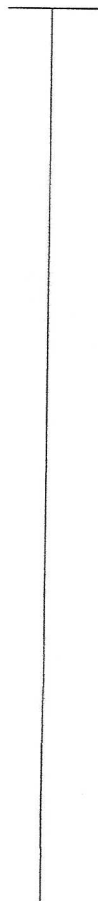


CHAPTER 8

# WHOLE

SOAKING SESSION

*Awake My Soul* by Brock Human



## BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”

*John 8:12 (NLT)*

We have all been affected by the darkness in this world. We long to live in light, to be whole and to enjoy life. The good news is that Jesus came to shine his light into our darkness and restore what has been broken. Any symptoms we experience—depression, anxiety, obsessive or suicidal thinking, addictions, self-harm, or any others—point to a deep desire and an unmet longing for wholeness.

In our attempts to find wholeness, we try all kinds of self-improvement plans. Some of these seem to work for a while. In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he poured out his frustration that he couldn’t make life work: “I don’t really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do what I hate” (Romans 7:15 NLT). Can you relate to this sentiment? All of us can. It’s part of the human condition: Life is confusing and frustrating, but giving up isn’t the answer. We can and should work hard to try to understand the thoughts, feelings, and actions that are connected with our symptoms, but only God can fully restore us. When we haven’t allowed the power and love of God to restore us, we hit the wall of our own or others’ (even professional help’s) noble but insufficient attempts.

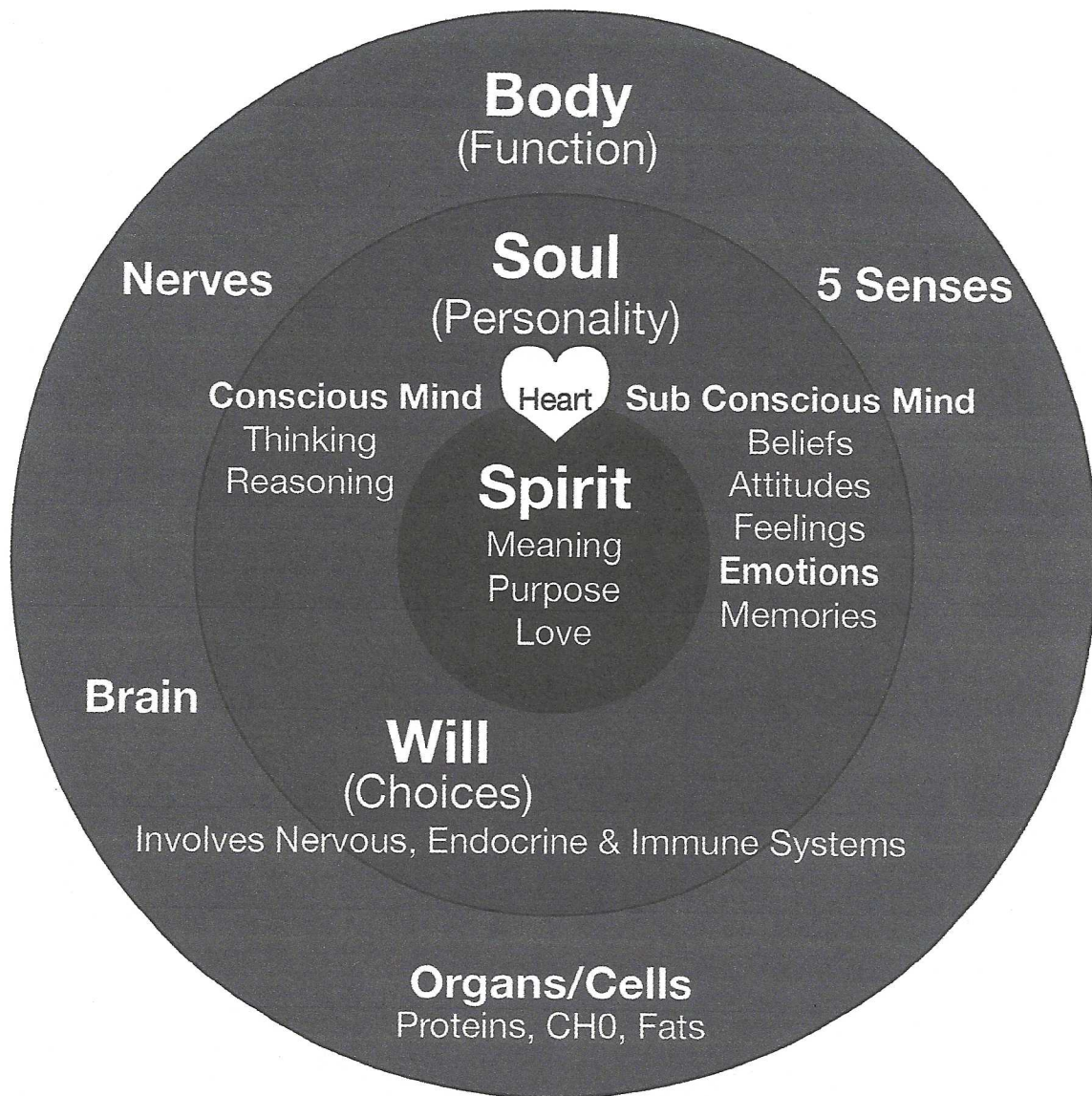
Paul found the source of wholeness. He realized his attempts were frustrating and futile because he was leaving God out of the process. “I’ve tried everything and nothing helps. I’m at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn’t that the real question? The answer,

thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.” (Romans 7:24–25, MSG).

