

Stealing Happiness

from **Life**

IT'S AN INSIDE JOB

Difficult People -
How to Restart or Depart
with an Open Heart

Find Meaning, Fulfillment
and Satisfaction from 7 Life Roles

Experience Difficult Feelings
with Much Less Suffering

Conscious Caregiving

First Aid for
Anxiety and Depression

Conscious
Coupling



**Peter and
Joanne Marks**

"This timely collection of teachings offers a beautiful balance of head and heart ways for anyone to become more unconditionally happy and fulfilled. Its potential to be powerfully transformative is due to Joanne and Peter's very skillful integration of Unified Mindfulness, neuroscience, psychologies and traditional wisdom, simply and practically applied to life roles using four essential tools."

Shinzen Young, Former Neuroscience and Mindfulness Researcher, Harvard Medical School

Foreword - Shinzen Young

Former Neuroscience and Mindfulness Researcher, Harvard Medical School

Every complete growth path involves two facets: helping oneself and helping others. Indeed, one measure of maturity is the degree to which a person realizes the complementary and ongoing relationship between these two endeavors. This book is a hands-on and heart-felt manifestation of that principle. I feel privileged to support its authors, Peter and Joanne Marks. Directly and indirectly their work has touched 10's of 1000's of lives in Canada, USA, Mexico and Australia.

In this book, the authors skillfully teach how to simply and practically apply Self-Awareness, Self-Understanding, Self-Management and Optimal Self-Expression so as to experience authentic fulfillment and satisfaction, in our roles as a friend, life partner, adult child, parent and human and health services' worker/volunteer.

Throughout every section the head and heart are nurtured by stories and references that help readers to learn how to improve the quality of all relationships including the 'difficult people' in one's life. As a result of Peter's initial career in the aerospace industry when he worked in the design and quality control of jumbo passenger jets, he brings a unique combination of proficiency in the hard science of engineering to complement his expertise as a highly accomplished Unified Mindfulness facilitator and Social and Health Services professional. He has completed over 20,000 hours of formal mindfulness exploration and development of the conscious and subconscious mind and has applied his acquired 4 tools insights and skills internationally, in his roles as instructor with the University of Toronto and director or consultant to 42 dual diagnoses and mental health and addictions, community support organizations.

This background, integrated so beautifully with Joanne and Peter's approximately 50 years of 'conscious coupling', parenting and their role as adult children in the mindful long term support and 'end of life care' of their parents, offers an excellent resource to learn from them about how to apply the 4 tools to optimally live the most important parts of one's life to be happy. Possibly the most significant contribution that 'Stealing Happiness' brings to one's Awakening and Personal Development process, is not only to learn the 4 essential mindfulness based tools and insights, but how to most effectively apply them to life's most challenging roles to be happy.

In short, this is a fully modern and practical yet science-based resource to promote the age-old tradition of developing one's self to have a happy and meaningful life and also to learn how and want to help others have the same.

Shinzen Young

Preface

Welcome to Stealing Happiness from Life – the ultimate inside job.

Throughout this resource, you will learn **4 Essential Awareness-Based Life Tools** (reference details, page 10) to expand your emotional tolerance for the unavoidable difficult times in your life so as to be much more at peace with those times and also be more fulfilled and happy with the good times.

You will also significantly improve your commitment and competence to help others you know be the same.

The importance of learning Mindfulness to live to one's fullest Mind, Body and Spiritual potential cannot be overstated. In addition, **equally as important we need to learn to integrate and apply** how-tos in Mindful Self-Understanding,

Self-Management and Self-Expression to live a more complete, personally satisfying and socially useful life (a.k.a be able to complete the inside job of stealing happiness).

As you learn more about these 4 essential life tools, you will also learn step by step strategies to apply them to significantly improve your 'how-tos' and 'want-tos' in the 8 most prevalent life task challenges of:

- **Difficult people** – how to Restart or Depart with an Open Heart
- **Developing and Sustaining Meaning and Purpose** from Life Roles such as being a Friend, Adult Child, Life Partner, Professional, Parent, Work Team Member, Community Volunteer
- **Difficult Feelings** with much Less Suffering
- **Depression and Anxiety** - First Aid and Recovery
- **Conscious Care Giving**
- **Conscious Coupling**
- **Loving Loved Ones** when their Lovability Looks and Feels Different
- **End of Life** - Compassionate and Competent Care



Why Should You Bother?

Over the past 50 years Joanne and I have learned these tools from many folks including gifted meditation teachers, insightful psychotherapists, neuroscientists, Indigenous healers and wise old elders who 'just got it' from no apparent science or profession. This resource passes their wisdom on to you. The following reasons are our best encouragement to you to do the work of learning and applying the life tools necessary for you to have more happiness and fulfillment that is not dependent on you do'n, get'n, hav'n, bigger, better and more.

So, why bother?

1. **Maybe you'll do it to find more happiness, less dependent on life's conditions...**

because no matter how good you get at do'n, get'n, hav'n, bigger, better, or more, if you don't develop adequate life tools you will rarely find sustainable happiness or survive the following normal and predictable life experiences – many of which await you.

- loneliness
- emotional insecurity
- boredom
- a challenging, disabled or ill child
- blow ups in important relationships
- unemployment
- life-partner betrayals and break ups
- depression/anxiety
- excessive chronic guilt
- grief/loss
- physical illness/disability
- mental health disorders, e.g. ADHD
- financial crisis
- substance abuse
- dementia
- life-threatening illness

2. **Or maybe you'll do it to better manage your primitive animal brain...**

because neuroscience and evolutionary psychology unanimously confirm that you were born with a brain that is in great part, deliberately designed to keep you unhappy and dissatisfied with hav'n. This animal brain rewards you with firing of pleasurable brain circuits, much more so when you are do'n and get'n, bigger, better and more versus the hav'n. In fact, the brain area that activates 'I want' is a different location than 'I like'. This brain architecture probably evolved because our ancestors who lived without shopping malls, marriage contracts and mortgaged houses needed to be continuously **dissatisfied with hav'n** so as to be motivated constantly to hunt for food, sex and shelter.

In addition, all other feelings and thoughts that direct what we say and do are produced and processed by different parts of the brain which absolutely requires mindful management.

3. **Or maybe you'll do it because you 'can't get no satisfaction'...**

even though your life style in the so called 'developed' part of the world is better than 95% of the world's population, on average you generally are no more happy than most others who live even in developing countries. This fact becomes even more alarming when we realize that those in the developed world who are a small percent of the world's population need the majority of the world's natural resources to shore up our bigger, better, more needs and addictions just (often unsuccessfully) to avoid being unhappy.

4. **Or maybe you'll do it to strengthen your life partner relationship...**
because right now you are happy in your life partner relationship, but you are aware of the fact that most every couple who help finance the multibillion-dollar industry of divorce lawyering were once just as happy as you are today.
5. **Or maybe you'll do it because you feel that you are ready to more often ask – How Can I Help...**
you have this desire to do more to relieve suffering in other peoples' lives but you don't want to burn-out or tune-out (become uncaring).
6. **Or maybe you'll do it to be present...**
because you spend most of your day lost in thoughts and therefore miss many potentially satisfying moments throughout each day. We would suggest that even when you are with someone special to you, if you are lost in some of the thousands of thoughts that just 'pop' into your mind each day, you may as well be with anyone. Your lack of presence means that you are not actually, in any meaningful way with the person you think you are with.
7. **Or maybe you'll do it to better manage those emotional hijacks...**
because you deeply regret so quickly becoming emotionally hijacked with your child, life partner, parent, friend or even a stranger on the freeway over so many *nothing*, first-world problems.
8. **Or maybe you'll do it because...**
you know that your ability to control your thoughts is a most important skill to be happy but you have recently become aware that you don't even know what your next thought is going to be before you have it. Therefore, you are (or should be) feeling quite vulnerable and wanting some insights and skills to not be as mindlessly driven by those unasked for thoughts...
9. **Or maybe you'll do it because your Social Media Feeds...**
are starving you. They are anything but a 'happy meal' for who you really are. Stealing Happiness from Life from the inside will resolve much of your '**social dilemma**' (unconscious addictions to electronic 'drugs' e.g. smart phones).
You have also noticed that while TikTok 'sound bites' are interesting, they are generally not improving you level of happiness.
10. **Or maybe you'll do it to learn to be more fully wake...**
because you are ready to wake up to living beyond only being semi-consciousness. This is like how you typically drive your car with your mind someplace else – e.g. you put the key in the ignition and end up at your designation. Could it be that without you even knowing it, you mostly relate to people and do most other doings in this same semi-conscious-lost-in-thought way?

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IT'S AN INSIDE JOB

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A Few 'Heads Up'

1. A Note of Clarity

The inside 'work' builds our capacity to be happy, less dependent on living conditions. It also helps us to feed the hunger of our very old primitive brain that is programmed to do important 'outside' work like contributing unselfishly to others 'in the herd'.

The social and neurosciences are clear that our happiness is in great part dependent on how often and how completely we give and share our time and resources with others. Research on the science of happiness shows that it is very much dependent on mindfully:

- Being useful, ethical and kind to others (even strangers).
- Being grateful for what we have.
- Healthy physical habits (breathing, nutrition and exercise) and
- Unconditional compassion

In this age of What's In It For Me (WIIFM) and many folks' addiction to social media feeds, as noted, many are still starving. In each chapter we help you to develop and nurture wellbeing, fulfillment, meaning and joy both **IN your life** and **WITH your life**.

Chapters Three to Sixteen will guide you to apply what is discovered and cultivated in working at the inside job to help you be happy 'in and with' your various life roles and also to motivate you to help others to be happy in their roles.

2. 4 Essential Life Tools to Steal Happiness from Life – The Ultimate Inside Job



In the following we overview the 4 tools for stealing happiness. In chapters Three to Ten we present each tool in detail followed by an example of an application.

We have represented these tools in a pyramid structure to indicate the vital interdependency of each tool. One of our earlier teachers, Stephen Covey strongly advised to “start with the end in mind,” so we start at the top of the pyramid with optimal *self-expression* which is the applied culmination of the other 3 tools. **Optimal *self-expression*** will, however, not be possible without **skillful *self-management***.

AND

Skillful *self-management* will require **deeper *self-understanding***

AND

Deeper *self-understanding* will be significantly enhanced through
Self-Awareness and AHH-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart

3. The Life Tools’ Big Picture

The following offers a brief description of each of the tools and how they build and depend on each other.

