:
- If you fear engulfment, stay a little closer and let a hug last a little

longer for one minute more than you can stand each day. If you fear abandonment, let the other go a little farther away than you can stand for a little

longer time than you can stand each day. Repeat this over and over, adding more time and more space each time.

- Bust yourself on despair:

This is how I am/or how he is.

This is how I always was/or how he always was.

This is how all my family is/or how he is.

- Say this to your partner: “I may not shield you from the fear of abandonment or engulfment and I do not ask you to shield me. Let’s accept such fears as conditions of human existence, as givens of relating. I choose to acknowledge fear of abandonment or of engulfment and work through them. This is how I go on living effectively rather than evading my fear and thereby go on fearing. Will you join me?”

- To fear engulfment is to believe that closeness takes something away from you. Deal with this fear of *losing yourself* paradoxically by freely *giving yourself*. Make a self-disclosure, admit a vulnerability, or show a feeling. Thus *you stop losing by letting go*.

- To fear abandonment is to dread being left alone. This is a fear not of loss of self but of gain of self by self-confrontation. Setting time aside for yourself daily means choosing the very thing you fear. This paradoxical reversal leads gradually to your enjoying your aloneness.

- The actual fears are not of abandonment or engulfment. You are really fearing the possibility of *powerlessness in the face of them*. But every time you choose to work on fear, you become defense-less and resource-full. This restores trust in your own organismic capacity for self-nurturance and safety when people get too close or go too far.

You know a relationship matters to you in a healthy way when you are willing to endure and even choose the awkwardness of the small but scary steps that lead to change. Commitment in a relationship means that we are willing to admit our fears and use state of the art techniques to get past them. To have such willingness is to be ready for intimacy and to become more endearing to others. At the same time we feel better about ourselves because we have not been stopped

by our fears but have passed through them. We are proud of ourselves and grow in self-respect. This is the connection between self-esteem and successful relating.

From: *How Be To An Adult in Relationships*

HANDLING OUR LONELINESS

The dragon of loneliness may suddenly appear and want to control me. It is an abandonment fear that has been in me all my life. It is a wilderness only I can cross on the demanding trek to my adulthood.

A face of someone I miss— or a wish for company— arises between the dragon and me. When I thus think of someone as my St. George, I am avoiding my dragon. The solution is, paradoxically, not in a rescuer but in an unconditional acceptance of the loneliness itself, allowing it a full unobstructed track to run its course in me. I then feel my own vulnerability safely because, by taming the dragon on my own, I am empowering myself in a nurturant way.

The loneliness itself is actually the signal of a wound that is already healing since I am finally feeling it, i.e., allowing it into consciousness, the only place where the fear in it can be truly faced and befriended.

My unconscious assumption is that I cannot survive without this other person, or sex, or a new partner, etc. When I make the assumption conscious— and even vocalize it— its absurdity is revealed and my neediness is reduced. In all my relationships, I may in fact, have been trying to armor myself against the dragon's charge by interposing someone else's body between me and it!

When I think literally that you are what I need, I am going for the lowest stakes: soothing, distraction, immediate relief. Your absence is not the true source of my pain nor would your presence be freedom from the pain. It would only go underground, into my unconscious, the only place in which it can truly hurt me!

The dragon survives and derives its power from our fear of it. It bows to me and diminishes to puppy-size when I relate to it in this frank and courageous way. When I fear or am ashamed of my loneliness, I am hiding the most precious, tender, and winsome part of myself behind frantic attempts to become invulnerable. I slap my own face and think I am protecting myself.

There are false beliefs behind that slap (each a blow to my self-confidence):

Re myself: This loneliness is so scary I may die. I will shrivel up because of it. I am helpless in the face of it. No one loves me, or wants me, or ever will.

Re the other: Without you, there is no me. I cannot be me without you.

The healing work is simple: I stay with my loneliness, i.e., I hold my feelings in a cradling way. I whisk away the conditioned response of anyone else's face and keep coming back to what I am feeling in my body right now. I defang the grimace that loneliness makes at me when I gaze into it and stay with it this way.

I speak to myself as the good parent to the child: "I know you are hurting and that you want him now and yes it does feel good to be with him. But he cannot really heal your pain. He is only the latest makeshift version of fulfillment you can find in yourself. Now try being with yourself just one more minute than you can stand. One long look is all it takes to diminish, exponentially, both your daunting dragon and his seductive face! The result will be self-trust *and* availability for a truly healthy relationship in which the other cooperates in your fulfillment but is not the source of it."

My work is not to be free of the need for you but to give to myself first. Then I do not demand or crave or beg but simply ask you to be with me. This liberating truthfulness teaches me how to give to you in return. I pause between the stimulus of my loneliness and the response of longing for your presence. Thereby, I strengthen myself in the skills of intimacy, one of which is accepting the times between us when you may not comfort me but still love me.

With each successful immersion in the self-mirroring of loneliness and longing, new capacities to feel begin opening in me and I become an autonomous adult—the only kind of adult that can love. This happens because I take care of my loneliness by tolerating it alone rather than running to someone else to fill it. I stop holding onto you so dependently and instead, begin, interdependently, to hold you—as I am learning to hold myself.

Abandonment has become at-one-ment.

From: *When Love Meets Fear*

STANDING ALONE AT THE EDGE OF THE VOID

The Void is the terrifying sense of irremediable desolation that occurs for all of us from time to time in life. Sometimes it is triggered by a crisis or loss. Sometimes it happens for no apparent reason. It can vanish as mysteriously as it arrives. The Void confronts us with a stubborn silence beyond our ability to escape or interrupt it. This Dark Night of encircling gloom is felt only as emptiness, vacancy, a wilderness with no oasis. No amount of self-esteem can over-ride or evade it. It is a condition beyond conditions.

At the deepest level the Void is a terror, a fear of abandonment by every spiritual support. If prayer works, it is not the Void. If activities work, it is not the Void. If anything works, it is not the Void. The terror in this spiritual panic attack is that nothing works to save us from the vacuum into which we have been thrown. The experience of the Void means no foothold, no handle on things, no end in sight, no light at the end of the tunnel. It is not quite adequately described as aloneness, loneliness, emptiness, forsakenness, abandonment, desperation, isolation, or even despair. It is all of these at once!

The Void is the Shadow of the mind. It is the hidden unreliable side of our functional ego. To say that "nothing works" in the Void means that the mind, no matter how intelligent or functional, goes bankrupt when the chips are truly down. Its half measures avail nothing in the face of the true terror. The Void is the Sherlock Holmes who exposes the ego as the Great Pretender.

In the Void, we cannot defend ourselves as we always have. What a paralyzing experience for the ego, with its all its clever ruses, its trusty bag of tricks, its stratagems to maintain control, its belief it is entitled not to have things like this happen! Now it is ambushed by a seditious and invisible militia. The ego is confronting its actual condition in the adult world: It has no real ground on which to stand securely. It is No-Thing. This is, paradoxically, the true meaning both of psychological panic and of spiritual awakening to egolessness. The panic

about the Void dramatizes the inadequacy of ego and the spiritual destiny of ego to go beyond its power games and face its utter fragility. Such egolessness is a liberation into the larger truth about who we are.

