

Healing Journey level 6. Introduction to the 2019-20 edition.

Healing Through the Mind.

Note to people beginning the study of level 6 of the Healing Journey program:

It is important to study and practise the ideas and techniques of levels 1-3 before beginning level 6; it helps, but is not essential to complete levels 4 and 5 also – these can be done along with or after 6. The manuals for all of these levels, along with my published books (downloadable), are available free on the Wellspring (go to Wellspring.ca\healing journey program\online resources; for level 6, scroll through to the workbook for that level)

This sixth level has 4 parts. We begin in part 1 (topics 1 – 5) with a review of basic techniques for self-healing: watching and trying to manage our thinking, connecting thoughts, images and emotions, and exploring beliefs about ourselves. We explore some new ideas about these topics, but the main difference from earlier levels is that you are encouraged to pursue them with greater intensity and to greater depth: there is no end to what can be learned from dedicated study of the internal monologue! In part 2 (topics 6-10) the focus is mainly on beliefs about the possible impact of mind on body, and on our motivation for self-healing (which is entwined with those beliefs). In part 3 (topics 11-14), we develop the ideas around beginning a spiritual search more fully than in earlier levels. Part 4 consists of 3 additional topics on healing our lives.

Most of this level 6 can be viewed against a background of conventional views about the world and our place in it (“material realism” – see topic 6). However, we introduce a new “paradigm” or way of thinking about reality (see next page), and you may find that this provides a much more compelling reason to expect that mental change may indeed promote physical change and healing. The last few topics of this course contain some ideas that follow specifically from this new paradigm. If you find it too strange, however, I would suggest simply staying as open-minded as you can and focussing on the specific techniques as a way of gradually expanding your views of what is possible.

This manual is intended as a guide for people interested in home study, which we understand may not appeal to everyone. During the course itself, we will explain the main ideas and practise the techniques, and this alone should prove useful. However, we encourage everyone facing a diagnosis of cancer, even if it has been apparently treated successfully by medical means, to use the Healing Journey program as a springboard for a future lifetime of self-awareness work. This does not guarantee continuing good health, of course, but all of our research and clinical experience suggests that it makes this more probable, while conferring a sense of meaning and fulfillment in life that becomes the primary motivation for persevering.

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The New paradigm: Physical reality as a product of the mind's activity.

A thoughtful person who tries to make sense of an experience of serious disease (or any other disaster, for that matter) is likely to ask some fundamental questions: "Is there any meaning to this?" "Why do bad things happen anyway?" Which may lead to: "Why are we here?" "What is the nature of 'reality' and how do I fit in?" Various answers to such questions have been given over the millennia – by philosophers, religious leaders, and more recently by science, but as a society we still operate on a view that was prevalent at the time of Isaac Newton: the world is seen as a kind of giant machine, in which things only happen as a result of physical interactions, and are not directly influenced by our thoughts. A different understanding is possible, however, one that is based on the ideas and experiences of great sages and mystics over millennia, (the "new" paradigm, shown below), supported in many respects by scientific evidence acquired during the last century. This new/old view has great practical implications for people interested in self-directed healing. I summarise the main points below, and then expand on them.

Principles of the new paradigm: the nature of reality, and how this affects healing.

1. Our consciousness works through the brain-mind, but exists independently of it.
2. Consciousness precedes mind and body: it forms ("creates") physical reality. We are not simply passive spectators of the world, but help to construct it with our consciousness.
3. Consciousness is arranged in an orderly hierarchy, in levels or "shells" of increasing complexity. The highest level may be viewed as a vast "Intelligence", "God", "Source", or overarching consciousness. Our minds are part of all of this - there are no real boundaries.
4. This Intelligence, or Source, is entirely benevolent.
5. We are usually unaware of our true nature as consciousness or "mind-stuff", embedded in a hierarchy of consciousness. This is because our very limited and fixed beliefs or concepts of reality, and of ourselves, obscure our connection with the Whole, consigning us to a kind of tiny, mental "prison".
6. We can greatly expand our awareness of the higher levels of our consciousness, seeking help and guidance from them, and thus gain much more control over our experience, including the state of our bodies.
7. Healing is ultimately this expansion of awareness, leading to experience of connectedness with all.

Some further explanations of these principles: there is a great deal of evidence for them, first from the experience of many people, but also, in some cases, from scientific investigations. Perhaps the best way to view them is as a guide to our own exploration – we will find that we can validate much of the new paradigm for ourselves, although this takes time, of course.

1. (First point in the new paradigm, above): The idea that consciousness precedes matter, that we are at root “mind-stuff” rather than material stuff, is, of course, central to many religions. This essential core of ourselves has been given various names – spirit, soul, essence and so on - and it implies survival of at least aspects of ourselves after death of the body. It is opposed by our society’s insistence on materialism – the view that only matter is real. Some of the best evidence for the fact that our minds, while normally acting through the brain, can also act independently of it, comes from studies on “out of body” (OBE) or near death experiences (NDEs), such as cases where people have been clinically brain-dead for some days, then unexpectedly recover and relate stories of passing into light, interacting with other beings, feeling overwhelming love and security, and other phenomena, which tend to be similar in many of these instances (see, for example, the recent book, “Proof of Heaven”, by a neuroscientist, Dr. E. Alexander, who describes his out-of-body experiences during several days in a coma). There are studies published by scientists who have collected literally thousands of these accounts, and carefully examined them for validity, e.g. to verify that the individuals did indeed show no brain activity during their NDEs.

A related kind of evidence, for those open-minded enough to consider it, is the vast body of “channelled” material from a wide range of sources. Channelling involves a living human, either wide awake or in trance, receiving and writing or dictating ideas purporting to come from a non-living agent, that is, from a “mind” unencumbered by body! The Koran, parts of the Bible, A Course in Miracles, and many other seminal works, have been transmitted in this way.

2. The second major new principle is perhaps less familiar: that consciousness actually forms or creates physical reality. This is a radical shift from our normal view of the world as a kind of “stage”, independent of ourselves, on to which we are deposited at birth, so to speak. We are used to thinking of ourselves as largely passive spectators of the world, and that at best we can make small changes through our actions. This principle tells us that, to at least some degree, we form it, by thought and intention.

Understanding and eventually accepting this view requires reviewing and revising all our ideas about reality. We can cite some lines of evidence that point to the conclusion. First, it is well established, even if not widely accepted, that the mind can influence matter at a distance without energy flow intervening. For example, when a computer is programmed to print out plusses and minuses in a random order, a person simply sitting and trying to influence the fall of these numbers can sometimes do so – i.e. can induce, by mental intention alone, more plusses than expected by chance. The effect is small, but statistically significant, and shown in literally thousands of experiments over many years by several scientific groups. It works equally well when a mechanical sorting device is substituted for the computer. The effect can even be shown if the experimenter, focussing on influencing the machine, does so after it has done its run, provided nobody has looked at the printed record in the meantime!

Another example of mind acting at a distance is the “remote viewing” protocol, also well-established by a number of scientific groups, in which one individual is sent to a location which may be many miles from a home laboratory where a second person is asked to draw what the first is looking at. The drawings, in many cases, show a startling resemblance to the scene

being viewed miles away. Once again, this does not seem to depend on a strict time sequence: at least in some experiments the drawer can play his or her part before the observer is sent into the field, and even before it has been decided where he will be sent! Both time and space seem to be different than we imagine – not absolute qualities, but dependent on conditions (which is what Einstein’s theory of special relativity showed us a century ago). There are other experiments in what is sometimes called “paranormal” science; for example, telepathy has been documented, as has precognition (knowing what will happen ahead of the event). There are also many experiments on healing by mental intention and by prayer. All of this large body of work tends to be disregarded by most professionals since accepting it requires a complete revision of our ideas about reality. (There are many books for the lay reader describing some of these fascinating phenomena. A good place to start is with those by Lynne McTaggart, a journalist, e.g. “The Intention Experiment”. You might also try “Entangled Minds” by Dr. Dean Radin, who has himself carried out many important experiments in parapsychology).

Western physical science itself has done a lot in the last century to undermine the old-fashioned “common-sense” view of reality. The universe, as the famous physicist Sir Arthur Eddington said, begins to look more like a giant thought than a giant machine. For example, quantum physics has taught us that any observation changes what is observed. We can no longer think of an electron as a little object circling around a central proton, for example – it is instead a wave, and could be almost anywhere until observed. The same is true for larger particles, and physicists like Amit Goswami (see, for example, his very readable “The Self-Aware Universe”) argue that nothing that we think of as a concrete object has any physical form until some consciousness views it – we give form to the world by our perception and thought. If this seems strange, consider the rainbow: it does not exist “out there”, but is simply an impression on our retina and brain when we look at the sky through rain with the sun behind us. It moves as we move; without a viewer, there is no rainbow!

3. The idea that consciousness is arranged in an orderly hierarchy, simpler forms operating within more complex arrays, is something that mystics and channelled voices have been telling us for centuries. It does not, however, seem to be something for which we can get evidence in a scientific way, since we do not know how to measure “consciousness” (and perhaps in principle cannot). That need not stop us thinking intelligently about it. Whatever consciousness is, it obviously exists in degrees or levels; simple organisms like bacteria, or single cells within our body, must have a much simpler kind of consciousness than we do. It is not unreasonable that there exist more complex, overarching assemblies which include our human consciousness as a kind of sub-set or “sub-program”. Organisation of such complexity as some kind of “hierarchy” seems probable.

The clearest account I have found of all this comes from the Seth books, channelled by Jane Roberts (e.g. in “The Nature of Personal Reality”). We will examine Seth’s description of what we are, in terms of consciousness, later in the course, but for now may say that our ego, the ordinarily self-aware or “small” self, is simply a part of a larger organisation that he calls the Whole or Higher Self, or Entity. Each Entity has many small selves (incarnations if you like – but since time and space are not absolute but ideas we have constructed, these selves, these “lives”, all take place together). The Entity is embedded in still higher levels of the hierarchy, and overarching all is what Seth calls “All That Is”, corresponding to what religions have called “God”.

4. “All That Is”, and in fact the whole organised consciousness that constitutes our underlying reality, is entirely benevolent. In religious terminology: God is love. This is obviously not

something we can assess with the methods of physical science, but instead is a proposition that we must test for ourselves. How to do that? Using the time-honoured methods of the great spiritual systems or paths, which advocate meditation and prayer, inner “listening”, surrender (to the divine), reading spiritual works, meeting with others of like mind, various rituals, and so on. With sufficient dedication and practice it becomes clear that “help is available” to us. We will address some of these ideas later.

It is possible, as when pondering how consciousness is arranged, to speculate about this most important principle, that the “structure” in which we are embedded is benevolent, rather than indifferent or malevolent. The existence of any hierarchy, even within our own limited experience in this world, depends on the higher parts taking some care of the lower, otherwise the structure could hardly endure. And if our true “Self” is indeed a more complex and diverse level into which our ego-self is embedded, then our very existence as apparently separate little selves would seem to depend on the good will, so to speak, of the Higher Self.

5. And 6. We are on firmer ground with these 2 principles, since they are open to testing through our own efforts and experience. We begin this course by examining some of our entrenched beliefs, for example, the important set of beliefs we have held, all our lives, about our own worth. We can also read some of the many books now available from great spiritual masters and from modern interpreters of the “perennial philosophy” (basically, what I’ve called the “new paradigm”), reassuring ourselves that the message has been the same across time and from many cultures. As we gradually release our grip on limiting but long-held concepts of what is possible, we become more open to actual experience of “higher” dimensions of ourselves (i.e. of the hierarchy). Unexpected and self-transcending experiences may occur, and perhaps in compensation for the miseries of a cancer diagnosis, these experiences seem to be more likely when we are afraid for our lives. We may find and follow a traditional spiritual path and enhance our experience by practising its techniques.

Finally, we come to understand healing in a quite different way: as the expansion of awareness of who we are, not only in an intellectual sense, but as actual experience. This expansion seems, in itself, to benefit the body, but whether the body heals or not, issues of life and death are now seen in a very different light.

Practical approaches to expanding our awareness

It is essential, if this healing work is to be pursued effectively, to be strongly motivated, and willing to reflect on and journal about the new ideas, and practice the various techniques regularly. Cancer, with its threat to our lives, can be a strong motivator! But after a while, as a new sense of “who I am” becomes established, you will probably find (as many previous students have done) that this kind of self-exploration is valued for its own sake, and that it brings meaning and joy into your life. So at the outset, examine your motivation honestly (we’ll help you with some exercises), and be determined to cultivate a strong motivation (affirming this often to yourself). Think of healing as the main priority in your life, and not as a duty that you have to somehow “fit in” to a busy, worldly schedule.

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The course is divided into 4 parts or phases, each with a number of “topics” (listed below). Each topic includes exercises typically intended to occupy one, sometimes two, weeks’ work at home.

List of topics

Part 1: Managing our thinking	
1	Monitoring our thoughts
2	Beliefs, and changing them
3	Quietenng the mind
4	Beliefs about oneself
5	The “Ego Triangle”; thoughts, imagery and emotions. More on beliefs about oneself.
Part 2: Using beliefs to affect the body	
6	How does my mind affect my body?
7	The central importance of “messages”
8	Beliefs and healing; finding out what we believe.
9	Beliefs and healing: using beliefs to change the body.
10	Purpose in life and will to live.
Part 3: Contacting higher levels of our consciousness	
11	Contacting the Higher Self.
12	Dreams; a gateway to the deeper mind.
13	Spiritual Aspects of Healing: Clarifying our Aims
14	Pursuing a Spiritual Path.
Part 4: Integrating expanded ideas on healing into our lives.	
15	Unblocking our lives.
16	Accessing our “sub-personalities”
17	The Nature of the Self/Soul
	Appendixes

Part 1: Introduction

The Healing Journey program is all about using our minds to understand ourselves better and thus potentially change all aspects of our lives: attitudes, behaviours and body functions. You will have seen, from level 3, just how much of our day-to-day experience depends on how we think about events. You may also have explored the possibility that actions of the mind may have an effect on the physical processes of disease and healing: in levels 1 and 2, for example, we used mental imagery in an effort to assist our physical healing. In this level 6 course we will address this idea in more depth. It's an unconventional view, not given much attention by modern western medicine, since we tend to think of our minds as something intangible that could hardly affect a concrete process like the growth of cancer. How then can we understand a possible healing influence of mind on body?

The body is, of course, a very complex structure, with many levels of organisation. As an analogy, think of a big corporation, with a CEO, vice-presidents, section heads, executives, shop foremen, and so on. The healthy working of any such organisation depends entirely on clear and accurate information. The same is true of the body: "messages", which begin in the mind as words and images, are translated into electrical and chemical signals, and pass freely from one level to another. There's a constant flow of information via the nervous system and the endocrine (hormonal) system down to the organs, tissues and cells. Physiologists (scientists who study the body's functions), know a lot about these mechanisms. However, the possible role of the mind, as a kind of overarching level of control, affecting all levels of the body, has been largely (not entirely) neglected by medical scientists and physicians. Yet it is clear that mental state is vital to health: think of the impact of severe depression on a person; or conversely, remember a time when you were elated about some success or accomplishment, and the "charged up" sense that created. An extreme but well-studied example of mind affecting body is "voodoo death" where in some societies, a witch doctor can cause an individual to die within days simply by telling them this will happen!

Our task in the first 2 parts of level 6 is to get some control over the messages that we send, constantly, from our thinking minds to the deeper levels of mind and hence our bodies. The healing process has 2 steps, "diagnostic" and "therapeutic". The first step is to uncover or discover what these messages are: if we have been promoting illness through unskillful thinking, we need to identify these harmful patterns. Then, having done so, we proceed to the therapeutic step, changing the thoughts (along with their accompanying images and emotions). Note that we are working with "software", rather than hardware; just as with our computers we operate on the software without knowing what is happening in the machine, so with our mind-body work we try to manipulate patterns of thought, without needing to know how the body translates these, as it does, into chemical messages.

We will address "messages" specifically in part 2 of the course. In this first part, we review some of the basic principles and techniques of mind management: monitoring our thoughts, examining our beliefs (in particular, about ourselves), trying to quieten the chatter in our minds, and the intimate relationship between thoughts, emotions and images. You will have met much of this material before, but there is no practical limit to how much awareness and control we can develop.

*A busy mind is a sick mind
A quiet mind is a healthy mind
A still mind is a divine mind.*

(Traditional Hindu proverb)

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Topic 1: Monitoring Our Thoughts

Quote: "Cultivate your mental state" (Anon).

The single most important thing you can do towards healing through the mind is to become aware of what's "going on" in your mind, particularly your thoughts, but also your feelings and mental images. This could be called "becoming an aware human being". Many people have little such awareness.

If you feel such a process is already familiar I'd suggest making a resolution to pursue this goal with even greater intensity and determination from now on. There is always more to be found in the recesses of the mind. Focus first on the "diagnostic" aspect – becoming aware rather than changing thoughts; we will discuss how to change them in the next session. Some questions and avenues for you to investigate:

- Why is knowing what we are thinking so important?
- For what proportion of your waking hours does your mind simply wander uncontrolled? (If you are keen to find out, you can keep a notebook with you for a day or two, every 15 mins or so making a note of your main mental activities).
- What "comes to mind", as thoughts or images plus emotions, when you think of:
 - What's for dinner tonight?
 - An old friend I haven't thought of for many years?
 - An upcoming clinic visit?
 - My most stressful moments?
 - Other situations: set your own questions to examine.....
- The mind monitoring needs to be supplemented by keeping a journal, in which we record significant thoughts and emotions from each day, analysing what was going on in our minds as best we can. In particular, any event that caused a strong emotional reaction needs to be re-examined, perhaps at the end of the day, if you haven't worked it out as it was occurring. Journaling in this way can seem like a chore – or you can represent it to yourself as a wonderful opportunity to learn. If we don't do it, many of our insights are lost, and the growth of self-awareness is much slower.
- Journal entries should be reviewed periodically – then you'll begin to see patterns. After a while certain habits of thought are immediately recognised as they occur and don't need to be recorded. Some questions:
 - If I haven't been keeping a regular journal in my journey so far, what has been my excuse (be completely honest!)?
 - What is stopping me now?

Basic home practice:

Practise monitoring your thoughts and feelings

- When sitting and watching the mind for 10 minutes or so.
- When "on the go" (compare with sitting).

Write about what you find. Ask yourself these 3 questions:

- (1) How willing was I to do this monitoring (what, if anything, stopped me?)
- (2) What differences did I notice between sitting and watching the mind, and doing it while moving around?
- (3) What were the main things I discovered about myself?

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Topic 2: Beliefs, and Changing Them.

Quote: "Reflection brings perfection". Anon.

Beliefs are simply ideas, usually derived from others at first, then repeatedly asserted by ourselves to ourselves. They are thoughts, with expectations attached. With time they come to be taken as "facts", e.g. "I'm a failure", or "I need 7- 8 hours of sleep each night", or "eating meat is essential/not essential/harmful to health", or even "the sun will rise tomorrow". Note that these are all beliefs, and not, ultimately facts, in the sense of being necessarily true. Many of our preoccupations, and hence beliefs (as you will discover if you watch your mind conscientiously) concern ourselves, our comfort, security, relations with others, and so on. We tend to be "imprisoned" by our beliefs – we take them as reality. In the case of our health, think of what deeply rooted ideas (and associated fears) the word "cancer" raises: it can sound like a death sentence, yet many of us recover from this disease. As an example on the social scale, members of a religion often believe that their understanding is the only true one, and may even go to war because of this belief.

Beliefs about ourselves and our lives are important to our health because they are messages, in the sense we discussed in the Introduction – signals from the mind, translated into chemical agents, which then move around in the body, affecting the tissues. An example we are all familiar with is the effect of a sudden fright, which causes release of adrenaline from the adrenal glands. This hormone has many effects on the body, directly or indirectly: it causes the blood pressure and heart rate to go up, for example, and sends blood to the muscles to prepare them for immediate action.

Examine your most deeply held beliefs in various areas relevant to yourself, for example:

- The need to justify myself by making a contribution in life.
- Whether or not it is OK to express my emotions, especially anger.
- Whether or not there is some underlying purpose or meaning in life.
- I'm bound to "go downhill" from now on because of my age/health/other....
- The relative importance to my healing of medical interventions and my own mental efforts.
- Things I can't do, that I'm "just no good at".

You may find, as you monitor your thinking, that most of your thoughts are beliefs in one form or another. Even a desire or wish for something is a belief – that things would be more pleasant if the desire were fulfilled. Or: "I have to do such and such tomorrow", which is a kind of belief in a forthcoming obligation. Explore this for yourself, i.e. what proportion of your thoughts are beliefs in disguise?

As for thoughts generally, our first task is to identify the beliefs – there is no point in trying to paste a new one over the old, as it were. For example, if you feel inadequate, you can profess your adequacy 100 times a day, but if you don't recognise the underlying drumbeat "I'm not good enough...." your efforts are unlikely to be successful (more on "self-worth" in session 4).

Which brings us to changing beliefs; having done the "diagnostic" work we proceed to the "therapeutic". The first thing to do is obvious, and follows naturally from uncovering an unwanted belief – we attempt to drop it. Now if it is an idea that you have been carefully cultivating for 30 or 40 years, it is not likely to disappear without putting up a struggle! So we keep at it, persistently acknowledging the belief as it pops up, and dropping it (e.g., saying to ourselves, "that's not the case"), perhaps countering it with an opposing affirmation. An example: you find yourself saying "I can't do that", and you might say to yourself "that's a belief I've been holding, but it's not reality", then replace it with an affirmation: "I'm quite capable of doing that" or something similar. To quote a well-known American politician: "Repeal and replace!"

More about affirmations: Having dropped what we don't want, we insert what we do want. We need to have a clear, believable idea of what we would like to accomplish or see happen; then as we deliberately insert our affirmations (in the form of words or images), 4 things are important. We must intensely desire the change, be diligent in our affirmation of what we want, expect that the change can happen, and avoid focussing on any "negatives". These 4 steps can be remembered as the acronym IDEA, as shown below.

I	Intensely desire the change: this is the "fuel", as it were, that propels changes in the brain and body.
D	Be diligent/dedicated in our practice: affirmations should be repeated regularly and as often and as intensively as possible
E	Expect that a change will happen: while accepting that it may not happen within any specific time frame.
A	Avoid focussing on the negative, i.e. what we see as obstacles. We know from our daily life that constantly expecting bad things to happen may make them more likely. This may even play out in our bodies: an expectation of getting more ill is a message to the body: "this is what is going to happen" People struggling with serious disease often focus, naturally enough, on the disease itself and how much they do <u>not</u> want it. We need instead to acknowledge what is happening, drop the unwanted self-suggestion, then move on, with our imagery and words, to affirming what we <u>do</u> want.