We are partners with God in the process of restoration. We have an important role to play, but God does the hard part! Our creator knows and understands our hearts better than we do; he knows how to bring healing to the broken places. When God is invited into the process in a deliberate and active way, miraculous healing occurs. It happens because you are accessing *his* power to heal and transform your life, and you are inviting *him* to do the work. When this happens, we are filled and empowered—filled by God’s love in the only relationship that can fully meet our needs and empowered to know and do our part.

It’s only with God that everything is possible. “God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us” (Ephesians 3:20–21). When we look to God, he has the power to unveil the wounds and the lies that cover our hearts, and we are reconnected with the very essence of who we are—his beloved children. It’s like the ultimate homecoming. In his light, we see light, and we become holy and whole (Psalm 36:9).

Having a healthy, holistic approach starts with educating ourselves on God's design for wholeness—body, soul, and spirit. This diagram shows the relationship of these three aspects of our being.





## BODY

The body is made up of the brain, nerves, muscles, bones, organs, and every other tissue and cell. It is the physical *house* for our soul and spirit. Through the five senses (sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound), our bodies engage, interact with, and have conscious awareness of the physical world.

God has made us wonderfully complex beings. When a person experiences love, joy, and peace, the psychological and spiritual benefits show up in the body: relaxed muscles, a lower heart rate, good digestion, restful sleep, and many other physical advantages. But stress, unprocessed grief or trauma, racing or depressing thoughts, and negative assumptions about God can produce compulsive and destructive behaviors, such as eating disorders and addictions, which have a very negative impact on our bodies. Since the body and emotions are intertwined, good therapy helps us utilize information from the five senses to enable us to discern our thoughts and feelings. This is where expressive therapies, such as dance movement and art therapy, help people connect with their bodies and their five senses.

In recent years, studies of the brain show how brain chemistry and neural pathways are affected by the full range of difficulties we face. When a person's brain is malfunctioning, it's like trying to run a race with a broken leg. The problem for most people is that they never do what it takes to heal the broken leg. Instead, they keep limping along, redoubling their self-defeating efforts. They seldom step back to see the big picture more clearly and chart a different course of action. When parts of the brain aren't functioning properly, we crave affection and affirmation, but we seek it from people who have proven to be irresponsible and untrustworthy. We can confuse love with worry and enabling behavior, and we develop rigid but unproductive patterns of thinking and acting.

In healthy brains, the neurochemistry is carefully balanced to promote clear thinking, good judgment, and pleasure. The brain functions properly because of three important chemical neurotransmitters:

- » Serotonin promotes a sense of wellbeing. When levels are low, the person experiences worry, anxiety, and depression.
- » Endorphins are released with exercise. They naturally produce a sense of pleasure and are effective in reducing physical pain, insomnia, and depression.
- » Dopamine affects the brain's reward and pleasure center by stimulating a person's motivation and drive to pursue pleasurable activities. People who are low in dopamine are more prone to addiction. This is why behaviors, such as the abuse of food or addictive substances, behaviors such as gambling or sex, and even excessive use of smart phones, can become so addicting. These behaviors release dopamine.

These chemicals are the gas in the car of our brains. They fuel the different parts of our brains so they work the way God designed them. They can become out of balance—too high or too low—as a result of injury, disease, and prolonged emotional distress. When we struggle with anxiety, depression, or other similar problems, the right medication is God's gift to us to bring our brain chemistry back into order. For many individuals, medications are an important part of the process of healing and recovery.

## SOUL

When our thoughts are unhealthy, negative, or distorted, they negatively affect our psychological health. Certain psychological issues, such as eating disorders or addictions, take a heavy toll on the body and the soul. The word *soul* comes from the Greek word “*psuche*” or “*psyche*,” which is where we get the word *psychology*. According to the original meaning in Greek, our soul is made up of three things: the mind (what we think); our emotions (what we feel); and the will (what we do, our choices).

Our soul reveals our personality and allows us to be self-aware. It connects us with the internal world of thoughts, feelings, decision-making, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. We experience health in our soul when there is integrity between what we think, feel, and do.

Cycles of destructive patterns of behavior wreak havoc on our soul health. Eating disorders, depression, OCD, and addictions create these cycles. When we are caught in these destructive cycles, we feel powerless over our thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Feelings of hopelessness, despair, and depression also go through a predictable cycle. They invariably include “negative automatic thoughts” (called NATs). These are self-defeating thoughts that flood into our minds (such as “I can’t do anything right!” “Nobody cares about me!”) and names we call ourselves (such as “I’m such a \_\_\_\_\_ fool!” and “What a loser!”). These thoughts reinforce existing painful emotions of hurt, fear, anger, and shame—and all their variations.