The foundation is ***Self-Awareness and AHH-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart***. The four main skills of this tool are (*Reference Chapter Three*):

- Self-Awareness
- Sensory Clarity
- Equanimity/AHH-llowness
- Being Here Now

Our ability to bring our attention fully and consciously into the present moment and simultaneously be equanimous with what we become aware of, is essential to live a fulfilling/happy life, and to help others in the world do the same. Without mastering this foundational tool, we will limit our development with the other tools. As you will discover, these skills (like all skills) can only be achieved through a consistent practice—the method we recommend and teach is Unified Mindfulness (UM). Our UM terminology to operationalize the 4 tools is Unified B-FIT Mindfulness (*U,B-FIT*).

U,B-FIT is an acronym for the Unified Mindfulness related to:

- Body Sensations (B)
- Feelings (F)
- Image Way of Thinking (I)
- Talk Way of Thinking (T)

Through a series of exercises taught in Tool #1 (Reference Chapter Three) and Appendices I, II & III, each of the B-FIT experiences that drive our perceptions, feelings and actions are identified, explored and skillfully processed. This processing then minimizes and often eliminates B-FIT's power to drive and distort our feelings and behaviour.

Self-Understanding is the second tool (*Reference Chapter Five*). This critical tool is applied to enhance our understanding of how deeply controlled we are by our nature and nurture programming and society's conditioning that govern many of our beliefs and behaviours. We must achieve clarity/understanding around this programming to have a more complete understanding of ourselves. Through applications of this tool, we can then better self-manage so as to significantly reduce the control of our programming.

The Third tool is **Self-Management** (*Reference Chapter Seven*). With the tools we have already mastered, we are now prepared to more optimally manage ourselves, not as driven by our programming. We learn to approach each situation with a simple four-step process.

- First, we catch ourselves, in the moment (i.e. become aware that I am here present in this situation).
- Second, we calm ourselves using the skills of *U,B-FIT* and numerous other awareness based calming strategies.
- Next we clarify the subjective and objective experience of the situation we are in.
- And finally, we can now choose the best possible response and consciously connect.

With this *self-management* process, guided by *U,B-FIT mindfulness*, we learn that the mind's reactions to situations is not the fundamental cause of our suffering when triggered by others' difficult feelings and behaviours. We learn that our suffering is actually directly proportionate to the mindless resistance that the unaware us brings to most challenging situations. Further, we learn that in the moment of awareness and allowingness, this resistance can be transformed into non-driven equanimous energy that results in deep inner peace regardless of the situation.

The fourth and last tool on the pyramid is **Self-Expression** (*Reference Chapter Nine*). Simply put, this is bringing our best self, our A-Game, to whatever we do and say. All speech and actions spontaneously become useful, ethical, kind, and timely and we become passionately committed to help others be happy as well.

Learning these 4 tools is within the reach of most every one of us. It starts with the work of discovering our vulnerabilities and blockages to happiness, and then applying the tools in very practical ways to everyday life. If and when we do, each of us will find that we are able to experience significantly more peace and resolution in many of life's challenging situations.

Throughout the applications of the tools, the 'activity of happiness' is described in many ways. Fulfillment, joy, meaning, peace, presence and compassionate action are some of the words that we use to describe the process of 'being' happiness.

4. Our Gandhi Dilemma

Once upon a time in the life of Mahatma Gandhi after giving a talk to a group of people in Delhi it is reported that a woman approached him with her son and she said something like the following, "Sir, I have an important request of you." Gandhi replied, "how can I help?" The woman said that her son eats far too much sugar and she would like Gandhi to tell him that it is bad for his health and tell him to stop. Gandhi immediately responded that he would, however he could not do it until the following week after his talk. The mother, although disappointed as to why he couldn't do it that day said thank you and agreed to meet him the following week.

She returned with her son the following week and met with Gandhi after his talk. Gandhi immediately looked down at the child and said "son, you must not eat excessive sugar as it is very unhealthy." The mother thanked Gandhi and then said, "sir I appreciate your guidance to my son but why did I have to walk many miles to come back to see you this week when you could have told him last week?" "Ahh" said Gandhi reflectively, "I couldn't tell him that last week because last week I was still eating too much sugar."

Joanne and I, for some of the suggestions we offer, are still 'eating too much sugar'. While we do our best to consciously walk our talk, some life challenges are still too formidable opponents for our current level of mindful presence and effective applications of the tools we suggest.

The absolutely most difficult part of writing this book has been living with the knowing that we are not perfect in applying the tools and skills everywhere, every time. This awareness almost caused several drafts to end up heating our home this winter a long side other logs in our fireplace. At these moments critical self-judgement almost took us mindlessly out of control. At these times however, we learned to chant the mantra **"judge the trend line"**.

To judge the trend line means to not despair with the occasional failure and do not overly rejoice with the exceptional miraculous moments of Stealing Happiness in the most difficult of life's classrooms. When you reflect on, "how am I doing", we encourage you to recall how well you respond in most moments of most days. Either this wisdom or convenient rationalization or both, of subscribing to this trend line self-judging principle, enables us to stay aware of our less than optimal 'work in progress' and renew our vow to do better next time.

Equally relevant, is the reality that our life has been privileged relative to some of you. That is, we have not had the degree of heavy lifting that some of you will be experiencing. For

example, we have not had years of ongoing chronic pain, financial poverty, the loss of each other and many other conditions that contribute to human suffering.

In spite of these two important qualifiers, we still ask that you trust into the process of exploring what we have to offer. Many of our actual experiences where we have applied the 4 life tools have been equal to and in many cases exceeded the demands and challenges of the average reader's 'classrooms'. As a result we feel the tools that we offer should be highly credible and relevant when applied to much of any person's life, regardless of the challenges they face (a.k.a. more than sufficient to help you stop eating so much sugar).

5. **A note about the text...**

Personal stories of relevant parts of our journey are included in bordered pages.

Headings for research applications, strategies and exercises are shown in mustard.

Our personal quotations that we want emphasized are in green.

All quotations from other sources are in rust.

6. **What's What At A Glance** – Reference Glossary Appendix VIII

7. As the healthy horse that spends the day casually grazing on one side of the pasture to find itself, at the end of the day on the other side and fully nourished, please mindfully graze your way across this pasture. This meal absolutely requires ongoing slow consumption and digestion. Explore this book in bite size pieces. As with any healthy meal, only put on your plate what you can take in and digest at the time.



8. **A team effort**

This has been a Peter and Joanne team effort of over 50 years of exploring and discovering and many months of co-writing. We decided that I (Peter) would do the talking with many references to we, our and us meaning Peter and Joanne.

9. Reference www.centreforconsciouscare.ca/stealing-happiness
Podcasts, videos, and guided mindfulness exercises

"Not all (of us) who wander are lost." J. R. Tolkien

Chapter One

The Big Picture

Introduction

It's fair to say that everyone wants to be happy and fulfilled and that how to achieve this goal varies significantly from person to person. One common thread of agreement that has been discovered or will be discovered by virtually everyone, is that happiness and fulfillment are relative and generally at high risk of being unsustainable when they are dependent on mainly life's conditions.

Our next phone call or email could instantly shift our focus almost 180° from getting an abundance of happy feelings to feeling devastated in receiving some news. This is too often the case even when the news is, compared to the suffering of millions of people from around the world, a relatively low first world problem.

The average person continues to live in the illusion that do'n, get'n, hav'n, bigger, better, more good stuff will give sustainable happiness. The truth is, however, that while our lack of hav'n necessary positive living conditions, relationships and circumstances will generally keep us relatively unhappy/dissatisfied, having these things will not bring us sustainable happiness and satisfaction. Most people in developing countries are no less happy than people living in the developed world. On average, I understand that one year after we win ten million dollars we will be about as happy (or less) as we were before we won the ten million.

Victor Frankl gave us a most important life lesson as he emerged from the concentration camp that claimed his family, when he wrote, "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In that response we find our potential for goodness and happiness". We would add however, that without the necessary awareness based skills, few of us have the 'in the moment' capacity to make these kinds of optimal choices.

We would suggest that for most of us to be able to have that choice, we must have some special tools (as listed above) to do the job. These tools must be earned as well as learned.

I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of men and women to elevate their life (and the lives of others) by conscious endeavours.

Henry David Thoreau

Marketplace Mindfulness

As the title implies, this book is about helping folks find happiness, less dependent on the ups and downs of life's conditions. We see happiness as a multi-faceted jewel including:

- being relatively free from being driven by difficult emotions;
- waking-up to be more conscious;
- loving unconditionally;
- living a fulfilling life because of meaning and purpose;
- being guided by essential insights into the nature of human nature;
- commitments to help others be happy as well.

In addition to one's personal preference for a human growth and development process, the necessity of a near daily mindfulness practice (Tool #1 *Self-Awareness and AHH-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart*) to be happy cannot be over stated. **We have a strong belief that the other 3 tools, together with awareness and ahh-llowing are also essential for the average person to grow and develop to our fullest mind, body, relationships and spiritual potential.** As a result we have balanced our tools' suggestions to help you stay sufficiently broad yet more than adequately deep to achieve the *Stealing Happiness* stated outcomes in your roles as friend, parent, life partner, adult child, professional, etc.

Regarding the tool of Mindfulness, we have not attempted to present near all of its principles and practices that you could learn and apply to experience a more complete range of consciousness and compassion through its awareness practices. Readers interested in these more intensive practices are encouraged to pursue the excellent resources offered at **unifiedmindfulness.com** and in books like *The Science of Enlightenment* by Shinzen Young.

Over the first 10 years of our mindful transformational journey, we heard many intriguing true stories of Enlightened Masters that indicated near limitless possibilities for human potential. We also witnessed men and women attaining some seemingly 'impossible' body and mind states.

While we too started to have some very interesting experiences and insights, our explorations into penetrating deeper domains of consciousness did not seem sufficiently broad enough for us with practical day to day applications. We felt we needed more specific how-tos to apply to many of our resistances and attachments to living conditions, to significantly soften our driven ego in our many roles. I too often still found myself being that reactive little 'rascal' boy who was significantly less than what I believed my 'A'-game could/should be.

Perhaps it was because we were marketplace mindfulness practitioners unlike many of the teachers who learned and lived for a while in a monastic setting. While we have no doubt that this forced simplicity and rigorous vows do give these practices a unique and highly valued place among the happiness how-tos, this was not our life and laboratory in which to learn and manifest our more complete 'self'.