That last bit, under "A" is important. It's not about being a Pollyanna and denying your natural fears and concerns, but about first acknowledging them, then refusing to dwell on that scenario, and changing the internal messages.

We will have more to say about emotions and imagery in session 5, but clearly, an affirmation can be in the form of an image rather than words (if you think about it, both are symbols – representing something other than themselves). Images are arguably the most potent tool we have to make deep changes in mind and body – they "speak to" the tissues much more directly than words do (more about this in later sessions).

Affirmations can be made in our ordinary state of consciousness – that is, as we go about our daily business. But you may like to explore putting yourself in a deeply relaxed or light trance state (as in earlier levels of the Healing Journey course), then repeating the affirmations. This is particularly useful if you are using imagery: the mental pictures or sensations tend to come up much more readily when we are deeply relaxed. We will do exercises of this kind together in the class.

Basic home practice:

Find one or more beliefs that you want to change. Use the IDEA approach (or some variant of it that you devise). Do several sessions of applying healing affirmations or images while in a deeply relaxed/light trance state, and also construct a simple, verbal affirmation that you can repeat to yourself many times each day.

I would recommend picking some relatively straightforward problem for a first attempt, such as a habit of thought or behaviour, for example obsessing about some concern, resentment of someone, or compulsive TV watching or smart-phone use.

Write about what you find. Three questions to ask yourself:

- (1) How willing was I to do this practice (what, if anything, stopped me?)
- (2) What differences did I notice between the beginning and end of the week in the strength with which I held the belief(s)?

(3) What confidence do I have that shifting beliefs will affect my physical health?

Additional reading: Many popular psychology books deal with changing unwanted beliefs, for example D. Burns, “Feeling Good: the New Mood therapy”, and other titles of his. For those who want to go into this more deeply than modern western psychology does, I warmly recommend reading “The Nature of Personal Reality - A Seth book” by Jane Roberts, and in particular, the first 2 chapters on beliefs.

Some quotes from “The Nature of Personal Reality”:

NPR pg11. Basically you create your experience through your beliefs about yourself and the nature of reality. Another way to understand this is to realize that you create your experiences through your expectations.

NPR pg20. Your beliefs can be like fences that surround you. You must first recognize the existence of such barriers — you must see them or you will not even realize that you are not free, simply because you will not see beyond the fences. They will represent the boundaries of your experience.

NPR pg16.You take your beliefs about reality as truth, and often do not question them. They seem self-explanatory. They appear in your mind as statements of fact, far too obvious for examination. Therefore they are accepted without question too often. They are not recognized as beliefs about reality, but are instead considered characteristics of reality itself. Frequently such ideas appear indisputable, so (much) a part of you that it does not occur to you to speculate about their validity. They become invisible assumptions, but they nevertheless color and form your personal experience.

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Topic 3: Quietening the Mind

Quote: *"Thinking has become a disease". E. Tolle.*

You will have noticed, while monitoring your thoughts, just how unruly the mind can be. There's a constant drifting from one idea to other, associated ideas, a process that can leave us at times unaware of what is going on around us. Or we may become obsessed with some personal concern, turning it over and over in our minds. You may have discovered that a lot of our thinking is about past and future events, and that remembering an insult from 20 years ago still has the power to cause an emotional reaction in the present (check this out for yourself). This is so "normal" (meaning usual) that it inspires little comment. Yet the spiritual masters of all traditions have always pointed out just how unproductive, wasteful of energy and often harmful the "wandering mind" can be. They extol "inner silence", a state which is not at all passive, but rather a kind of inner listening, awareness, noticing, without the usual reflexive commentary that accompanies most of our observations. To quote Tolle:

"The wider the time gap between perception and thought, the more depth there is to you as a human being, which is to say the more conscious you are."

Tolle is, of course, a spiritual master, living in Canada at the present time. I strongly recommend his two books, "A New Earth", and "The Power of Now" (if his writing is new to you, "A New Earth" is an easier one to begin with). Tolle speaks of "presence" to describe the state of inner stillness. He emphasises the desirability of staying "in the present moment, the 'Now'", which, as you can confirm for yourself, means being relatively free of all thought. This state allows us to see ourselves, others, and the environment as they really are, rather than viewing them all through a veil of concepts that we have made up. He continues (after the sentence quoted above), to say:

"Many people are so imprisoned in their minds that the beauty of nature does not really exist for them. They might say, 'What a pretty flower', but that's just a mechanical mental labelling. Because they are not still, not present, they don't truly see the flower, don't feel its essence, its holiness – just as they don't know themselves, don't feel their own essence, their own holiness".

How do we reach a state of inner stillness; how can we stop the mind's restless and aimless wandering? It's not easy (to put it mildly!). The first step, as always in this work, is diagnostic – recognising how the mind behaves when uncontrolled. We need to reflect on what's happening, and realize how non-ideal that is. Then we are in a position to start the therapeutic phase: changing our mental state to what we want it to be. We can periodically try to "stop thinking" for a few moments – and you will likely find that a few seconds of this is as much as can be achieved! We can sit and stare at an object, trying not to think about it, just attend: this is a little easier, perhaps, but still no easy task. And then there's meditation, a word used to describe both a variety of techniques and the state they try to achieve, roughly one of focussed concentration in the relative absence of thought. Meditation techniques usually involving sitting, with the back straight, relatively relaxed, and bringing our attention to a focus – often the breathing, or a word or phrase (mantra) or prayer, or an image (perhaps of a spiritual being), or even just attending to what comes up in thought, and staying with that rather than letting the mind wander off.

Many books have been written about meditation. In addition to Tolle, mentioned above, the many books by Eknath Easwaran (including one specifically titled "Meditation") are easy and enjoyable

to read as well as being authoritative. But meditation is all about personal experience: no amount of reading and study can substitute for simply getting down to the practice.

Basic home practice:

- (1) You will be familiar with some meditation techniques from earlier stages of the Healing Journey. Perhaps you already have a regular practice of one of these. Following one or more of your meditation sessions, write about your experience. Note: if you have found meditation with a mantra or similar technique difficult (even impossible!) you are not alone! Try instead what Easwaran advocates: concentration on a prayer, going over it many times for 15-20 minutes. The prayer of St Francis is a good one (you can Google it). This has a similar meditative effect to using a mantra or focus on the breathing.
 - (2) As a related exercise, try staring at an object without thinking: a potted plant might suit, or a wall hanging. Gaze at it (shutting your eyes periodically as needed) for about 5 minutes, avoiding all inner commentary. At the end of this time, note your thoughts (if any) and emotional or other reactions towards the object.
 - (3) Walking without thinking. Try, while walking, to keep the mind quiet. You will probably find that you can do it for only a short time, perhaps seconds, but persevere, noting differences in the way you perceive your environment, and the “felt-sense” that goes with being silent while in the world.
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Topic 4: Beliefs about Oneself.

Quote: *“Focus on your abilities, not your liabilities” (Seth)*

The beliefs that matter most to us are those about ourselves, which we often take as undeniable truths. Many people believe they are somehow unworthy or inadequate. Often they never admit this, even (or especially not) to themselves, but it will affect everything they do. For example, a belief that one is “not good enough” may prevent someone from undertaking challenges that he or she is perfectly capable of meeting, and from growing by doing so. Or it may inspire excessive efforts to compensate for the perception of inadequacy, with resulting harmful effects on one’s health or relationships.

Work on our self-concept, central to conventional psychotherapy, is absolutely critical for those seeking to use their minds to affect a disease. Without an authentic sense of self-worth, the necessary intense desire and expectation for healing work, even for surviving, is difficult to muster. A Course in Miracles (ACIM, quoted frequently in HJ level 3) takes this reasoning further than is usual in western thought. For example, in chapter 12, the author says:

“If to love oneself is to heal oneself, those who are sick do not love themselves. Therefore, they are asking for the love that would heal them, but which they are denying to themselves. If they knew the truth about themselves they could not be sick.”

The “truth about ourselves”, as ACIM explains in depth throughout, is that we are part of a much larger consciousness, or “God”, and that we are not just the separate, physical beings that we conventionally imagine. However, we do not have to subscribe to this spiritual view in order to recognise that having a genuine love and respect for ourselves is important to our wellbeing, including our physical and mental health. Even without exploring the mystical viewpoint, it is pretty clear that if we don’t “love” (i.e. respect and accept) ourselves, we are unlikely to believe that we are worthy of help from any level of consciousness beyond ourselves.

Many people balk at this work because it is painful; we discover things about ourselves that we would rather not acknowledge. But it is vital not to bypass it: understanding what we think of ourselves is at the root of everything we do. The key to the process is always to go “deeper”, as if in an archaeological dig. As soon as you come up against a belief about yourself that seems potentially unproductive or harmful (for example, “I must do better than those around me”), ask yourself: “why do I believe that? What do I fear would happen if I dropped the belief?” Your answer may throw up another belief, such as, in this case: “Then people wouldn’t think I was worthy”. Repeat the process, by asking yourself: “Is it likely that people would think that?”, and “what am I afraid might happen if people didn’t think I was worthy?” Eventually you will come to some “rock bottom” idea, commonly a variant of “I’m just not good enough”, which you will see is quite unjustified, and probably a hold-over from early childhood.

Basic home practice:

Make a (long) list of what you think are your best and worst characteristics. For the “worst” ones, see if you can find the beliefs underlying them. So, for example, if you write that you are “selfish” or “timid”, find out why you act in those ways at times. Possible reasons for selfishness: “I learned early that if I don’t focus on my own desires, they won’t be satisfied”. Timidity could be similar: “I’ll be hurt or humiliated if I take risks”. Then ask yourself if these consequences are likely at the present stage of your life. For the “best” qualities, you can do the same kind of analysis but you probably will have no such

concerns – don't take them for granted, however: feel happy about them, and grateful to whatever the forces were that allowed them to develop as you grew up.

You can now link this investigation with the IDEA practice of the second session. Find and apply affirmations (words or images) to counter some of the negative qualities that you are most unhappy with. It's similar to what you did in session 2, but this time, hopefully, you are digging deeper into basic characteristics of yourself.

- What were the "negative" qualities that you came up with? Does it now seem rational to hold these opinions of yourself? How many of them are still valid?
- Do you (sometimes) believe "I'm not good enough?" If so, how do you plan to combat this in future?

Additional exercises (if desired): some specific ideas about yourself to examine:

- Do you see yourself as "smart"? Have you lived up to your potential?
- Do you believe it is OK to express your emotions freely? If not, why not? (What do I fear might happen if I did?).
- Are there areas in your life about which you feel guilty or ashamed?
- Do you, deep down, regard yourself as superior/inferior to others?
- Do you have any sense that you "deserved" illness?
- Do you feel you can control events around you, or that you are basically helpless before them?
- Do you have a right to recreation, free time?
- Do you feel you have a right to do what you want to do in life?
- Are you creative? In what areas?
- Do you feel attractive to others?
- Do you feel the "the Universe"/God/some Higher Power cares what happens to you?

Try not to give knee-jerk answers like "of course I'm in control, smart, attractive...." and instead "dig deeper", acknowledging any unwanted conceptions of yourself – without doing so, you can't change them. Then tell yourself: "these are ideas about reality, not reality itself".

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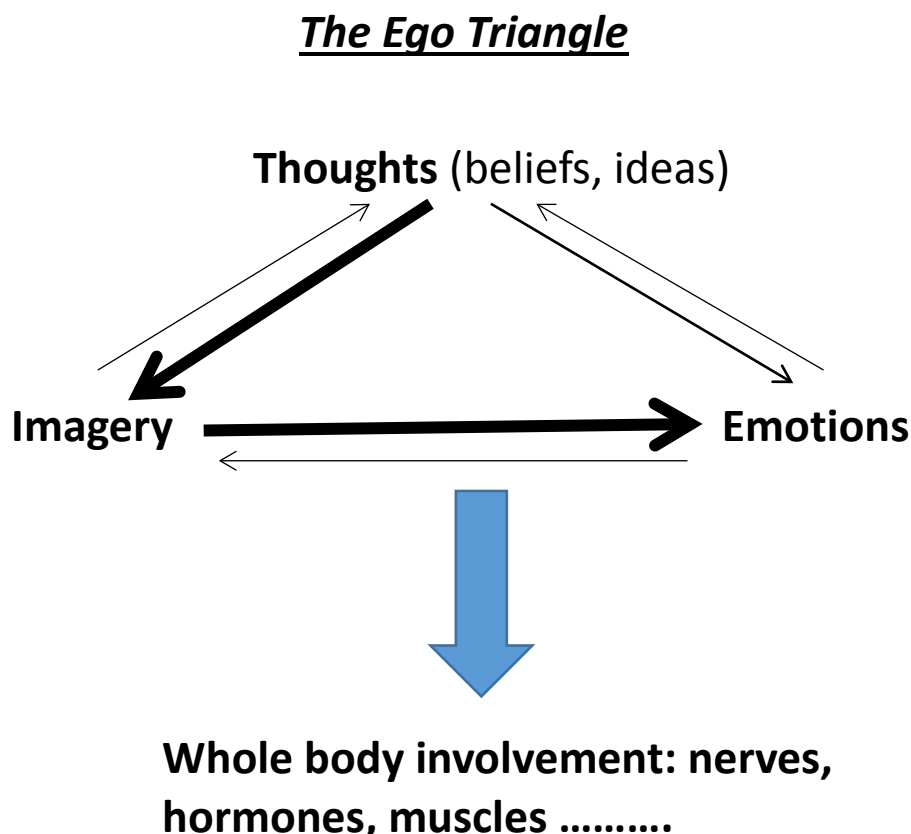
Topic 5: The “Ego Triangle”; Thoughts, Imagery and Emotions. More on Beliefs About Oneself.

Quote: “To love yourself is to heal yourself” ACIM.

In level 1 of the Healing Journey we noted that emotions are regularly preceded by a thought – even if the thought flashes very rapidly across the screen of consciousness. It may take close attention to detect this. In both levels 1 and 2 we also introduced another aspect of the mind’s workings – mental imagery. Images, too, are closely connected with thinking. In our current work we want to look more closely at the relationship between these 3, vital elements of our mental activity.

The attached diagram (below) shows this relationship: thoughts give rise to a mental image which in turn prompts an emotional reaction. This is the usual pattern, one which you need to verify for yourself. For example, you’ve been shopping and are going to get your car from a crowded parking lot. There will be a (probably very brief) mental picture of where you parked it, followed by a small glow of relief at remembering this – reinforced when you actually find the car. Or imagine you have a visit to a doctor tomorrow: this thought will be accompanied (in fact followed immediately) by some kind of mental picture of the clinic and other aspects of the visit, then followed again by an emotional reaction to the idea – perhaps fear, if the visit seems likely to produce difficult news.

The weaker arrow lines in the diagram show that there are other directions to some of this mental movement: emotions and images will in turn prompt thoughts; imagery and emotions may interact directly. But the most important “pathway” seems to be: thoughts, to images, to emotions.



A reminder: images are any mental representation of what we perceive outside, or summon up from the “inside” (memories). They are often visual, but can also be auditory (sounds) or even tastes, smells or touch images. Images are like blueprints for action: imagination becomes “image-in-action”! “Emotions” are something we are all intimately familiar with, although experts have difficulty defining them. My dictionary of psychology says they are “a complex state of the organism, involving widespread changes” in the body, accompanied by “a (mental) state of excitement or perturbation, marked by strong feeling, and usually an impulse towards a definite form of behaviour”! In simple terms, an inner feeling usually prompting a desire to act.

You will need to satisfy yourself that this “triangle” or triad, (the terms are mine, and not “official”), is the “software”, so to speak, that drives much of what we do in our lives. Now there is a second, extremely important aspect to this, emphasised by the big, downward arrow in the diagram: when the triad is activated, the body, unavoidably, becomes involved. How? In any thought with an emotional component, the possibility of action, or potential action, is implied. There is a “gearing up” phase when nerves are firing (electrical and chemical messages passing between them), production of hormones, like adrenalin, and muscles tensing in preparation for movement, whether or not this follows. Even when the thought is not obviously about doing something, for example, “I remember how mean she was to me”, there is an image of the interaction, and an emotional response to the memory, inevitably causing some arousal of various bodily systems. We are all aware that we can get quite “stressed out” by sitting in a chair obsessing about past injustices!

People often wonder how to “handle” emotions, particularly if, like anxiety/fear, they are hard to bear. The ego triangle offers us guidance here: since, as we see, emotions are intimately linked to thoughts and images we can use these other mental tools to gain some control (this is not to say that “control” is necessarily appropriate with all emotion: the appropriate reaction to sadness, for example, may be to leave it alone!). Perhaps the most important idea is to allow your emotions to be, rather than suppressing them (because they are painful). I suggest a “4A” acronym here:

- Acknowledge the emotion (as opposed to pretending it’s not there). Sit with it for a time.
- Allow yourself to express it as appropriate, e.g. through sharing your feelings with others
- Access the thoughts associated with or behind the emotion – they are always there.
- Adjust the thoughts (i.e. don’t try to turn off the emotion directly, but find out and change whatever thoughts are causing any undue persistence of the distress).

Coming back to self-concept. It is possible, I suppose, to think about oneself in an entirely detached or abstract way, but generally, when we do think about ourselves, it is in connection with some other actions or ideas – myself in relation to my world, in fact. If you watch your mind while thinking about yourself you will find that the same kind of triad of thought, images and emotion is activated. The body will automatically respond; it can’t help doing so, even if the response is slight and unnoticed. In other words, thoughts about oneself prepare the whole system of mind and body for possible action. Our “self- concept”, far from being a bloodless abstraction, is in fact more like a blueprint or a template guiding what we do. Actions are often blocked, of course. What we call “stress” is not the situations we find ourselves in, but the inner conflict that follows from not being or feeling able to take appropriate action or to somehow express the resulting emotion

In a sense, self-concept is a kind of representation in the body of what we think we are. The concept is “written” in our very nerves, muscles and other tissues. Someone with high self-esteem may have a confident stance, a mind relatively free of conflict, vigorous health in the tissues, and behaviours to match. Another individual with a “poor” self-image may be anxious or depressed, have a hunched

posture, be prey to various ailments, and unable to pursue behaviours that are in his or her best interest. Becoming familiar with the ego triangle is essential both to improving our own self-esteem and to further progress in mind-body healing. Once we know this pattern, we will see that it is not so far-fetched to imagine that a “disease” symptom is very like a “self-concept”, a representation of mental ideas in the body’s tissues. Practice of various “mind-body” disciplines, such as hatha yoga, tai chi, or chi gong, can sensitise us to the intimate and constant interplay between thoughts and bodily arousal.

Basic home practice:

Consider a number of everyday situations, and investigate how the “ego triangle” operates in each case. For example. Use the “internal video” approach to clarify (i.e. become very relaxed first, as an aid to accessing images).

- going to the local store to buy groceries
- wondering what to cook for dinner, what to wear today, when to go to bed, what to read next, what TV to watch (if any).....
- planning to talk to someone about a sensitive topic; or to someone who scares you; or to someone you dislike; or like very much
- bring to mind situations involving illness: visiting a clinic; sensing a pain in your body; wondering about your lifespan; thinking about your family should you die prematurely
- Now shifting to self-concept specifically: if you doubt that you are sensitive about your “worth”, consider a case where someone cuts in front of you, either in a car or standing in a queue – follow this one down to its core idea!
- Imagine interacting with someone you suspect dislikes you.
- Think about a task that you must do that you find difficult – how is self-concept involved?

Please don’t restrict yourself to these examples: find your own, and let it become a habit to analyse any situation that appears to cause you to react emotionally (even when the reaction is slight). Developing such awareness is the core process in “personal growth” and self-healing.

You will find that you can start at any point on the triangle, i.e. start with an emotion, and try to sense what the thought provoking it may be, and any associated images. Or begin with an image (often visual, but it could be a feeling sense or a sound), and note how emotions are immediately prompted, and thoughts as well.

Additional exercise (if desired). In a deeply relaxed or light trance state, allow a picture to develop of how you see yourself and your world. If you have a current illness, this may well appear in your depiction, but we will be addressing illness more specifically next session. Then draw this picture of yourself, noting that whatever you put down, and the way you do it (timidly vs boldly, calmly vs angrily, and so on) tells you something about your self-concept. The drawings are symbols for how you conceive of yourself in your “deeper” mind. You may come up with a symbol to represent yourself; try to let this happen spontaneously, i.e. without controlling it. Some possible examples: a lighthouse (guiding others), an old but beautiful tree (providing a home for others), a rock (resistant to the waves), a wild horse (free, bold...). These are all rather fine things to be – you may at first arrive at something less inspiring, but if so, work with it, see if it can be upgraded!

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Part 2. Introduction

We have been examining how our minds work, and acquiring some familiarity with the stream of thoughts, images and emotions that are responsible for our moment-to-moment experience:

- We practised monitoring the mind, noting how much of our usual thinking is uncontrolled and unproductive.
- We explored ways of quietening this mental “noise”.
- We saw that many of our thoughts are in fact beliefs – most of them, if we accept that “wants” and “don’t wants” are beliefs that some desired change would benefit us.
- Beliefs can be inspiring, but in practice our unexamined beliefs (particularly about ourselves) may do great harm, and are often disempowering.
- In attempting to gain some control over our minds we saw the value of splitting our manoeuvres into “diagnostic” and “therapeutic” phases: finding out what we are telling ourselves before trying to change it.
- We examined the effective use of affirmations, using the IDEA acronym.
- We discussed the intimate relationship between thoughts, images and emotions, which together constitute the main “software” through which we can exert some control over our minds, and through the mind, our bodies.

For this next section, we move to considering further how the mind can affect the body. We will take a very practical approach, since we are mainly interested in the question “What do I need to do to use my mind to improve my health?” However, before we get down to techniques, we need to consider some fundamental issues, such as “Just what is the relationship of mind to body?” and even “Who am I?”

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Topic 6. How does my mind affect my body?

There are 2 very different principal views about the nature of our minds, and their relationship to the physical world:

1. The conventional (materialistic) view.

Medical science, and our society's ideas in general, are centred around a philosophy of material realism or, (for short), "materialism". Realism is the view that the world is an independent reality, a kind of stage on to which we are "dropped"; it is exactly as we perceive it, and does not depend on our perception of it. This is an idea that has long been recognised (at least in its simplest form) by philosophers as naïve and incorrect. We can see this for ourselves: for example, our view of the world depends on our organs of perception; many animals see different parts of the electromagnetic spectrum than we do, and so see a different world. Materialism claims that everything in our world can be explained in terms of matter and energy in various forms. This has worked well as a platform for the development of technology in our society. However, it is a very limited view, with no way of accounting for spiritual experience or for the many well-documented observations of mind acting independently of matter, such as "near death experiences", telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance (seeing at a distance), psychokinesis (mind moving matter), "channelling" (receiving information from a non-material source), distant prayer effects, voodoo death, phenomena in quantum physics, and even the familiar placebo effect (I discuss this further in the general introduction). When applied to medicine, it leads to an underestimation of the importance of mind in maintaining health. Healthy behaviours are beginning to receive attention, and the role of the physical signals used by our nervous and endocrine (hormonal) systems is understood, but the central importance of our inner mental state, our consciousness, tends to be ignored in most quarters; the body is seen rather as a machine, and mental activity as a simple by-product of physical processes in the brain.