Over time, the human body can’t bear the stress, and we develop physiological symptoms. Different people have

very different *pressure points*. They may experience headaches, upset stomachs, backaches, nausea, and generalized fatigue. We eat too much or not enough; we sleep too much or lie awake for hours every night. Our coping abilities break down, and we have cognitive disruptions: We can’t think clearly, we can’t engage in thoughtful conversations, and we can’t reason through problems to find a workable solution. Sometimes, we can’t even find the next word in a simple sentence. Relationships (and hard questions, like “How are you doing?”) are too much to take, so we avoid meaningful interaction and drift into isolation. In this condition, we make decisions that are self-defeating: We don’t go to school or work, we watch television hour after hour to escape, we take drugs to numb the pain, we avoid people because they threaten us when they ask how we’re doing, and we snap at people for no apparent reason. All of this, of course, produces a deeper, more destructive set of NATs, which makes us feel more out of control and hopeless, leading to deeper, more negative feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. Some people who find themselves without hope want to end it all.

We often don’t even stop to think about what’s going on in our minds. We let our thoughts run in a direction without analysis or correction. If we’re focusing on something pleasant, the lack of awareness is no problem. However, if our minds run down paths of self-condemnation, anxiety, blame, or any other self-defeating thought, we need to learn how to “take every thought captive.” We can stop the destructive thought processes and replace NATs with true, positive, affirming thoughts.



## SPIRIT

When is the last time you felt alive—I mean *really* alive? Free to be the person you always envisioned and hoped you could be. Free to be the person that you know deep down in your heart you are. If you're feeling less than alive (or if you're wondering, *Do I even have a pulse?*), then it's time for a spiritual check-up. Let me explain why.

The essence of who you are, who you were created to be, and the seeds of your divine purpose and destiny reside in your spirit. Yes, you have a spirit! Merriam-Webster defines the word *spirit* as that “vital principle” that “animates” and “brings life” to a being. Your spirit is eternal . . . it's what enlivens you—it gives you life with a capital “L.”

Your spirit brings life to your body and soul. In fact, even when your body and soul cease to exist, your spirit lives on. The spirit helps us to connect with the spiritual realm so we can connect with God. When our human spirits are connected to God's Spirit, we can discern heavenly things and access God's perfect wisdom, truth, and knowledge. This connection makes us aware of God's loving presence, and he helps us grasp spiritual concepts, like love, hope, meaning, and purpose. When Jesus met the woman at the well, he explained how we connect with God: “God is Spirit, and his worshippers must worship in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24 NIV).

Only through the Spirit can the soul and body interact with God, but our five senses, thoughts, and emotions help us to make sense of spiritual realities. In this book, you have been encouraged to notice what you are sensing (on all five levels) and what you are thinking and feeling. The information from your body and soul gives signals about your need for God, his presence in your life, and his communication with you—in other words, your spiritual life.

Problems like eating disorders, addictions, depression and anxiety take a toll on our ability to be truly free and to

feel fully alive. For this reason, they take a heavy toll on the human spirit. When someone is in the throes of an eating disorder or addiction, the divine order gets *out of whack*. The incessant drive of these disorders clouds the truth and overwhelms our spirit, the functions of the body, our thoughts and emotions, and our ability to make choices.

The atmosphere of our homes in childhood and adolescence often shapes our spiritual receptiveness. Some of us have grown up in an environment that has not nurtured our spirit or in an environment that overvalued or over-nurtured some other aspect of our being (for example, one that stimulated and valued only our mind) to the neglect of the other aspects of our being. And some of us have been exposed to an environment that was toxic—limiting our sense of freedom and harming our capacity to feel fully alive. In these environments, our spirit can be seriously compromised.

There are three primary ways our spirits respond when spiritual health is compromised:

### 1. A captive spirit

When a psychological disorder consumes you and threatens to upset the divine order, it can actually begin to *rule* over your soul and spirit. That's why I call it a *captive spirit*. As this occurs, you live less out of the essence of who you are, and you begin to look more like the disease that holds you captive.

For individuals struggling with substance abuse, for example, the physical drives of the addiction control their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. On a deeper level, they may long to feel alive, but using the substance has become a superficial substitute for really living. In their attempts to “enliven” themselves, they look to drugs, alcohol, or compulsive behaviors.

## 2. A slumbering spirit

If you've grown up in an environment that has failed to nurture your spirit, or you've lived in an environment that overvalued or over-nurtured some aspect of your life to the neglect of your spirit, you may experience what is called a *slumbering spirit*. It's like your spirit went into hibernation due to lack of nurture, strengthening, or development. It's like you are spiritually sleepwalking through life, finding it hard to feel any significant level of joy or tangible connection with God on a more real and personal level.

Alternatively, trauma, such as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect, or abandonment, can contribute to a slumbering spirit. In this case, the individual has repressed emotions or disassociates from the negative effects of the trauma or toxic environment.



Take your spiritual pulse:

Can you relate to captive spirit? If so, what in your life (wounds, destructive behaviors, toxic beliefs, etc.) has taken your spirit captive?

## 3. An orphan spirit

Someone with an *orphan spirit* has wounds that come from deep feelings of emotional abandonment. People with an orphan spirit struggle to trust others or receive love from them. They have essentially closed their hearts off to others, even those they are seemingly close to. They isolate out of fear of being hurt again. They struggle to believe that their emotional and relational needs could ever be truly met in relationships.

As a result, they tend to be self-reliant, avoiding risks in relationships and hiding from God. They may be angry with God, they may feel God is angry with them, or they don't believe they are worthy of his full attention or love. While someone with an orphan spirit may appear fiercely independent, in actuality, this independence covers immense hurt and fear.