From earliest life, the prospect of being dropped may have filled us with terror. This is just such a drop from invisible arms. To go into such a free-fall space feels like annihilation — becoming nothing. In the direct encounter with remedyless and solutionless aloneness, we realize that every clever charm, every gesture, every source of ready consolation has fallen flat. We are being given a direct, unblurred vision of our ultimate condition with a simultaneous crash of the means we ever employed to avoid it. Our usual condition is to find that things work, that the world we built for ourselves houses us well. Now we find that there is another side: darker, more frightening, merciless, totally adamant against seduction or cajoling. It allows no loopholes. It is not fooled by our coquettishness.

The habits, bulwarks, dramas, relationships, addictions, and people that we gathered around us helped us stave off this ultimate moment of truth. They joined us in the game of avoidance of the Void, avoidance of full surrender of ego. But, all that is really collapsing here is the illusion of security. *Only illusion can collapse.* Our shell, our armor is being dismantled. Our true inner Self remains. In the terror of this moment, such a realization may not be a comfort. Our main fear may be *not* being able to die then and there!

Now what? When we simply pay attention to the Void, the inner stagnation may awaken and begin to live in a new way. To face the naked truth about ourselves nakedly is all we can or need to do. The Void is a mirror of the "space" that is ourselves. Meister Eckhart says: "Everything is *meant* to be lost that the soul may stand in unhampered nothingness." The Void is actually a special grace that takes us beyond the mind and its tricks. We can now confront our condition of aloneness instead of using so many consolations and distractions to protect ourselves from it.

We experience the Void as especially scary because we have been refusing to face the fact of our aloneness and of the inadequacy of our every

defense. This is how we betrayed the fearlessness that was always living within us. Our armoring, our running, our running for help, every thought, every plan, every hope we ever cherished: all were ways of forestalling our inevitable encounter with this inner silence. The Void is the emptiness we always assumed we had to fill but actually only had to face. "Was every choice I made, every activity I chose, a way of eluding this trickster that wanted to call me by name?"

Actually, the experience of the Void is a summons, a call to the adventure of poise beyond pose, of Self beyond ego, of love beyond fear. The Void is a farther reach of our own potential, now beckoning to us to actualize it. The sense of inner emptiness is the experience of ourselves as the alchemical vessel of transformation. Thomas Merton said that "a deep existential anxiety crisis precedes the final integration of the Self." The Void is the threshold to rebirth beyond fear. The reason for this is that forsakenness is a necessary ingredient of spiritual maturity. Without it, we would never have learned to look within. We would have trusted only external sources, as children trust parents. Without forsakenness, we would only have looked outside for nurturance. This would have maintained the neediness of childhood, not ever freeing up the plenipotentiary powers of adulthood.

When we shake the pillars that hold up our temple of defenses, we join in the demolition of our frightened childish belief system. In the rubble, we see every false premise, every shred and patch that held our life together, every superstition, every wish for safety from the full brunt of the human story. This is the edifice that collapses, not the fortress of true supports and nurturance but the stockade of imprisoning delusions. We never had anything to lose but our chains.

James Hillman says: "Moments of dissolution are not mere collapses; they release a sense of personal human value from the encrustations of habit."

Dissolution is a stage in the alchemical process of releasing the fearless, i.e., unconditional, Self — the authentic identity we have been avoiding all along. The Void thus prompts a giant leap into finding out who we really are: *We are love in the habit of fear*. Now we see why we believed we had to maintain control: to

avoid an encounter with the inner emptiness that fear disguised. To drop control and face our fear is to open the inner spaciousness that love designed.

We try so hard to avoid ever having to face the Void. Yet, to contain and relax into our own emptiness makes room for a deeply compassionate love to emerge. Vacancy becomes spaciousness and we open ourselves to all who suffer as we do. This is how aloneness plays a key role in the release of unconditional love.

From: *How to Be an Adult in Faith and Spirituality*

A CHECKLIST ON BOUNDARIES IN RELATIONSHIP

<i>When you give up your boundaries in a relationship you:</i>	<i>When your boundaries are intact in a relationship you:</i>
Are unclear about your preferences or willing to forego them easily	Have clear preferences and act on them
Do not notice unhappiness since enduring is your concern	Recognize when you are happy/unhappy
Easily alter your behavior, plans, or opinions to fit the current moods or circumstances of another or feel guilty if the other is depressed or angry (live reactively)	Acknowledge moods around you while remaining centered and not feeling you are at fault for other's dark periods or obliged to fix them (live actively)
Do more and more for less and less	Do more when that gets results
Require approval for self-esteem	Act lovingly and take others' responses as information
Live hopefully while wishing and waiting	Live optimistically while co-working on change
Are satisfied if you are coping and and surviving	Are only satisfied if you are thriving
Let another's promises or minimal improvement maintain your stalemate	Are encouraged only by mutual commitment to change (not one-sided)
Have few hobbies because you have no attention span for self-directed activity	Have excited interest in self-enhancing hobbies & projects
Make exceptions for this person for things you would not tolerate in anyone else and accept her alibis or lies	Have a personal standard, that, albeit flexible, applies to everyone and ask for accountability
Are manipulated by flattery so that you lose objectivity	Appreciate feedback and can distinguish it from attempts to manipulate
Keep trying to create intimacy with	Are open to relationships only with

a narcissist	partners with whom reciprocal love is possible
Are so strongly affected by another that obsession results	Are appropriately affected by Your partner's behavior and take it as information
Will forsake every personal limit to get sex or the promise of it	Integrate sex so that you can enjoy it but never at the cost of your own integrity
See your partner as causing your excitement	See your partner as stimulating your excitement
Feel hurt and victimized but not angry	Let yourself feel anger, say "Ouch!" and embark on a program of change
Act out of compliance, compromise, and appeasement	Act out of agreement and negotiation
Do favors that you inwardly resist while being motivated by obligation (cannot say No)	Only do favors that are motivated by choice (can say No)
Disregard intuition in favor of wishes	Honor intuitions and distinguish them from wishes
Allow your partner to abuse your children or friends	Insist others' boundaries be as safe as your own
Mostly feel afraid and confused	Mostly feel secure and clear
Are enmeshed in a drama that unfolds beyond your control	Are always aware of choices
Are living a life that is not yours and perhaps not quite noticing	Are living a life that mostly reflects your deepest needs and wishes
Commit yourself for as long as the other needs you to be committed in whatever way she demands (no bottom line)	Decide how, to what extent, and how long you will be committed
Believe you have no right to privacy	Protect your private matters without having to lie or be surreptitious
Never believe you have given enough	Give generously and reasonably, then let go