For example:

- We were life partners wanting to meet the needs of our beloved including eliminating our little boy's and girl's ego demands and tantrums when they didn't get their own way. Marriage 'as a monastery' offers a very special kind of transformational experience. We also had to learn how to be equanimous with our feelings of, for example, in my case, insecurities that at times manifested as jealous anger when Joanne, very reasonably, chose to spend some time with male friends.
- We were parents with three small children, all with unique needs to grow and mature that required much of our time and patience when they forced us out of control with worry and frustrations. I also required an improved presence to more completely experience the joy and fulfillment of being a Dad, which too often slipped past unnoticed even as I played with them. In our family, the old adage that 'we don't raise our children, they actually raise us' had significant meaning. We so needed better applied mindfulness skills to manage our 'overwhelm' from the curriculum offered by our three little teachers.
- I was also simultaneously the main financial provider, working 60 hours a week in a job I disliked and commuting two hours each way to get there and home.
- Other grist for our mindfulness mill was my three-year, totally debilitating, life-threatening clinical depression at the time of the loss of my twin sister 30 years ago.
- We were adult children directly assisting our parents to manage their failing mental and physical health and we wanted to support their palliative care process as equanimous direct primary caregivers. For us, this meant to go deeper into our 'letting go' without contaminating it with our fears and resistance.
- I was volunteering in several maximum security prisons where I was locked in cell blocks, often with violent offenders. As well as being *relatively* consciously self-regulated, I also needed a broader range of *self-understanding*, *self-management* and *self-expression* tools to better manage and prevent my prejudices, judgementalness, and fears of being physically hurt. Although my service was well intended and my behaviour impeccable, my level of authentic compassion was clearly inadequate to meet the needs of these men and women.
- And then all the regular stuff like job loss, Joanne's near death experience, numerous emergency hospital admissions, marriage dry spells and oh yes, the questioning of 'is this all there is' that started at about age 40 (for which my new motorcycle did not answer this question).

This was our reality as beginner happiness explorers that started some 4 decades ago. So very early on we decided to stop our search for the Atlantis of **Classical Enlightenment** and focused on the attainment of **Conscious En-lifen-ment**. This search meant that in each ordinary hour of every day, we needed to learn to apply our formal mindfulness practise into useful

ways to relieve our own and others' suffering across a wide range of living conditions. It also meant finding readily accessible ways to significantly enhance our own and others' unconditional happiness, as much as is possible, less dependent on conditions.

To achieve this we worked to learn and apply some essential life tools and teachings as presented throughout this resource. With these essential skills and capacity we set a course to adapt and mindfully apply these tools and teachings in practical ways that would complement our many roles and responsibilities.

Simply put, as we will describe in the how-tos below, we first attempted to live mindfully each day in ways that would defuse our anxiety and resistance from the conditions described above. We also worked to learn to be fulfilled by the many mundane moments in our roles, instead of mindlessly taking them for granted. To achieve these lofty goals, (many of which are still work in progress), Joanne and I developed the numerous applications of the awareness based life tools and teachings as described in the following chapters. Many personal stories and examples are offered in this resource to help readers to better understand and how to apply the tools as you meet your life's challenges.

Chapter Two starts with hopefully bringing you to a place of discomfort as a result of your inheritance and unknowing adoption of the human predicament. In Chapters Three to Seventeen we then outline the 4 essential life tools, each followed by a specific application to be happy for no particular reason – even as life's challenging situations attempt to overwhelm.

Appendices I to VIII give more details and examples of the tools' how-tos.

Below we have tried to describe our modifications to the age old traditional practice of development of consciousness and compassion to experience happiness and fulfillment, significantly less driven by conditions. After training many thousands of people in what we have learned, we can, with confidence say that the strategies can be readily learned to complement any average person's life, including the roles of friend, parent, partner, adult child and being a responsible, socially engaged member of our local and global community.

And so, with these few simple guidelines we embarked on a journey to become more 'real' through awakening into, not away from the stuff of life.

We offer our algorithm/way to help you lessen your experience of unhappiness and increase your meaning, purpose and happiness from your life roles. The tools divide into two categories: **skills** (what to do in the moment) and **capacity** (your growth and development) to adequately prepare you to steal happiness from life in the moment.

To repeat, for us the vital role of Mindfulness to ensure optimal activation of the other essential life tools and teachings cannot be overstated. This is because in part, many people learn important skills like for example *self-management*, but in the moment (the only time it really

counts) they forget to apply what they learned. Being *mindfully emotionally self-regulated* with the skills of **awareness and ahh-llowing** (*reference Chapter Three*) is necessary to turn theoretical practice into personalized performance.

The essential role of mindfulness in helping us be happy however, we feel needs more clarity than is generally the case given its current social media status as the next 'fix' for everything from fear to failures. I am a 40 year mindfulness practitioner with approximately 20,000 hours of formal practice including numerous long silent retreats. During this time I have had personal contact with hundreds of other practitioners. One important objective of this resource is to offer our best thinking on what mindfulness is and isn't, and what it can and cannot do to steal happiness from life. We will also show how we do not need thousands of hours of mindfulness practice to achieve radical improvements in our ways to be happy (25 hours is an important mile stone).

As noted, the following offerings of musts, musings and maybes have been gifted to us over the past 50 years from our many teachers including hundreds of mindfulness and conscious care students and coaching clients, as well as numerous Indigenous healers and elders and some of the best carriers of Eastern and Western traditional wisdom. Added to this rich tapestry of resources is our own five decades of personal experiences as life partners, adult kids, parents, grandparents, friends, siblings and social and health care workers. These roles have been the garden where we as seekers of happiness, compassionate action, and fun have nurtured these seeds during times of euphoric life celebrations and in times of our own suffering from painful losses, clinical depression and life threatening illnesses.

We list numerous observations supporting our premise that happiness must be stolen from life because, as one wisdom tradition puts it, "Life is inherently unsatisfactory," or as one street sutra says, "Shit is always happening". Here we give examples from neuroscience, social neurobiology and humanistic psychology of numerous consensus findings from international research that support these claims that sustainable happiness, much less driven by and dependent on life's conditions will be significantly enhanced through becoming more mindful and equanimous.

We offer numerous ways in how to apply these tools to the most challenging life roles and tasks. These apps are practical and highly relevant for many everyday experiences of most readers.

With each of these essential life tools and their applications, we offer true personal stories as examples from our five decades of journeying together with hundreds of very special people. These folks brought meaning and happiness to our life by welcoming us to be a part of their transformational journey through times of their unbearable pain as we helped them to experience a unique kind of unconditional happiness within the chaos of their life and also during times of their joyous celebrations.

Waking Up – O' Natural

For five years Joanne and I were two of several volunteer caregivers/support workers for Bret as he died from Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS). This diagnosis was the last in a series of lifelong difficulties for him. He truly transformed through child abuse, rage, terror, addictions, loss of his loving wife through postpartum depression and suicide, to forgiveness and peace. Finally at age 39 he completed his healing, dropped his remaining 100 pounds of skin and bone and moved on. His journey was a profound and meaningful gift to all of us who knew and grew to love him.

One day, about three years into his journey, his life was changed forever. With a once perfect 200 lb. athletic body he could now barely walk with his walker. He lay in bed and said good-bye to his support worker whose replacement was to come in about half an hour. Due to an oversight in the scheduling, nobody came until about five hours after his worker left.

Within an hour Bret had a strong need to have a bowel movement. He waited and waited but no one came to help him get out of bed, an ability that he had recently lost. As he attempted to get up on his own, he reached for his walker and using all of his strength almost stood up. Instead, however, he crashed down forward onto his walker, knocking out his front teeth.

There he lay, alone, bleeding, in pain, imprisoned in his own body and helpless to move. His bowel movement came. **His first response was rage**, shouting obscenities to the people who were to care for him and to a God who "made me sick". As he later told me of this experience, he said that he shouted in rage for what he estimated was hours. "Suddenly," he said, "my rage stopped and I broke into a **paralyzing panic attack**. I felt the **terror**, even deeper than ever of being trapped in my useless body". This terror lasted for what he said seemed like an eternity. "I had lost all sense of time and was terrified worse than ever before in my life – like being buried alive in a box".

He said then *it* happened, as intensely and spontaneously as his rage and terror had come. He told me what happened as best he could (because he had lost much of his ability to talk).

He said that without any thought or even intention, **he flowed into a deep state of peace, comfort, forgiveness and openness**. It was like nothing that he had ever experienced before.

As he lay there in his excrement, blood, teeth and pain, he softened into a state of being (not really thinking, feeling or doing) that he said he "wanted to last forever".

He asked me what happened. I told him I had no idea and besides he was clearly the teacher.

As the days, weeks and months passed, “without effort it seemed,” Bret said he felt incredibly close to his mother and father. He felt that he genuinely forgave them for all the beatings and abuse that they had given him while growing up until he went to live on the street at age fourteen. He said that although his new found state of being (our words, not his) did not completely stay with him, he did until he died have a profound peacefulness and willingness to “let it be,” accept what he could and do his best with the rest.

For the next two years before he left his body, he mentored many support workers with their problems with partners, parents, children and bosses. He reconciled with his family and others who had made his life hell. He could now see what parts of that hell were self-induced. His gratitude for his life partner, Diane, and their daughter, Betty, workers and friends who cared for him was like nothing we had ever experienced with him before.

There is no doubt that Bret’s ability to sustain the amazing grace that resulted from his transformational process was complemented by the unconditional love and support that he received from Diane and Betty.

Bret reached his fullest mind, body and spiritual potential in great part over thousands of lonely painful hours of being brought to letting go by the healing power of his pain. But suffering is not enough. Throughout our five years together we taught Bret some of the basics of the 4 life tools that you are about to explore. It seemed to us also that his condition, together with just limited practice of the life tools helped to facilitate this life changing transformational process in him.

His afternoon of rage, terror and peace became a special part of the natural healing process that we have personally witnessed with others and that has been described for centuries in the transformational journeys in all of the wisdom traditions.

The day before he died, as I lit his smoke for him and held his lips together so he could inhale, he pointed, waved and gestured (as he could not talk during the last six months) for me to push play on his cued-up CD player. I did what he requested and Louie Armstrong sang us “What a Wonderful World” as we wept together and somehow (at least a little) knew far beyond cognition, what his last five years had really been about.

A Reflection on Bret's Waking Up

We share this story and many others throughout the book to show how the 4 essential life tools are all just accelerating your natural growth potential hidden deep within the layers of who you may have forgotten you are.

These kinds of events, when experienced mindfully and with intention, reinforce our sense of waking up to our life's potential for real Meaning, Purpose and Heart - Happiness.

As seen here, our human potential can evolve effectively by experiencing human pain and suffering more **completely** with the 4 tools, as Bret did. We also have personally witnessed many others who have courageously learned to be consistently more happy and fulfilled as a result of learning and practising the 4 life tools in everyday life and work situations. **We do not have to experience a life threatening illness to heal and grow to our Mind, Body and Spiritual fuller potential to have happiness within the chaos of life.**

Bret's process also helped several of us experience deeply meaningful moments in supporting him by learning to experience more fully how to soften our own resistance to his suffering and our drivenness to try to change the unchangeable.

This story is not unique. Our inner potential for this capacity to naturally heal, mature and transform and to help others do the same is very real.