Name ways you have begun to live less and less out of the essence of who you are and are beginning to look more and more like the affliction that holds you captive?

Can you relate to slumbering spirit? If so, what in your environment, both in the past and present, contributed to this condition?

» What in your environment overvalued or over-nurtured some aspect of your being to the neglect of your spirit?

» Did trauma, such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect or abandonment, contribute to a slumbering spirit? If so, how?

Can you relate to orphan spirit? If so, in what specific ways do you relate to the world around you like an orphan?

» What are your orphan-like thoughts and feelings?

» How does this affect your relationship with God and others?



# WHOLENESS SKILLS

Our lives are a complex and interconnected whole. Our bodies, souls, and spirits all affect our pain *and* our restoration. When one part is harmed, the other parts suffer damage as well. We need a holistic approach to emotional, spiritual, physical, and relational health. For instance, depression requires us to address our bodies (eating well, sleeping, exercising, and taking medications), our souls (our mind, will, and emotions, and our connections in supportive relationships), and our spirits (our experience of God's love, strength, and forgiveness . . . and where we find true meaning and connect with our destiny and purpose).

## BODY



Ask God to help you identify the current needs of your body and how he wants to help you meet these needs. (Consider nutrition, sleep, exercise, and medication.) List your needs here.

» Your needs related to nutrition:

» Your needs related to sleep:

» Your needs related to exercise:

» Your needs related to medical/medications:

» Other:

How can you envision God meeting these needs? What's his part, and what's your part?

## SOUL



Ask God to help you identify the current needs of your soul—your mind, will, and emotions. List those here.

» Your needs related to your thought life (thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes):

» Your needs related to your choices:

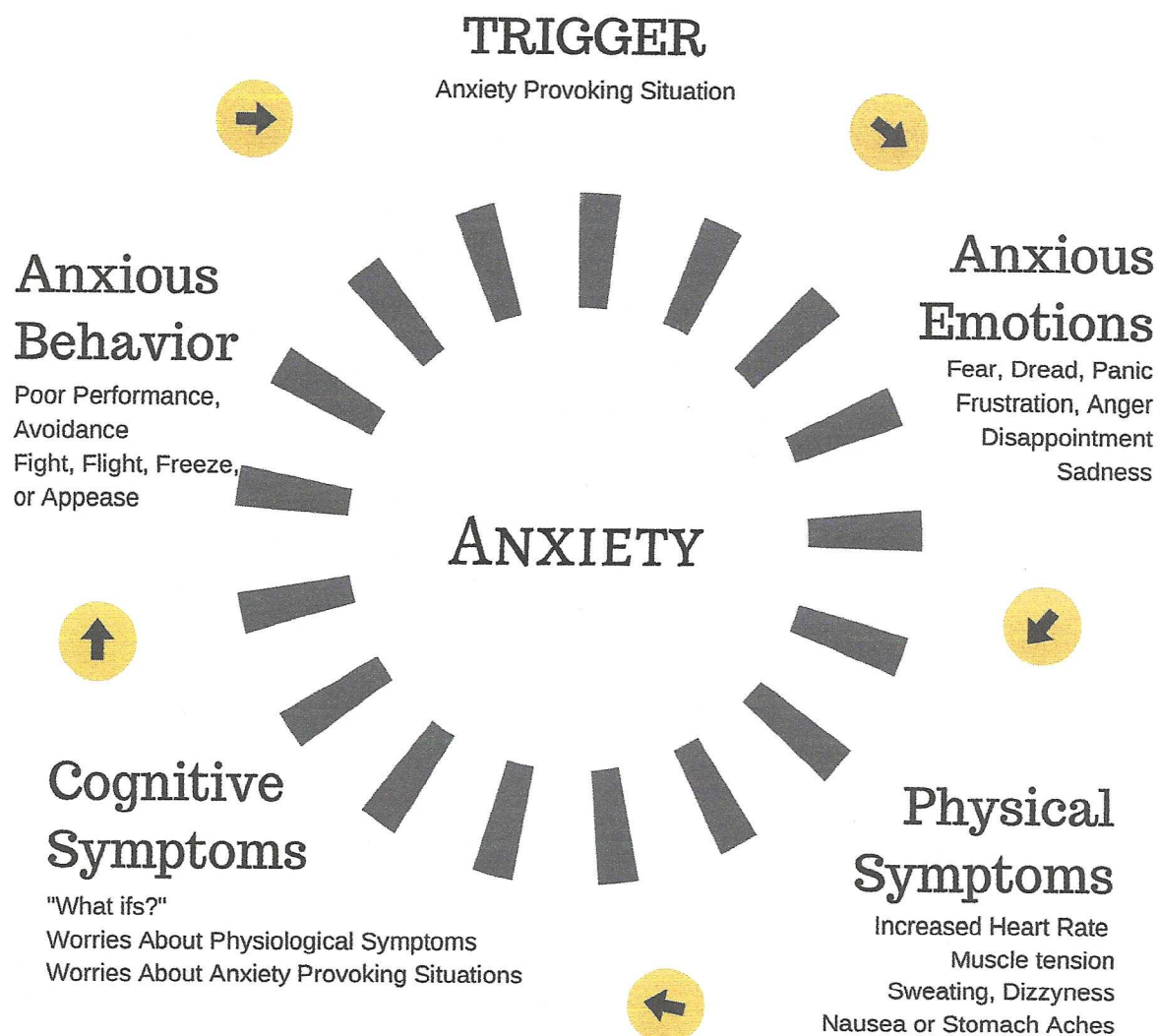
» Your needs related to your emotions:

How can you envision God meeting these needs? What's his part, and what's your part?