Break commitments with friends because the other is suddenly available	Fit the other to your schedule
Have lingering guilt even after reasonable amends	Are satisfied and finished once amends are made
Fear your partner will leave or punish you if you disappoint him	Trust yourself to handle the other's reactions without losing your own self-esteem
Arrange things so that your partner will be protected from feelings or truth	Supportively allow the other to know and feel the truth
Tolerate your partner's addiction(s) even when abusive	Confront addictive behavior and detach if change is not forthcoming
Forsake your own moral standards to please or hold onto someone	Maintain your own principles with consistency
Place your physical health at risk	Protect your body in all Circumstances
Swayed by looks, charm, rhetoric, sex, or wealth	Enjoy the extras as desserts
Give, loan, or invest money inappropriately	Handle money matters wisely, shrewdly and objectively
Lose objectivity, intelligence, and powers	Maintain your full range of personal discernment
<i>The above entries define</i> CO-DEPENDENCY	<i>The above entries define</i> SELF-PARENTING

A helpful way of using this chart is to draw a line for every entry with a point at each end. (Use a separate sheet of paper). Plot your behavior at an end or center and notice where the majority of your responses fall. They may differ for each person in your life, e.g. poor boundaries with spouse, clear boundaries with parents, moderate boundaries with children. All of this is information about where your struggle is, where your work needs to be, and where things are satisfactory.

From: How Be To An Adult in Relationships

CONFLICT VS. DRAMA

Use this chart to see where you stand with whatever issue is facing you now. List the styles on the right that most appeal to you, write them out in the form of affirmations and post them where they can be seen by both of you and by visiting friends:

HEALTHY CONFLICT	STRESSFUL DRAMA
The problem is placed on the table between us, and we see it in perspective.	The problem becomes bigger than both of us; we are possessed by it and lose perspective.
We explore the situation.	We exploit the situation.
We address the issue directly.	We side step the issue or cover it up.
We express our feelings candidly, taking responsibility for them as our own, without blaming the other or feeling ashamed.	We use invective to dump our feelings on one another or engage in theatrical/histrionic displays meant to manipulate, intimidate, or distance the other.
We are looking for a way to keep the relationship stable, and we don't use violence.	We explode, act violently, retaliate, or withdraw sullenly.
We remain focused on the present issue.	We use the present issue to bring up an old resentment that contaminates the present process.
We are committed to a bilateral style in processing issues and making decisions.	One of us makes a unilateral or secret decision.
The issue is resolved with an agreement to change something for the better.	The issue remains an open wound with lingering resentment and ongoing stress.
Both of us are looking for a way to make our relationship better.	One of us has to win and see the other lose.
We fight fairly.	We use cutthroat tactics.
We admit mutual responsibility for the problem.	We are convinced the problem is entirely the other's fault.

We are committed to working things out, but we respect the other's timing.	We insist this problem be fixed in accord with our timing, showing no tolerance for a time-out.
We try to deal with the issue one-on-one.	We crowd the stage by bringing someone else or something else in as a distraction (e.g., an affair, drinking).
If necessary, we seek help in therapy or a support group.	We refuse help or attempt to use it to justify our personal position.
We want both of us to grow from this conflict.	We want the other to learn a lesson.
We let go of our attachment to the outcome we wanted in favor of a resolution we can both live with.	We each insist on getting our own way.
We are aware of any complexities.	We see only in black and white.
It is acceptable to agree to disagree.	Ambiguity is intolerable.
We notice, mirror, and feel deep compassion for the other's pain.	We are so caught up in our own pain we do not see the other's pain, or we think, "He/she deserves it."
We admit it if our behavior is connected to childhood.	We are adamant that the issue is entirely about the here and now.
We each acknowledge our shadow. We may state our position passionately but always with tolerance for another's opinion.	We see the other's shadow but not our own. We become so fixated in our own view that we harangue, insult, or ridicule the other person.
Our conflict is love-based, and we want to show the five A's.	Our drama is fear-based, and we <i>have</i> to save face, protect our ego.
<i>We are centered in mindfulness.</i>	<i>We are distracted by the mindsets of ego.</i>

From: *How To Be An Adult in Relationships*

ANGER OR ABUSE?

What we have called anger may be abuse. Both anger and abuse are visceral and involve raised voice, gesticulations, red-in-the-face, intense eye-contact. Yet there is a difference as the chart below will show

Use this chart as a checklist for examining your way of showing anger. Where do you find yourself? Do you relate to your anger in a mindful way or do you become possessed by it? Look at this list on your own and then with your partner or a friend for feedback. Make a commitment to become so familiar with this list that you recall it when you become angry. You can *pause* long enough to practice mindful anger and not engage in abuse. Practice pausing before many ordinary daily activities as a way of preparing. To pause between a stimulus and your own reaction makes for saner and more responsible behavior. Immediate unconscious reactions often arise from fear and ignorance and cause pain to ourselves and others.

True Anger	Abuse: The Shadow of Anger
<i>Authentic self-expression: the hero's way</i>	<i>Theatrical display: the villain's way</i>
Is always mindful	Is ego-driven and caught in mindsets
Expresses a feeling	Becomes a tantrum
May be expressed with a red face, excited gestures, and a raised voice	May be expressed with a red face, menacing gestures, expletives, and a screaming voice
Is a form of assertiveness that shows respect	Is aggressive, an attack
Shows tough love that enriches or repairs the relationship	Explodes in rough and damaging mistreatment that endangers the relationship
Arises from displeasure at an injustice	Arises from the sense of an affront to a bruised, indignant ego

Focuses on the injustice as intolerable but reparable	Focuses on the other person as bad
Informs the other, creates rapt attention, draws a mindful response	Is meant to threaten the other and drives him or her away
Is meant to communicate, to report an impact	Is meant to silence, intimidate, put down, bully, or dump
Desires a response from the other but does not require one	Insists the other acknowledge how right or justified one is
<i>Asks</i> for change but allows the other to change or not (desires change)	Masks or expresses a controlling demand that the other change (demands change)
Asks for accountability and amends	Blames the other* and takes revenge.
Is about this present issue and is expressed freshly from incident to incident	Is often a build-up of past unresolved issues and displaced rage, gathering intensity from incident to incident
Is always direct	Is often displaced
Has some perspective, can distinguish between minor and major issues	Is trapped in the heat of the moment & explodes vehemently no matter how minor the issue
Relates to the feeling	Is possessed by the feeling
Coexists with other feelings	Occludes other feelings
Takes responsibility for one's own distress	Diverts the blame for one's distress onto the other
Is nonviolent, in control, and always remains within safe limits (manages temper)	Is violent, out of control, derisive, punitive, hostile, and retaliatory (loses temper)
Releases lively energy and leads to repose	Derails lively energy & creates continuing stress
Is brief and lets go with a sense of closure (a flare)	Is held on to as lingering resentment, hate, grudge, or bitterness (a smoldering fire)
Includes grief and acknowledges it	Includes grief but masks it with feigned invulnerability or denial
Believes the other is a catalyst of anger	Believes the other is a cause of anger
Treats the other as a peer	Treats the other as a target

Originates in and fosters a healthy ego	Originates in and perpetuates an arrogant ego
Aims at a deeper and more effective bond: an angry person moves <i>toward</i> the other	Wants to get the rage out no matter who gets hurt: an abuser moves <i>against</i> the other
Coexists with and empowers love: fearless	Cancels love in favor of fear: fear-based
<i>These are all forms of addressing, processing, and resolving.</i>	<i>These are all forms of avoiding one's own grief and distress.</i>

*Blaming (from the Latin word for *blaspheme*) differs from assessing accountability:

- Blaming is censure with an intent to shame, humiliate, and show that someone is wrong.
- In assessing accountability the intent is to right a wrong and restore a balance.
- In mindful adult living, no one is to blame and everyone is accountable.