2. The spiritual view.

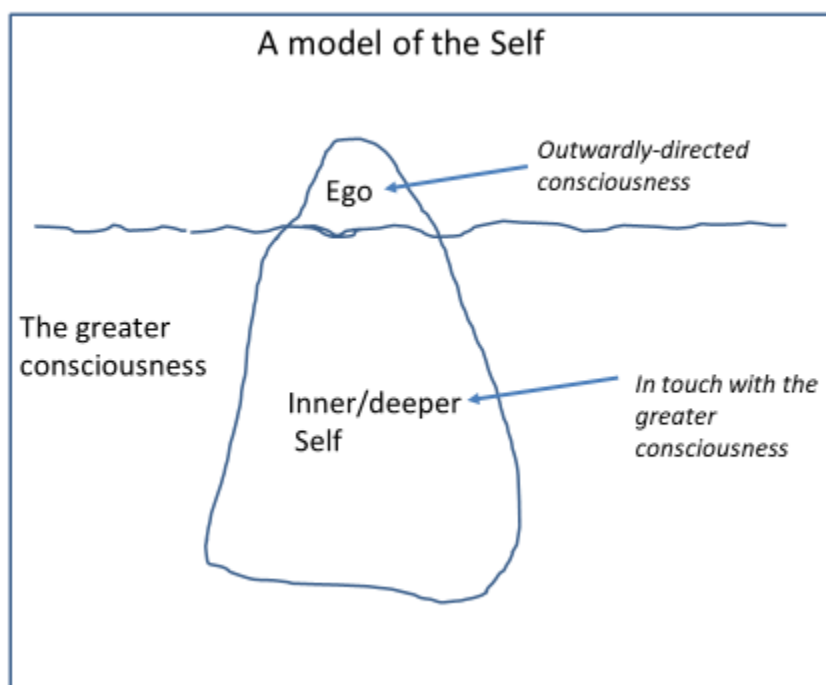
The alternative to materialism is what we might call the "spiritual" view: that our essence is in fact not material, but consciousness or "mind-stuff"; our bodies, and the whole physical world and universe are somehow projected or derived from an all-embracing non-material consciousness (which a religious person might term "God"). This is very different from our usual way of thinking about things, so it can help to have a simple visual model to explore it.

In the diagram below the "iceberg" is the part of consciousness that we may think of as our individual self. It is bobbing around, so to speak, in an ocean of the greater consciousness. Above the "waterline" is the material world, which is in some way fashioned by the perceptions of all the individual consciousnesses underlying it. Our "minds" are that part of consciousness that is expressed through the brain. Note this way of thinking about the mind-brain relationship is opposite to the conventional; our bodies, being part of the material world, emerge from consciousness, rather than the other way around. If this is true, it follows that we can expect the mind to have a powerful potential influence on the body, acting in ways that we may not yet understand, in addition to the nervous and hormonal pathways that we know about already.

All of these parts of consciousness/mind in the model – the ego mind, Inner Self, and ocean of consciousness – are connected and influence one another. The Inner Self is in free communication with the greater consciousness in which it is embedded. The ego, however, is that part of consciousness that thinks of itself as separate – it tries to "go it alone" – with often unfortunate consequences. It separates itself (or thinks it does) from the Inner Self and the greater consciousness by adopting a portfolio of

inhibitory beliefs and expectations, for example that it is really only a body, nothing more, and that its role is to control virtually every aspect of life.

These ideas often clash with people's previously-held beliefs: to examine their validity, we need, first, an openness to considering them, followed by reading, reflection and some kind of personal spiritual or contemplative practice. This is well worth undertaking, since, as you can see, the spiritual model provides us with powerful reasons to believe that the mind may promote healing of the body, because of its intimate connections with a greater order.



Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- What do I think about all of this? What ideas and information have I relied on up to now, and how firmly am I attached to my conventional ideas?
- If I'm sceptical, what would it take to convince me that the spiritual view is correct?
- What have you read or otherwise encountered in this area?
- Have you personally had any experiences suggestive of mind being independent of body?
- If you are sceptical, ask yourself why? Perhaps you have just taken for granted the usual cultural views? Or you may have encountered and been put off by some of the rather wild assertions of the less responsible "New Age" writers.

Could consciousness give rise to bodies (and other physical forms)?

This is perhaps the hardest part of the spiritual view to understand. In the context of healing from disease, we ask ourselves: "How could an intangible thing like my mind affect a concrete, physical reality like a cancer?" The materialist ideas that we have all been steeped in since childhood make this difficult to accept. On the spiritual view, however, anything that exists in the physical world, including the body and any disease symptoms, exists first in the domain of consciousness. Thus a change in mind/consciousness produces a change in the physical body. This is not quite as strange as it may at

first sound: I like to imagine the underlying reality as a kind of formless “electromagnetic soup”, and that we “shape” this into the kinds of forms that our senses allow us to see. As Seth puts it:

“The physical senses actually can be said to create the physical world, in that they force you to perceive an available field of energy in physical terms, and impose a highly specialized pattern upon this field of reality. Using the physical senses, you can perceive reality in no other way.” (Seth Speaks p 78).

In other words, the nature of our senses determines (limits) what we can perceive. We know this is true: a colour-blind person sees a different world than a person with normal colour vision. A squirrel, or an ant, no doubt perceive physical reality very differently from humans. They don’t simply fail to have our “correct” view – they see a different reality.

- Have you considered this last idea before – or have you assumed that the world picture of a 21st century western human being is the only true one?
- What do you think of the possibility of a non-material force/energy/event (there are no suitable words, which tells us something!) affecting matter, even creating it?

A simple, everyday example that I like which shows how our senses “create” our physical experience is the common rainbow: if we look in the right direction so that sunlight is shining through raindrops, we will see a rainbow – but if we move a few steps to one side, we see a slightly different one! If we are not looking, the rainbow we were observing is no longer there!

- What is your reaction to this “rainbow” example? Perhaps you wondered if you could prove its independent existence by taking a photo of it? Possibly you have encountered the old conundrum: “If a tree falls in a forest and nobody is listening, does it make a sound?”

To be clear, the new paradigm goes beyond the simple idea that our sense organs determine or limit what we can perceive of a “real” world “out there. Rather, the act of perception may actually determine the physical nature of what is seen. This is an old idea in philosophies of the “East”, and one which since the “quantum revolution” a century ago has begun to be accepted by many physicists (although, to be fair, it is still a minority view). A very readable account is the book by physicist Amit Goswami “The Self-Aware Universe: how consciousness creates the material world”, where he claims that this is what we are doing all the time - giving form to what he calls “formless potentia”.

These ideas, if new to you, may be hard to accept – and there is no immediate need to do so; our work on beliefs in the next few topics does not depend on their truth. The reason for putting them forward here is that, if true, they provide a rationale for believing that the impact of mind on body may be much more profound than we have previously thought. We can begin to consider the idea that our little individual minds may have a role in shaping our world, and that this extends to the body, that is, in addition to the conventionally known mechanisms by which mind affects body.

The practical question is: “Does my mind determine, to at least some extent, what happens to it, including health and disease?” Seth answers “Yes” to these questions:

“You constantly give yourself suggestions about your body, your health or ill health. You think about your body often, then. You send a barrage of beliefs and instructions to the inner self that affect your physical image” (Nature of Personal Reality, p83).

“If you realize that your beliefs form your experience, then you do indeed have an excellent chance of changing your beliefs, and hence your experience. You can discover what your own reasons are for choosing (an) illness by being very honest with yourself.” (The Way Toward Health, p231).

Basic home practice.

There is obviously a lot to consider under this topic heading. I suggest pondering the questions posed above, discussing them with others, and reading some of the texts recommended in the Introduction to the course. Youtube is a valuable resource these days: if you search around you can access brief videos of talks by experts on subjects like these – the nature of reality, of consciousness, and how mind and body are related.

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Topic 7. The central importance of “messages”

The mind contacts the body by sending it “messages”: if we want to move our arm, a message passes from the mind via the nervous system to the muscles of the arm. Many more messages are transmitted outside of our awareness, such as those that control automatic processes in the body, like digestion and blood pressure regulation. According to the conventional (materialist) view, these messages all require a physical carrier – usually impulses along the nerves, or hormones. The newer (spiritual) view doesn’t in any way deny this, but adds the idea that some messages between mind and body occur without such physical intermediaries (and recall, it has been well documented that the mind can indeed affect matter without physical connections).

We would like to gain some control over these mind-body connections. We have already seen the power of words (affirmations), images and emotions to affect our bodies: a simple example is the way imagining a peaceful scene can relax the whole body. In taking control we have to work within that part of the mind of which we are aware, and use two main kinds of message, words and imagery.

1. Words.

Words are symbols, meaning that they stand for something more than just themselves. “I want to live”, held with passion and without ambivalence, is a tremendously powerful statement of a person’s overall memories and ideas about the value to herself of her life. It can mobilise innumerable changes in her physiology (the body’s processes). We tend to underrate grievously the impact such inner statements can have on the body. It seems to us that we can’t simply command a change in the body: “pain go away” doesn’t work. Yet under hypnosis, where the subject’s mind is relatively still, such commands can often do surprising things, like relieving pain. This suggests that some of the apparent limits to a direct influence of verbal statements on the body are a result of contrary thoughts and general scepticism. Seth:

“You get what you concentrate upon. There is no other main rule.” (Nature of Personal Reality, p 45).

This is a key idea: notice the word “concentrate”. He does not say “we get what we want”, because wanting is often undermined by thoughts like “Oh, but that couldn’t happen”. We need to find out for ourselves the extent to which we are sabotaging our efforts at healing changes, by not “concentrating” fully upon them, that is, by allowing interfering or contrary thoughts to arise (and see the next topic, #8).

- The most obvious way we interfere with effective messaging is by allowing the mind to wander. We have all found how difficult it can be to keep the mind still. What helps?
- Having the mind wander off on irrelevancies is one thing – actively pursuing a line of thinking opposite to what we want is quite another, and we don’t need to do it, once we catch the negatives. Think of a health change you desire, such as relief from a symptom. Sit quietly watching the mind, having expressed the wish for relief, and note any thoughts that undermine that possibility. Your immediate thoughts after stating the wish are often key here. You will need to be alert for subtle “wisps” of negative thinking.
- If you have a serious disease, you will probably think about it often during the day. Watch your mind to determine how much of that thinking is “negative”, i.e., gloomy ideas about what might happen, how much you wish things were different, and so on.

- We discussed in part 1 the common-sense idea that “intensity” of desire is important to promoting change. What does “intensity” mean in this context (what is happening in the mind if we are intense, and what is absent?).

2. Images.

Images are a richer, more complex kind of symbol than words – they carry more information (think how many words are needed to describe a mental picture). Mental images “speak” more directly and forcefully to the body than words do. So it makes sense to try to imagine healing change, wherever possible, in terms of inner pictures (visualisation), i.e. to accompany your verbal expressions of desire to heal with such images. (You will recall that we emphasised healing imagery in levels 1 and 2 of the Healing Journey program).

If you find it difficult to construct an image (or even if you are skilled at imagery creation), try using the “light”, a sense of light first filling you and then pouring out through the palms of the hands, which can often be held over affected parts of the body. The “Divine Light Invocation”, Taught by Swami Sivananda Radha, is a valuable way to invoke light in the body (and “light” here means more than just the physical, of course):

I am created by Divine Light,
I am sustained by Divine Light,
I am protected by Divine Light,
I am surrounded by Divine Light,
I am ever growing into Divine Light.

- Experiment with this – repeating the mantra/prayer, filling yourself with light, and holding your hands over an area of the body where you want relief.

At the practical level then, healing through the mind depends on getting to know what we are thinking or imagining, and changing whatever is not working for our benefit. Instead of being exclusively concerned with material/physical interactions, our focus shifts to the information or messages passing between different levels of consciousness and the body. The new model offers far greater possibilities to the conscious mind, and this HJ level 6 is a beginning exploration of these potentials.

Where do messages come from, and go to?

We tend to be aware only of what is going on in our ego minds (the tip of the iceberg, in the diagram in topic 6). The ego is a kind of clearing house for both incoming and outgoing messages: an example of “incoming” might be sensations from the body, or words read from a page of text. “Outgoing” messages include directions for actions of the body, communications with others, “replay” of old memories, and ruminations about whatever is of most concern to us at the moment. We are not limited to transmissions between ego mind and body, however. The “deeper” part of the mind (which we have called the Inner Self) constantly sends and receives messages to and from ego and body, although most of them are out of our awareness. And according to the new model of the greater Self that we have been considering, messages are received from and sent to the higher levels of consciousness, as when prayer is used in an attempt to contact these levels, or to be guided by them.

Becoming aware of messages from the higher levels is not simple – the “signal” tends to be weak and obscured by the loud noise of the ego’s chatter. Spiritual masters talk of attending to “the still, small voice within”. The quality of these inner messages is different: they tend to be more like intuition or knowings – there is really no appropriate word in the English language for them. They may appear to come from spiritual figures or guides. We need inner quiet to receive such information, which

can often be profoundly significant to us. Situations causing deep emotion seem to open us up to receiving messages from within; for example, if we are desperately afraid for our lives. In such a case, a religiously minded person might seek guidance from a spiritual figure, but a non-believer can use the same mental potential if she will accept that information is available from higher/deeper levels of her own, extended Mind. Dreams are another source of information from deeper levels; although usually thought of in our culture as coming from what Freud called the “unconscious”, they can tap into spiritual realms very effectively at times (more on dreams in topic 12).

Basic home practice:

The table below is a summary of the main avenues through which our minds interact with our bodies, our world, and the higher levels of our consciousness. It can be used to develop your own “protocol” for healing through the mind. List some of your own incoming and outgoing messages under the categories shown. You might construct an extended table with a column showing your own experience and understanding of the messages in the different categories, followed by a further column listing what you need to do in each case to expand that experience.

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Messages to and from the ego (self-aware) mind.

Incoming	Sensations from the body (via sense organs)	From the environment: <i>for example, through eyes, ears and pressure receptors in the skin.</i>
		From the workings of the body itself: <i>most of us recognise only relatively gross changes, such as pain, digestive dysfunctions, difficulty breathing, and muscular tension. More subtle awareness can be cultivated through disciplines like yoga and chi gong.</i>
	Input from other people	<i>Reading, workshops, discussions, religious services. Social interactions.</i>
	Messages from “higher” or deeper levels	From <u>dreams</u> , and other “altered states of consciousness” (e.g. drug-induced): <i>with practice, dreams can reveal much about our desires and ideas that we were not aware of in the waking state.</i>
From many levels of the <u>greater Self</u> : <i>including near-death and out-of-body experiences. Non-verbal “knowings”, for example reassurance that we are loved and supported, or advice on decisions, may come when the mind is quiet, as in contemplative prayer or meditation.</i>		
Outgoing	“Surface” or ego	<u>Beliefs</u> : <i>these are the habitual patterns of thought that are readily accessible to our awareness. We constantly broadcast messages that affect our bodies, for example. We have discussed uncovering and changing these throughout the Healing Journey, and will do so in more depth in the next topic.</i>
	“Deeper” ego	<i>More concealed conflicts, i.e., psychological problems, often about self-concept and out of awareness, which affect our conscious behaviour and our bodies. Resolving them may require professional help, although much can be done by a determined self-healer.</i>
	“Existential”	<i>Deep, often non-verbal ideas and feelings about one’s place in the world, the purpose and meaning of one’s life, and whether there is a clear path to achieving whatever we see as fulfilling for ourselves. These affect everything we think and do with minds and bodies.</i>
		<i>Messages (devotional) to higher levels of Self/avatars/Divine Being</i>

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Topic 8. Beliefs and healing; finding out what we believe.

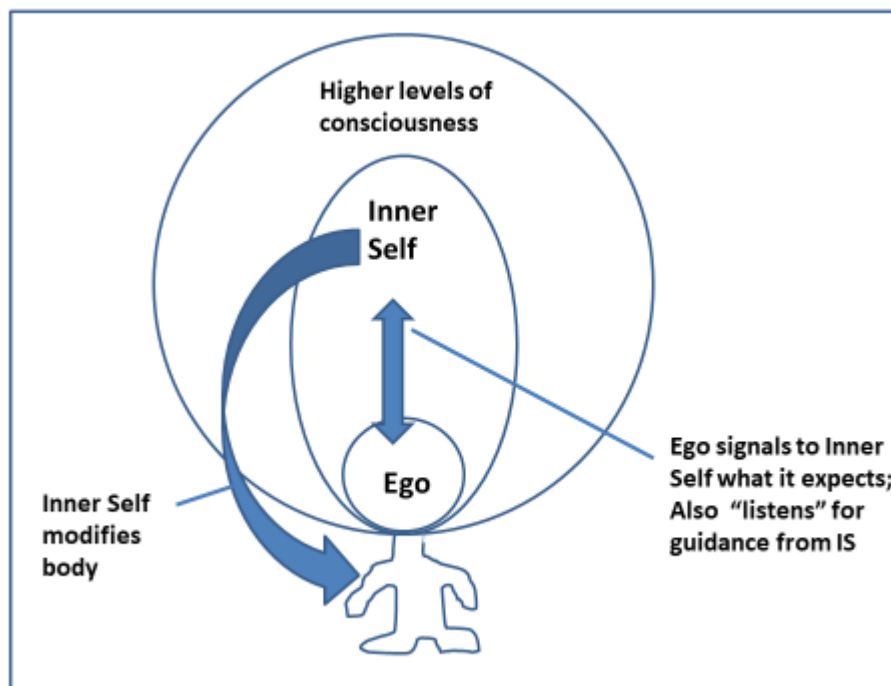
Quote: "Any physical ailment is symbolic of an inner reality or statement". Seth

Our beliefs are key to healing through the mind, because they have such a strong potential impact on the body. We all have some sense of the power of belief in the case of physical activities where our voluntary processes are involved (i.e. when we are using our muscles deliberately): if we believe a task is going to be difficult, or impossible, it is likely to prove so. Athletes know that their mental confidence plays a large part in their success. The reason for this is that if we are not confident, not believing in ourselves, we undermine our performance in many subtle ways by allowing contrary thoughts and fears to creep in. There are accounts of feats far beyond what we usually think possible when people are subject to extreme threats, or under hypnosis, probably because the "negative" ideas don't have a chance to get in the way under those conditions.

It is harder (in our society) to accept that we can change or heal hidden, inner processes in the body by any act of mind. Yet there is some scientific evidence for it: for example, biofeedback research has shown that we can take control over a lot of body functions that were thought to be entirely independent of the conscious mind; yogis have been reported to perform remarkable feats, such as drastically slowing their heart rate; warts, which are virus-induced tumours, have at times been removed by suggestion under hypnosis. Mind-induced changes in normal body processes are probably responsible for such events, for example, by redirecting blood flow or heightening the activity of nerves and muscles. This is not the only possibility, however: according to the spiritual/esoteric view we are considering here, beliefs can also act directly to change physical reality. While it can be hard to believe that events in the mind could promote or hinder the growth of cancer, we are going to keep an open mind, and see what we can uncover about the possible relationship of our own beliefs to cancer, and how we might change our beliefs to oppose its growth.

The clearest explanation I have found of how mind forms reality, and how it can be used to heal the body, is in the books by Seth (through the channel Jane Roberts). While his teachings are consistent with what many spiritual writers have put forward, he explains how all of this works in much more detail than most, and in a relatively simple and practical way. According to him, the ego mind (that is, our normal, thinking mind) appraises the world around it, and decides what it wants and believes. This information is continually transmitted to the Inner Self, which tries to produce the desired effects in the body, or in our lives generally (see the diagram below). There are limits to what can be done, obviously – nobody lives forever, or regrows a limb – but there is much more potential for deliberate change than we usually imagine. However, this healing pathway – from ego to Inner Self to body – is subject to frequent interference by opposing pessimistic or sceptical beliefs, also sent from the ego mind to the Inner Self.

"All practical healing deals with the insertion of positive suggestions and the removal of negative ones" (Seth, in "The Way Toward Health", p171).



Our first task is to discover what messages we are sending (we are usually unaware of them), and to remove or at least downplay any that act contrary to healing. In the next session we will discuss the “therapeutic” part of the process: replacing obstructing ideas with healing alternatives. In this session we will focus on the “diagnostic” arm: seeking out potentially harmful habits of thought and attitude by asking ourselves a number of searching, perhaps uncomfortable questions:

- (1). Consider how indoctrinated we have become with materialist ideas (meaning that we tend to think only concrete matter is real) by imagining the following scenario.
 - You have a sudden new pain – what immediately comes to mind, in terms of possible causes and what needs to be done to “fix it”?

This little mental experiment will likely show you how a fearful event in the body typically prompts us to look for physical causes and solutions. We generally downgrade the possibility of help through our minds – i.e., we don’t believe in its power. (Please note, we are NOT advocating ignoring symptoms or failing to have them checked out by a physician. Physical medicine is the dominant health care mode in our culture, and we should use all the help it can provide).

- (2). Associations to the word “cancer”.

Sit in a relaxed fashion and ask yourself the following:

- (a) What is your immediate reaction – mental-emotional – to the word “cancer”?
- (b) What other associations do you have to it, e.g., ideas about suffering and death, about possibly leaving loved-ones.
- (c) Apart from the inevitable fear, are there other emotions that a diagnosis has brought up – for example, anger, frustration, shame, or bitterness
- (d) What are the thoughts or beliefs behind the various emotions you identify, especially fear, and any others. This needs careful investigation, i.e. ask yourself “what exactly am I afraid of?” Complete honesty is needed for this exercise (and all of them) to be useful.

(3). Your expectations about healing through the mind.

People often have a vague feeling that “the mind can’t do much”. It is worth finding out where this “block” in confidence lies: it could be in any or all of the areas below. So consider these 3 connected but distinct questions carefully:

- (a) To what extent do you now feel personally familiar with techniques of healing through the mind?
- (b) To what extent do you believe that these techniques, if properly applied by someone, are capable of affecting the growth or recurrence of cancer?
- (c) To what extent do you believe you yourself are able to apply these techniques effectively?