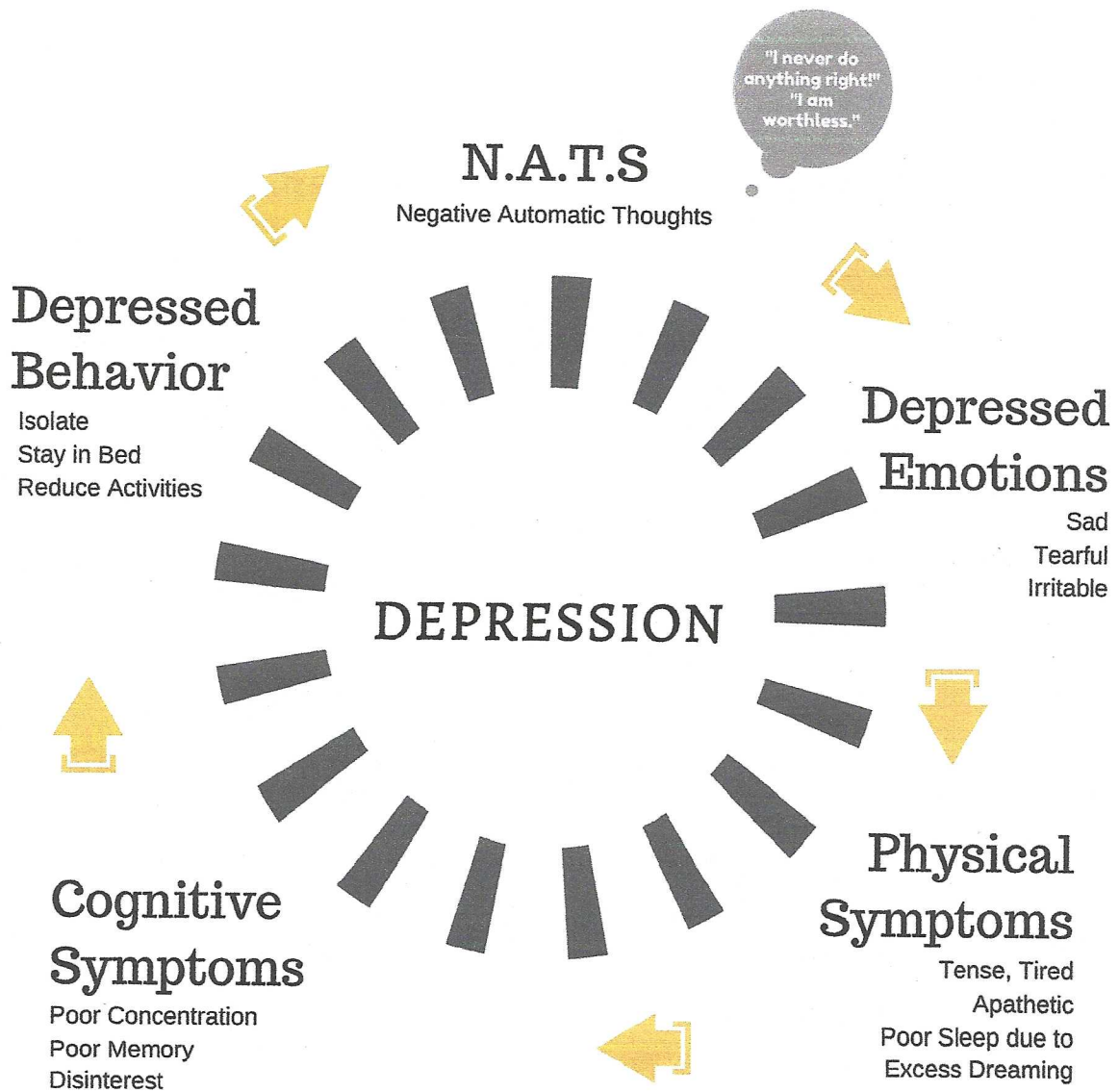
How well do you know and understand your personality—it's uniqueness, strengths, and challenges? The Myers Briggs Personality Type test can be a helpful tool. You can take a short version at [humanmetrics.com](http://humanmetrics.com). You can also explore the meaning of your personality type on this website.