From: *How Be To An Adult in Relationships*

NO MORE PUNISHING OR PLACATING

Our ego often reacts to painful altercations with others in standard and automatic ways. For instance, when someone snubs us or disappoints us our arrogant ego may react with a plan to punish him with “eye for an eye” vengeance, distancing, sarcasm, etc.

Our victim ego, on the other hand, may feel intimidated and react to such rejection with conciliatory or fawning gestures such as: giving in to someone, over-compromising, etc.

Both sides of the ego are in all of us. We may punish when we are outraged or placate when we are intimidated. Punishing masks our grief and rage; placating masks our fear. Everyone is occasionally rejected or intimidated. Punishing and placating are desperate neurotic attempts at controlling and interrupting the painful feelings that arise when we have to confront these normal conditions of human existence. The alternative program consists of: fully admitting and feeling grief and fear, maintaining self-protective boundaries in relationships, acting assertively, consistently over-riding the impulse to punish or placate.

What are we avoiding in the space *between* our fear and rage? It is vulnerability— the essential ingredient in loving! We imagine it to be the unsafe, scary vulnerability of the victim. Instead, it can be the empowering vulnerability of heroic and utter reconcilability. Here is what it might look like:

- In the face of rejection, we let ourselves be vulnerable both to it and to our own grief about it *and* still go on acting kindly and staying open to love.
- Intimidation does not make us cower because we are brave enough to admit feeling afraid *and* strong enough to stand up to others and to refuse to let them come at us that way.

In our commitment to powerful vulnerability we act lovingly and look lovable. We have personal standards that do not falter in the face of, nor at the

mercy of, others' behavior. People may hurt or scare us but that no longer compels us to punish or placate them. Love impels us instead to the loving alternative it always finds.

From: *Shadow Dance: Liberating the Power and Creativity of Your Dark Side*

RELEASING GUILT AND FORGIVENESS

Where's that palace whereinto foul things

Sometimes intrude not? -Othello

Release from guilt can happen with these steps:

1. Acknowledge to yourself how you may have failed in loving your partner by any willful deficit in attention, acceptance, appreciation, affection, or allowing freedom of individuality. Have you refused to address, process, or resolve issues? Have you placed selfish concerns over those of the relationship, shown disrespect, lied, betrayed, disregarded feelings, let your anger erupt into abuse, disappointed your partner, broken an agreement, denied responsibility for your actions or choices, gossiped, not respected privacy, taken advantage, used your partner, manipulated or been controlling, been greedy, acted in a retaliatory way, etc.? Devising your list requires a careful examination of conscience. It calls for a willingness to see your own inadequacies and a desire to work on them.

2. Admit your deficiencies in words to the person you have offended showing your sincere feelings of sadness and regret (the essence of repentance).

3. Take action by making amends wherever and however possible.

4. Resolve not to repeat the behavior. This may include making a plan that in the future you will police yourself or ask for feedback about how you are slipping back into the old behavior.

This program makes for a move from alienation to reunion, even a closer union between you. It also leads to the creation of an atmosphere of mended failures. It fosters healthy vulnerability and diminishment of ego which leads to less hurtful behavior.

True recognition of our guilt and dealing with it using the four steps releases us from guilt. At the same time, something also happens in the person to whom we make the amends. The human psyche is calibrated to produce

forgiveness at the sight of these very four steps! We evoke the forgiveness of others when we show we are sorry we hurt them and are willing to make amends and change our behavior for the better.

Alternatively, a retaliatory response is more likely to come our way when we refuse to show repentance. The stubborn ego that refuses to admit wrongdoing induces not reconciliation but vindictiveness. This reaction, like all retaliation, comes from the lowest level of the psyche where unattended hurt remains unhealed and lashes out in frustration and rage. Mindfully loving justice is not retributive but restorative.

In our human story, hate happens where arrogance digs in and love happens where humility arises. This program makes for a move from alienation to reunion. It leads to the creation of an atmosphere of mended failures. It fosters healthy vulnerability and a diminishment of ego which leads to more compassionate behavior.

The stirring purpose of this and of all our work is to let a loving response come out first rather than an ego reaction.

From: *How Be To An Adult in Relationships*

WHEN OUR FEELINGS ARE HURT

We humans have a long history of being mean to one another. In the face of this unfortunate fact, the ego has a repertory ready to be employed: attack in a vengeful way or withdraw in an alienating way. What is the alternative adult spiritual response when someone hurts your feelings, acts inconsiderately toward you, or is downright mean to you? The spiritual practice is to forego the options of the vindictive ego and to choose the path of lovingkindness. As you live in accord with standards that transcend your ego's habitual strategies of fight and flight, you evolve as a more human being. You find new ways of turning the other cheek.

Here is what the defense-less and resource-full program might look like:

- * I let myself feel this hurt fully without any defense against it.
 - * I say "Ouch!" without retaliating.
 - * I accept the fact of occasional inconsiderateness or meanness as a given of human life.
 - * I am determined not to be mean myself.
 - * I do not allow others to abuse me and I bear normal suffering without self-damage.
 - * I declare directly to the person the impact of his/her behavior on me without blaming or shaming.
- (Cf. below on possible ways to say it.)
- * I ask for amends if appropriate.

I dedicate my program to the welfare of others, both to those who are hurt and those who do the hurting.

May compassion increase in me and flow from me as a result of what I suffer.

May love grow in others as the result of my commitment not to inflict suffering.

Examples of what to say: “We had an agreement to meet. I felt hurt and confused when you did not show and did not call to cancel.” “What seems like sarcasm in your statement to me really stings and leaves me feeling hurt.” “Your involvement with my partner has devastated me and my relationship. I have been crying, not eating or sleeping, and feeling completely bereft since I found out about your affair. This is what can happen to partners who are betrayed and I want you to know that it is happening to me.” (Notice how the emphasis is on the behavior and our reaction to it not on the person.)

When I commit myself to non-violent ways of responding to hurt, my self-respect grows accordingly. I let go of the vulnerability of a victim. I find the vulnerability that has— and leads to— power. I like myself more as I access such courageous gentleness no matter what the cost or provocation. No one can make me swerve off my course toward or give up my standards of lovingkindness. This is the basic meaning of groundedness: no longer moved off center by what others may do.