Gandhi said, "My life is my message". Repeated mindlessly, his statement can sound all too trite. Said with discernment and contemplation, however, it can encourage us to stay committed to our maturing and healing *work-ins* for self and others. This "Happiness Is" guide to a more conscious, intentional and meaningful personal and work life is offered as one way for you to learn to connect with your innate deep wisdom and compassion. It also is intended to encourage you to be willing and able to skillfully help all others you know, as appropriate do the same.

Learning the tools and teachings however is not enough, we must also practice what we learn. We can't drift to the top of a mountain – we become our habits.

All of this is possible for those of us who mindfully challenge ourselves to learn to find and sustain meaning, purpose and heart in each hour of each average day.

Human life should be like a vow, dedicated to uncovering the meaning of life. The meaning of life is in fact not complicated; yet it is veiled from us by the way we see our difficulties. It takes the most patient practice to begin to see through that, to discover that the sharp rocks are truly jewels.

Joko Beck

Chapter Two

Happiness – Why an Inside Job?

It is slow, painful, and difficult for an adult to reconstruct a radically different way of seeing life, however needlessly miserable his present preconceptions make him.

Peter Marris

Our first car was a 15-year-old 1953 Ford. It had a manual transmission. For those readers too young to know, this meant that if you skillfully did three things correctly with the gear shift, clutch and gas, the car performed well. To do this you really had to pay attention to what you were doing—especially if you stopped on a hill.

Our second car was a deluxe 10-year-old 1956 Crown Vic hardtop with a new technology called automatic transmission. With automatic, shifting just happened for you. It was so fast, so quiet (no gear grinding) and efficient. In fact, it was so smooth that you hardly noticed the shifting of the gears.

But, of course, with most new and better ways of doing things, there is usually a cost. Manual transmissions gave better gas mileage and more options, such as gearing down to brake. In spite of this, the benefits to the driver of not needing to think about it, and the faster and quieter shifting seemed to be well worth the costs. So today, very few cars have manual transmissions.

After studying much of the best current internationally published research from neuroscience, social neurobiology and humanistic psychology, combined with our own many thousands of hours of mindfully observing our mindless mind being driven, and our fifty-year journey to find happiness, Joanne and I now know that at some time in our human history, nature started changing everyone's thinking and feeling from manual model mammals into automatics. It seems that the slower, manual model of thinking and feeling—shifting—got too many of us hurt or even eaten in dangerous jungles. So automatic model humans started coming off the assembly line with faster, no need to think about it, autopilot.

This means today that, just like with our “new” Crown Vic, thinking, feeling, and gear shifting happen for you and at speeds so fast and so quiet that you don't even notice it. This autopilot thinking and feeling happening for you, also has its costs. One of the most serious costs is that if something is thinking and feeling for you and without you realizing it moment by moment, you have no/low free will to think and feel for yourself (*reference following details*).

Consider also that it is highly probable that you, the person who is reading this, is mostly operating like an automatic transmission, with thoughts and feelings that are auto-piloting

most of your interactions with others and many important parts of your life. We know this is a radical claim with many very serious implications. These include the possibility that you might not be in charge of your life choices nearly as much as you think you are.

If this autopilot effect turns out to be true, it could account for why ...

- You get into harmful power struggles but can't stop them from escalating.
- You want to stop worrying about a concern that you have done all you can to correct, but something won't let you.
- You want to forgive someone, but something won't let you.
- You don't want to be angry or fearful, but something seems to make you.
- You don't want to lose your temper, but it seems to just happen.
- You don't want to be moody, but something makes you.
- You don't want to feel excessive guilt, but something makes you.
- You too often do not play your A-game, especially when your autopilot (not you) is following directives of which you are unaware.

This auto pilot processing is what we will be referring to throughout the book as being mindless.

Could it be that most or all of these unwanted thoughts, feelings and behaviours are happening to you (and similarly to all other “difficult” people in your life) just as unknowingly as our Crown Vic shifted gears?

Algorithms

A really exquisite techy word is starting to be more broadly used in non-techy ways. The word is *algorithm*. It basically means a formula that when followed will yield the same predictable results every time.

We have a great family recipe for cabbage rolls. It says to mix the following ingredients, bring to a boil, etc. Follow this recipe and you will create a delightful dinner every time. This recipe is an algorithm. Change the recipe and you change the algorithm; always resulting in a different taste.

My first career was in the aerospace industry where I helped design jumbo jets and investigate mechanical failures. A typical investigation would be for me to fly to Baltimore, Maryland and visit a parts supplier of the wings for the DC9 and DC10 jumbo jet airplanes. These parts were the framing structure for the wings that are also the gas tanks, so it was critical that they meet the highest quality specifications. The parts that I inspected had been smelted, extruded, heat treated, machined and then assembled to make the wings' super structure. Again, this process is called an algorithm.

One test to determine the strength of the parts was a tensile test. I would follow the internationally accepted seven-step procedure whereby a machine pulled apart a sample of aluminum to see how much force it took for it to break. I then calculated the data using a specific formula to determine how strong it was. Engineers and technicians, like me using the identical algorithm, did the same test all around the world. The data we received told us all exactly how much of this metal and in what condition it must be so that it would perform perfectly in predictable ways (not break or fatigue under certain loads). When failures in parts occurred, engineers changed the algorithm and the parts performance was then enhanced.

Shifting from planes to nature, I once asked one of my training groups what had to happen for us to see young robins bobbing for worms in the garden this spring. They came up with forty-two for-sure events. For example, we all collectively agreed that when Mama and Papa robin fly north to join us in the spring they seldom use a GPS purchased from an online store. When they build their structurally sound and strategically placed nests, they are not being directed by a video found on YouTube. Also when Miss Robin decides that it is time to find a Mr. Right, she does not generally consult with eHarmony and does not end up sharing her bed with a crow. Note, these and the other thirty-nine events that happen to every robin every spring are the result of their inherited and learned algorithm that has evolved over tens of thousands of years.

You and every person you know are driven and operated by their unique and personal algorithm. When we know what conditions you inherited and learned, we can predict with relative accuracy how you will perform in various situations and relationships. As testing with humans is not an exact science yet, compared to jet planes, our probability of predicting performance is only as good as the test data collected. Although not all variables can be tested to determine your exact algorithm, many variables can be known - but sadly, most folks don't bother to look!

As a result of neuroscience, social neurobiology, humanistic psychology and the other human sciences, discoveries have given insights into human behaviour far beyond the out-dated predictions of the original social behavioural scientists of the early part of the 20th century.

Our human algorithm is many times more complicated than that of a robin or other animal. It also has the potential to be malleable due to our fuller brain bandwidth that can grow with consciousness or even somewhat through some more basic cognitive behavioural learning processes. Sadly, however, many of our human brothers and sisters have not modified their algorithm much since their late teens.

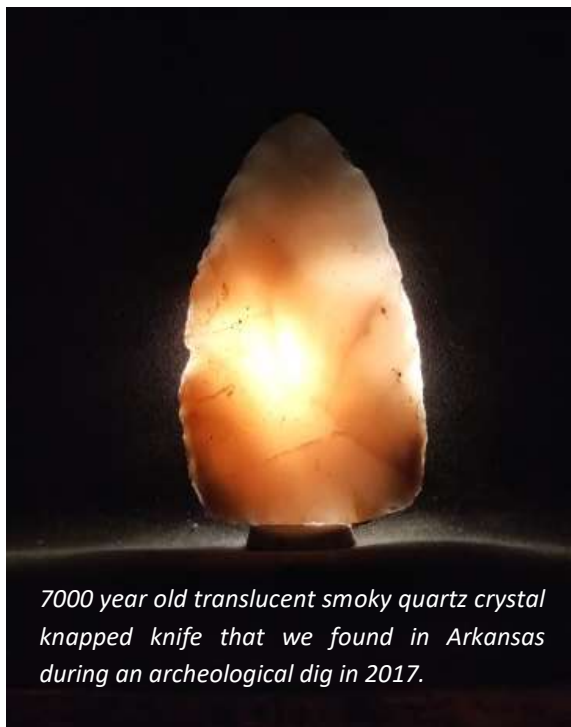
Our work in discovering and testing has enabled us to offer you these 4 highly reliable life tools (self-awareness, understanding, management and expression) to modify your algorithm. We will also show you how you can grow and develop it to have relatively sustainable happiness, much less driven by your current outdated algorithm. The importance of knowing how to

change and also to learn how to not be driven by the less than optimal elements of your unique 'adolescent' algorithm cannot be overstated.

At the risk of 'being pulled into the weeds' of no return, we are going to make just a couple of comments to give context to this process that we are calling 'the human predicament'.

Too simply put, we have two brain hemispheres (left and right) that are both essential and reinforcing components of a useful and valued algorithm. As we unpack our 4 tools and then give the applications for real life experiences, we will advocate for the development and use of a whole balanced brain.

One major assumption that we have made is that our western world, with for example it's seemingly left brain dominated preoccupation with do'n, get'n, hav'n, bigger, better and more, supported by addictions to smart phones, etc., is leading the vast majority of folks down the rabbit hole of lower fulfillment, meaning and happiness.



7000 year old translucent smoky quartz crystal knapped knife that we found in Arkansas during an archeological dig in 2017.

The 'inside job' that we are referring to throughout this book is to help bring you back to balance by predominately offering you vital right hemisphere brain development tools and exercises (reference below). It appears that in spite of the left brain achievements like medicines, moon landing and hundreds of comfort and convenience giving 'gadgets', it seems that we have lost the essential perspective of our hunter, gatherer ancestors. For thousands of years Indigenous peoples' basic stone tools not only had utility but also were often beautiful pieces of art. In addition to their art forms, their way of life based on rituals, living in harmony with nature and service to others was also predominately right hemisphere brain inspired. Please stay mindful of this reference as you learn to better 'left brain'

think and reason, and also 'right brain' holistically feel and intuit your way to steal happiness. While both hemispheres are constantly talking to each other, it seems that we can help the right hemisphere that is too often dominated by the left hemisphere on its mission to do'n, get'n, hav'n.

This part of the resource previews elements of the human algorithm and how important it is to better manage and improve it.