(4). Psychological conflicts, possibly contributing to the disease.

An idea that modern medicine (the branch of “psychosomatics”) shares with the new paradigm we’ve been examining is that psychological conflict may lead to physical symptoms. Further, at times these symptoms may symbolise the problem (e.g., muscular paralysis brought on by fear of the consequences of movement). Can you think of any personal conflicts that may have led to, or are promoting, the development of ill health, and possibly cancer? (Note that just because you think of something like this it does not necessarily mean that this was a causative agent, but it does tell you what you believe is an important area of work to heal your mental-emotional state, which may well affect the body. Some areas - you may be able to think of others):

- Any sense of great loss in your life - of relationships or other important features.
- A sense of low self-worth or shame.
- Any thought that you deserved to get the disease (as “punishment” for something?)
- Any belief that work or other life habits contributed to the disease.
- Any sense that your life may not matter much to others.
- Any idea that life is no longer worth living for its own sake.
- Any idea that a fatal disease could be a “way out”.
- Hidden “secrets” about yourself that others don’t know.
- Any premonitions that you were bound to get cancer.
- Any thought that because other related people had it, you must get it also (of course, there are sometimes – quite infrequently – genes shared by related people that promote cancer. However, even having such a gene doesn’t usually mean the disease is inevitable).

Basic home practice:

- Investigate the questions above, writing about your findings
- Do an imagery exercise in the usual way, by relaxing deeply and going to your inner sanctum – a room, chapel, cottage, garden – whatever place allows you to feel at peace and focussed. Keeping the critical thinking part of the mind out of the way, try to let images and ideas form that are associated with the disease. They may symbolise or represent it, as your deeper or unconscious mind sends you messages about it. Focus more on finding out (diagnosis) than on solutions, at first. If you have had a cancer removed, you could call up memories of when it was present, or focus on the possible risk of recurrence. Document your findings with drawings or paintings and with verbal descriptions.
- Another way to do this is to imagine your higher consciousness as a point of light that enters the body and “visits” any cancer or affected areas. You may hold a “dialogue” with the cancer – ask it what it “wants” (or “wanted” if it has been removed), and how these requirements could be satisfied in another way without harming you.

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Topic 9. Beliefs and healing: using beliefs to change the body.

Your answers to the questions posed in the last topic will give you some idea of the wide range of beliefs that may arise in our minds when we are suffering from a serious disease. Once you have done the “diagnostic” work, you will begin to see which beliefs and reactions are disempowering; the obvious first “therapeutic” step is to try to drop these, and replace them with more helpful affirmations. We are not suggesting that a person with cancer (or other serious conditions) should deny or avoid what is happening in the body; it’s rather a matter of finding upbeat alternatives to the usual pessimistic ideas that crowd into our minds.

There is a wealth of opportunity for beneficial change in most peoples’ unedited ideas about disease. For example, if you have been thinking something like: “this cancer has made me a less significant person, and I can’t any longer do all that I want to do”, you might replace that with “this cancer is the major challenge of my life; I will face it with all my resources, and find ways to do whatever I need at this time”. If you feel angry at the world/fate/God/the medical system, you might change that to: “nobody, including myself, is to ‘blame’ for this cancer; I accept it as a motivator to move ahead with my personal growth”.

Beliefs about oneself.

Before considering the disease itself, we need to return briefly to an earlier matter, by now familiar! Many of us will find that we have serious doubts about ourselves, our worth and abilities that can undermine any efforts we make to oppose a serious disease with our minds. These are “symptoms” also, of a mental nature. We need to work on them before, or as well as, addressing the healing of the physical body. I’d suggest reviewing topics 2, 4 and 5, and making sure we have in place some affirmations and images about ourselves as potent, worthy beings! It may help to recall our interview study of people with cancer who greatly outlived a fatal prognosis. In these people we consistently found 3 qualities, related to self-worth and generally not strongly exhibited in others who succumbed: “authenticity”, “autonomy” and “acceptance” - all essentially beliefs about themselves and their relationship to others. And in our long-term study of individuals with late-stage cancer who attended Healing Journey groups for a year or more, we found that the more involved people became in self-healing, the longer they tended to survive (you can find an account of these studies, which were published in peer-reviewed journals, in my book “Can the Mind Heal Cancer?”, available for free downloading on the Wellspring.ca website under online resources for the Healing Journey).

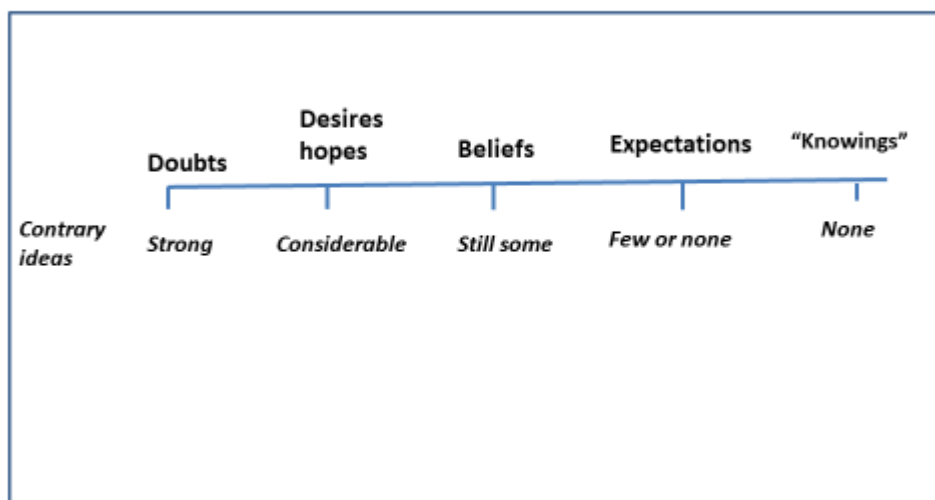
Thus before moving directly to imagining healing changes against cancer, you might consider these more general qualities that appear (not surprisingly!) to be important for healing, asking how they appear in your own life, and how you can strengthen them, and what blocks their expression in you.

- What would it mean to you to be “authentic”, i.e. to know what your life was truly about? (We will do further work on finding authentic purpose in life in the next session).
- What would it mean to be “autonomous”: to feel you had the right to do what was important to you?
- What does “acceptance” mean to you, and how does it manifest in your interactions with other people?

Mental affirmations to promote healing:

Beliefs and expectations play a large role in determining what happens in our lives. Here we are exploring whether they can have healing effects on our bodies. There is a range of possible attitudes to forthcoming events, shown in the diagram below. An attitude of “doubt” implies a great deal of

pessimism about whether what we want can actually happen. “Desires” are complex: basically a belief that some other set of events would be preferable to what we currently perceive. “Hopes” are like desires, rather undefined wishes for a desired future, usually tinged with doubt that it can actually happen. When we get to “beliefs” we are being more fully “positive”, but we may still entertain contrary ideas, mixed with the positive ones. “Expectations” do seem, however, to indicate that we don’t have any reservations. And at the top end of the scale, I’ve put “knowings”, meaning a feeling of certainty and connectedness that comes from some part of the mind/consciousness that is much deeper than simple thought.



Having identified our harmful beliefs, and tried to drop them (last session), our task is to replace them with affirmations of healing. Many professionals object to this on the reasonable grounds that, if there is no good result, the individual may feel very disappointed – it could make things worse rather than better! This is true if the affirming is done in a Pollyanna kind of way, and without any examination of what is actually going on in the mind. In fact, as we have seen, our thoughts are almost always a mixture of ideas, both optimistic and pessimistic. We need to expect to heal while acknowledging that this may not be enough to affect the balance between health and disease. According to the new model, the further to the “right” we can go (on the scale above), the closer we will be to allowing the power of higher levels of consciousness to affect the physical, with more potent healing effects. Yet as we move in this direction we may have to leave our doubts progressively further behind!

One way to resolve this dilemma is to focus on the process rather than the outcome; we are responsible for our thoughts, our self-healing efforts, but not entirely for what ultimately happens – other forces, beyond our control, play a part. We could say to ourselves: “I am responsible for my thoughts, and will immediately remove all ideas of hopelessness or helplessness”; then: “I will do everything I can, using positive thoughts and images, to oppose this disease, recognising the outcome is not entirely under my control”. With this as a background, we can now affirm something like: “I fully expect my mental intention will promote my healing.” Affirmation about a specific symptom might be: “I fully believe my mind can make a healing difference to this symptom.” (There is a fuller account of how to see this process in an Appendix to this course, under the heading: “Reconciling beliefs with outcomes”).

Mental imagery.

Mental images, like words, are symbols, representing how the mind views events in the body or in the environment. As we discussed in the last session, a visual image usually contains much more information than a verbal label about how the mind sees an event. For example, if your cancer looks to your mind like an alien invader, and you draw this, you are calling on a vast store of memories, concepts, movies, perhaps discussions with others – all bundled into this one picture; your mental-emotional conception of the disease. By identifying how you think and feel via imagery you are providing yourself with a lever through which to understand and manipulate the connection between the mind and this part of the body.

Exercise using imagery:

Relax deeply and move to whatever inner place allows you to feel at peace and focussed. Thinking should be kept to a minimum. If you have images representing the disease, let them appear. Now, as in earlier stages of the HJ program, you may bring in other images that represent removal of the cancer, or a surveillance for any remaining cancer cells. Another approach is to adopt an open, receptive frame of mind and ask what needs to change, and how. Your Inner Healer could be invited in, to offer guidance. You could have a “dialogue” with the cancer itself; you might acknowledge it as a part of yourself, but a part that has gone astray, and ask it what it “needs” for the tissues to return to normal. As with all of this work in the deeper part of the mind, the aim is to allow unanticipated ideas and images to emerge; often they will be unclear, perhaps fleeting. The first thing to “pop into one’s mind” is often the most significant. If you find imagery that seems life-enhancing, then you can use it as a form of affirmation during the exercise and perhaps also by bringing it to mind many times during the day.

As always, it is vital to draw and write about these important exercises, in your journal or elsewhere.

Basic home practice:

- Devise affirmations to counter negative predictions about your disease, and replace them with positive ideas, taking account of the subtleties needed in this endeavour, as discussed above.
- Practice your healing imagery daily – allow it to evolve. As you become more comfortable with the process of spiritual connecting (which will be further examined in later sessions) integrate this into your healing practice.

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Topic 10: Purpose in life and will to live.

Quote. "The excitement of living must come from you" (Seth)

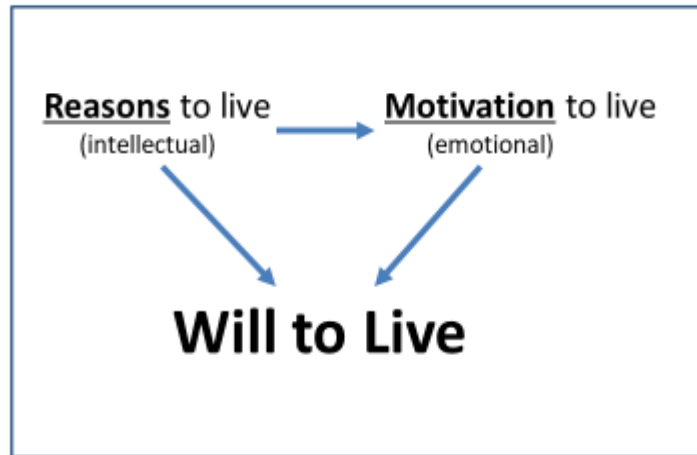
Most people with a serious illness, if asked "do you want to live", would reply "Of course!" They might even feel the question was insulting. Yet if that was followed up by asking "Why?" they might be at a loss for an answer: "Isn't it self-evident?" Well no, often it isn't. Very few adults in our modern world seem to experience the unfettered joy in life for its own sake that the more fortunate children do. It can be a valuable aid to our healing to investigate how we feel about living, to identify any thoughts that life is not worth the effort, and then actively to promote an enthusiasm for continuing.

- Ponder the question "Do you want to live, and why?" for a moment. You may find that an honest first reaction is something like this: "I'm afraid of suffering, and of dying – and what if there's nothing more when we die?"

Is this a "reason to live?" Not really – rather, it's a reason not to die! A reason or purpose for living implies some goal or experience that you need to be alive to have. And if we have a strong enough reason, if we feel we really need to live, that can be a powerful force for healing.

Lawrence LeShan, a psychologist and pioneer in the field of using the mind in cancer healing, found that patients who discovered a stimulating purpose in their lives often survived the disease (see his book "Cancer as a turning point"). We made similar observations in our own study of people using self-healing techniques, and in interviews of "remarkable survivors". The main point of difference between the survivors and others who did not survive advanced cancer was that they were clear about what mattered to them in life - "authenticity" - and felt entitled to pursue such goals - "autonomy" - (again, you can read about these studies in my book: "Can the Mind Heal Cancer?", and in the back of the level 4 HJ manual, both available free on wellspring.ca.; go to "HJ program" and "Online resources").

How does "will-to-live" affect what goes on in the body? No doubt it influences how the hormonal and nervous systems behave. But we should also recall the claim of the spiritual model: a feeling that "life isn't worthwhile" is a message from ego to body, via the Inner Self, not to overcome its health problems, an overarching attitude with potentially disastrous effects. This topic, even more than the last, challenges us with deep questions: what are our lives really about, why do we want to hang on to them, and how strong is our will-to-live? We will approach it by posing a series of questions which need to be carefully considered while alone at home, then ideally discussed with others in a healing group. The first group of questions are about purpose in our lives, which translates in practical terms into "reasons to live". The second group is about motivation – how strongly we want to live, which depends on having good reasons, but includes other elements, such as whether we feel capable of pursuing our authentic purpose, whether our environment is sustaining, whether we believe healing is indeed possible.



Reasons to live (purpose in life):

(Investigate the following categories, and write about your findings):

(1). Reasons to live #1: Pleasures of life:

- Loving relationships with others. (This is probably what comes to mind immediately for most people).
- List other activities that are pleasurable, stimulating, and/or make you feel content with yourself and your life. Even “small” things, like listening to music, reading the paper, morning coffee, chatting with friends....
- Write a similar list of activities that drag you down, are depressing or boring.
- Examine what proportion of your time is spent in activities in the 2 broad categories.
- Find beliefs that stop you from spending more of your time doing what you think is satisfying.

(2). Reasons to live #2: Creative activities:

- What do I want to create or accomplish in my life from now on? This category might include arts, crafts, sciences, business ventures, home improvement, sports, or many other activities and enterprises, different for everyone. The more intensely you feel it, the more important it is. Ultimately, try to find or revive reasons that make you “need” rather than just “want” to live! Such reasons can create a sense of excitement that reverberates throughout the whole body.

(3). Reasons to live #3: learning.

- What do I want to learn more about, and why?
- Personal growth or evolution – how important is this to me?

(4). Reasons to live #4: Helping others.

- Help for those related to me, or close friends.
- Help for others in the community (or even in the world!)

There may well be other categories that are not listed here: ultimately you determine the direction of your own investigations. Conversely, if you are somewhat depressed – understandable and common in people battling a serious disease - you may not find anything that moves you much. In that case I would advise looking for things that arouse a small spark of interest, or were stimulating earlier in your life, dwelling on them for a while, and pursuing them even if it seems to take unwanted effort – the action itself can bring an improvement in mood.

Exercise. An ideal day in the future.

This exercise is basically one we did in HJ level 1, which you can find as an audio track by going on the Wellspring website to “Online Resources” for the Healing Journey program. It also covers similar ground to that in “Assignment 5” of the level 4 workbook. However, it is well worth repeating, especially after exploring the questions listed above. As you do the exercise, keep in mind what you have discovered about the importance to you of other people and of helping them, and your creative and learning aspirations.

Get yourself very relaxed (light trance), and proceed to your inner “room” or other place from which you do imagery exercises. Now imagine, without allowing any censoring or doubt, that you are well, and on some future day (perhaps 5 years in the future) you will be doing whatever gives you most enjoyment and satisfaction – in other words, what is most meaningful to you. What is your ideal, ongoing, mental state? Imagine that there are absolutely no obstacles to your achieving this kind of life and state-of-mind, financial, social, career-related, or others. You could express this as developing a “vision”, or template of how you would like to be, mentally and physically, in a few years’ time: without such a vision to work towards we tend to fall back to the old views of ourselves, unchanged from before the diagnosis. Without change, of course, there can be no healing through the mind.

The important element here is simply to “play” with the process, relax and let images and ideas emerge, no matter how improbable they may seem to be at first. Make notes or drawings. You can subsequently begin to use your reasoning powers to devise ways to move your life in the direction that your deeper self has indicated would be “right” for you.

Motivation to live:

Questions about motivation to carry on living are among the most searching and intimate we can put to ourselves while doing this healing work. Few would want to admit to being tired of life, unless perhaps they are very old, yet it is understandable and probably not uncommon if you are facing serious illness and harsh medical treatments. It is also nothing to be ashamed of. What we are doing here is trying to “get out on the table” what we truly think and feel about our lives and the possibility of dying – once we are clear about those thoughts or beliefs we can decide whether or not we want to hang on to them: this clarity will guide our actions. The desire to live depends on having reasons for doing so, as we investigated in the previous section. However, motivation can be undermined by other factors, such as whether we feel blocked in what we want to do with our lives (and see topic 15), or whether we feel threatened or overwhelmed by circumstances. Behind all such negative views are usually ideas about our personal worthiness, so this is worth re-visiting. The following questions are all directly or indirectly concerned with the impact of self-worth on motivation to survive:

- (1) Do I have a right to live? This is a question which taps into our fundamental sense of worth. A way to start investigating it is to ask: “do I have a right to express myself?” Then “do I have a right to have my needs satisfied?”
- (2) Do I feel connected to some larger order? Belonging – to a project, an organisation, a country, a religion, to God, a society, a profession, or any number of other entities – can persuade us that it is important to carry on.

- (3) Why does my life “matter”? To whom (or perhaps to what?) You may think in terms of relationships to other people, to projects or organisations, or if you are spiritually inclined, then to a divine order or God, or you may understand that your life matters as a learning experience for your own greater being.

Exercise. Investigating my will-to-live.

This is a “thought experiment” that requires absolute honesty; the answers can be painful, in that they may contradict what you normally tell yourself at a more superficial level. Investigating them may allow you to choose a different set of aspirations if you want.

You are offered an immediate and painless exit from this life and world, at a time of your choosing. The following conditions apply:

- (1) Your loved ones will not suffer.
- (2) Your various responsibilities, financial and so on, are all taken care of.
- (3) You are certain that the death of your body is not the end of you – that you will be going to some other realm more interesting and pleasant than this one.

The question is: would you accept this offer?

- If you answer “No”, it implies you have some strong interest, passion, vocation or purpose that makes you want to stay on this Earth. Spell that out.
- If you answer “Yes”, then clarify what, if any developments in your life might change your mind.

You can also ponder this question without caveat # 3. This may help you see if your “desire to live” is simply a fear that there is nothing more after death of the body.

Basic home practice:

Answering the questions posed above, and practising the “Ideal day” exercise.

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Part 3. Introduction

Features of the conventional viewpoint:

- The world is a “stage” on to which I was dropped at birth.
- The world operates according to Newton’s laws – i.e., mechanically. All events are completely determined by interactions between materials, although we speak of “chance” when we don’t understand all that happens.
- I am essentially a body, with a mind that is no more than an effusion from the brain.
- There is no “God”, or “higher power or intelligence”.
- When my body dies that’s the end of me.

Features of the spiritual/esoteric viewpoint:

- My essence is consciousness.
- Physical forms, including bodies, are derived from consciousness, and not the other way around. Thus while my body dies, my essential self goes on.
- While I am on this plane, I am subject to physical “laws” – thus mechanical and biochemical events play a large part in what happens to me (including illness). However, my consciousness, operating on another plane, can over-ride and control many such physical events.
- There is a constant passage of “messages” – words and images - between my ego self (the part that thinks it is separate) and other levels of consciousness.
- My beliefs and expectations tell the Inner Self (higher consciousness) what my ego self wants to experience. For these signals to be effective I need to examine and clarify them, removing contradictory messages.
- Likewise, if I have a life-threatening disease, it is vital to clarify my motivation – reasons to want to live, and my will or determination to do so.

The list above summarises the main ideas we considered in part 2. It is quite possible to approach healing through the mind against a conventional background, i.e., with a purely materialistic concept of reality. On this view, the mind may indeed affect the body, in ways that have been well defined by research on stress, for example. Healing becomes a restoration of the normal balance of the various components, usually meaning the nervous, hormonal, immunological systems and all the structures in the body that are influenced by these, e.g. the digestive, musculoskeletal, blood-vascular, respiratory and other systems. Likewise many people remain resolutely materialistic – believing that the world, including their bodies, is largely independent of their minds - but feel comfortable invoking “God” as a being or power quite separate from us, whom we can ask for help.

The spiritual viewpoint, however, has a number of tremendous advantages over the old model, if we are open to considering it. Our concept of who we are becomes vastly expanded. This, in turn, diminishes our anxiety about dying, since we come to see, without necessarily invoking religious ideas, that the essence of ourselves persists when the body goes. The search for the true nature of oneself becomes a “spiritual” search, and can be acceptable even to atheists! We find that we are an integral part of “All That Is”, to use Seth’s term, or “part of God” in traditional terms. Of immediate importance to people with serious disease: we gain more confidence that there are levels of the mind that have much more power to affect the body than the ego mind appears to have; these can be called upon for help and guidance. Healing through the mind, while doubtless involving known mechanisms, may also occur along pathways currently unknown to medical science.

Moving toward a new view of reality is obviously not a trivial pursuit (!), and will not appeal to everyone. If you find it interesting and potentially rewarding I suggest reading widely to get a sense of

the many areas of human endeavour, spiritual, philosophical and scientific, from which is emerging a new and more expanded picture of who we are. In this part 3 of the Healing Journey level 6 we will focus on ways of strengthening our contact with the higher dimensions of consciousness.

Topic 11: Contacting the Higher Self.

A central question for the thoughtful person is “Who or what am I?” Our culture, sadly, has a very sombre answer: “You are just an assembly of chemical materials, and when the body dies, that’s the end of you!” The great spiritual traditions of mankind, however, have a much more cheerful view: “You are spirit (or soul or consciousness): yes your body dies, but your essence is immortal!” In other words, our essence is consciousness, not matter, and the essential “you” carries on. Which of these radically different ideas is correct? This is obviously of considerable interest to a person diagnosed with a life-threatening illness!