When love is my only defense, I am invincible. –Tao

From: *Shadow Dance: Liberating the Power and Creativity of Your Dark Side*

LOVE AND CONTROL

Love is not a feeling but a choice, a commitment to show unconditional positive regard in five major ways: *attention, appreciation physical affection, acceptance* of the other as he is and is becoming, and *allowing* the other freedom to act in accord with who he/she is or is becoming.

These same five elements of love are also our major needs in adult relationships! To seek the fulfillment of these needs is to ask someone to mirror us as we are. When we mirror in return, we complete the circle of mutual love.

Freedom is the ability and the right to choose. Control takes over that right and denies that ability. When we control someone we are not loving him/her. We have omitted the allowing and acceptance elements of mirroring. We fear letting the other be who he really is.

To control is to make someone over in our own image and that self-mirrored projection is then what we love, not the true other as he is. Perhaps most of us achieve only *loving moments*—special times when we dare to show attention, acceptance, affection, and allowing in an unconditional way.

Love only happens when we let go of control and the fear behind it. In spiritual love, we go one step further and mirror to others the higher power of the heart: unconditional and universal love, perennial wisdom, and healing.

Control gives way to letting be; knowing what is best for others gives way to respect for their choices; and making-over gives way to genuine curiosity about their surprising uniqueness. *Can I risk that?*

Love can also be mistaken for clinging that is welcomed by the other, for sexual desire that is satisfied by the other, or for neediness that is fulfilled by the other. Love can even be mistaken for dependency, surrender, conquest, submission, dominance, approval, gratification, fascination, addiction, etc. Thus: I can feel that I love you because you love me, or will not leave me, or will not let me feel lonely, or let me feel anything! I hear myself saying: “I love you” to the

person who meets any or all of these wishes. I may simply mean: I am attached to you and it feels good!

In real love, I love you even when you do not fulfill me. My love can survive the periods when you have nothing to give. Love is not simply a satisfaction of my own neediness but a commitment to giving *and* receiving.

It is only in the context of such fearless gift-giving that the grace of real love is mutually mirrored and generously risked.

You can be broken down and I will hold and love you that way. You can fall apart and I will hold and love you that way. You can have nothing to offer for now and I will hold and love you that way. You can be at your lowest ebb and I will hold and love you that way. You can be depressed, contorted, wounded or distraught and I will hold and love you that way.

I will do this with no insistence that you be fixed. I can accommodate a you that breaks down and is not available for my needs for the time being.

From: *When Love Meets Fear*



PAUSING TO FIND OUR SPACE

Write a sentence about your present personal crisis or issue. Use a piece of typing paper, horizontally, and write in the center of it: Either...or. If...then. Because...I.

Here are examples of the sentences: Either I stay in control, or everything will fall apart. Either I stay with you unhappily, or I leave you unwillingly. If they find out, then I lose my job (or reputation, etc.) Because you left me, I intend to punish you.

Draw a box around each of the two clauses with the comma unboxed in the center. Study your sentence with its boxes, the space between them and around them. The boxes are the figure and the space is the ground. See if your eye can reverse figure and ground for a few seconds so that the space becomes something! Look steadily at the comma. A comma in speech represents a pause. A pause is to the ear what space is to the eye. This comma has created a space: ENTER HERE and pause.

Breathe regularly and deeply as you do this, paying attention to each in-breath and each out-breath and the little space between each breath.

Allow yourself to be with your statement with the pause button pressed on all judgments, fears, desires, attachments to outcomes, etc. Experience your statement with clarity and pure awareness, no layers of drama around it, only space around it. Simply stay in the space and attend to your breathing. This part may take the rest of the day—or of your life—and what better way could there be of spending it?

Notice the content of the sentence. Do you see sense of necessity in it? The second part seems forced to follow from the first? This is a dualism. It makes the sentence a “sentence” of a judge. Who is that judge? Do not attempt to integrate or combine the clauses of your statement. Instead, find an alternative

that does not give in to either side of the dilemma. Notice that this cannot be done. You are stumped! “Stumped” is the left brain’s response to space.

Being stumped makes us feel powerless. This is why we fear space! What are we fearing? We are fearing the gap that has opened in our heretofore reliable logical categories.

We are fearing the space that undermines logic and underlies every reality. Continue simply to attend and stay. It will yield; it will change. The gap will become an opening, the Taoist “mysterious pass” will appear in the apparently impenetrable mountains before you. This is the *pause* that restores. Make no attempt to figure anything out. Simply breathe, letting go of the need to know anything, and paying attention to the space.

Here is what happened to the original sentences after this process:

“Either I stay in control...” became: “I let the chips fall where they may.” I am not caught in having to control (a form of pain) or in being the victim of chaos. I dropped into the space, fell into the gap and there I found a way to live that releases me from the dilemma, is still responsible, and is much more realistic. (When I myself did this exercise myself with this as my chosen statement, I laughed out loud when the “chips” sentence came to me. Humor is a clue that we are on track!)

“Either I stay with you unhappily...” becomes: “We work together on changing things.” “If they find out...” becomes: “I will be the one to tell and will tell it proudly or with willingness to make amends and be done with it.” I am released from shame, the opposite of being mirrored. Now I can mirror myself. “Because you left me...” becomes “I let go of the need to punish you. I grieve your going and get on with my life.”

The new statements were there all along within the originals, in the space, the comma-pause. Each of them confers a power. Each new version is what your situation looked like before your ego got hold of it! The good witch said to Dorothy, “You’ve had the power all along! Just click your heels...” Her power was the ground under her illusory figural belief that she was powerless.

To contact this soul space, not filled in by drama, means seeing the headline and not the editorial. When we drop attachment to outcome, a gap opens

in the ego's cycle of fear and craving. Surrender results. "I observe my life as a silent and fair witness who feels all feelings deeply but is not overwhelmed by any one of them."

From: *The Power of Coincidence: How Life Shows Us What We Need To Know*

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is a meditation technique that brings our attention to our physical breathing here and now and away from our mind's inveterate habit of entertaining us with fears, desires, expectations, evaluations, etc. The word mindfulness is a poetic irony since it is mind-emptying not mind-filling!

The shadow layers of ego are control, fear, attachment, the need to fix things, obsession with an outcome, blame of others, and shame about ourselves. When we peel these away and see our present predicament purely as it is, we are seeing it mindfully. Mindfulness entails pure attention to *what is* without these elements: what I believe it is, want it to be, have to make it, or am sorry it is not. This is what happens in mindfulness meditation: I breathe through it all without judgment, attachment, control, fear, etc., simply paying attention to each of the ego's deceptions, labeling them, and then letting go of them.

Here is an adaptation of mindfulness for addressing and processing issues: Sit in a quiet place with your eyes closed and with attention to your breathing throughout this exercise. Keep returning to your awareness of your breath whenever you become distracted.