Understanding the Setup – Our Human Predicament

Understanding Our Human Predicament is vital to stealing happiness. The following is a brief summary of what we have concluded from years of reviewing research findings, coaching thousands of others and our own inner journeys:

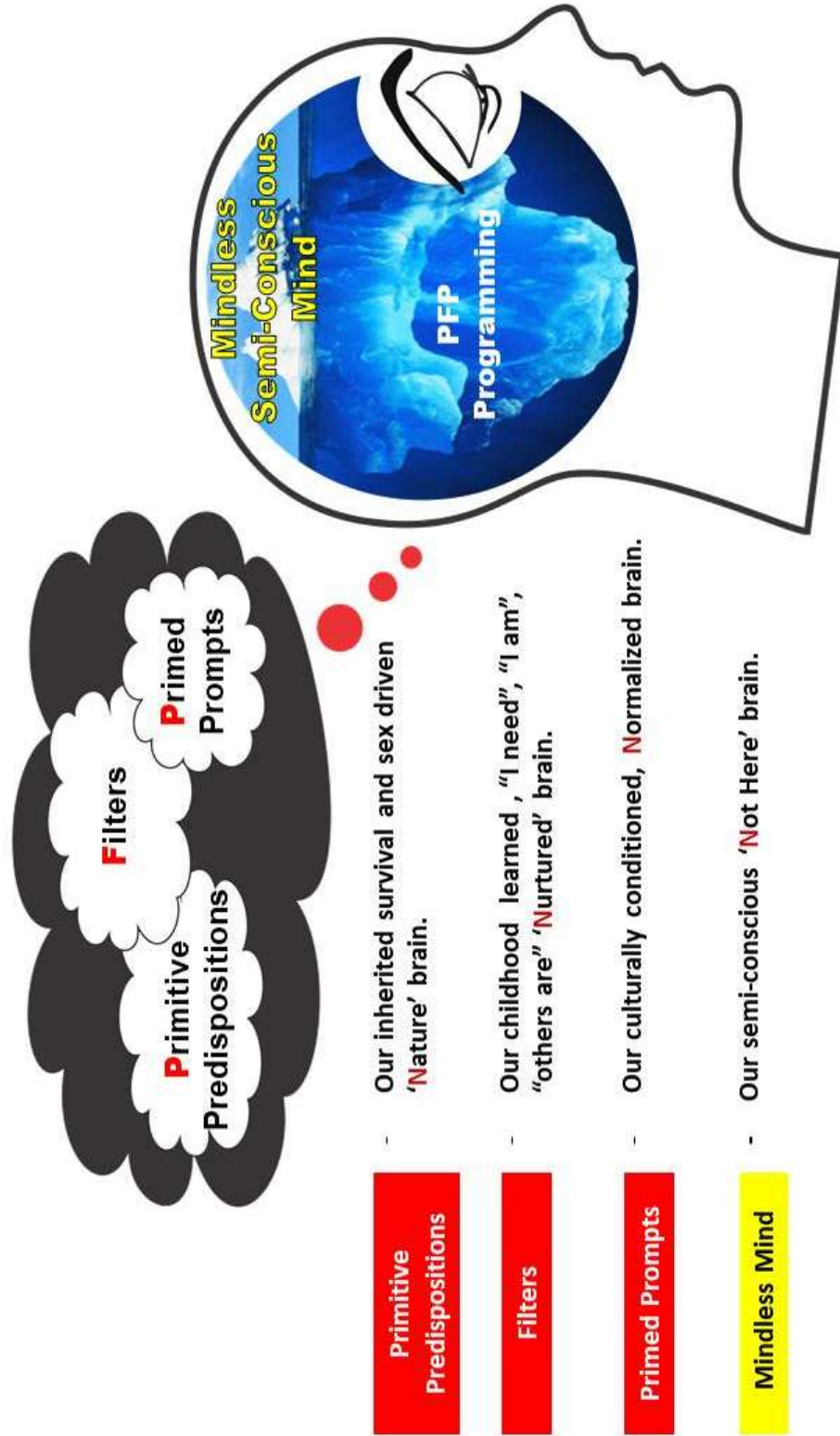
- Our *nature* decided tens of thousands of years ago that to be successful we humans needed to evolve as a species with the prime design feature only being to survive and pass on millions of copies of itself.
- To live and survive then, nature has specifically designed us to still be motivated to mainly always just be scanning our environment for food, sex and shelter to stay safe, reproduce and stay physically comfortable.
- An important design feature/ flaw to guarantee this motivation that every normal person has inherited (not developed) is automatic neurotransmitter rewards that are activated much more when we anticipate and pursue for example eating, having sex, impressing others, competing for control and/or excluding others who appear different (our hard wiring today still insists that “different is dangerous”). Note the words – anticipate and pursue. We are actually designed to crave these things by being given significantly greater dopamine and other neuro rewards when we anticipate and are in the process of having our needs met versus actually having them met. This is so we will continue to do it again to ensure a daily diet (a.k.a. what’s next?).
- This inheritance keeps us basically dissatisfied with our life because hav’n is given significantly fewer neurotransmitter rewards than do’n and get’n. Satisfaction is therefore fleeting. This is one of the main reasons why we can be living in the top 5% of social and environmental conditions on the planet and still be craving more because of hard wired discontentment.

These factors then keep folks in need of growth to be more conscious and emotionally skillful so as to have a consistently effective response to override the self-centred set-up of our algorithm’s programming.

The Human Algorithm (reference Chapter Five – Self-Understanding for details)

Every human being seems to have at least four brain centres (so to speak)— all of which require specific understanding and management.

Our Human Predicament – PFP Brain – The MESS



Without growing beyond PFP prison you will live your entire life primarily being only semi-conscious.

We call our combined nature, nurture, normalized brain *PFP* because it is made up from **P**redispositions, **F**ilters and **P**rimed prompts - see below).

Discovering and disengaging from our PFP/**NNN** programmed algorithm will help you break free from being driven by the outdated predispositions, filters and primed prompts (PFP) that are primarily responsible for our emotional hijacks.

We call this PFP a prison from which you have to break free to steal happiness from your life. Without the 4 essential tools, it is fair to say that you may be able to continue to better decorate your prison and even paint over messages on the walls, but you won't free yourself from the prison and its chains of unnecessary human suffering.

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Consciousness instead of a (semi-conscious feverish selfish little clod) of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

George Bernard Shaw

This quotation in part is what led Joanne and I to write this book—as a guide to help you meet the life ideal that Shaw calls the “true joy in life”.

For most people to live a personally satisfying and socially useful, good and happy life in any role (e.g. find true joy in life), we must overcome several serious conditions of which you may be unaware. We refer to these conditions as the *human predicament*.

The first step to solving any problem is to answer the question, what is the problem? For example what are the consequences of the situation or existing condition? Today there has never been more information, resources or opportunities for people to be and remain happy. Yet for most, this happiness only lasts until the latest bigger-better-more fix has lost its luster (like other shiny objects that hold our attention for a while). For the vast majority of folks who cannot even be happy with bigger-better-more (let alone be happy for no particular reason), the most fundamental of all challenges is that you do not know the human predicament's set-up. The predicament set-up (that you and everyone else inherited and learned) has been designed by nature and nurture to actively work against your satisfaction and happiness with just mindless hav'n.

We offer you this resource of these most fundamental insights and tools to neutralize the set-up that may well be stopping you from realizing your potential to be happy and to want to help others be the same.

Ignorance Ain't Bliss – what you do not know, can and does harm you and others

Most good and caring people (which you probably are) are stuck in a 'good' place—a semi-conscious, half-awake trance. Discovery for most people seems to start with discontentment, discouragement and distress. Often this seems to result from crash and burn situations, many of which are unnecessary (e.g. Relationship failures with friends, kids, parents, sibling, life partners). But just this suffering alone does not seem to be sufficient to get folks unstuck.

This first part of this resource will help you learn more about the good place in which you are stuck, the cost for being stuck, what causes 'stuckness' and what to do about it. It seems we just don't work to break free from prison unless we really know that we are locked in one.

The main focus of this part of the resource is to prove to you beyond any doubt that your personal algorithm has some qualities of which you are probably unaware, that significantly limit your potential to live a personally fulfilling, happy and socially useful life (unless you understand and consciously manage them).

I once asked Daniel Goleman (the author of *Emotional Intelligence*) to walk me through how the brain and body react to a threat. This was his reply:

When the body sounds an alarm of, say, fear, it sends urgent messages to every major part of the brain; it triggers the secretion of the body's fight-or-flight cardiovascular system, the muscles, and the gut. Other circuits from the amygdala signal the secretion of emergency dollops of the hormone norepinephrine to heighten the reactivity of key brain areas, including those that make the senses more alert, setting the brain on edge. All of this happens in three fifths of a second.

Parts of our PFP human algorithm to be explored throughout this resource are:

1. Being only semi-conscious (a.k.a. lost in thoughts)
2. PFP survival feelings drive most of your important decisions
3. Free will ain't free
4. Thinking or being thought?
5. Who remembers?
6. Stop thinking
7. Share your thoughts, why not?
8. Your memory is seriously corrupted
9. Inattentional blindness

10. You fabricate much of your reality based on how the PFP algorithm processes incoming data
11. Your mind has a mind of its own
12. Mental health considerations, such as the brain wiring “underload” of ADHD
13. Removing the mask of anger covering your more painful “faces” to become emotionally self-regulated

Humour us for a moment by considering that we, and many world-renowned researchers may be right. Consider what it would mean to your life if we were right. The following are the main conditions discussed throughout this book that we will work to help you to radically improve.

(Reference recommended reading Appendix V)

(Also reference www.centreforconsciouscare.ca audio resources for details)

Some of the ways described throughout this resource to Grow Beyond the PFP Human Predicament to Upgrade your 1.0 Algorithm to a 2.0 Version

1. How to grow far beyond your high-risk algorithm of being only semi-conscious (a.k.a. lost in thoughts):

Over each 24-hour period, you can be experiencing consciousness on a 1-10 continuum.

Unconscious: (1)

- like when you are asleep in your bed.

Semiconscious: (autopilot) (5)

- like how you typically drive your car, relate to people and do most doings, i.e. you are there but your mind is someplace else and you are unaware of what is happening in the present moment.

Fully Conscious: (self-aware) (10) ‘mindful’

- like when you are paying attention – noticing **what** you are doing e.g. how you drive when a police car is following you;
- knowing **that** you are doing it when you are doing it and
- knowing **how** your **body’s sensations, feelings and thoughts** are reacting to what is happening.

Subconscious:

- your data bank of files that you inherit and develop (a.k.a. your algorithm).

(reference Appendix VI – The Path to Awakening for a more complete understanding and graphic illustration of levels of consciousness)

The 4 Life Tools will help you to live more fully conscious by helping you to better understand and to manage the human predicament’s set-up.

A human being experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. The striving for such achievement is, in itself, a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.

(Albert Einstein)

2. **PFP survival feelings drive most of your important decisions:**

The brain inherited and develops feeling files—a data bank from which you semiconsciously speed-dial reactions to very quickly manage your world and keep you (mainly your ego) safe. Some of these files are called *cognitive bias* (i.e. your PFP autopilot algorithm). You will learn numerous qualities of your own cognitive bias and learn how to change what keeps you at risk when you complete the exercises offered below.

3. **Free will ain't free:**

Not one person disagrees with us when we suggest that having free will to make informed choices is near the top of importance of our human life skills to be successful, happy and fulfilled. Most people also immediately agree that we would be in serious trouble if we didn't have this free will. Loss of free will would mean that we are extremely vulnerable to not being able to do what we feel we must do to manage life's events and relationships so we can be happy and to help others be happy.