What is “consciousness” anyway? It is very difficult to define. An attempt: it is awareness of being. Neuroscience has no answer – currently it confines itself to study of the material brain, and cannot explain how awareness or consciousness arises. The spiritual traditions of many cultures, and reliable channelled sources, do have answers, as we have seen, telling us that we have our ideas “back to front”: the spiritual dimension, consciousness, is the ultimate reality, and our physical body something that arises from it. To quote Seth:

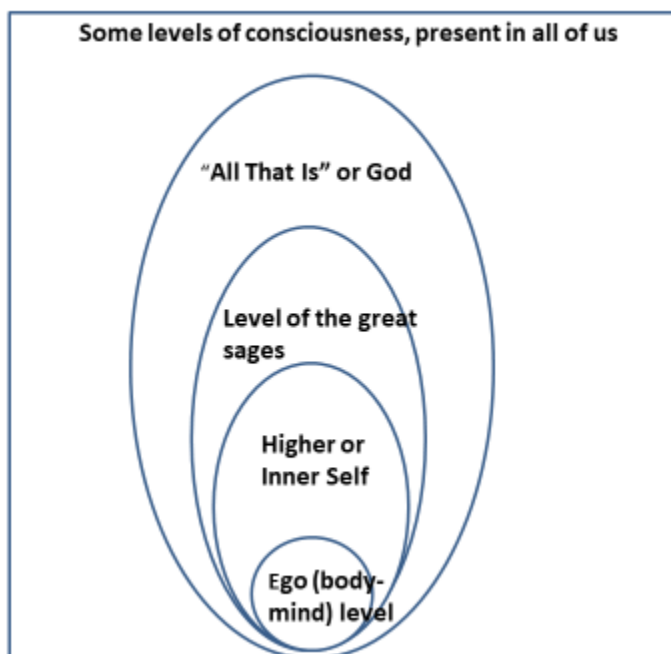
“Consciousness is a way of perceiving the various dimensions of reality” and: “Consciousness is an attribute of the soul, a tool that can be turned in many directions..... You are learning to use it. To the extent that you understand and utilize the various aspects of consciousness, you will learn to understand your own reality, and the conscious self will truly become conscious”. (Seth Speaks, p8 and p283).

How do the mind and brain fit in to all of this – what is their relationship to one another and to consciousness? Seth again:

“A mind is a psychic pattern through which you interpret and form reality” (Nature of the Psyche, p41).

“The conscious mind exists before material life and after it. In (earthly) existence it is intertwined with the brain, and during physical life, your earthly perceptions – your precise and steady focus within your particular space and time system – are dependent upon that fine alliance” (ibid p 99).

The “mind” then is not a thing – it’s more like a computer software program, and the brain is the “hardware” (like the physical computer) through which the program runs. According to spiritual masters in many traditions, what we think of as our “mind” is simply a product of consciousness, one tiny part of a vast “sea” of consciousness. Consciousness may be understood as a series or hierarchy of levels, the “higher” levels encompassing the lower (see the diagram below, which takes us a bit further than the figure in topic 6). Each of us is a part of this, with potential access to all of it. However, we usually think of ourselves as restricted to the ego-mind, a tiny part of the whole, specialised for operating in the physical world, a viewpoint that is very limiting. If the whole were an ocean, the ego self might be a wave, tiny and temporary on the surface.



A “map” of the mind can help chart our way, recognizing that this is simply an aid – we are not dealing with material things in space but mapping consciousness. The map is not the territory, and the lines shown on the map are not real, since there are no boundaries between the different levels of consciousness. Many versions of this map are described in spiritual and metaphysical texts. While this diagram does not depend on any particular spiritual or religious beliefs we can see where various religious symbols could be located in it: the usual self is the ego, while the consciousness of the great avatars (e.g., Jesus, the Buddha, Christian and Hindu saints) belong in the higher levels. “God” becomes the overarching consciousness, embracing everything else; Seth refers to this level as “All That Is”.

- If you have a religious background, how might you reconcile this more secular explanation of the nature of our consciousness with what you have been taught?
- What does the word “God” mean to you?
- While conventional (theistic) religions often represent a divine being as something outside of ourselves, the map of consciousness sees us as completely connected with all other “beings” – there is no separation. If you like: “I am part of God”. Your reactions to this?

Our practical aim can be seen as gradually moving outward, from being exclusively identified with the little ego-self to contacting and invoking the potentials of the larger domains of consciousness that surround and embrace us. We have perhaps found that we can retrieve beliefs (regular patterns of thinking) that were previously outside our awareness. As we move further out, so to speak, we may encounter other aspects of the Self that can help us – recall the “Inner Healer” exercise in level 2 of the Healing Journey. If we ask ourselves: “Who am I, really?” the answer ultimately becomes: “I am a part of All That Is – there are no divisions between my consciousness and the Whole”. While we usually think of ourselves as simply the little ego, we also have much more comprehensive and powerful levels, normally out of our awareness.

Becoming aware of these “higher levels of oneself” is a demanding, lifelong quest, as the accounts of spiritual masters show us. You may be drawn to such a quest, in which case it is advisable to seek a spiritual teacher who has made the “journey” himself or herself. Belonging to an organisation

devoted to such an end is also valuable, perhaps essential. However, people with cancer who are seriously considering these ideas for the first time can do a lot to help themselves fairly quickly. Within the Healing Journey program level 2 we introduced the “Inner Healer” exercise. This is a simple way of visualising or putting a face to higher levels of the self. To receive “messages” from the higher levels we obviously need to “listen” internally, meaning stop the chatter of the thinking mind. Meditation can be pursued in a school dedicated to the practice: Buddhist organisations often specialise in this. If you attend a church, temple or mosque, seek out teachers within your tradition who are themselves involved in the spiritual search, and try to go “deeper” within your faith. If you have no patience with religion (having perhaps rejected dogmatic assertions in the past), a source of great wisdom, untainted by dogma, is the writing of Eckhart Tolle. His second book, “A New Earth” is the easiest place to start. Tolle has, in a sense, boiled down the spiritual quest to one simple operation: not thinking (while remaining alert and aware in the present moment). This is essentially meditation, and his writings are close in tone to Buddhist practice. Tolle, in his first book, “The Power of Now”, describes 7 “portals into the un-manifested”, which simply means ways of contacting higher levels of the Self. You will find them described in chapter 7 of the book – I highly recommend it.

- Portal 1: The “Now”, i.e. resting in the present moment.
- Portal 2: Cessation of thinking
- Portal 3: “Surrender”, meaning letting go of emotional resistance to what is.
- Portal 4: “Getting in touch with the energy field of the inner body”.
- Portal 5: Silence
- Portal 6: Space/nothingness (i.e., being aware of this).
- Portal 7: the portal that opens at the time of death (involuntary)

Basic home practice: Ask yourself the following:

- How does my ego-self react to the idea that some higher level has much more wisdom to offer, and will guide much of my thinking life if I allow it? What am I afraid I might lose? What might I have to give up? What would be the advantages? Could this guide my healing?
- What is my main aim in trying to contact the spiritual “dimension” or aspect of myself? How will I go about it – what will be my principal methods? If I already belong to a religion or similar organisation, how can I use this as a platform for spiritual growth?

Exercise 1. Conducting a dialogue with your Higher Self. In a relaxed state, imagine that there is a source of wisdom within you, that you are calling the “Higher Self”. Imagine yourself as alternately being this HS or your ego self. Pose questions from one to the other (switching chairs if you like), making notes of any answers. (This may sound a bit odd, but it is quite surprising what new insights can be gained through this process). For example, if you have cancer you might ask what it is “seeking to accomplish”, and what you can do about it.

Exercise 2. Visiting the Inner Healer. Review the exercise we did back in level 2; it is one way of “visiting” your Inner Healer/Higher Self, and beginning a dialogue with it (this can be downloaded through a link on the Wellspring website (Internet resources/Healing Journey). Alternatively, once you have become familiar with the process, you can dispense with the “journey” through a woods and so on, and simply relax deeply and ask directly that the Inner Healer will appear.

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Topic 12: Dreams; a gateway to the deeper mind.

Dreams are important in our work on expanding the sense of self, in particular because they show us undeniably how we create a reality with our minds. A dream may be full of convincing action – during which we do not leave our beds! Furthermore, while few of us are aware of having “out-of-body” experiences, perhaps the most dramatic evidence that consciousness does not depend on a physical body, we all dream, and are capable of remembering dreams if we wish to do so.

Dreams are an avenue into another reality, or level of consciousness; our dreaming mind has simply turned in another direction, so to speak, a process somewhat analogous to changing the channel on a TV set. The dream reality is more fundamental than the waking one, however: esoteric teachers tell us that it harbours great creativity: that our physical world emerges from it (something certain “primitive” cultures understood!). It is a state in which communication can occur more easily between levels of consciousness, that is, between all parts of the greater Self.

As you will find when you study your dreams, different laws seem to operate there. Time and space are much less in evidence: we can sometimes fly, or move instantly from one place to another! Ideas are expressed immediately, e.g. as visual symbols, without the time delay experienced in waking reality. Some people learn to become aware that they are dreaming and direct their actions (such as flying) deliberately. Healing is said to be possible in dreams, and spiritual experiences often occur within them. Insights may be acquired, for example by posing a question to ourselves before going to sleep, and finding a symbolic answer in a dream. Clearly, it is a dimension of ourselves well worth cultivating.

We can divide our dream study into 2 phases: first the “capturing” and recording of dreams, and second, analysing them. At the end of the notes for this topic there is a summary of the main points about both strategies. The most important prerequisite for remembering dreams is the desire to do so: if you are not recalling any, examine your thinking for any ambivalence – does it seem like too much trouble, or are you afraid of what you might find? Then in the analytic phase, the main point is to be intuitive rather than rational/intellectual; you are asking the deeper levels of mind to show you something new, which they will do, but in their own “language” – and the symbols used in that language tend to be visual and other imagery, rather than words. We need to find out what those symbols are able to convey to us. Various methods may be used for this purpose, the most common being to generate lists of ideas associated with each symbol. One or more of these ideas often “resonates” – i.e., there can be an “Ah-ha” feeling: “so that’s what it means!” We each have to do our own work on this – lists of standard meanings for symbols have little value.

There are very many books on dream analysis, which you can find in any New Age bookstore. “The meaning of your dreams” by D.F. Melbourne and K. Hearne seems to be a good one by 2 dream scientists. “Realities of the Dreaming Mind: the Practice of Dream Yoga” by Swami Sivananda Radha is an outstanding and accessible account, particularly for those interested in ultimately understanding the spiritual meanings of their dreams.

Exercise 1. How our senses create our world.

- Make sure you understand the difference between these 2 operations of the body: (1) “sensory perception”, meaning the taking in, and acknowledging, of “raw, sense data”, i.e. visual data, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling touch. (2) “Conception”, or thinking about things, forming concepts in the mind. Often this immediately follows a sensory experience – we see something, then we label it and think about it. Please do explore this by looking around and noticing how

quickly thought follows perception, and how difficult it is to look at things and not think about them! Perhaps you have already tried walking along the street just noticing (i.e. perceiving) everything without any thought (labelling, judging, remembering, fantasising...).

- Sit with eyes closed and focus on individual sounds around you. Notice other sensations in the body: aches and pains, smells, taste (in the mouth), touch (e.g. of clothing, the chair). Feel where the muscles of your body are tense. Try to capture feelings within the body organs, e.g. in your gastro-intestinal tract.
- Now open your eyes and note how rich and diverse the visual stimuli are. Try to bring the inner world and the outer world together, i.e. continue to note how the (apparent) outer world registers on your senses. Think of it as an extension of your senses. Feel yourself as part of this process of creating and experiencing the world about you.
- Repeat the eyes closed/open cycle a few times.

As always, write about your findings. Try the whole practice a number of times.

Exercise 2. Associations to a recent event.

Pick any recent event and “relive” it in your imagination. Let your associations flow. Other events or memories will spring to mind. Try to recall the emotions connected with them. Write it all down. You could then construct a “map” or flow chart showing how the different streams of memories led from one to another.

Exercise 3. Constructing a waking (day) dream.

Create a dream for yourself, starting with whatever event or image you like. Let it simply unfold, naturally, playfully; let the images flow (it will help to be in a relaxed state). You can imagine that you are the Higher Self, watching it all unfold. Let it end in whatever way it does without trying to force a pattern or conclusion on it.

Now write this daydream down, and analyse it as you would a sleeping dream (see below), i.e. underline the symbols (words) that seem important, and generate a number of associations to each.

Exercise 4. Recording and analysing your dreams: see the directions below. Ideally, watching and analysing your dreams can become a regular part of daily life.

Recording and analysing dreams

“Capturing” and recording

- The key requirement is **intention**; we need honestly and intensely to desire to remember and record our dreams. Affirm this to yourself before going to bed.
- Have a pen and paper ready by the bed. Explain to any sleeping partner what you are up to.
- When you wake in the night (and this can be made more probable by consuming lots of liquids before retiring!) keep still, and see if you have been dreaming (we all have many dreams each night). If you remember something, move as little as possible as you write down what you can recall – you’ll need a small light, obviously. Don’t get up and walk around first – dreams seem to dissolve with major body activity.
- Be honest, even if you don’t like what you recall.
- If you feel you know what it’s about, note that down too.
- Return to sleep: you may wish to try and continue with the same dream (works sometimes).

Analysing.

- Next day, read through what you wrote (or scribbled!)
- Record also what you were doing in the day before the dream; in particular, any activities or thoughts that were emotionally charged.
- Now go through the text (if you are very conscientious you may wish to type it out, but that's not essential), and underline or highlight every word or phrase that seems to have possible significance – err on the side of underlining more, not less.
- Make a list of these words/phrases. Each one is a symbol, i.e. it stands for something which may be quite different from what it appears to be. Each one is also (obviously) part of yourself – you have created this inner world.
- Now painstakingly go through the list, one by one, making associations to each. For example, you see a dog, and you might write: companion/pet, diversion, loving acceptance, my old dog Fido (childhood), warm fuzzies.....; or you might write: danger, noise, too much energy, responsibilities, vet bills, mess..... and so on: it is different for everyone. You can't rely on lists of the "meaning" of dream symbols.

When you have finished this, you may well find that reading through all your associations points to a meaning for the dream that was quite unexpected. Reinsert the symbolic meanings into the text of the dream, and see how it reads now. The hope is to learn something about yourself that you did not already "know" at the consciously-aware level.

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Topic 13. Spiritual Aspects of Healing: Clarifying our Aims

While the body is perhaps the most obvious “dimension” of ourselves (and in some people consumes most of their attention), we have learned that with a little practice we can become familiar with the stream of thoughts, perceptions and emotions in our minds, and that this mental dimension then seems much more central to our identity than our body does. The great spiritual teachers take a giant step further, and tell us that our minds are simply a tiny part of a much larger universal Mind or consciousness; our idea of being a separate little mind is an illusion, but we can become aware of or “connected to” this higher or deeper (the words are metaphors) dimension if we wish. The spiritual work is an attempt to do this – to gain direct experience of this order that transcends the material (and refer back to the level 3 workbook, “Bringing Spirituality into your Healing Journey” for further discussion).

How do we do it? Religions have their various approaches. The great religions are all based on spiritual experiences of their founders, but with time tend to become rigid, and about concepts more than experience. We can work within a religious framework, but need to relinquish dogmatic concepts in order to touch the spiritual core behind them. The great mystics are people who have devoted their lives to this search, and their writings are an invaluable guide to our own efforts. In reading these texts we do not have to subscribe to any specific tradition; instead, we can focus on the idea that there is ultimately only one consciousness, of which ours is a tiny part. Avatars, like Jesus or the Buddha, and even “gods” are not separate from ourselves but simply part of a larger Self to which we, too, belong. In this course, we take this relatively “secular” approach, emphasising that it in no way contradicts the essential message of the great religions.

We have briefly discussed, in earlier topics, why accessing the “higher” or spiritual dimensions of ourselves is important for healing? Here’s another way to look at it. The basic idea of this course is that healing is expansion. Just as expanding our awareness of the workings of our minds provides us with a much wider range of ways of responding emotionally to a crisis like cancer, so if we can expand our awareness further, beyond a focus on thinking, and tap into a much higher/broader level of ourselves, we may access an immeasurably greater range of options to apply to healing both our mental state and our bodies. It seems foolish to rely entirely on our very limited intellects if there is a much larger reservoir of knowledge available to us, something that Eckhart Tolle calls a “vast intelligence”.

Spiritual experience is non-verbal: insofar as it can be described in words, the mystics tell us, it comes more in the nature of a “felt-sense” or a delightful “inner knowing”. However, it is valuable, and probably essential for most of us, to do first some hard thinking about our aims, to clarify the major principles and terms involved, and to set a rational course of study and practice for ourselves. Benefits won’t come from simply drifting along as usual in a state of pious hope, or, for that matter, by attending religious services in an automatic, non-reflective way. Spiritual growth requires a personal struggle with old habits of thought, and the cultivation of receptivity to the grace that comes when the aspirant (student) has prepared the ground. We need to muster enthusiasm and dedication to the process, and to organise our efforts sensibly, just as we would in setting out on any important enterprise, such as learning a new language, or embarking on a new career. And we need to approach our explorations and practices in the spirit of “an acute fever”, rather than as a “dull habit”, in the words of the eminent psychologist, William James, a century ago.

Should I follow or study a traditional spiritual path?

The best approach to spirituality for an individual desiring greater understanding and healing depends to some extent on her personal inclinations. For example, yoga, which is one of the the oldest systems for personal spiritual development, describes 4 main paths: devotion (to the Divine), acquiring

understanding (through study and reflection), selfless service to others, and mind-body work such as meditation, controlled breathing, hatha yoga, and other techniques. They are of course not mutually exclusive, but different people tend to flourish best with different methods. I'm going to condense approaches of particular relevance to healing into three main streams (with apologies for the generalisations and simplifications, which of course don't do justice to the richness and variety of the various spiritual traditions):

- (1) A focus on **understanding**: learning how our minds work, and making changes, which includes finding and removing the obstacles we erect to communion with the higher levels of consciousness. This avenue can be secular, that is, unconnected to any traditional system of belief or faith, although pursuing it leads to a spiritual state of mind. Seth's writings are of this kind, as is the text of A Course in Miracles. Modern western exponents of understanding by closely watching and managing the mind are Krishnamurti (recently deceased) and Eckhart Tolle, a well-known spiritual teacher, currently residing in Vancouver. The Healing Journey program is an introduction to self-understanding that uses this type of educational approach.
- (2) A focus on the **relationship between oneself and higher levels of consciousness**: the emphasis is on devotion to an avatar or God, endeavouring to commune with these levels, adopt their spiritual qualities, and receive blessings (help) from them. This is a much less cognitively-oriented approach, involving mental quietening and surrender of personal agendas. The higher-level entities tend to be personified: most of us find it much easier to relate to avatars, who may be long dead, or indeed have never lived on Earth, if we ascribe to them some human-like form.
- (3) A third stream is "**non-duality**" (advaita, in Indian philosophy), in which the student is invited to question constantly her preconceptions about the nature of the apparent physical world surrounding her, and even the existence of a separate self. This leads eventually to the realization that we are, in our essence, simply consciousness having an experience as a human body. The Indian sage Ramana Maharshi taught this approach in the early twentieth century; Rupert Spira is a modern western exponent, with many excellent presentations on Youtube. This is also, in my understanding, basically the path followed by Zen Buddhism. Adyashanti is a wonderful modern American Zen teacher, accessible on Youtube.

What should I do?

All of these approaches can be used together. Numbers (1) and (2) are probably easier than (3) for most people at first. It is very helpful, perhaps essential, to find an organisation that can support our investigations and regular practice. As I suggested in topic 11, if you belong to a religion, I would advocate going deeper within its teachings – exploring the mystical authors in that tradition. If you are not so attached, then it is important to explore various approaches, through extensive reading, and attending workshops, lectures and services, until you find one where you feel "at home", and from which you gain a sense of steady progress in your understanding. It is safer to choose organisations that are part of established traditions, since these impose restraints on their teachers who might otherwise (in some cases) exploit the vulnerability of new recruits. Be wary of charisma, of leaders with lifestyles that contradict their teachings, and of demands for a lot of your money or time: a sincere spiritual organisation should be entirely about giving, not taking!

Here are some questions to consider:

- What is my aim in trying to contact the spiritual “dimension” or aspect of myself? What do I hope to achieve?
- Do I feel more attracted to the path of understanding, as described above, or to some form of devotional approach, where I attempt to surrender my own will to that of a spiritual entity or God, or to the more direct path of non-duality? (What do these words mean to me: “God” and “surrender”)?
- How will I go about pursuing a spiritual path: where will I seek help? What will be my principal methods? If I already belong to a religion or similar organisation, how can I use this as a platform for spiritual growth?

Some common misconceptions: Write your views on the following:

1. My religion (____) is the only true road to salvation/truth/enlightenment.
2. Religious “observance” and my “faith” is enough – I don’t need a “spiritual path”.
3. I don’t need to think about all this: I just know I am “spiritual”.
4. The body is basically sinful; I am tainted by “original sin” (Adam and Eve!).
5. When I die, I will be judged (by whom)? Then I will be sent to heaven or hell.
6. When I die, that’s the end – “I” won’t exist anymore.
7. This world is all there is.
8. This world is unreal.

An exercise:

In a deep relaxation/light trance state, imagine a figure that to you symbolises a higher or divine level of consciousness. If you have a religious background, this may be one of the traditional avatars, like Jesus. If you are “not religious”, the Buddha may appeal. Personally I like an image of “Divine Mother”, for whom there are many avatars in Hinduism (as well as in the Catholic faith, of course). It seems to me that if we must humanise the Divine, she is more of a feminine energy than a masculine one. Now imagine this figure embracing or holding you, and allow yourself to feel secure and loved. Draw a picture of this.

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Topic 14. Pursuing a Spiritual Path.

In the last topic, paths to spiritual development were (rather cavalierly!) condensed into three main kinds: the approach through understanding and “purifying” the mind, the path of developing a loving relationship to the divine, and the direct path of questioning our very nature, leading to the realization that we are, in our essence, awareness itself. In an educational course like the Healing Journey, we are largely restricted to the first of these three: examining our beliefs, ideas about self, and uncovering the messages we send from ego mind to the body and receive from higher levels of Self. There are advantages to this approach as an introduction to the spiritual search:

- Learning about oneself is valuable for its own sake, of course: it leads us to a healthier mental state with better control of our emotional reactions, and can teach us that we are more than just this visible mind-body individual. Coupled with quietening practices, like meditation, this process can in itself bring a feeling of unity and loving acceptance of all.
- These attributes are achievable by anybody who pursues a relevant course of study and practice, and the resulting state of mental harmony almost certainly promotes better physical health. If our aspiration is “becoming all that we can be”, then Seth is an appropriate teacher. He advocates developing our human characteristics, clarifying and clearly stating our (ego) desires, discriminating among them but not necessarily relinquishing all of them.
- Psychological work – removing obstacles - seems essential to ultimately achieving deep spiritual connection, at least in modern, western society, where very ego-centred attitudes prevail. The cognitive, self-investigative work can act as an extremely valuable preliminary to an ultimate “surrender” to the Divine, in those interested in pursuing the work this far.