Take a distressing event that has happened recently or the main problem you are dealing with in your life right now. Picture it as an onion with many layers. Imagine yourself holding it in your lap and peeling off one layer at a time. The layers are: control, fear, attachment, the need to fix things, obsession with an outcome, blame of others, and shame about ourselves. Imagine what your

problem begins to look like as you progressively eliminate each of these layers of ego. As each is removed, what is left? Only more and more *space*. Only the pure event or problem is real and its reality is roomy. The heavy rest of it is self-made, a product of ego.

Our destiny is to display in our lifetimes the qualities of divinity: unconditional love, perennial wisdom, and healing power. This happens as mindfulness becomes the style not only of our meditation but of our daily interactions. *Can we let go of our egos long enough to allow ourselves and our world such a gift?*

In mindfulness, natural feelings of attraction or repulsion can be experienced without simultaneously feeling compulsive attraction or terrified avoidance. I simply notice and take as information and I am no longer fixated in any way.

Pause and poise in the center of our revolving world is the best position from which to watch the parade of our personal events and experience. Serenity in the midst of the ups and downs of life is a powerful indicator that we are living in accord with our deepest needs and wishes. Ego fixations like control, expectation, blame, etc. actually inhibit the release of our potential. Mindfulness thus contributes to the befriending of our positive shadow. All the landscape of the path is the path.

In Zen, such mindfulness is called the gateless gate because there is no need to find a way in. We are always and already in since we are always present in the moment by mindfulness. Of course, it takes some breaths and some letting go to notice. "I am the space in which I sit. I am the space from which everything in my life arises and into which everything sets." The all and everything is the Self. Mindfulness is a consecration of our soul to the glittering incorruptibility of that space. The mindful psyche is an apparatus of relentless and irrepressible transformation that can only be impaired by ego and only limited by a lazy imagination.

Mindful awareness is the condition of the fair and alert witness rather than the judge, jury, prosecutor, or defense attorney. We notice what happens and take

it as information. We act without compulsion or restlessness. We relate to what is happening rather than be possessed by it. This is a recurring distinction in all human interactions.

Mindfulness is a translation of Sanskrit words meaning attend and stay. We pay attention and we stay with our here and now predicament. The paradox is that when we accept something in this serene way, shifts begin to occur and we begin to discover the skillful means to more fruitful intimacy and commitment. Over the years we learn to escape and take refuge in illusory sanctuaries built by our frightened ego. We notice that it is easier to believe what will make us feel better. We feel entitled to expect that others will be what we need them to be. These are man-made chains that look like links to happiness.

From: *Shadow Dance: Liberating the Power and Creativity of Your Dark Side*

LOVE AS A PRACTICE

Love is not so much a feeling as a way of being present.

Love is a sustained and active presence *with* an unconditional giving of these five A's:

Attention to others by hearing what they are saying and noticing what they are feeling

Acceptance of others just as they are, with all their light and shadow too

Appreciation of others' gifts, limits, and uniquely poignant predicaments

Affection shown in holding and touching in respectful ways

Allowing others to make their own choices rather than the ones we think best for them

Compassion is the five A's as a response to others' pain.

We are not fully present in the moment when we are caught up in conditioned habits of ego, such as fear, judgment, expectation, interpretation, control, attachment to an outcome, etc. Love is presence *without* such egoic mindsets that impose our reality on others.

There is a spiritual practice by which we can let go of our intruding mindsets. In mindfulness meditation we maintain a sustained attention to the here and now—or to this person as she is—and when the distractions arise, we keep gently bringing ourselves back to the reality in front of us, shorn of our mind's elaborations.

So love is presence *with* the unconditional five A's *and without* the conditioned distractions of ego. We receive love in the same way— with an openness to the five A's and with a letting go of our own ego interferences such as fear or judgment. In other words, love happens best in the context of mindfulness. This is how a spiritual practice can build our capacity to love and to be loved.

There is a touching and encouraging synchronicity built into our very being. The five A's are simultaneously the fulfillment of our earliest needs, the requirements of adult intimacy, and the ingredients of universal compassion. Notice how all three of these have *connectedness* in common. In the splendid economy of human and spiritual development, the same keys open all our evolutionary doors.

We can expand our consciousness of giving and receiving love. One way is by practicing ways of being present *with the five A's and without ego overlays*. It may help to say the following affirmation first thing in the morning and throughout the day, concentrating on each word and picturing yourself being just this way. It can be especially powerful as a silent mantra, a prelude to our interacting with someone who threatens or annoys us or to facing a situation that may be scary:

“I am fully present here and now with all my unconditional attention, acceptance, appreciation, affection, and allowing. In this moment, I am letting go of judgment, fear, control, and demand. May I be this way with everyone. May I be ever more open to the love that comes to me from everywhere. May all beings find this path of love.”

Confidence in ourselves grows when we feel the immense joy of fulfilling our capacity to love. In addition, we can be comfortable in the real world that exists beyond our wishes and manipulations. We can be co-creators of relationships in which love is more and more cheerfully and generously given and received. We can love the moment, all we have, and love in the moment with all we are.

From: *How To Be An Adult in Relationships*

LOVING-KINDNESS PRACTICE

Mindfulness culminates in the practice of lovingkindness. In Buddhism we open to lovingkindness by sharing four immeasurables or divine abodes: compassion, love, joy, and equanimity. We can cultivate these qualities and place an intention that others enjoy them too. Lovingkindness adds heartfulness to mindfulness. The basis of lovingkindness practice is that we all want the same thing: happiness. Our kinship with all beings makes us want to love them, that is to will their happiness and their best good.

Here is a simple format for this process: Sit quietly and image yourself filled with one of the four immeasurables at a time. With each of them, use affirmations that make contact with a widening circle of people until you have included the whole world in your loving wishes. "May I be joyful. May those I love be joyful," etc. Begin with those who love you, then those who are benefactors, those you love, those who are friends, and then those who are acquaintances. Go on to the neutral people who meet you in daily life, bank tellers, check-out persons, etc. Next are people who do not like you, those you dislike, difficult people, hostile people, enemies, first personal and then politically, including figures from history. Finally, beam the love to the whole world, north, south, east, and west.

It is useful to notice any resistance as you move down the list. Do not attempt to root out the resistance. Simply *complete* it by forming a stronger intention to love and the resistance will weaken. Something may change in you as you wish love and joy to neutral people or to enemies. This practice shows the limits to our love and helps us surpass and exceed them. It also teaches us to take refuge not in ego or selfishness but in heartfulness.

Here are examples of useful affirmations : May I respond with compassion to..... May this person have happiness and the causes of happiness.... May those who....be free from harm. The affirmations are to be repeated daily and throughout the day, internally, as you encounter people. Leaving the dentist, you say: "May he and all helpers bring healing to themselves and others." We not only affirm for others but for those they will reach too. Lighting a candle or incense while doing this adds a ritual dimension that furthers enacts and focuses the healing energy.