We strongly suggest that if you are only semi-conscious, your in-the-moment reactions and responses to most of your life situations are virtually on survival only programmed auto-pilot without your knowing. You have no/low free will to make positive choices.

Do this simple **free will** experiment:

- Using your free will, think of someone who you know.
- Using your free will again, think of someone else you know.
- Now attempt to explain how *you* applied your free will to complete this simple free will task by answering these questions.

Why and how did you think of Uncle Fred first and Aunt Martha second (or whomever)?

Now consider, did you consciously, with free will, choose those two people or did they just pop into your mind? You may be saying “well, four people popped into my mind, but I chose which ones to remember so I did exercise free will to make a choice”. This could still hardly be called free will because you made your choice from a very incomplete list that randomly popped up to offer you an incomplete menu.

You may also be saying, but I consistently exercise my free will to do and say what I want provided it is ethical, useful, kind and timely, etc. We would fully agree with this statement, however I would ask the more critical question. **Where did the ‘I want to’ thoughts and feelings that you dutifully followed originate?** In the absence of self-awareness you have low/no free will to make essential conscious choices beyond your PFP wants. You will be delighted to learn in Tool #1 *Self-Awareness and Allowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart* that the more self-aware we are, the less we are driven by outdated qualities of our PFP brain.

4. **Thinking? Or being thought?**

If you have free will, most agree that it will generally be initiated, experienced, and expressed in thoughts and feelings.

Complete this next experiment. Can you tell me what your next thought or feeling is going to be before you have it? If you answered no (which every person does), you must then agree that free will is on shaky ground because those thoughts and feelings come from somewhere that *you* cannot control without proper training, as in the 4 essential life tools. Will power and thinking are created by your mind and body mostly beyond the awareness of the untrained only semi-conscious person. We call this PFP prison.

Mostly we first learn what we think, only after we hear what we say – Scary.
(inspired by Forrester)

5. **Who remembers?**

To build an even more complete picture to describe your lack of free will to make choices, to be happy etc., when you spontaneously remember something, how does it happen? Do *you* consciously go to your data bank and select the name of the file you have forgotten or does it just pop up like those online pop up advertisements? Further, if you are in charge of your data bank and can access it at *will* (free), why do you forget anything in the first place? Tools #2 *Self-Understanding* and #3 *Self-Management* will help reduce this problem with your PFP algorithm.

6. **Stop thinking:**

Close your eyes and just focus on your breathing for a moment. Don’t think of anything. If you have free will to think or not, this should be a simple assignment. Close your eyes now and use your free will to stop thinking. How did you do? Right, you were thinking about not thinking weren’t you? This is more proof that “you are being thought” and need some skills to not be driven/owned by these PFP thought files.

7. **Share your thoughts? Why not?**

Let’s take any day that you have been alive. If we could retrieve all of your thoughts from that day, how would you feel about making them public? No one we meet readily agrees

to this proposition. Why? Is it not because you would be too embarrassed or disgusted with many of those thoughts to share? They would not be your A-Game and where they come from you haven't a clue.

These functions are so critical to our survival that they have not been given to *you* to manage. They are instead assigned to your PFP autopilot/algorithm (the mindless you) that requires a unique password to override. Lack of awareness is one of the main contributors to unhappiness – not the life's conditions that we normally blame (more of this in Tool #1 a.k.a. 'the password').

8. Your memory is seriously corrupted:

In great part because of the first seven points we've made, your memory is as solid as Swiss cheese. Also, each time you re-remember something, your memory retains this newer, less complete version of the experience (more on this with *self-understanding*).

9. Inattentional blindness:

We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are. Anais Nin

Your brain right now is subconsciously processing approximately 11 million bits of data per second. But the conscious you (the you who can become aware that you are doing this) can only consciously process about 50 bits of data per second.

- Because of only 50 bits per second of conscious data processing capacity, our brain filters out most information that comes our way. This is why you fail to see a three-storey building that you have looked at for years while driving to work, and then one day you see it.
- This filtering process results in the mind responding and reacting to parts of each life event that activates what you have been preprogrammed to believe is important and meaningful at the time; that is what it believes and wants to hear. We therefore miss buildings, pain and other truths.

The Brain's Conscious Processing Capacity

The body's sensors, as a minimum sends the brain 11 million bits of data per second for processing.

Human Brain Neuroscience, cognitive science – basic knowledge 101, Dr. Joseph Dispenza

The conscious mind processes data at approximately 50 bits per second.

MIT Technology Review

10. You fabricate much of your reality based on how the PFP algorithm processes incoming data:

Consider the following practical example of how your algorithm already thinks it knows everything and will work to convince you of its wisdom. The images below also demonstrate how our PFP algorithm processing capacity fills in the blind spots (both of our senses and cognition). We actually only see the incomplete image on the right-hand side of the page (because of our optical blind spot), but our brain fills in the gaps to send us the full image as captured by the camera. (*Look at the left photo*).

How the brain creates its world – AKA, what we see isn't really all that there is.



Left picture original image, made by a camera. The same image seen by a retina

Courtesy of Laurent Itti.

This knowledge will be used to help you to integrate the **Third Life Tool: self-management**.

11. Your mind has a mind of its own:

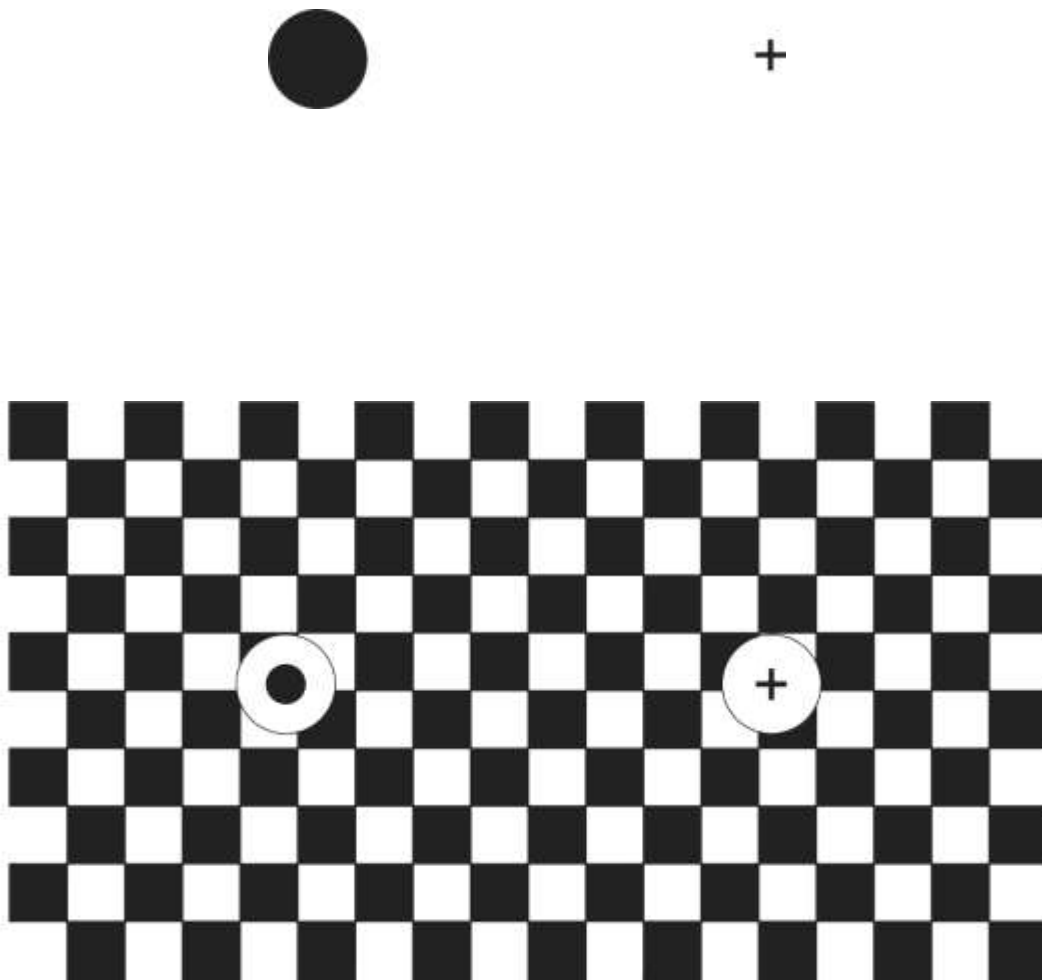
To get another brief taste of an experience of how your mind has a mind of its own, complete the following exercise.

Instruction:

Hold the following page with your left hand, and put your right hand over your right eye. Then using the dot and + at the top of the page, while focusing with your left eye on the cross (+) on the right side of the page, notice how you see the dot in your peripheral vision. Now **very slowly** move the page toward you until the black dot disappears from your peripheral vision. (This place may be six to eight inches from your eye.)

Now do the same with the cross (+) located on the checkerboard pattern until the black dot disappears in the checkerboard. Do the exercise now, then read the next step.

Now **repeat** the checkerboard exercise. Notice how the black dot disappeared, but the checkerboard pattern has filled in the space where the dot was. Your PFP Programming is primed to think that the checkerboard should be complete, so it (not you) replaces the blank space with the pattern—and it does this without your knowledge or consent! The same happens with other senses hundreds of times a day.



All 4 Life Tools are more effectively implemented as you learn to be aware of this serious design flaw.

12. Mental health considerations:

Mental emotional health is on a very broad continuum from mild OCD, ADHD, anxiety, depression symptoms, to deep disorders of psychosis, suicidal ideations, etc. While this resource is not specifically about mental and emotional dysregulation, the destruction caused by unidentified PFP algorithm malfunctions/disorders is too prevalent to not be somewhat addressed here.

Readers who are feeling less than they remember happiness was like, or even who feel they have never really been happy, will find some very useful advice and suggestions throughout this book.