The spiritual search has engaged many people over thousands of years, and many have made it the central focus of their lives; some of the most influential individuals on the planet have been spiritual teachers – think of Jesus, the Buddha, Lao-tzu (Taoism) and Mohammed. Most of the major religions have a kind of “mystical” arm, a set of learning and practices for those (few) adherents who wish to probe more deeply: for example, Sufism in Islam, the Kabbalah in Judaism, Yoga in Hinduism, Christian mysticism within that religion. Books in all the main spiritual traditions are readily available, and are of course an excellent way to get an overview of the task ahead in a relatively short time (they are not, however, a substitute for personal reflection and practice!). A list of (older) books appears in my book “Bringing Spirituality into your Healing Journey” (available free on the Wellspring website). I will mention here 3 authors whose books may be particularly useful for beginners, and then briefly describe the 3 sets of texts that we particularly advocate in the Healing Journey program: the Seth material, A Course in Miracles (ACIM), and the teachings of Eckhart Tolle (there are more detailed accounts of ACIM and Tolle in Appendixes to this course).

- Eknath Easwaran. An Indian man who moved to the US and taught there for many years. His (20 or so) books are models of lucidity and spiritual sincerity – an excellent starting place. My personal favourite among his many works is *Original Goodness*.
- Swami Sivananda Radha (my own spiritual teacher). Swami Radha (now deceased) was a German woman who travelled to India in her 40’s, and was taught and initiated into sannyas there by her guru, Swami Sivananda. She has written about 10 major works, all very accessible, and is clear and uncompromising in her presentation of what we need to do to evolve. *Radha: diary of a woman’s search* is a fascinating account of her own early years becoming a swami (a

teacher in the tradition of yoga). *Kundalini Yoga for the West* is a monumental work for the dedicated student who wishes to undertake personal spiritual growth from a yogic perspective.

- Paramahansa Yogananda. *Autobiography of a Yogi* is a popular and eminently readable book by this Indian master who taught in USA for many years.

The Seth Material:

A series of books channelled by Jane Roberts from an entity who took the name of “Seth”. Central to the Seth material are the 10 books which Seth dictated, although there are also many other written accounts by Roberts and her husband of sessions in which Seth’s teachings are quoted. While not “spiritual” in the conventional sense, these writings explain all aspects of reality, including how the non-material substrate or framework of our lives generates the material world in which we currently find ourselves. A great deal of space is devoted to illness and approaches to overcoming it. There are no simple, pat solutions (in contrast to much “New Age” writing): rather the recommendation is to examine our beliefs closely, in order to discover how they, coupled with intense emotional desires, cause all kinds of distortion in the normally healthy body. Healing, in this view, depends on awareness and understanding of who we are and how our minds operate. Many (about 90) therapeutic exercises are interspersed throughout the Seth works.

Seth points out we are like actors in a play, in which the broad outline has been set by other levels of consciousness, but leaving us with the freedom to interpret the action in our own way – and even to change the script somewhat as we go along. We’ve been subjected to a lot of previous conditioning (learning), which restricts our range considerably, but we can break free of much of this if we try. While acting in the production (this life), we become so absorbed with our role that we forget, for a time, that this is only a play, a small part of who we are; when the “performance” ends (at death), we return to a broader awareness of ourselves, and of our capacity to act in very many such plays if we choose.

An exercise: reading excerpts from Seth: “The Nature of Personal Reality”, channelled by Jane Roberts (Amber-Allen publishing 1974/1994) is probably the most popular and most immediately practical of all the Seth books. Read the two prefaces (one by Roberts, one by Seth) and the first 2 chapters of the book (pp2-36). If you don’t have the book itself, the text can be freely downloaded from various sites on the internet.

A Course in Miracles (ACIM): (see Appendix for details):

This is a text authored by Jesus himself, speaking daily through a psychologist, Helen Schucman, between 1965 and 1972. The resulting book (in fact a compilation of 3 books) was published in 1976 and has since become widely known, studied and disseminated. The central thesis is that we have become separated from God, and can “return” (that is, our consciousness can re-unite with the divine ground) by detailed examination and change of our egoic thought processes.

An exercise: reading excerpts from ACIM: A good place to start is with chapter 5 (chapters 1 and 2 are obscure in parts). If you do not have the book itself, there are a number of sites on the internet for free downloading of it. Try chapter 5, section II “The Voice for God” (p 75 in the second edition of the book) and section V “The Ego’s Use of Guilt” (p 83). I would also suggest meditating on section IV, paragraph 8 (p83) – it is a beautiful prayer.

To get a sense of the workbook (part of the same compilation) you could review lessons 22, 23 and 26.

Eckhart Tolle: “The Power of Now” and “A New Earth” (more details in the Appendix).

Eckhart Tolle is a living spiritual master, a German-Canadian man who had an enlightenment experience in his late 20's, and who has in recent years devoted himself to spreading his understanding of the nature of reality through his writings and talks. He is not affiliated with any religion or spiritual organisation, although many of his ideas echo those of masters through the ages, and are perhaps closest in style to Buddhism. His discussions deal with the problems of modern life, and are couched in simple terms. This does not mean that they are always easy to grasp, since the spiritual view of meaning in life is often directly opposed to the conditioning (materialism) we have all been subjected to since early childhood. Probably the best introduction to his teachings is to read "A New Earth" (his second book), and then the earlier one, "The Power of Now", which is a little more difficult in parts. You will find that on repeated re-reading more insights emerge: the works are profound. There are many CDs and DVDs of his talks available, and the internet has a number of sites devoted to his work.

In the appendix I summarise some of the main ideas from Tolle's teachings. He has focussed on one simple (but not easy!) operation: learning to stay in the present moment, the "now". This requires not thinking while in that awareness. He helps us realize that the great majority of our thinking is unnecessary, and often harmful. As we drop it we will uncover our true nature, or essence, which is consciousness itself. This transformation brings joy, peace, and a sense of love for all.

An exercise: reading Tolle: If his work is new to you, I'd suggest going through "A New Earth". If you are already familiar with this book, try the last chapter of "The Power of Now".

Part 4: Integrating expanded ideas on healing into our lives.

Topic 15. Unblocking our lives.

It is a common-sense idea that energy, in various forms, must flow freely around our bodies to maintain their health. In some medical systems (e.g. traditional Chinese medicine), this aspect of health is emphasised, and there are procedures like acupuncture designed to improve the flow of “chi”, which is thought of as a subtle form of energy. We have seen the importance of messages, from one part of the self to another, and within the body these depend on this flow of some medium or “energy” that carries them. Here we are focussing on the role of the mind, which generates messages in the form of thoughts and images, messages that are then transmitted to the body by the nervous and hormonal systems. According to the spiritual/esoteric view, the mind also receives messages from higher or deeper levels of the Self, which in turn affect the body. If you study Seth’s books you will find the view that this spiritual-level information may influence our bodies and our lives by allowing a shift to another “track” or life path.

If health depends on free flow of energy and information, it follows that illness is likely to be promoted by “blocks” to the flow, and many healing systems address this, for example by using procedures like massage, healing touch, reiki, acupuncture, and various herbs and remedies. There are techniques involving body movement, like tai chi, chi gong, and hatha yoga that we can learn to help ourselves restore a healthy balance or “energy flow” in the body (and I warmly recommend exploring these). Here, our focus is on what is potentially our most potent tool for self-healing, if we choose to use it – our conscious minds. We aim to find out how our thinking and imagining may promote health, and even more important, what patterns in our minds interfere with health.

“Poor health, or simply unhappy situations, arise only when the individual meets too many detours, or encounters too many blocks to the expression of value fulfillment”. (Seth, in “Way Toward Health”, p175).

What are these mental “blocks”? Basically, they are thoughts or ideas contrary to those we would prefer to hold. If we want to do something but the thought “I can’t do this” immediately arises, it clearly interferes with our performance. If this kind of thinking is pervasive, it will profoundly affect our lives. Low self-esteem or low self-worth derives from the feeling that we don’t have the right to express ourselves and our abilities fully, and so can’t achieve what we want. While such thoughts may be unrecognised, someone holding them “under the surface”, so to speak, may spend much of her life in a state of chronic anxiety. The negative thoughts are messages to the body: “gear up for trouble, for challenges you may not be able to meet”, and the muscles respond by tensing, the blood pressure may rise, breathing may become shallower – all the signs we associate with stress. When it comes to trying to heal from a serious disease, the person’s efforts are likely to be completely undermined by thoughts and images telling her that she really can’t expect to make a difference to the process (this is quite usual among people in our society who get cancer, and indeed generally).

- Examine your thoughts, and the reactions in your body, that take place when you are faced with something fearful, such as an imminent clinic visit where you expect unwelcome news.
- Watch your mind throughout the day to find out what thoughts provoke anxiety (another name for fear!).
- We are accustomed (in our psychologically naïve society) to blaming situations for our emotional reactions, like fear and anger. What is a more sophisticated view?

We begin to see that blocks to self-expression, being afraid to say and do, or even feel, what we believe is important, may be significant contributors to ill health. We discussed previously the research finding that remarkable survivors tend to be authentic and autonomous, that is, they have identified what matters and feels fulfilling to them, and feel entitled to pursue it. Modern psychology would agree with Seth that, provided the basic physical needs for survival are satisfied, one of man's greatest needs is for creative outlets, "creative" being understood as any constructive process providing a sense of fulfillment.

"In almost every case of severe dissatisfaction or illness, the underlying reasons will not so much be found in the discovery or expression of buried hate or aggression, - though these may be present - but in the search for expression of value fulfillment that is for one reason or another being denied" (Dreams, Evolution and Value Fulfillment, vol 2, p 444.).

"Value fulfillment", in Seth's accounts, is a very broad term pointing to the need to exercise all one's potentials, mental, physical and spiritual, in an attempt to "enrich one's existence by expanding the psyche and expressing the ideal or complete self". Seth applies this specifically to cancer:

"In almost all such cases involving cancer, spiritual and psychic growth is being denied, or the individual feels that he or she can no longer grow properly in personal, psychic terms. This attempt to grow then activates body mechanisms that result in the overgrowth of certain cells. The individual insists upon growing or upon death, and forces an artificial situation in which growth itself becomes physically disastrous. This is because a blockage occurs. The individual wants to grow in terms of personhood, but is afraid of doing so" (Nature of the Psyche, p67).

It is of interest that the pioneering psychologist Laurence LeShan, in his book "Cancer as a Turning Point" reported his research finding that people with cancer were more likely than usual to have suffered a severe loss, such as a bereavement, in the period prior to contracting the disease. This sounds very like Seth's assertion that if one kind of (psychic) growth is denied, or lost, some kind of alternative cellular overgrowth takes place! However, regardless of whether we want to follow Seth and LeShan this far, we can readily sense the damaging effects in ourselves of being blocked from doing what we think is important to us.

Clearly, it would be valuable to look back over our lives, and try to identify points at which we felt blocked in what we wanted to accomplish or experience. We may find that health problems developed at such points in time, and see what helped us to resolve them – focussing particularly on patterns of thinking and mood. We can compare these periods with our present situation, looking for clues as to what might help us overcome any current ill-health.

Exercise 1: Making a list, and "graphing" the unfolding of your life.

Step 1: In a relaxed state, slowly go through your memories of your life (it can be very helpful to look at photos and other aids to memory). List any events that seem important, e.g. starting school, learning to play a sport, getting a good result in some endeavour, graduating from school, marriage or lasting relationships, choosing a career path, significant health changesand so on. Aim to list around 20 – 40 of these key events.

Step 2: Go through your material, and recall how you felt at the various points: not just immediate emotions, but the kind of mood or quality of your life at each event or stage. Make some notes about your feelings at these different times.

Step 3: Now construct a graph, designed to show how your usual mood or emotional quality of life was affected by the main events going on at different times. Along the bottom axis, mark out your lifespan in years (use a large sheet of paper, perhaps 2 feet in width, or join 2 standard sheets together). Note where some of these main events occurred – i.e., at what age. Then on the vertical (Y) axis, that is, up the left side of the graph, draw a line at right angles to the first, from “0%” at the bottom, representing the worst you have ever felt, to 100%, at the top, the best. Now draw, across the page, a line that will move up or down depending on how you felt at the different stages. For example, if you had a happy childhood, your line might have remained near 100 during that period, but it is likely to have taken a severe dip at the time of a diagnosis of cancer!

Step 4: Our main concern here is to identify times at which we felt able to pursue whatever was important to us, and compare them with other times when our creativity seemed blocked, that is, when our lives did not feel fulfilling to us. The former times may seem like successes, and the latter like “failures”; or we might describe some periods as “flowing smoothly” and others as “difficult” or times of stagnation. Examine what was happening in life at those times – our tendency will be to claim that the surrounding events were responsible for feelings of moving ahead or of being blocked, but try to recall your thinking in those periods, since it is ultimately our appraisal of events that determine what we feel able to do. Mark these different periods on your graph. Pay special attention to the years immediately before any diagnosis of cancer or other illness.

Step 5: You may think of other qualities in yourself that could be recorded on the same graph (as further lines) – for example, ideas of self-worth: how do they correspond with mood, feeling blocked or otherwise, and current events?

Step 6: If you feel enterprising, you could continue this graph for a number of years into the future, noting what you want and expect to happen, and what you want your mental state to be! How will you “unblock” yourself?

Step 7: Prepare your graph and notes in such a way that you can present your findings to a group; use bold, large drawings, visible from a distance.

Exercise 2: A visual Autobiography (adapted from “Nature of the Psyche”, by Jane Roberts, pp 44-45).

Building on the list of significant events of our lives we can now arrange them in various ways. The aim is to uncover patterns, i.e., broad general trends, clusters of similar happenings, repetitions of similar events, that may be discernable in this retrospective overview, but which were probably not obvious at the time. Veterans may be interested in doing parts of this exercise not tackled at earlier times, but if you are new to this work and find it daunting, the main parts to complete are steps 1 – 4. You could then ponder steps 8 and 9. Step 10 is a very interesting one for everyone, whatever your experience: we all have times in our lives where sudden changes, perhaps the averting of disasters, occurred. Look at these points now from a new perspective – do you feel you may have been “helped” by a higher dimension of yourself, or by a divine force?

Step 1: Start with the list of events of major significance in your life history from the last exercise. Look through the list and pick out main events or situations (perhaps 20 – 40 of them) that had a strong emotional content for you at the time. Consider interpersonal relationships, education, career, creative activities, hobbies, sports/diversions, spiritual and personal growth activities, travel

Step 2: Take a pile of 3 x 5 inch cards, or cut sheets of white typing paper into 6 or 8 equal pieces. Put one “event” on to each card as a simple diagram (stick figures are fine), with a descriptive label.

Step 3: Arrange the cards in chronological order: see what larger patterns you can find, e.g. “childhood anxieties and satisfactions”, “learning that I was responsible for getting ahead”, “finding a career path”, and so on. Consult with and compare your “life graph”, plotting your general emotional satisfaction (from “0” very low to “100”, peaceful, blissful) against your age.

Step 4: Now disrupt the time sequence, if necessary, and instead see if you can group the cards into a number of clusters of related events. Draw a diagram of this arrangement on paper – a series of boxes or circles connected by lines would be one way. Make this big and bold enough that you can show it to the group, perhaps even pin it on the wall, if you want.

Step 5: Try ordering the cards backwards in time, starting with the present – and note any insights, in particular how your current state of mind has developed from earlier conditions.

Step 6: Select the scene which causes the strongest emotional response (or alternatively, the one you think is most significant to the course of your life – they may well be the same). Now see if you can cluster some of the other events/cards in groups around this central one (the idea is to see if other events led up to, or were prompted by, a single, seminal happening).

Step 7: Write notes on whatever you discover about the patterns and themes in your life. You may well find one or two main themes during your adult life. What has given you the greatest satisfaction? What has most held you back? What have been the factors contributing to your sense of satisfaction or success, on the one hand, and unhappiness or “failure” on the other?

Step 8: Find a symbol for your life (a flowing river? Climbing a mountain? A descent into a morass? Learning to fly?), and a symbol for yourself – one that may have changed during the course of your life. Ponder these symbols and write about them. You could also try interpreting your life as if it were a dream.

Step 9: Where is your life “pointing” or going? What do you now see as the most important theme or direction for your life?

Step 10: Identify times when you feel you were helped, by the Higher Self or a divine agency.

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Topic 16. Accessing our “sub-personalities”

Listing our personality traits.

We are all (delightfully!) different, that is, we exhibit different qualities in different combinations and intensities. Below is a list of some of the main possibilities. For the first part of this exercise, we need to ask ourselves: do we have the listed feature (for example, do I tend to be anxious much of the time? Am I generally “benevolent” or kindly disposed to others?). You may be able to think of more not included in the list below. Make some notes about yourself under each quality: for example, under “emotional expressiveness” one person might write: “constantly driven by emotional reaction to events”, whereas another person might write “tend to suppress my emotions and rarely display them”.

To add some more depth to this self-analysis, you can rate the intensity of each quality that you find in yourself. A good way to do this is to draw a scale from 0 to 100 for each, as shown below; then mark where you feel you fall on the scale. We are all different; there’s no real “good” or “bad”, but it is important to be honest with oneself.

| _____ |
 0 (don't have this quality at all) (fully express this quality) 100

.....

Benevolence: Ask yourself if you usually feel inclined to help others; also whether you tend to have warm, even loving, feelings vs feeling the need to be self-protective or avoidant. Another aspect of this is the degree to which one tends to judge other people or situations, vs accepting them.

Activity: This is about the extent to which you tend to be an active person, always on the go, doing things, getting involved. Or maybe you’re the kind of person who lets things take their course, hoping for the best.

Self-assertion: We can be “assertive” in different ways. For example, do you tend to stick up for yourself, versus feeling unworthy or unable to do that effectively? Another kind of self-assertion is the quality of adventurousness, tending to try new things, to experiment, to assert your own way of doing things.

Self-absorbtion: Do you tend to be absorbed by your own needs and interests, or are you more inclined to be interested in what is going on around you? How concerned are you with the needs of others?

Habits of thought: Are you someone who relies mainly on intellect, making rational appraisals, or do you tend to go with impulses, intuition and feeling (or both)? Are you a seeker after new ideas (or not)?

Emotional expressiveness. How do you manage your feelings? By hiding them, or at least keeping them in reserve, vs letting emotions come out, and letting yourself feel what’s going on inside?

Sensual interest: The extent to which you tend to be drawn to sensual experience, through interest in things like food, sex, comfort, distractions for the mind.

Social inclinations: The preference for being in the company of others where possible, vs being alone, and attending to one's own interests. The extent to which family and friends preoccupy you.

Spiritual interest: The extent of one's mystical or spiritual inclinations – whether or not spiritual matters seem compelling, and whether we devote time to them.

Imaginativeness and creativity: This is about being constantly open to new ideas or ways of doing things vs being more conservative, and preferring the familiar ways. Also about interest in the arts or crafts, and in making or doing original creations of your own.

Anxiety/ confidence: People obviously differ in the extent to which they tend to worry about things and thus become prone to anxiety, or to feel pretty much on top of things, without worrying so much.

Organisation: ask yourself if you are an organiser, or whether you let events unfold without trying to control them much. Is career important to you?

Persistence: The extent to which you stick at things until you get what you want, vs becoming discouraged if things don't go your way.

After thinking about this list, and adding your own ideas, now try to come up with a short list of brief phrases that describe you; some examples (one person would not exhibit all of these!):

A manager: I organise, control, maintain order
 A creative person or artist: love to create new things
 A thinker: fascinated by ideas, and working things out.
 A wounded child: I still feel the effects of early abuses.
 A helper: driven by sympathy to try to help others
 A sensualist: seeking experiences of the body
 A parent: my kids need most of my energy
 An impatient striver: always wanting to accomplish
 An intuitive: seek to feel my way through life
 A self-preoccupied person; have enough to do managing myself
 A lover of the company of others
 A career person: this matters most to me
 A seeker/explorer: of spiritual and other ideas and experiences.
 A failure: things never work out for me
 A fighter: I won't let things get the better of me

..... and so on. Remember, you are unique.

Pick one or two (or more) of the qualities that are most typical of you, and draw a symbol representing that; this could be a diagram of you "doing your thing", or of an animal or environment that typifies the quality, or any other symbol, realistic or abstract. Alternatively, write a poem about yourself!

Subpersonalities:

In the exercise above, we identified in our minds patterns of behaviour or traits that we typically display. For example, a person may be readily affected by the suffering of others, eager to help them,

perhaps feeling guilty about selfish inclinations, having a need to prove his or her own worth, maybe with lofty ideals about all of us being brothers and sisters – and this cluster might constitute a “helper” or “healer” personality trait. As another example, someone might believe (because of early life experiences), that others will try to harm her, and that it is necessary to be tough and vigilant at all times – a cluster that might represent a “fighter” of a certain kind. Most of us have within a “scared child” that was more obvious when we were small, but is less on display in adulthood. We can call these aspects of ourselves “sub-personalities”, and recognize that they can take over control of our behaviour at times. Different circumstances bring different sub-personalities to the fore; for example a fright may temporarily cause the scared child to control us completely. Such a narrow focus usually does not lead to the most mature and beneficial way of acting – we are better served when all aspects of ourselves contribute, in an integrated way, towards a best response to situations.

The sub-personality work – somewhat unconventional in modern psychology, but well-tested over many decades – has as its aims the identifying of these clusters of characteristics, these semi-autonomous parts of the whole person, and allowing them to assume a visible form. We might, for example, be able to picture ourselves as a small child, at the mercy of domineering adults. Or a more fanciful symbol might emerge from our unconscious, like a knight on horseback, representing that part of ourselves that rides to the defence of others. Such symbols are intensely individual, and quite fascinating when we allow them to form. We can then interact with them, for example in a dialogue between the whole or core self and the sub-personalities, encouraging them to express what they want and need, helping them find a constructive way to achieve that, prompting them to grow or mature, and promoting harmony and integration between the various sub-personalities to serve the interests of the whole self. Healing of mind and body may follow. (A fascinating account of healing from cancer while using this approach can be found in “Mind, Fantasy and Healing”, by Alice Hopper Epstein, 1989).