When meeting up with someone who causes you pain, this practice and affirmations will kick in and you may hear this in your head/heart: "I am thankful for this teacher. May he find the light." These affirmations do not mean that we necessarily approve of others' behavior only that we appreciate the potential in it. This is another way of never giving up on anyone.

The compassion affirmations free us from the retaliatory habit of ego. The love affirmations free us to love more. Joy to others brings joy to us and equanimity is a response to the conditions of existence for all of us. We begin to act from our practice. We are engaged with others in the world as people committed to a practice. This is spiritual integrity. The organizing principles of the world are the conditions of existence and synchronicity. As we say yes to the givens of life and open ourselves to the messages in synchronicity that spiritual integrity becomes spiritual wholeness.

This practice takes time. It is not done in one sitting. Proceed slowly and honor your own timing. It may take awhile to get to the level of compassion that makes an affirmation sincere. This is about transforming relationships and oneself so it may be a long process but daily attention to it will pay off.

The practice of lovingkindness can be applied to all the practices in this booklet. In keeping with our oneness with humanity, we do not use any affirmation or spiritual practice exclusively for our own benefit. We expand it in three directions to include those we love, those with whom we have difficulties,

and all beings everywhere. Thus the affirmation: “I am open to the healing power of nature in my life” is only the first dimension of a spiritually mature affirmation. We move from personal practice to a universal embrace of humanity when we add: “May those I love be open to the healing power of nature in their lives....May those with whom I have difficulty be open to the healing power of nature in their livesMay all humans be open to the healing power of nature in their lives.” A complete affirmation is a form of generous lovingkindness and makes our wish for ourselves a hope for the world too.

From: *How Be To An Adult in Relationships*

EGOLESS LOVE

Everyone is an appreciated friend when we follow the *lojong* teachings, eight verses designed in the twelfth century by Geshe Langri Tangpa to summarize Buddhist concepts. They can be found in a booklet by the Dalai Lama called *Training the Mind* (Wisdom, 1999). The central point of these skillful means for letting go of ego is in this verse: “Whenever others...revile and treat me in other unjust ways, may I accept this defeat myself, and offer the victory to others.” By cultivating compassion and by dissolving the illusion of an independent self, it becomes possible to love in such a humble way. The implications of this exalted teaching for intimate relating are clear once we realize that love is other-concerned. It is without hierarchy or insistence on individual autonomy. It does not cherish self-vindication. To see that leads to freedom from separateness. There is indeed an “I am” but without the conceptual limits with which we have surrounded it. “I am not a separate entity” means I am not limited by time or space. This is the real meaning of “no me.” Limitation happens when we identify with any layer of ego.

Here is a summary of the eight verses of *lojong* as a practice of affirmations that apply to relating egolessly:

May I consider all beings precious.

May I always respect others as superior while maintaining self-esteem.

May I face my inner darkness and turn it to good.

May I be moved with compassion for the pain behind the spite others
may show me.

When I am hurt by others, may I forego retaliation while always fighting
injustice.

May I reckon those who betray me as sacred teachers.

I offer joy to all beings and am one with them in their suffering.

May all beings and I be free from ego concerns of loss and gain.

Our healthy self-esteem can increase as we look at ourselves mindfully. We do
this by seeing ourselves just as we are:

I look at myself and my life without fear of what I may see or what I may find I
have to work on

I look at myself without censure, blame, or shame but with a sense of
accountability for any ways I have hurt others and I make amends

I accept myself as I am without an attachment to fixing, changing, or controlling
my natural inclinations and attributes

I let go of any attachment to the outcome of what is happening in my life right
now or for the future

I allow myself to live in accord with my deepest needs and wishes

I love myself as I am and take care of myself

I pay attention to my body and what it tells me about myself and the joys and
stresses of my circumstances

I am free of fear and craving

I share with others the gifts I receive and am thankful

May all beings have happiness because of my work, my gifts, and my practice.

From: *How Be To An Adult in Relationships*

FATE OR DESTINY?

Our destiny is to let the design of the whole universe work itself out in the display of our unique life. What we choose is destiny. What we refuse comes back to us as fate. It hits us from without when we refuse to heed its summons from within, as the tornado swooped up Dorothy when she was reluctant to leave on her own! “We are dragged by fate to that which we refuse to walk toward upright,” says Jung.

It makes spiritual sense to forge a lasting agreement with the universe, an unconditional Yes to “what is.” By that Yes, I am the embodiment of nature’s laws and harmonies. Shakespeare states this so profoundly in *The Merchant of Venice*: “Soft stillness and the night become the touches of sweet harmony...Such harmony is in immortal souls.”

Each generation presents to the universe a population of people who have just the right ingredients in them to make the world better for that epoch. Each person is an utterly crucial cell in this mystical body of humanity. Our work on ourselves makes us healthy enough to transcend our fears and attachments so that we can make our unique contribution to the world. There is synchronicity in the fact that here and now the world always has just the human resources it needs to further its evolution as befits our era. Our work is to become fit for our part.

Nature participates in the same synchronicity by its drifts of species and seasons of change. It creates an ice age and a temperate age in accord with the over-all requirements of evolution. I am here at the right time for me to make my contribution and nature is supporting me by presenting just the conditions that promote this enterprise. And so are all the people and events in my life. Each one assists me, either by support or challenge, in moving toward the full expression of my destiny: to bestow the abundant riches of my love, wisdom, and healing on my world. These riches come from the treasury of all mankind and they are accessible to all of us only through each of us: “My work is that of a collective being and it bears Goethe’s name.”

From: *The Power of Coincidence: How Life Shows Us What We Need To Know*

WHOLENESS WITHIN

- I am always opening myself to more consciousness, i.e., more light
- Sometimes I fall down in my resolve to love generously. I admit this without despair. I accept myself as I am, neither condoning all I have done nor castigating myself. I make amends to those I have hurt. I accept responsibility for the consequences of all I have caused.

- I create an atmosphere of forgiveness and mendable failures in all my relationships. No one is perfect and no one is permanently excluded from my circle of love. I am never at ease as long as I have even one grudge. I let go of the will to retaliate; I will the transformation of others not the punishment of them.

- I see that the armor that was protecting me from fear was actually preventing me from being fully free of it. I admit my fears, feel them fully, act as if they were not able to stop me, and find an alternative that frees me from them. With this program, I am combining defenselessness and resourcefulness.

- I see that honoring a Higher Power does not excuse me from even one of the conditions of existence but may grant me more resilience, optimism, and resources in facing them. I acknowledge that spirituality is like an immune system: it does not prevent sickness but it does make for faster recovery and perhaps less susceptibility.

- I trust that I have a unique and significant destiny and that everything that happens to me is part of its unfolding. Synchronous events and meetings keep happening for just that reason. It is for that same reason I was given this lifetime. Everything in it is perfect.