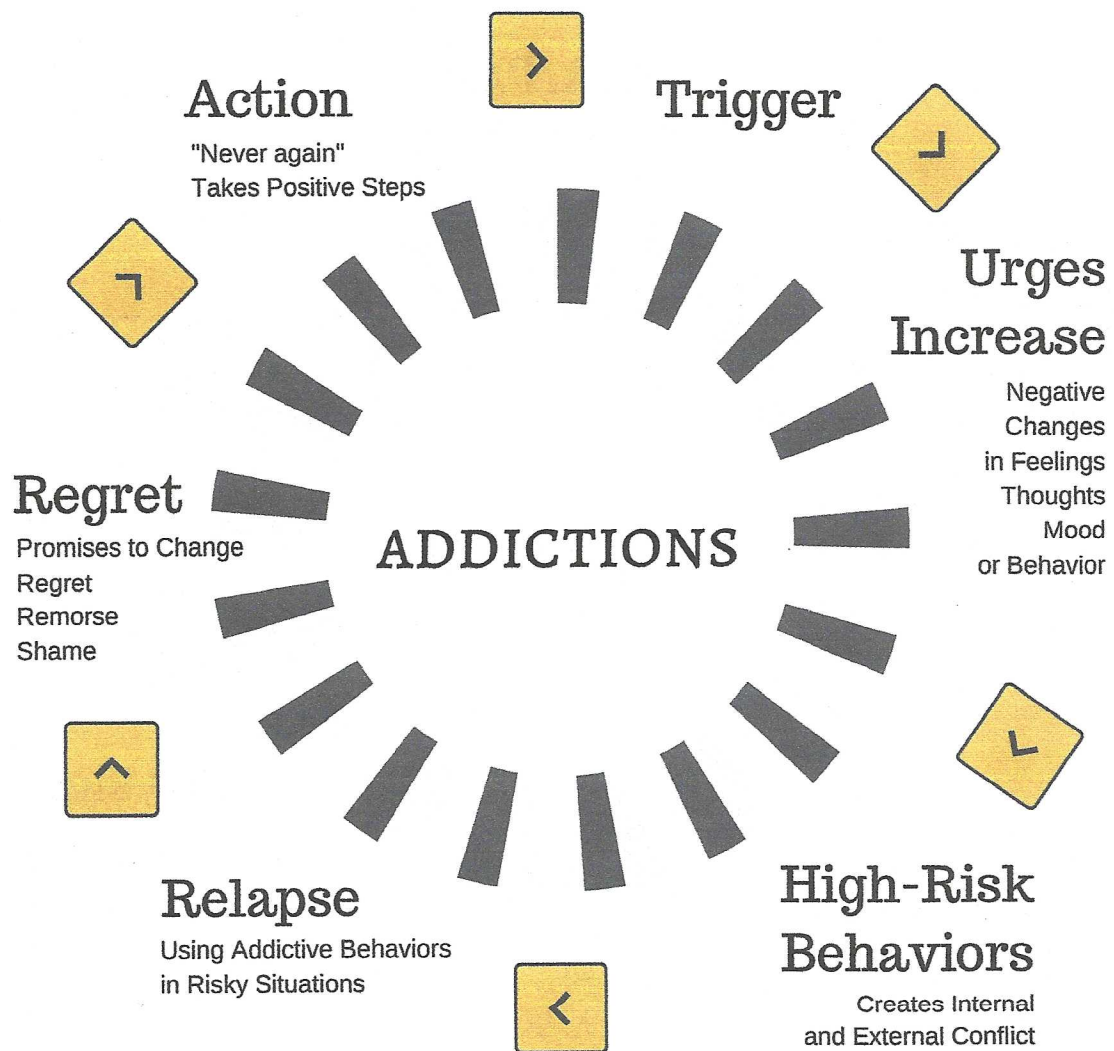
## Soul Cycles

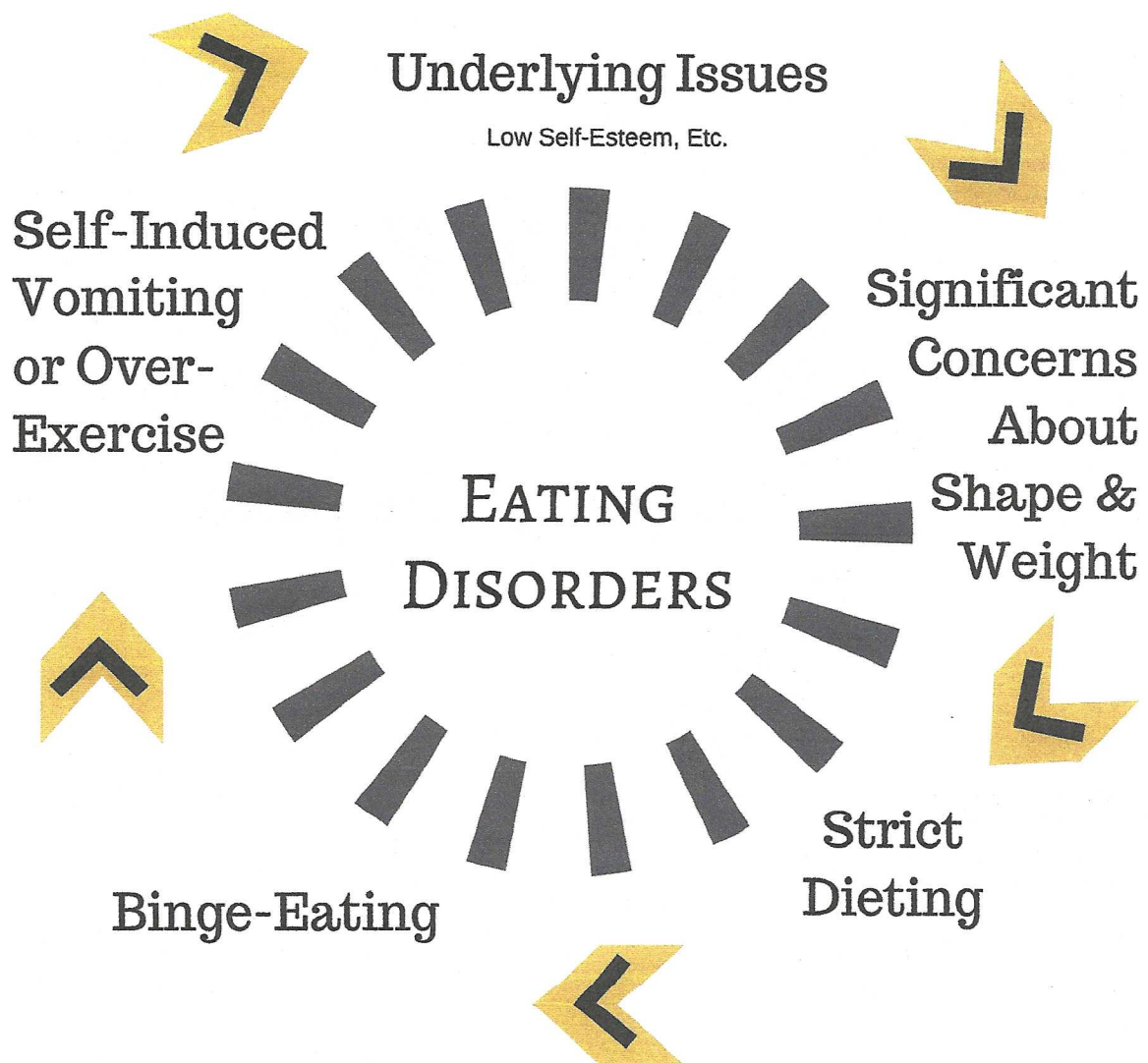
We'll look at several cycles that describe familiar destructive processes. Look at each of these cycles and identify the one that most closely depicts your struggles. Then answer the questions related to that cycle. (You may relate to more than one.)