Exercise 1. Giving shape to some of our personality aspects or traits

Having come up with some of our personality traits like “manager”, “helper”, “fighter”, “wounded child”, and so on, we now seek to develop visual symbols or representations of such patterns. For example, if the pattern (sub-personality) we were considering was “frightened child”, we might see a small figure, cowering as if under threat; for a “creative artist” the symbol might be a kind of stereotyped French figure in a beret, brandishing a palette. These visual pictures might represent yourself, or they might show a generic figure, or some symbol that is not a human person at all – for example, a lover of food might appear as a hungry animal! The image could be an archetypal one from the media; it could be someone encountered in life; or it could be a personality that has appeared in dreams.

This exercise will be easier if done in a very relaxed or mild trance state. Get yourself into such a state, then recall an incident in which you felt strong emotion. Note the activities prompted by this emotion. Then wait for an image representing this combination of ideas, emotions, and behaviour. This may arise spontaneously, or you may have to use some reasoning to construct the image.

The following is an account of 2 sub-personalities spontaneously appearing to a former member of the Healing Journey group (reproduced with her permission):

It was a minor incident, a phone conversation where the person crushed something I had been enthusiastic about. I felt tears welling up inside me and quickly ended the conversation. It was not a big deal, so I was alarmed at my strong reaction. I decided rather than bury the emotion and tears I would stay with the emotional pain I was feeling. An image of an old lady appeared, pointing her finger at me she said “See that is what happens when you get too excited, someone comes along and crushes you, it is better not to become too excited or happy, someone will always come along and be critical of you, crush

your enthusiasm, your happiness.”

At first it was my vulnerable little girl that appeared hurt and upset, then the old woman pointing her finger. She was protecting the little girl, but also doing a lot of damage.

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Exercise 2: Contacting our sub-personalities through a magical door:

(adapted from notes by the Psychosynthesis Institute, San Francisco)

Our aim is to increase our awareness of some of our sub-personalities so that we can interact with them. We want to know their needs, their wants, their special qualities, their behavior patterns. Of course these are our own wants, needs, qualities and behavior which may be locked into the inner psychological patterns we call sub-personalities. The goal of the work is to “release the energy” which is caught in them and to integrate it into the whole personality, so that the overall life energy can flow more smoothly and harmoniously. The true observer within us, our “center,” does not criticize. It is objective and wise, and understands that the needs of our sub-personalities (although not necessarily their wants) are valid and legitimate.

(For a first attempt, if you manage to do the first 5 of the operations below, you will have made good progress. On subsequent occasions you could try the remaining exercises).

- 1.) Sit comfortably and relax. After closing your eyes, take a few deep breaths. Imagine a big wooden door in front of you. Make it as real as you can – note the texture and the color, and any details such as the hinges, handle or knob. On the door there is a sign that says SUBPERSONALITIES. Imagine that they all live behind the door.
- 2.) Now open the door and let one or more of your sub-ps come out. Just observe them. Don’t get involved. Be aware of them.
- 3.) Gradually focus on one which seems most central, or which interests you most.
- 4.) Approach the sub-p, and begin to relate to it. Talk to it and listen to what it says to you. See what you have to say to each other.
- 5.) Ask it what it wants. Then ask it why. These are different questions and they are very important. Make a mental note of the answers.
- 6.) Now let yourself become the sub-p. Identify with it and experience what it’s like to be it. As this sub-p, how do you feel? What is the world like to you? Ask yourself: “What do I want? What would I like to do? What do I need?”
- 7.) After summoning one or more sub-ps, see it/them in front of you. Ask yourself: “What would my life be like if that sub-p fully had its own way, if I were the sub-p all the time?”
- 8.) Take another look at the sub-p; examine carefully what you like and what you dislike about it.
- 9.) See yourself outside in the sunshine with the sub-p. Imagine that it is a beautiful, sparkling day and that the sun is shining brightly. Now imagine that a special warm beam of sunlight slowly radiates from the sun towards you, and envelops you and the sub-p in light and warmth. The energy of the sun will make something happen.

10.) Is the sub-p different in any way now? If it is still there, turn toward it, and again begin to relate to it. See if you can improve things, if you can arrive at some better relationship with it. Take all the time you need to do this.

11.) Now write about what happened. What did you like and dislike about the sub-p? What does it need? Were you able to reach an understanding with it? You may find it helpful to make a drawing of the sub-p.

-These exercises can be repeated as needed, focusing on the same sub-p or on different ones. Be sure to spend plenty of time in the write-up afterwards.

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Topic 17. Nature of the Self/Soul

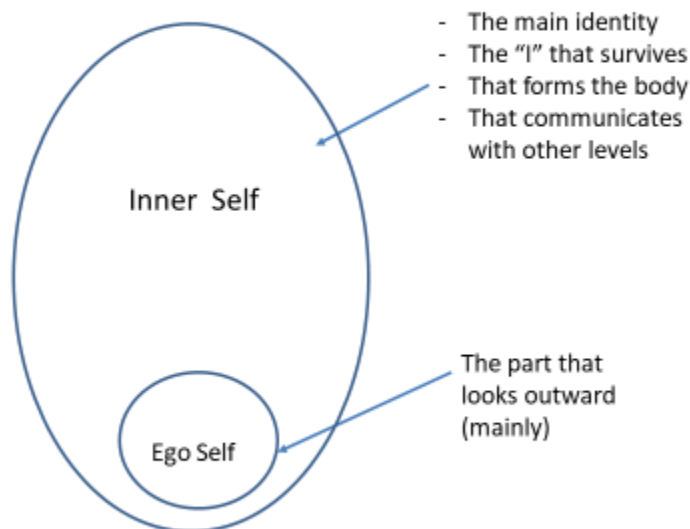
The more we study the nature of the self and its relation to the world the more we begin to realise that understanding this is the ultimate basis for our healing. Western psychology would agree that our concept of ourselves is a kind of filter through which we create our experience – and this is something that, with sufficient inner investigation, we can begin to confirm for ourselves. The new paradigm that we've been examining goes further, stating that we are, in essence, consciousness, part of a much larger organisation, and that consciousness as a whole actually creates the physical world. This includes our bodies and what happens to them. Clearly we need to know more about our true nature, to see if we can escape the very narrow, mechanical view that has been passed down to us in the centuries since the scientific revolution in Western Europe, a view that still guides most of our thinking and medical treatment.

If you pursue the spiritual search, through reading texts from various traditions and reflecting and meditating, you will find a variety of ideas on the nature of the self. One will be common to all: we are not how we usually see ourselves in the modern West – bodies with a mind that is a by-product of brain activity, the death of our bodies meaning the end of the self! Instead, the mystics of all the great religions describe the self as an integral and immortal part of the greater consciousness. You may, however, come across a point of view that, while of ancient origin in Eastern philosophies, has become more prevalent in Western writings over the last 2-3 decades: the idea that there is ultimately no “self”, and that what we are is simply a kind of observing consciousness, part of the whole, in no way separate from anything else. While I mentioned this briefly in topic 14 (“non-duality”), I haven't pursued it further here, since it is difficult to accept for most people starting a spiritual search – we all want to hang on to our precious individual selves! Instead, I've focussed on ways to expand and heal the apparent self, an avenue which also has a venerable tradition. The 2 broad approaches – evolution of the individual self or recognition of “no-self” – are not in contradiction; they simply reflect a choice of whether or not to identify oneself with being a separate individual while experiencing this human life.

Assuming that we wish to retain this focus of individuality, let us examine Seth's writings which paint a fascinating and very much expanded sense of who we are and how we fit in to the greater consciousness.

The “personality” (personal self).

Look back at the diagram in topic 11: we have an ego nested within levels of consciousness of increasing size and complexity. Where is the “self” in this? We customarily identify with our ego, which is simply that part of ourselves that looks mainly outward – at the physical world, including the body. The ego often gets a bad press, but it is essential for living in a physical universe (problems arise when we are totally centred on the assumed needs of our own ego, and pay no attention to others). With some practice, our ego can learn to receive “messages” (topic 7) from “within”. Where do these come from? Seth tells us (topic 11) that the closest level to the ego is what he calls the “Inner Self” (or sometimes, confusingly, the “inner ego”).



The diagram above shows outer and inner egos or selves as one unit, which Seth refers to as “the portion of the soul (entity) activated in a particular existence”. In other words, it is the apparently separate self in this lifetime, the “the flower of the moment” as he sometimes calls it. While we are mainly aware of the outer-directed ego, the inner Self is more extensive, and more “powerful”; it is our “prime identity”, the part of our personality that influences our bodily form, and the part that survives the death of that form, according to him. It is also the aspect of our personality that communicates with the higher levels of consciousness.

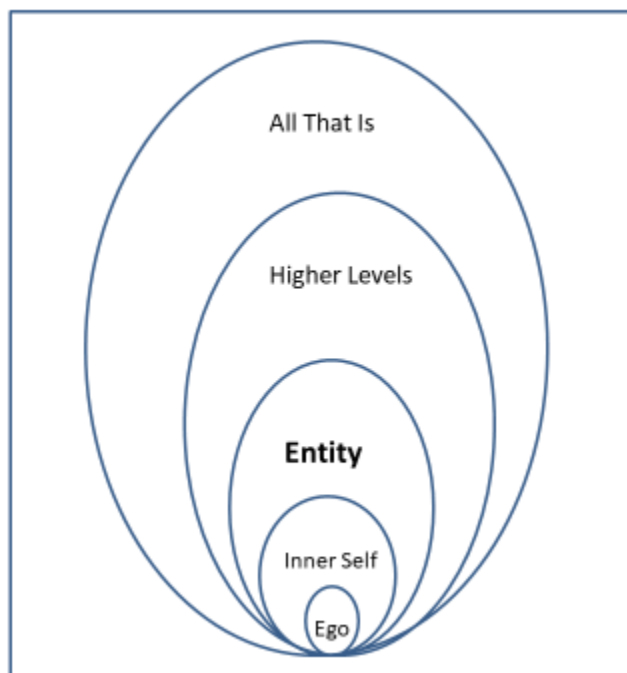
The "outer ego" and the inner ego (Self) operate together, the one to enable you to manipulate in the world that you know, the other to bring you those delicate inner perceptions without which physical existence could not be maintained. (Seth Speaks, p 9)

If you have studied Freud, you may wonder if the inner Self is his “unconscious mind”. In Seth’s terminology, Freud’s unconscious is part of the ego, and is in principle accessible to our awareness, while the inner Self is a different order of consciousness altogether, not being physically based, although it uses the brain to act on the body.

The takeaway message from all of this? That our personality, what we believe we are in this lifetime, is what we might think of as a little “pod” floating in an ocean of consciousness. Importantly, we are not separate from the ocean – more like a drop of water within it, although we appear to have our own individuality.

The Entity.

Coming back to the idea of shells or levels of consciousness. There are many levels (remember: this description is simply a convenience: there are no actual boundaries). Let us modify slightly the diagram from topic 11 (below):



Between the Inner Self and higher levels Seth interposes another level, the “Entity.” (The diagram is of course not “to scale”: there are innumerable “entities”, perhaps an infinite number, within levels of consciousness that are higher still). Seth has this to say about the individual personality and its relationship to the entity:

There is however a portion of you, the deeper identity who forms both the inner ego (Self) and the outer ego, who decided that you would be a physical being in this place and in this time. This is the core of your identity, the psychic seed from which you sprang, the multidimensional personality of which you are part.... The entity is the overall identity of which (your) personality is one manifestation - an independent and eternally valid portion. (Seth Speaks, p 9).

In answer to our question: “who am I ultimately?” the entity would seem to be a good candidate (although it is, in turn, embedded in still larger dimensions of consciousness). Seth reassures us that our prized individual personality (from this life) will never be lost, however:

Your ‘life’ is simply the only portion of your existence of which you are presently aware. (Nature of the Psyche p27). In one manner of speaking, you are fragments of your entities (Seth Speaks, p306).

Your own personality as you know it, that portion of you that you consider most precious, most uniquely you, will also never be destroyed or lost. It is a portion of the soul (or entity)....Your individuality, in whatever way you want to think of it, continues to exist in your terms. It continues to grow and develop, but its growth and development is highly dependent upon its realization that while it is distinct and individual, it is also but one manifestation of the soul. To the extent that it realizes this, it learns to unfold in creativity, and to use those abilities that lie inherent within it (Seth Speaks, p 74).

Multiple selves (“reincarnation”?)

Before saying more about the entity, or soul (Seth prefers not to use the latter word because it has so many different associations to different people), we need to consider another, perhaps more

startling, set of ideas. In brief, we (our entity) comprise not one self, but many, and these all exist at once (there is no time in the world of pure consciousness)! To grasp this, we must venture further into territory that is not familiar to Western science and theology, and more in line with ideas from Eastern religious philosophies. The main new idea: that this life is only one of numerous experiences that my essence or soul or entity undertakes. There is not one “I” but many!

One form of this understanding is familiar to many of us as the idea of “reincarnation”, found in Hinduism, Buddhism (with variations), and indeed in most religions. It is claimed that an individual “comes back” to this Earth repeatedly, in many human forms, and is expected to develop or evolve until a state of such perfection is reached that no further incarnations are necessary. Atoning for misdeeds in earlier lives is said to be an important part of this process. This model or explanation assumes that time is linear – that we “come back” time after time in successive generations and centuries. There is a problem with this, however: time is not linear, it only seems so under some conditions (namely in our day-to-day material reality), and not in others, as our own science has begun to demonstrate (see, for example, Einstein’s relativity, and well-documented phenomena like precognition - knowing something about the future). Popular ideas about reincarnation point to an underlying truth, but presented in a simplified way that people over the ages could understand. In the reality beyond the material – to which our essence or soul returns after death of the body – there is no time (or space, for that matter). According to Seth:

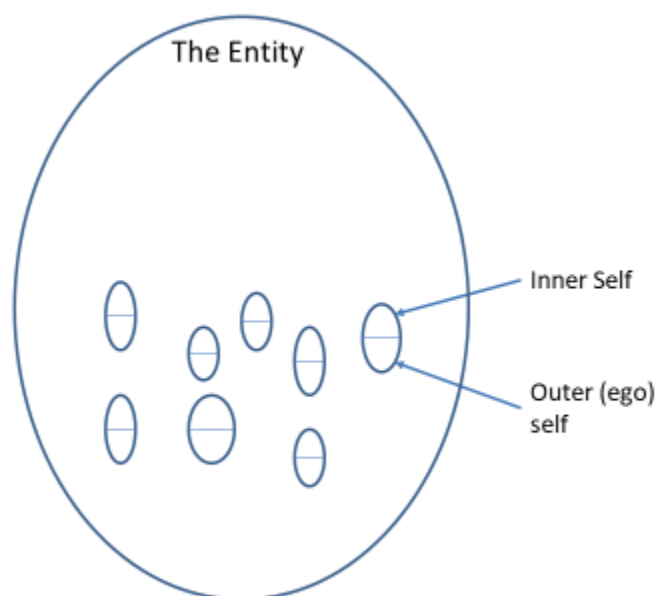
There is simply no time as you think of it, only a present in which all things occur. (Nature of Personal Reality, p 382).

The fact is that all time is simultaneous.... In larger terms, there is no cause and effect either, though these are root assumptions in your reality. (Nature of Personal Reality, p15).

What separates events is not time, but your perception. You perceive events “one at a time”. Time, as it appears to you is, instead, a psychic organization of experience. (Seth Speaks, p313).

Below is a diagram of the nature of the entity, which we can think of as the whole Self, or soul, drawing on Seth, although it is a simplification of what he says. Please note that the picture is not the reality – just an aid to thinking about it. There are no “lines”, no real divisions between parts of the Self. It is a map of regions of consciousness. I’ve shown a larger Self (Seth’s “entity”) as comprising or hosting many smaller “selves”, each of which has an outer ego and an “Inner Self” component.

One might well ask: “where am ‘I’ in all of this?” It seems there is not one simple answer to that question, but while we are in a physical body on this Earth, we may identify ourselves as one of the little “pods” in the diagram, a combined ego and Inner Self, nested within an entity (although we are usually aware only of the ego part of this).



Why is this more elaborate model or picture of the self important?

If what we may call this “esoteric” model of the self, put forward by Seth and others, is a more accurate picture of our true nature, it has a number of important implications:

- “Death” looks very different – our body dies, but this life is only one of the roles we play, and our essence goes on. If we fully internalise this idea we are likely to be much less anxious about dying. In particular, premature death, even of a child, may come to seem less tragic.
- It takes some of the “pressure” off, so to speak: if we no longer feel that this is our only incarnation, we can relax, enjoy whatever hand we have been dealt, trying to make the most of it, but understanding that our essential being will have other opportunities for experiences that may seem out of reach this time. Instead of trying to be “perfect” (if that is our misconception), we simply try to be “fully ourselves”.
- If we are concerned to leave children, or some accomplishment in the world, as a legacy of our existence, this concern becomes much less acute if we recognise that we will exist in many forms and personalities.
- Seth assures us constantly that there are no real barriers within consciousness; our various dimensions and all bodily expressions are connected at the level of consciousness. This means that we can draw on other “selves”, and notably on the higher levels (the Self, or the entity), for help in difficult situations. (As mentioned earlier, this would seem to be analogous to the more conventional religious idea of praying for assistance from a “higher being”).

Home practice:

Accepting that your existence here is just one of many possible earthly experiences, ask yourself: “What are the main lessons I have learned from this life?” (Refer back to the graph of your life from topic 15). The most important ones probably lie in interpersonal relationships, or emotional

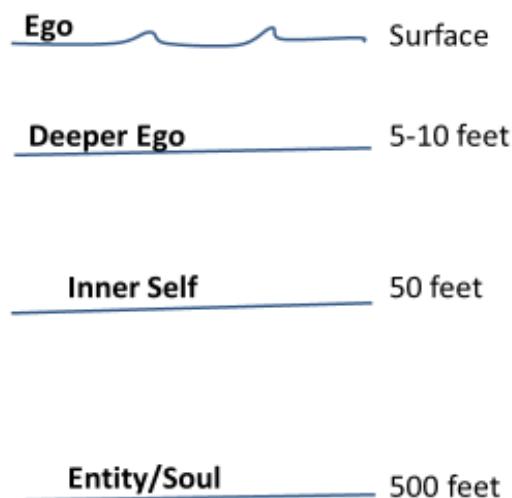
learning. For example, what have you discovered to be the consequences of the various kinds of behaviour that inevitably follow from thinking about oneself as a body, vulnerable to all kinds of harm from others, and from the world? Then ask yourself: “What else do I need to explore and learn while I am here?” And finally: “In what way am I meant to evolve while here? What do I want my state of mind and understanding to be when this lifetime draws to a close?”

Exercise: “diving” to greater depths of the Self.

It would obviously be valuable to have a way of voluntarily contacting the higher/deeper levels of oneself. Prayer may be one way of doing this (topics 13 and 14). Or we may use a secular, imagery-based approach like the one described here.

Imagine that you are floating on the surface of a calm sea, representing your usual ego-centred state, but would like to contact the more expanded dimensions of yourself (it is usually easier to imagine “diving” to accomplish this, rather than floating “higher”). As you dive down (able to breathe normally), you are still in the ego, but a deeper part of it, and can access what is going on in the Inner Self more readily (see diagram below). From a few feet down (you determine what feels comfortable – the distances are arbitrary), imagine communicating with the Inner Self, far below. Ask questions (it’s the Inner Healer exercise in another form!), and especially be open to ideas coming up from the depths. This may be a sufficient depth for you; spend time there.

If you want to “go deeper”, you can obviously visualise diving down, to see what your experiences are when you reach, first, the Inner Self, and later, the entity. No descriptions can be offered here: experiences will be highly individual. You will find it worthwhile repeating if you gain new insights and information from the exercise. If you use prayer, relate your experiences in “diving” to those you have in prayer or meditation.



HJ6: Appendixes

The psychological basis of self-healing

We are exploring the impact that changes in our mental state can have on physical healing. In our materialistic culture, it is not reasonable to claim, baldly, that “the mind can heal cancer”: whether or not that is ultimately possible, we simply do not believe that mind alone can do it. But we can say, on the basis of clinical and research experience, that mental change has a lot of potential to assist our healing.

The way the mind exerts its influence is via repeated affirmations or messages in the form of the beliefs and expectations that we hold. We’ve seen how this can work in our attempts to change attitudes and behaviours; the process is analogous in physical healing. The first, and perhaps most important phase of our attempts to change either behaviours or physical symptoms is to diminish the constant stream of negative self-suggestions. For example, if we examine the inner monologue closely, we will often find that we are saying over and over to ourselves things like: “This cancer is bound to grow”, or “I’m afraid this will get worse, that I’ll suffer and die”. Such ruminations, going on largely out of our awareness, can act like directions to the “deeper” parts of the mind (what we have been calling the “inner Self”), which then tries to influence the body in the direction expected. We can see effects of this kind in hypnotised subjects; in a disease like cancer, it’s a chronic process, taking place over months or years. In a sense, we tend to hypnotise ourselves with our negative expectations. As Seth puts it: “You get what you concentrate on”. Notice he does not say “you get what you want”, because our “wants” are usually undermined by thoughts like “I’d like that, but I don’t believe it will happen”.

Having done the “diagnosis” – identifying and removing our constant negative suggestions, to the best of our ability – we move to “therapy”: replacing these with a stream of “positive” or optimistic projections. Note that we do not deny the possibility of disease progression and decline in health; we simply choose to focus on more positive outcomes, while at the same time accepting that factors beyond our control may prevent us achieving what we want. We resolve to “give it our best shot”, in other words.

The qualities of good healing suggestions are mostly common sense:

- We use mainly words (phrases) or visual images (some people may find they can also invoke a “felt-sense” of healing). Phrases are easiest to use as a constant refrain while we go about our daily tasks; imagery tends to require us to sit for a time and allow the mental pictures to develop.
- Phrases should be brief, clear, direct, unambiguous, and positive. For example: “I am invoking all the power I have to heal”, or “I allow my body to heal this disease”, or “I expect to return to health”everyone must devise personal affirmations in which they feel confident.
- The phrases or images should be coupled with a strong emotional charge: the image or words provide a “blueprint”, so to speak, while the emotion is the “fuel” that drives the desired change.
- We need to expect and believe that changes can happen. This is a complex matter, since we must, at the same time, accept that what we want may not come to pass. One way to resolve this is to affirm that whatever proportion of our healing is under our control will receive our total commitment and effort (and see the separate account below: “*Reconciling beliefs and outcomes*”). In practical terms, the more positive expectancy we can muster, the better.
- We need to allow time for changes to take place. The disease has a momentum that will take time to interrupt: think in terms of small, incremental changes, of gradual improvement.

Recognise that we have spent decades thinking along certain lines, digging “deep ruts” in the mind, and that it will take time to climb out of these!