- My destiny is to reach mystical union through a healthy personality and an evolved spirituality. My destiny is thus a holy communion of the human, the natural, and the divine. I make a fervent commitment to love wisely and to shower healing upon my world.

- Grace is the life force and it is the same in me, in nature, and in the Higher Power.

From: *How to Be an Adult in Faith and Spirituality*

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Love is our finest human grace.

It is the cause, the means, and the result of our human journey.

It is unconditioned by expectation, neediness, or the desire to change, control, or rescue anyone.

Love lets go and never clings or controls.

It takes nothing away from us; it multiplies when we share it.

Love lets the light through and survives the darkest gloom.

Whatever is true about love is true about each of us.

Love and we are just one miracle.

Love is not our goal. It is our very identity. It is not something to be achieved. It is what we always were and already are. It is experienced uniquely and differently by each of us.

Every choice in life supports or denies this one penetrating fact.

Every risk in relationship is a challenge to love more.

Everything that happens in and through us is about this incorruptible and inalienable love: how we can see it, how we can show it.

Unconditional love is the most powerful builder of our immune system. It actually protects us physically as well as spiritually.

Paradoxically, it also makes us vulnerable emotionally. We become softer, more permeable, more accessible. We become centered, strong, and free enough to let our heart be penetrated while keeping it nonetheless intact.

In a very real way, we are who we are because of the love others have shown us. Our every adult asset began as a gift from someone who loved us as we were and thereby encouraged our unique self-emergence.

Our origin was in this living dialogue of love. We are alive because love brought us here and wanted us to stay here.

Love is not an emotion but an unsentimental Being-Here-Now: generously, non-hurtfully, powerfully, truthfully, consciously — irrespective of others' behavior toward us.

Once love means consciously choosing to Be-Here-Now in an unconditional way, we can love not only people but the “What Is” of our life.

The starting point of our love for others is our sane and fearless love of ourselves.

Love gives us the courage to see what is, to see it all as wise, to see it all with humor, to see it all as the very best predicament in which we can become free. Jung recommends “an affirmation of things as they are, an unconditional Yes to that which is, . . . an acceptance of the conditions of existence.”

Each person, thing, or event wants us to love it and when we do, it tells us its once-silent secret: everything is in itself an imperishable Yes. To love unconditionally is to join in the harmony of the vast and endless Yes of the universe, the music of the spheres. This love makes a cosmos out of chaos, a whole out of parts, a breath out of death.

The challenge is to accept and to love — without fear — all the Frankensteins we have created in life and even the ones with which the universe surprises us.

When we look in the mirror and see a scared face, we are only looking at years of habit and conditioning. Our real image is of power and love, waiting to be acknowledged so that their light can break through.

We love ourselves by showing our feelings, by being tender toward the places in ourselves that we do not like or that scare us, and by not staying in addictive or abusive relationships or circumstances. We move on to horizons that offer nurturance and honor our lovability.

In these ways we embrace our destiny to demonstrate in time the timeless love we are—“else a great prince in prison lies.”

Love is all that can satisfy the mute irrepressible longing we carry inside us. Our life will always feel strangely deficient until unconditional love happens.

Only then do we realize what had been missing all along. Only then do deserts bloom. Only then do we find their manna.

The most perplexing and elusive mystery about love is that we can show it totally and yet we can never really know how much we love someone or just how intensely we are loved.

It is deeper than we can imagine or ever have imagined.

Sometimes a wink, a touch, a word, or a gift reveals a depth of love we never guessed was there. But not even then do we know the full extent of the love, only one of its striking, sustaining, and momentary manifestations.

The limitation is in our minds which do not have the capacity to conceive or appreciate how profound love is. Our actions can show it all but our minds cannot let it all in.

Love is ineffable. We can never adequately put our love into words because words are categories of our minds and love is a living experience.

This is why love is such a unique mystery: we actually contain and channel a power that is greater than ourselves. Love is the something about us that points beyond us, our Higher Power.

How poignant and bewildering that we have intellects inadequate to grasp the most precious of all realities! “Such are the tears of things.”

The more we advance on our spiritual path, the more we appreciate that everything good, everything beautiful, everything life-affirming—even pain—is actually love.

We realize that the thread of coherence that has pulled together the surfaces and depths of our life has always and only been love.

Unconditional love is what we have looked for whenever and wherever we looked for anything: in relationships, in sex, in people-pleasing, in family ties, in any ties.

All the while it has been here within us and here everywhere around us. The only search is for that which is always and already ours.

What makes us human beings so uniquely wonderful in this puzzling universe is that we never give up on love.

Against all odds, with no guarantee of being loved in return, out of the hate and hurt so often handed us, in the face of the meaningless suffering history has let us see, we go on loving. We make a door of every gaping hole, a threshold of every prohibiting wall.

What deep respect we deserve for this capacity of ours to take what fate chooses for us and to make a choice of love in return!

How can we ever doubt the specialness of the part we play on this planet? What honor we deserve for handling, indefatigably and indomitably, the most delicate and tender task of evolution: to make love out of nothing and to let it last.

Our experience is that human beings live on. From this I infer that it is the law of love that rules mankind. It gives me ineffable joy to go on trying to prove that.

— Gandhi

From: *How To Be An Adult*

CONCLUSION: WHAT MAKES US HUMAN

*Moment by moment, things are losing their hardness;
now even my body lets the light through.*

-Virginia Woolf

Our innate longing to find order in chaos
Our playfulness
Our indomitable hope
Our outrage at evil
Our irrepressible sense of humor
Our ability to love unconditionally:
to go on loving no matter how we are treated by others
The durability of our capacity to love no matter
what happened to us in the past
Our willingness to put ourselves second,
even to risk our life for others
Our capacity to forgive and let go
Our ineradicable belief that there is goodness
and redemption in every human heart
Our sense of accompaniment by a protecting presence
Our knack for showing our best when things are
at their worst
Our intuition that reveals more than we logically know
Our choice to be honest when no one is looking
Our refusal to accept defeat in the face of unalterable odds
Our striving for what lies beyond our grasp:
our inclination to stretch
Our power to say, do, or be something that leads to
healing ourselves and others
Our abiding sense that the universe is friendly and that there is ultimately
a loving intent in all that happens to us.

From: *How to Be an Adult in Faith and Spirituality*



MAY I GREET THE ALL-ILLUMINATING DAWN
OF LOVE AND ABUNDANCE AND
MAY I ALWAYS REMAIN LOYAL
TO THOSE WHO ARE STILL LOST
IN THE EVER-DARKENING SUNSET
OF FEAR AND DESIRE.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Richo, Ph.D., M.F.T., is a psychotherapist, teacher, and writer in Santa Barbara and San Francisco California who emphasizes Jungian, transpersonal, and spiritual perspectives in his work. He is the author of many books about personal unfoldment and spiritual development.

Dr. Richo's CDs, MP3s and books online catalog,
serving the US and Canada, can be viewed on the web at:

<http://www.davericho.com>