## Shame

When (SH) is used to feel something besides numbness, the emotions provoked by the SH subside.

Those who use (SH) to find relief from overwhelming emotions go into secrecy, feel shame & stress.

## Trigger

Some people are triggered to (SH) when they feel numb.

Others are triggered when they feel over-whelmed by emotion

## SELF-HARM (SH)

## Self-Harm

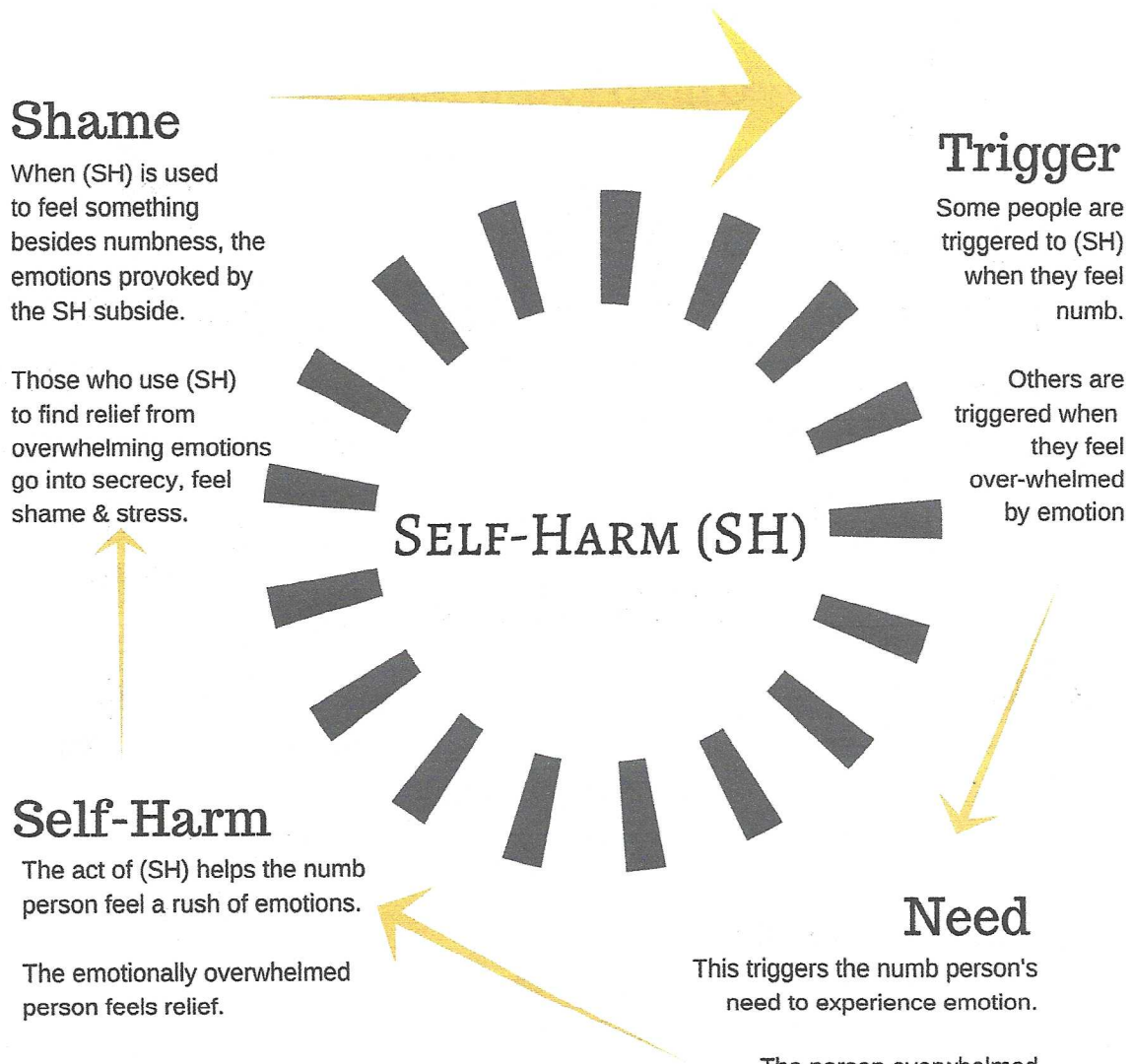
The act of (SH) helps the numb person feel a rush of emotions.