- The healing we desire needs to be tied to a sense of purpose and direction in our lives (*and see topic 10*). In all of this Healing Journey work we are trying to bring our lives into line with what is our true meaning or purpose – to be authentically ourselves. Ideally, we need to aim for a future life that develops our capacities and creativity, and benefits those around us, while being exciting and stimulating – a life worth living, in other words!
 - Note that all of this reflects a willingness to engage with what is happening, as opposed to trying to cope by avoidance or denial. We engage with ourselves, expressing the emotions that come up, such as fear, anger and sadness, even when these seem temporarily unpleasant. We engage with the cancer, acknowledging its presence and threat, trying to figure out what it seems to “mean” or “want”, i.e. how it may be a reflection of some conflict in deeper parts of the mind (an example would be a disease that allows us to avoid certain responsibilities). We do our best to engage with, or open up to, the higher, more expanded dimensions of ourselves – the spiritual search.
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Reconciling beliefs with outcomes: how can I continue to believe in or expect complete healing if it doesn't seem to be happening?

In “healing through the mind” we aim to influence healing of the body by changing our state of mind – notably, by cultivating our beliefs and expectations, using imagery and affirmations. We may find it very difficult, however, to believe that this can work! Then if healing doesn't seem to be happening, at least not to the extent we want, our scepticism grows, and we may feel we have “failed”. How can we maintain our confidence in the process, if symptoms and disease persist? Here's a way to think about this:

(1). The conventional medical view is still that state of mind makes little difference to the outcome of a serious disease like cancer. Some physicians would agree that a strong will to live may help; most would endorse healthy behaviours (including adhering to medical treatment!) as helpful; and we do now have good evidence that exercise can cut the incidence of recurrence of some cancers by 50% (which may well be an effect of a changed state of mind – this needs to be investigated).

(2). While it is true that purely physical events (i.e. at the level of our biology) determine what happens in animals and small children with cancer, and perhaps for most adults at present, the new paradigm would claim that it is possible for the mind, in aware adults, to over-ride, modify or bypass the usual biological pathways, at least to some extent. This is difficult to believe at first, because we have not explored to any degree in this culture the potential influence of mind on healing. However, while our healing depends to some extent on our state of mind, some part or fraction of what happens depends on factors we can't control. It is hard to put a number on it, but for the sake of concreteness let's say that if we are open-minded and determined, the progression and outcome of our cancer may depend 50% on our state of mind, and 50% on factors beyond our power to control.

(3). Our task becomes to activate, to use fully, this 50%. We do so by clearly and without any reservations laying out in our minds what we want and expect may happen. We construct a “template” or plan of what we want, using imagery, monitoring and changing beliefs, and clear motivation that we want to live, and why (and see topic 10). There is no need to be tentative about it: this 50% (which may grow to be more, as our understanding increases), is completely under our control.

(4). Having adopted this strategy, we now can accept whatever happens with more equanimity, since we know (a) that we have “given it our best shot”, and (b) because much the healing process in the body is outside of our control, there is no question of “failure”.

(5). We are all aware how a clear and focussed determination to pursue a course of action makes success more probable in many areas of life. My research, clinical and personal observation is that this kind of determined “involvement” in personal healing often prolongs life in people with advanced cancer (it may well make recovery more likely in people with less serious disease: we don't have research data on that, and it is technically more difficult to investigate). Yet the individuals involved, while agreeing that longer good-quality life is immensely worthwhile, may feel they have “failed” because the disease did not disappear. Complete remissions do occur at times, but often they do not – that may be a result of the “other 50%” of factors exerting their effect. We may reach a stage in human development when we can exert, through our minds, more complete control over our health, but we are not yet at that level of understanding.

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The Seth Material:

Seth's works have been extensively quoted throughout this course, which should convey a sense of his teachings, but I reproduce here a (my) short table summarising some of his ideas on illness and healing.

Ideas from Seth on Illness and Healing		
	Reasons for Illness	Routes to Healing
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Illness and early death are not "preordained" (i.e. by some higher level of the self, or the Divine) -But we have separated from (lost trust in) our body and nature -Science, medicine and religion, while often helpful, have fostered this mistrust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Trust: that we choose (at some level) what happens (therefore we need to investigate the choices we have made) - Trust that higher levels of ourselves have considerable capacity to heal our bodies
Definition of purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Illness often arises from <u>lack of meaning</u> in our lives: "value fulfillment is being denied" -There is "a failure to materialise spirit faithfully" -Specifically, cancer (in the old): spiritual and psychic growth are often being denied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Seek meaning and <u>value fulfillment</u> in life, i.e. explore your full creative potential -Recognise that we may choose illness for learning.
"Deep" psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Failure to solve a psychological problem; a symptom is a materialised symbol, representing a challenge. -Cutting off emotional expression and blocking action. More generally, there is ineffective handling (blocking) of energy, and the ego is separating from the whole. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Try to solve the problem; uncover the inner causes of symptoms; find what they "mean" -Uncover the links between thoughts and emotions; allow emotional expression; trust your impulses; regulate thoughts, emotions, and intentions.
Ego level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Beliefs are distorting; because of the influence and power of negative suggestion in our lives, there is lack of trust in the "good intent of your bodies". <u>"You get what you concentrate on"</u> (i.e. what you truly and consistently believe and expect). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Uncover and control <u>beliefs</u>, and the activities of the conscious mind generally -Use constructive suggestions -Identify and drop ideas of personal unworthiness.

A Course in Miracles (ACIM)

(The following is a slightly modified form of the introduction to “level 5B” of the Healing Journey, a workbook which can be freely downloaded from the Wellspring.ca website, On-line resources for the Healing Journey, then “level 5B of HJ”. (The internet version also shows a number of tables and diagrams not reproduced here).

ACIM is a most remarkable book from an unusual source. The author is none other than Jesus Christ himself, arguably the most important spiritual teacher (for western peoples) in 2 millennia! “But didn’t he die 2000 years ago?” ACIM is a text “channeled” from Jesus, through an atheistic psychologist, Helen Schucman, over a period of 7 years, beginning in 1965. She “heard” a voice, identifying itself as Jesus, and dictated daily installments of what has become the text to a colleague, William Thetford, who typed up the material, which was eventually published in 1976. This history is likely to inspire more than a little scepticism in some who encounter it for the first time! In fact, there are many examples of such channeling - the Koran was channeled, for example. Texts generated in this way should be judged by the nature of the material received; the content, rather than the source, is after all what matters to us, and the material of ACIM is quite exceptional. It is a text on healing at all levels, psychological, physical and spiritual. It is the most sophisticated and profound material on self-initiated healing that I have encountered in more than 40 years of searching, which is why I recommend its study. Moreover it is written in modern language, with psychologically understandable reasoning (although the conclusions go far beyond the conventional). It offers us an extraordinary opportunity to evolve, and although Christian in terminology and origin, is not conventionally Christian at all: in fact certain sections offer a correction to many of the misconceptions that have crept into the Bible as a result of centuries of injection of human ideas and values into that text. A typical reaction to something as unusual as this is criticism and summary rejection! We might, however, try a different approach: suspending scepticism and seeing what it can do for us, upon which we may become filled with gratitude to both the author and the two ordinary people who persevered, year after year, in making the course available to us all.

Since 1976, several million copies of ACIM have been distributed in many languages. A lot of commentaries have been written explaining some of the concepts in it. There are also a number of popular books written by mental health professionals who base their texts around ACIM, for example those by Marianne Williamson, Karen Bentley and Gerald Jampolsky, among others (reading some of these books can be a helpful introduction). The “Foundation for ACIM” has been established under the direction of the late Dr Ken Wapnick, who was perhaps the foremost exponent of the course; he was present in the early stages of its publication. There are many sites on the internet where the text can be freely downloaded, the text and other related books published, and contact made with the staff of the Foundation for ACIM.

What does ACIM say, and why is it hard to read?

Perhaps the most important revelation, in ACIM as in other mystical writings, is that “God” or the Divine Source is within us all, and not some authoritarian being outside ourselves, as often represented in the theistic religions. To put it another way, we are all part of the Divine, but we have lost sight of that; our task is to recover this awareness. We are primarily “mind-stuff” rather than body, and are not separate, from God or from others, so we need not attack (i.e. resist, judge) any of them! Fully realizing this is healing.

It must be conceded, however, that ACIM is often difficult reading. (The “Workbook” part of it, as you will find, is perhaps simpler than the main text, and therefore may be a place to start as one is becoming acquainted with the course). Why is much of the text so difficult? In part because it turns

most of our conventional ideas about “reality” through 180 degrees. And in part because it seems to be designed to make us think hard, so that we truly master the material, rather than have it “slip down” and be forgotten. The terminology can pose an initial barrier to some readers also, appearing sexist (always “he” and “your brothers”), and Christian in some of its symbology. We simply must allow any old hackles this raises to subside, and get on with the substance of the text, if we are going to benefit from it.

An outline of the process of separating and healing

We began as, and are still all part of, One Mind, which may be called by various names – “God”, the Divine, the Source, the One and so on. ACIM uses “God”, sometimes the “Father” (which can be validly translated into “Divine Mother” if you wish). The important point, however, is that we are not ultimately material but “mental”, the inverted commas denoting that this is an approximation - we can’t, from this earthly vantage point, expect to understand fully what such a different state of being would be like. At some point, for reasons that are not clear (I like what the Hindus say, that it’s “God’s play”!), we became temporarily separated from God. “We” here means that some part or aspect of God believed itself to be separate, although this was immediately corrected. This apparently separate part is called the “Son of God” in ACIM. The separation is an illusion, and the separated mind retains that awareness, a kind of connecting link that ACIM calls the “Holy Spirit” (or we can call it the “Higher Self”, and use the same initials, HS). Because of the guilt such a radical separation invoked, there was immediately a fragmentation of this mind into millions of apparently separate beings, each clothed in material substance, the purpose being (to put it simply) so that others could now be blamed for “my” predicament. Each unit however still contained a knowledge of the whole - the separation was, and is an illusion, to say it yet again, a kind of dream or play put on by the separated mind.

We are, unfortunately, some of the apparently separated beings arising from this “Big Bang” of creation. We start from the following misconception, to paraphrase Descartes: “I think I’m separate, therefore I am”. But it is a false conclusion. We can “swim back upstream”, return to our original home, simply by a change in perception. This is not easy because, as a result of our presumed separateness, we have developed all kinds of fearful ideas about our guilt (ultimately towards the Divine, for leaving it/Him), and vulnerability (to retribution from Him, and to attack by others). We therefore have surrounded ourselves by defenses, including our material bodies as a defense, and we have buried the knowledge of our true nature underneath all of this. Now, we say, we are simply bodies, and we may even get ill and die to prove it! The material world, and particularly other people, are blamed for all our problems.

Spiritual healing is the reversal of separation, a shift in perception of what we are. It affects every aspect of our lives. This shift is what ACIM calls a “miracle”. The whole text is thus about healing, although not specifically healing of the body, since it views the material world as an illusion; the hope is that by correcting the overarching illusion, all aspects of ourselves will return to harmony. As we read the text we will receive many ideas about how to heal - i.e. what “healing” is will be expressed in many different ways. This can be confusing until you see that these different ways refer to different points along the process of separation. We can heal by forgiving our “brothers”; something that we emphasised in level 3 of the Healing Journey course. This requires recognizing that they have not “sinned” against us, merely fallen into error (as have we all), and that even an apparent attack on us is simply a disguised “call for help”. Then at a slightly “deeper” level, healing requires forgiving ourselves, recognizing that we are not sinners, destined for punishment. Higher still - that we are not even separate, from the Divine or other people; that somehow our minds are all joined. And even further upstream, as it were, there was no real initial separation from the Divine Mind at all, and hence no real material world was generated to “protect” us and maintain this separation. Occasionally, remarkable individuals will come to this last realization in one leap. Most of us, however, have to work away at the

more accessible levels first - our judgment of others and of ourselves, moving up towards realizing that we are not separate from them, and can risk loving them, and ourselves! As we do this, our emphasis on the material world will diminish (there is no need to fear losing touch with it! We simply learn to have, as the course puts it, a “happy dream” rather than an unhappy one).

Metaphors can help us understand this drastic reversal of ordinary worldly conceptions (“all our conceptions are false” says ACIM!). Here are a few:

1. We could think of the original One Mind as a tree, spreading out into ever smaller branches then twigs and finally leaves. Each of us is a leaf, and our petty concern is to compete with other leaves for various advantages, such as being bigger and more beautiful, or having better access to the sunlight! We can content ourselves with learning to accept the rights of other leaves (the usual limit of human mental healing), or we can move back towards our origins, to where the twigs diverged, and recognize that we are in fact part of the same whole, and ultimately an integral part of the tree/Mind.
2. Another example: when a container of liquid mercury is spilled, it breaks into thousands of tiny droplets, which can readily merge again when pushed together. If, however, these droplets get covered with dust and grit (a metaphor for worldly defensiveness), they stubbornly refuse to merge, and retain their separateness! We need, of course, to remove the “dust” that normally surrounds each of us.
3. ACIM refers in several places to the metaphor of dreaming. When we dream it is as if our minds split into many separate characters or individuals. Yet they are all part of the one mind. And when we wake, we realize that “it was all a dream”. This, say the mystics, is what we will understand when we awaken from our current worldly dream.
4. Ken Wapnick makes a comparison with the case of people with multiple personality disorder, a pathological condition in which a person assumes, at different times, entirely different personalities that tend to be unaware of one another. Yet they are all parts of the same mind. So it is, he says, with the emanations of the Divine Mind.

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Eckhart Tolle; summary of the main ideas from his teachings:

Our basic misconception: that we are nothing more than material form, a body with a brain that incidentally creates thoughts. Our “ego” is this false “self”, which believes itself to be separate from all other things and other minds. We have come to believe that we are our stream of thoughts.

- In fact, as Tolle and all other spiritual masters emphasise, our deepest and true Self is consciousness, ultimately one with all, and independent of form, but operating through forms (body and brain-mind).

Why don't we realize this?

- Because obsessive thinking has taken over, and obscured the deeper “knowing” of consciousness.

Associated beliefs: since all forms are impermanent, we must die.

- The body dies, but our consciousness is immortal

We perceive our reality as bounded by space and time.

- In fact these are our own constructions, not absolute qualities of reality.
- Specifically, our idea of linear time is an illusion (this is a central theme of Tolle’s teachings: he points out repeatedly that the only experience we can have is of the present moment, the “Now”. The future always exists only as an idea).

How can we escape from our mistaken views?

- This needs a fundamental shift; we need to create “space” in our minds in order, ultimately, to recognize and identify with our “being”, our deepest Self.
- Practically, this requires that we relinquish the constant thinking, and especially drop thoughts of past and future (which is most of them!), except where they are needed for planning.
- In addition to minimising thinking and thus being “in the Now”, we should cease the usual reflexive emotional resistance to whatever we encounter. This includes no longer labelling and judging the (apparent) world around us.
- Getting (and staying) in touch with the “energy of the inner body” is another valuable “portal” to deeper being.
- We become an “observer” of the thinking mind, detached from it. Thinking remains as a valuable tool, but one to be used only when necessary.

Some further consequences of our mistaken ideas:

- We think of our “**life**” as a series of events (including thoughts). In fact, this record is what Tolle calls our “**life story**”. Our true life is our conscious being, behind the story. He uses various analogies to illustrate this: we live in a dream, and imagine we are a character within it, whereas in fact we are the dreamers; we are actors in a play, but have so completely identified with our part that we have forgotten we have a “real life” outside of the play.
- Many people are consumed by **grievances** – wanting things to be different, wanting more of this, less of that. The antidote is to cultivate the kind of detached, aware mental state that he describes, from which forgiveness and acceptance will arise naturally.
- The “**pain-body**” (a kind of mental “program”) is a favourite topic: it represents the accumulated grievances within a person’s lifetime (and even beyond, to previous lives and to the species as a whole). The pain-body is like an entity that is always lurking in the psyche, ready to take over at

the slightest insult or inconvenience. We must learn to observe this, but not identify with it (i.e. not let it guide our behaviour).

- **Suffering:** this is our mental reaction to physical or psychological pain – again, the old pattern of wishing things were different. Tolle suggests learning to “surrender to” (accept) the facts of any situation, and not to increase our distress with anxious forecasts about the future.
- **Health and illness:** Likewise, if we refrain from imposing our emotional reactions on illness, this will give the intelligence of the body the best chance to restore health.
- **Relationship problems:** Tolle discusses some of the many difficulties that arise between people: the remedy lies in first cultivating one’s own state of conscious awareness, from which position understanding, acceptance, forgiveness and compassion follow. Love is “perceiving oneself in the other”.
- **Unhappiness** in its manifold forms – e.g., anxiety, boredom, fear, including the fear of death, are all rooted in our misperception of time and space. **Happiness** is “being one with life”, that is, knowing oneself as the consciousness behind form.

Purpose in life:

- One of the most brilliant and practically valuable discussions in Tolle’s books concerns his analysis of purpose in life (and see chapter 9 of “A New Earth”). We usually think of our purpose as defined by roles – working life, parent, student, teacher, artist, home-maker, and so on. He points out that these are **secondary** purposes, and that the **primary** purpose is finding out who we are, by contacting our inner being. When we do this, everything else in life falls into place.

Social (collective) problems:

- Tolle discusses many of our major social problems – war, environmental destruction, preoccupation with pleasure seeking, and others, and points out how they would cease to exist if sufficient numbers of us were more conscious (i.e. aware). His telling comment: we pollute the planet by our collective unconsciousness.
- He sees religion as usually being a conservative force, encouraging beliefs over experience, and generally inhibiting people from making their own connection to their deeper being or “God” (Tolle doesn’t much like the term, since it is used in a vague way to indicate a variety of unspecified phenomena).

Philosophical issues:

- In place of “God” Tolle often refers to the “vast intelligence” behind all the phenomena we observe. Consciousness is “the light emanating from this eternal Source”.
- Space and time are “the two essential attributes of God (using the word this time), infinity and eternity, perceived as if they had an external existence outside you” (Power of Now, chapter 7).
- As we drop our preoccupation with the “horizontal” dimensions of space and time, we become aware of a “vertical” dimension, one of intensity of connection to the absolute.

Some quotes from Tolle’s writings:

- Thinking has become a disease. This incessant mental noise prevents you from finding that realm of inner stillness that is inseparable from being.
- Conceptualising kills aliveness
- Full attention is full acceptance is surrender
- Surrender is the end of the mind as your master
- Joy is awareness of consciousness, of Self
- Embrace the space within, not the form

- Any form obscures God
- God is Being itself, not a being
- Sacredness is where form meets the formless
- Recognizing yourself (your Self) is love
- You are enlightened when you have no need of time
- To offer no resistance to life is to be in a state of grace, ease and lightness.

-What is God? The eternal One Life underneath all the forms of life. What is love? To feel the presence of that One Life deep within yourself and within all creatures. To be it. Therefore, all love is the love of God.

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The “belief tree: making a graphical array of our beliefs about ourselves

If you look back over topics 1 – 10 you will recall the great importance of beliefs in the structuring of our lives. These beliefs are not randomly scattered – one or a few of them (about ourselves and our relationship to the world) tend to dominate, and subsidiary beliefs can be grouped into categories. To make this more obvious, one way is to arrange them as a “tree”, with trunk, branches, and progressively smaller or more detailed twigs and leaves. The topics below are simply an indication of what you might consider – you may find others; everyone will have their own tree, with differing branches.

You can construct this as a table (see below), or, for greater impact, draw this up on a large sheet of paper as an actual tree. Another possible metaphor is a river, with tributaries. You can continue the “tree” into the “ground” – looking at the roots of your current personality in childhood and earlier life. The main aim is not so much to retrieve a lot of small details, as to demonstrate to yourself how a few central beliefs about oneself have ramifications in all areas of our lives.

If you find a lot of negativity in your honest appraisal of your qualities and priorities, it is an excellent idea to construct a second tree (either separate or in different colours on the same branches, for example) showing the qualities and behaviours you would like and aspire to exhibit. If these trees are to be shown to others, you may want to leave some areas blank (e.g. thoughts about sex), with a code referring to your private descriptions, noted elsewhere.

To stimulate your thinking, I present below a listing of areas of mental life that are important to most of us. You will see that there are major categories, divided into smaller areas (“twigs and leaves”). This is by no means a complete list – everyone is different, so you will need to devise some of your own categories.

Table of MY BELIEFS

Table of MY BELIEFS		
ROOTS	Basic biological fears – my sense of security, vulnerability....	
	How I thought parents viewed me....	
	Other adults, teachers...	
	My peers.....	
TRUNK	My basic nature: I am	
	My fears, self-doubt.....	
	How the world seems to me; dangerous, safe, depressing, exciting.....	
BRANCHES	twigs	leaves
Branch 1: my relationships	-How I believe others view me now	-My need to perform, control, compete. -My reactions to others -My need to defend myself -Actions I must take (in various situations)...
	My rights to express myself	-How I must act, present myself -How much I need to hold back -Examples of holding back, over-reacting, pretending...
	How I see my family, intimate relations.....	-Time and attention I give them -Specific instances
	Importance of sex	-What priority I give it -Activities

	How I depend on others	-How I express this dependence.... -How I resent, ignore, avoid.... -Co-dependency on partner? -What I give them..... -What I rely on getting.....
Branch 2: My health	Importance I give to health generally	-What I do to enhance it, e.g. nutrition, exercise, rest.....
	Priority I give to self-healing activities	-Time I allocate daily -Extent to which I allow interferences..... -Specific activities, e.g. meditation, reading, HJ homework...
Branch 3: My employment.	What it says about me	-My perceived need to make efforts to progress.... -Impact on my sense of worth and meaning.....
	Relation to security	-Fears if I lost it my employment..... -How others depend on it...
	Effects on rest of life	-Impact on family and relationships..... -Importance relative to rest of life.....
	Compromises I have (had) to make	-Specific examples
Branch 4: My finance	Importance of money to me....	-Impact of my beliefs on others around me -Priority I have assigned to making money
Branch 5: My interest in arts and creativity	Importance to me	-Sense of own creative abilities..... -Time/priority assigned
Branch 6: My recreation	Importance to me	-Time/priority assigned -Effects on rest of life..... -Relation to "productivity"
Branch 7: My search for purpose, meaning in life	-Importance I give this -Priority (over other activities)	-Specific actions this leads to..... -How these activities affect the rest of my life
	-Beliefs about religion, spirituality	-How these beliefs have influenced my life
Branch 8: My beliefs about my ultimate fate (after death)	-Fears -Hopes, interest.....	-Past learning about this..... -Interactions with religious organisations, authorities.....
	-Degree of confidence in persistence of Self	-How this is changing with spiritual work.... -Implications for my present life....