13. Removing the mask of anger covering other more painful faces to become mindfully emotionally self-regulated:

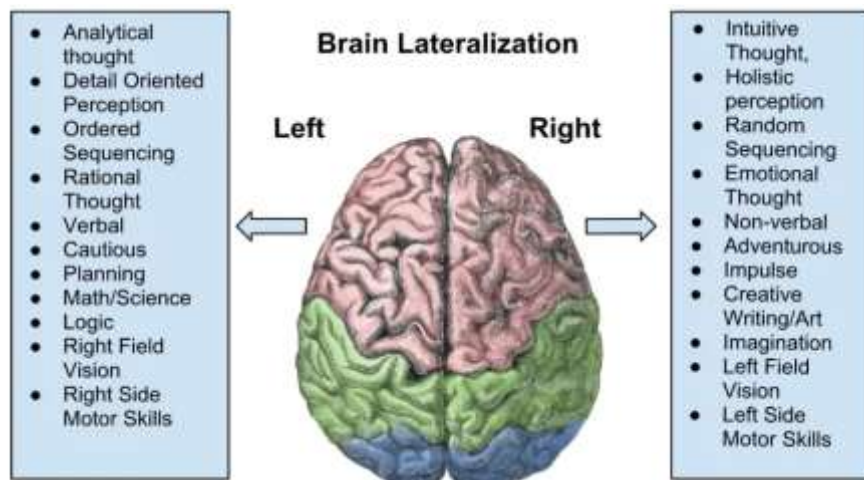
Sometimes anger is just anger. For example, anger can be an emotional response to an experience of man's inhumanity to man. Very often however, it is a disguise hiding many more difficult feelings from your subjective experience. Because anger is such a highly prevalent, but disastrous alternative to emotions that can arise even in relationships with in-groups/loved ones, in Chapter Four we decided to explore it as one of the most influential primitive predispositions that could be keeping your PFP prison doors locked.

PFP Algorithm Conclusions

The average untrained person's near total lack of **Knowing** about their body/brain's most critical architectural design errors (to steal happiness) keeps us in need of self-awareness and the other 3 tools.

Every healthy person's brain is divided into two hemispheres and are joined by neuro tissue called the corpus callosum (CC). The CC is the set of connectors that allow each hemisphere to talk to each other. While these two hemispheres do talk to each other on virtually all tasks, it appears that in our culture at this time, the left brain's hemisphere got to sit in the CEO chair first and makes the right brain's hemisphere wait outside of the main office until it is called upon by the CEO or forces itself into the office to give extra input to life task's. (reference the following graphic)

Information that enters the **left hemisphere** travels across the corpus callosum going to the right side of the brain and vice versa. The two hemispheres of the brain (right and left hemisphere) function interdependently.



Each of them has a role to play in the processing of information although the other is more dominant in certain functions. The process is called brain lateralization. The degree of **brain lateralization** is not the same in everyone.

The untrained persons left brain dominated CEO has a serious problem in not knowing what it doesn't know and doesn't want to know and worse yet, it makes stuff up to cover what it doesn't know. So, like child soldiers walking around in some countries with AK-47 weapons, our left brain is far too unqualified to run our company.

With the 4 tools, it appears that we can start to reinstate the wiser, compassionate, patient, holistic, etc. right hemisphere of the brain to be more dominate in our moment by moment interactions. In other words, the right brain recaptures its rightful essential place as master over its 'keep it simple stupid', impatient, reactionary, unaware, resistant, survivor focused left brain servant.

Volumes have been written by neuroscientists and others about this primitive predisposition. I have read enough and looked deep enough with my mindfulness microscope for sufficient thousands of hours to say that our simple above description of the master-servant is for the most part an accurate summary of the overwhelming vulnerability that near everyone has when we settle for 'being normal' (a.k.a. left brain driven).

Self-awareness through U,B-FIT Mindfulness and the other 3 tools are emerging as one of the most effective ways to stop being overpowered by 'lefty's' narrow materialistic values of utility, function (do'n get'n hav'n) pleasure, and fears, driven by machine/computer like mechanistic ways of 'living' in our world. In becoming more conscious instead we can, with some limited effort and discipline, keep lefty in charge of maintenance but seek to be radically abnormal by developing righty's broader range of holistic qualities such as courage, loyalty, humility, aesthetic values/beauty, goodness, and truth. These qualities are vital for us to live to our optimal mind, body and spiritual potential.

We ask you to learn and practice the 4 tools and thereby appoint a new CEO for your company.

So, based on these examples, and hundreds more in the references and resources in the recommended reading, can we generally agree that at least some of your subconscious mind/brain is often influencing you (the you who is reading this) and getting what it feels it needs, based in great part, only on your survival primitive nature/nurture brain directives?

Most of how you see and interpret the world is made up by your unique PFP programming that prevents you from seeing things objectively. We hope that we have made you feel sufficiently vulnerable to motivate you to read on to learn how to break free from PFP prison.

When the fact that you and most everyone else you meet are imprisoned by a minimum of these thirteen components of our PFP algorithm sinks into your awareness, four-life changing experiences will start to happen to you.

- You will be moved to tears of gratitude for your **good luck** in being programmed with mostly positive PFP that guides your feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

- You will slowly start to have a deep and authentic compassion for those whose PFP words, thoughts and deeds cause suffering for themselves and others.
- As you do what you must to prevent others from harming you and others, your heart will remain open and compassionate.
- You will become highly motivated to learn the essential life tools so as to develop your more complete consciousness (i.e. PFP algorithm version 2.0). This will enable you to more effectively and efficiently access and control your PFP data bank.

Now for a moment, a gentle compassionate moment, think of some people in your life and recall their most annoying to obnoxious and harmful personality traits and behaviours. Save a little memory space as best you can to include some of your own short comings as well.

Let's call these qualities, manifestations of one's unhappiness. To give you a heads up as to where we are going, we would suggest that the above nasty list of 13 components of the PFP human algorithm are the actual source for virtually all of these annoying, obnoxious and harmful qualities in ourselves and others.

Also take the time and list your own and others' desirable qualities because PFP is the source of them as well.

Our job will be to show you how to bring more consciousness to each moment so that you can as a minimum, skillfully process the PFP induced negative reactions so as to 'ahh-llow' those PFP directives to pass by and to make room for our 4 tools developed wisdom and compassion to come out of hiding.

The culmination of our 4 life tools' work will not only be this ability to skillfully process this less than optimal you. It will also start to transform your PFP into version 2.0 that will eventually become the conscious connecting you.

Using the 4 tools you will start to experience many moments in each hour, of **catching** your mind reacting on autopilot playing another order/demand from your algorithm. Your new upgraded autopilot will then activate your developed **calming** and sensory **clarifying** capacity. This will result in your enhanced experience of now being able to **choose** for example, more optimal self-talk leading to more **conscious connecting** with others.

Your new files and understanding will improve your free will and autopilot processor to make better thinking, feeling, and doing choices that will significantly enhance happiness for you and others to whom you relate.

A vitally important consideration is that the 4 tools will not only help us to enhance happiness for self and others. Equally as important they will help us develop the wisdom and courage to compassionately and passionately work to stop others from perpetuating the harm they inflict on others. We can now take this action with an open heart.

Summary of the JOURNEY

We thought that we would end this overview chapter with a poem we wrote of what we have learned and earned over our 50 years together to steal happiness from life. We feel that it is a pretty good overview to describe the purpose of the book.

Claim Your Brain – Start Your Heart

(To Consciously Connect)

*Of all the signs of ignorance,
that is anything but bliss.
Hidden from me, my addiction,
mindless mind's seductive diss.
Sort out the bad guys from us good,
with closed heart complain.
Pushed out of Eden just seconds ago,
now live in PFP Brain.*

*PFP picks my side,
This silent voice a curse.
'In-groups' against 'outs',
each proclaims the other as worse.
Also part of my operating system,
priming and filters' software,
masters of semiconscious me,
the cost of unaware.*

*Must judge those others,
proving I'm so wise.
Critical and self-righteous,
heart's biggest compromise.
Blessed to be so perfect,
in my mind at least.
safe in the delusion,
no need to tame my beast.*

*Then first light of mindfulness,
learn PFP writes the song.
riffs played by mindless mind,
endless binge off brain's bong.
Facts don't really matter much.
It's feel that steals the dance.
Mindless minds' ole shuffle and jive,
manipulates all circumstance.*

*But as I awaken more,
see beyond their evil ways,
now love of enemies,
their life my work to raise.
Forgiveness forged in fires,
heat from life's pain.
Dark made light by flames,
of burning PFP brain.*

*Very slowly, more light each year
Illuminates my prison.
Equanimity unlocks the door,
Some rightly claim "arisen".
See other's troubled tribal heart,
evolved only to survive.
Their consciousness deep asleep,
seldom present, so barely alive.*

*Now compassion for sad life,
Had by that babe and teen.
Scars from mindless ma or pa,
who knows where others' heart has been!
Too few days of loving sun,
drowns many a child in rain.
Never to find a safe shore
'Cept in PFP brain.*

*As thoughts transform to wisdom,
I ponder the plight of birth.
If I had their genes and home,
Would I not have their worth?
But what to do with those who harm,
To stop them before they start?
We must do what we must do,
but now they never leave our heart.*

*PFP ice transforms to steam,
revealed in conscious connect.
No good or bad guys on the field,
for all others, never neglect.
Even the words "all others,"
lose meaning and resolve,
As "I am" morphs to "There is,"
"Here" ego self dissolves.*

*Mind transforms to consciousness,
through the stillness of mindful breath.
This tortured prisoner is released,
back to Eden at PFP's death.
Kindness emerges, beyond mere feel,
conditional love departs.
See all in the game, as my own name,
The way of awakened heart.
The way of awakened heart.*

Possibly the most significant of the 'Truths' that we have learned on our journey 'Home', is that suffering – from personal to global, is most often caused by average people being virtually 100% locked in – identified with the 1000's of random thoughts that unknowingly spontaneously and uncontrollably arise in their mind every hour of every day.

The great wisdom teachings all more or less agree that we must awaken out of the semi-conscious sleep (mental prison) that is the normal and natural condition of every mindless child, adolescent and adult.

Because the source of 99% of these thoughts are our nature and nurture inherited and learned PFP rules/algorithm to get and have Security, Sameness, Sex, and Satisfaction, they set us up to fail to find sustainable meaning, purpose and happiness.

While it's too early to speculate, we feel that the insights, tools, and practises that we are about to pass on to you have good potential for helping young and older readers to find authentic meaning, purpose, and happiness in a radically changing world. This world it would appear, will be absolutely unrecognizable by any of you who live another 20 to 50 years and more. Biotechnology, it is predicted will continue to create an Artificially Intelligent (AI) 'civilization' that will significantly change most of today's standard life's conditions.

As our stealing happiness tools are primarily designed for inside job applications, they should remain highly relevant for the years to come.

These life tools we feel will, as a minimum, offer you a home base from which to cherish your past, find authentic and sustainable meaning, purpose and happiness in the present, and help ensure that the 'way of the heart' will guide your future - home.

P & J

Chapter Three

Essential Tool #1 – **SELF-AWARENESS AND AHH-LLOWING TO MINDFULLY MANAGE THE MIND AND HEART**

Tool
#1

SELF-AWARENESS AND AHH-LLOWING TO MINDFULLY MANAGE THE MIND AND HEART

Introduction

While the many models of cognitive behavioural self-talk and reframing of thoughts to be more positive are helpful therapies and useful ways to be happier, we start our tools' suggestions quite a bit further upstream.