The emotionally overwhelmed person feels relief.

## Need

This triggers the numb person's need to experience emotion.

The person overwhelmed by emotion seeks relief.





Identify the cycle (or more than one) that relates to you.

All of us have particular thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that make up our unique individual cycle. Draw your cycle and write in the words that best describe your experience at each stage.

When did this cycle begin in your life? What made the associated behaviors attractive?

What thoughts or behaviors keep your cycle going?

Each cycle starts with unique, underlying or root issues (examples: low self-esteem, trauma, grief and loss, etc.). Spend some time identifying your unique underlying issues. How can you begin to address them?

What are your strengths and weaknesses at each point of the cycle?

A cycle can be broken at any of the points. At what points do you have the skills to stop the cycle? At what points are you weakest and need the most help?

For each point on your cycle, describe how you can intervene to break the cycle.

Focus on the points that you are strongest and commit to working on these with an accountability partner or sponsor.



## SPIRIT



Ask God to help you identify the current needs of your spirit and how he wants to help you meet these needs? Write your response.

What activities and experiences make you feel alive, secure, and connected to yourself, connected to God, and connected to others?

What activities and experiences oppress your spirit and make you feel insecure and disconnected from yourself, from God, and from others?

What have you noticed about how you receive communication from God? (Consider your senses, conversations, thoughts, feelings, dreams, mental pictures, and premonitions.)

You were created to be a *free* spirit. The first step to having a healthy spirit is paying attention to your spirit and identifying and nurturing the needs of your spirit. Once you have taken your spiritual pulse, here are some practical ways to begin the journey towards hope.

### **Liberate and Empower: Individuals with a captive spirit struggle to connect with life.**

The primary connection a person with a captive spirit has is with his/her addiction or disorder. If you are struggling with a captive spirit, it is important to understand how the addiction or eating disorder has taken your spirit captive.

Admitting this painful fact is a powerful first step. Then it's important to make decisions that will strengthen your recovery instead of choices that only strengthen the power of the addiction. The journey involves giving your spirit a voice to restore proper alignment . . . so your spirit is in control of your mind and body instead of the addiction being in control.

In the movie *Shawshank Redemption*, characters released from prison struggled at first to re-engage in life (the good and the bad). In the same way, people who have lived with a captive spirit struggle to be truly free and empowered as they leave the prison of their addiction or disorder.



In what ways do you struggle to connect with life?

What are some steps you can take to make progress in this area?

What kind of community, small group, and friendships would you like to be a part of?

12-Step communities and other support groups are based on this idea of seeking out and maintaining fellowship. Is there a 12-Step group you can attend? Do some research online to see what types of groups are available in your area.

## **Awaken and Nurture: Individuals with a slumbering spirit struggle to connect with themselves.**

People with a slumbering spirit have lost sight of what they really think, feel, and want out of life. If you are struggling with a slumbering spirit, then you have an under-developed, *malnourished* spirit. Do all that you can to engage your spirit and have a healthy relationship with yourself by learning to identify and respond to your thoughts, feelings, and needs in a healthy way. Connect with God through your spirit through soaking yourself in prayer and meditating on Scripture.

The word *genius* is the root word for spirit. As we connect with our spirit, we find our genius. Spending a generous amount of time participating in creative activities that do not rely on language, such as art, music, nature, movement, and dance, is particularly helpful in awakening your spirit. Be involved in activities that you used to do as a child—play, dream, and explore!

“

**GOD IS THE POETIC GENIUS IN ALL OF US.**

**THREADS OF GENIUS ARE PRESENT IN EVERYONE,**

**BUT ONLY BECOME VISIBLE WHEN**

**SOMETHING CREATIVE IS ATTEMPTED.**

**WILLIAM BLAKE**



What activities help you connect with who you truly are? Which ones awaken your spirit and make you feel alive?



## **Restore and Strengthen: Individuals with an orphan spirit struggle to connect with others.**

Those who suffer from an orphan spirit need to identify and heal their emotional wounds. They need to exchange the lies they believe about themselves and their relationships. The lies have contributed to the lack of trust in relationships and a pessimistic outlook toward life and God. Prayer, scripture reading, music, arts, and nature are important avenues for them. Orphans are encouraged to connect with their spirits by building a healthy and nurturing community around them.



What activities can you engage in to take risks in building and engaging in community?

How can you participate in community to build trust?

How can you receive healing from negative beliefs through relationship?