The tool of *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart* brings into awareness and relative control the building blocks of how we perceive and interpret most life events and how this process seriously influences our quality of life. These building blocks are:

- Body sensations
- Feelings
- Thoughts

(BFT)

The tool #1 is activated by two fundamental skills:

1. Self-Awareness
2. Ahh-llowing/Equanimity

Self-Awareness

***Self-awareness* is the ability, in the moment, to consciously experience those PFP (Primitive Predispositions, Filters, and Brain Priming - PFP) algorithm influences that are attempting to control our thoughts, feelings and behaviours. It is the ability to be mindfully aware of what we are experiencing as we are experiencing it. This awareness can activate sufficient free will to make better informed choices not dependent on our reactive PFP programmed wants and desires. This enhances fulfillment of positive experiences and reduces the suffering from negative conditions.**

To be aware, we start by paying attention to what we are doing. It is as if we were driving our car and a police car was right behind us - we are really focused on our driving and also 100% aware **that** we are being followed.

'Being aware' is the opposite of how people normally drive their car: put the key in the ignition, and suddenly they are at their destination, without really knowing how they got there because

their mind was somewhere else. They were not really aware of what they were doing at the time or that they were doing it! Most untrained people drive their life in the same mindless way, i.e. being some place or with someone and their mind is too often some place else.

With self-awareness I can “catch myself” being here, now: present, in the marketplace of life. This catching opens the tool chest to have a relatively positive response.

Learning to be this self-aware/conscious, although being a part of our potential is not a natural state of mind. For most it must be learned and practiced through some sort of consciousness growing such as *U,B-FIT mindfulness* (see below).

You Play The Lead Role In Life’s Movie

As an analogy to explain how self-awareness can help you steal happiness and fulfillment from within the human predicament of living with the inevitable and unavoidable chaos of life, consider what happens when you are watching a movie. Think of how you emotionally respond to the movie as being how you react to a life event. When you watch an interesting movie you become engrossed in, lost in, caught in the story line. For all intent and purpose, it is real life to you as long as you are ‘lost’ in it. Therefore, it brings you sadness, joy, anger, fear, excitement etc. The instant that you catch yourself being lost in the movie and say “Oh yeah, this is just a movie”, your spell and trance are broken. Given this context you immediately start to feel different.

When we are not aware of being lost in Body, Feeling and Thinking (BFT) reactions to a life event, we are driven by them, they seem ‘real’. When we become aware or more conscious in the moment, we give this context, which often stops or reduces the PFP emotional hijack. We contribute to **re**-directing the BFT movie more in line with the values, thoughts and feelings of a conscious us. In this moment, then, because you are self-aware you simultaneously play your “get out of prison card”—just like when you realize this is just a movie.

Mindfulness 101



When you grow sufficiently aware in the moment (i.e. being here now) to be able to catch yourself being caught in thoughts, feelings and body sensations (a.k.a. the movie) and then skillfully calm these reactions, only then can you more completely respond from an informed, conscious, free will perspective (a.k.a. you're A game).

Most people go through their entire life being caught in, identified with, directed by their thousands of body, feeling and thought (BFT) reactions each day that pop in from their unique PFP programming. When mindless, we have relatively little influence in developing or managing our PFP.

Why is This Level of Awareness Important?

Become aware right now that you are reading this sentence. With practice we can have many moments in each hour like this knowing that you are here, now!

Typically, without knowing that we are **here**, we will react with the behaviours and feelings from our PFP-programming. When mindless PFP-programming dominates our BFT, our reactions are usually automatic and unconscious (remember our Crown Vic automatic transmission).

When under pressure, these reactions can rapidly take you into an indifferent, tuned-out or “freeze, fear, flight or fight response”. This is especially true once you start to mindlessly be pulled into even the first stage of an **emotional hijack**—a situation that triggers an emotion in us that quickly takes us somewhere we don't want to go: overwhelm, irritation, impatience, indifference, fear, guilt.

Examples of the Benefits of Self-Awareness

Catching ourself being **here** is a subtle but potentially powerful dimension of *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart* that is extremely important. This objective is vital, not only for effective communications, but also for authentic wisdom and compassion in all relationships.

With increasing perspective we see that all of our ego identities, models and self- images can be useful, but need not be entrapping. We may gain this perspective very slowly, but the direction is clear. As we lighten our attachment to self-image, we find a different vantage point from which to observe [become self-aware] who we are and who others are.

It's as if you lived in a little town and you go up to a mountain top and, looking down, you see how you move about in the course of an ordinary day. You see your route to work, where you go shopping, the main thoroughfares, your short cuts, your daily routines – you're seeing all of that from up there. Then you return to the village but now, when you are moving around town thereafter, there's a part of you that always recalls the perspective from above. As you go through a day, you are still watching it all from up there. (i.e. catching yourself being here in each moment.) Ram Dass and Paul Gorman

The wisdom of **here**—knowing that I’m **here**, in this moment—offers the following benefits:

- **Here** can be a vital, timely prompt to intentionally activate insights, wisdom and skills learned through other personal growth experiences (e.g. empathy).
- **Here** can give us an early warning signal that an emotional hijack has started to occur in ourself or another (e.g. to become aware of a feeling of irritation or impatience).
- **Here** opens the door to bring immediate perspective to this moment. “Ahh— relative to other possibilities, this situation is pretty good”.
- **Here** enables us to more fully experience the wonderful moments of laughter, fun and humour with others.
- **Here** reminds us to slow it down, which in turn promotes being aware and experiencing what we are doing instead of doing something just to get it done.

The skill of self-awareness offers a significantly richer and more complete way of experiencing life. We will attempt to prove to you that without it you will live your life at a small fraction of your potential. This means that you will probably suffer emotionally and physically many times more than necessary from life’s inevitable challenges and losses. This also means that you will probably experience fulfillment from life’s joys and happiness many times less than you could. For us, being mindful of body sensations, feelings and thought reactions in the moment, is one of the most powerful tools available to be mindfully emotionally self-regulated which is essential to be happy.

Our job then is to give you sufficient reasons to invest the time and effort to learn the skill, and then to teach you how to do it. We have successfully taught several thousand individuals how to live more mindful and emotionally self-regulated so this part of our job is generally successful. Having you adopt a life-long practice and performance is our greatest challenge.

With practice, **being aware/knowing that** I am **here** and experiencing—starts to become normal.

So then, the self-awareness part of the ***Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart*** tool is the ability to, as often as possible focus on/observe/notice/pay attention to how our body sensations, feelings and thoughts are reacting to life’s situations. (i.e. catch yourself being here now!)

To Summarize:

By ***catching*** we are referring to your awareness when you realize **that** you are **here** “in the present,” **NOW** and experiencing something/someone in this moment.

Equanimity and Ahh-llowingness

Introduction

Of all the skills required to live a personally satisfying and socially useful life, the ability to be equanimous/ahh-llowingness (EA) with life's challenges is possibly one of the most essential but least understood.

What it is and what it isn't?

Let's start by defining what it isn't. EA is not in any way just accepting challenging situations and people with some cute phrases that abound in the stories of many sincere and dedicated practitioners and teachers. 'It's all good', 'it's all God', 'It's all grace', is not EA. This implies acceptance of one's lot in life with no hope for improvement. There is for sure a place for acceptance when all options for more positive alternatives have been competently pursued. Implementing the EA skill into the process will then be relevant whether one is forced to accept a life situation or not.

While speech and behaviour that are useful, ethical, kind and timely will be effective by-products resulting from EA to resolve issues in one's life, the actual process of EA is primarily a subjective experience of 'let it be'. But let's get very clear about what the 'it' is in 'let it be', then we will unpack the 'be' part of this sacred 'John Lennon' mantra.

The 'it' is our internal subjective experiences of body sensations, feelings and thoughts. For example, as thoughts cascade onto our inner stage like wild horses stampede down the canyon of our mind, with EA we observe them from a peak on top of the canyon and watch them pass by. We also observe/notice/witness our feelings. This means both the emotions of for example fear, guilt, anger, grief, etc. and also their corresponding body sensations. We give them permission to be stronger or weaker, bigger or smaller, faster or slower, etc.

Our acronym for let it be is (no surprise) LIB – as in liberate the driven BFT senses from the chains of PFP prison. There are two simultaneous elements of which we must be aware that are impacting our well-being at any moment. The one element that most folks obsess about is **objective reality** – the do'n, get'n, hav'n, bigger, better, more 'it'. The second element that is all but forgotten is **subjective 'inner' reality**, which can have, and often does have, an unrestricted life of its own unless we are equanimous and ahh-llowing.

The second skill set of the *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing* tool is to subjectively ahh-llow/let be the body sensations, feelings, and thought reactions of which we have become aware. This means letting go of the resistance to the 'bad stuff' and attachments to the 'good stuff' of the BFT sensations of which you become aware. With EA, we focus on the forms and changingness

of *BFT*, not the content. For example, the forms of thinking are internal pictures and internal Talking—not the meaning or content of a thought like “this is awful”. Feeling body sensations are for example tight or constricted muscles like how your throat can close when you are feeling sad.

Read this instruction and then do it. First become aware, pay attention to/notice the sensations in one of your hands. Now tighten your fist and notice the change in muscle tension. Now intentionally release your hand’s muscle tension. This is an example of applying EA to a body sensation that has tightened as result of a life event. All emotional feelings have similar body sensations (e.g. the throat example). With practice we can learn to identify feelings and feeling body sensations for most of our emotions and lessen our resistance and drivenness of them as well.

Next read the following and then do it. Close your eyes and say some words to yourself. Be aware/pay attention to/notice that you are self-talking. When this happens spontaneously, we call this form of thinking, internal ‘talk’. Next think of how a person you know looks. Notice whatever representation comes to you. We label (say to our self) this form of thinking ‘image’. Do this exercise before reading on. Label image or talk as they spontaneously arise. Let them stay as long or as short as they want. Do not get pulled into the content – just notice/pay attention to the form arising and passing away.

So then, when you become aware of being involved in a life situation, pay attention to/notice how your BFT is reacting in the same way you experienced these examples. Simultaneously, to not become emotionally hijacked by the feelings and thoughts, skillfully ahh-llow their forms/sensations to come and go, get stronger or weaker. Also intend release of the body sensations.

We first learn to experience this in formal practice (*reference below*). It is subtle and inconsistent at first. Over time with enough formal practice, a kind of capacity is built that starts to influence us to be aware and ahh-llowing. This results in relative calm in many stressful everyday experiences.

Calm is one of the main by-products of EA. This calm then opens the gate to deeper insights concerning the most fundamental influences of our subjective experiences. Ahh-llowing is a very unique and powerful process to lessen stressful feelings and thoughts by not trying to get rid of them.

Here is another example. At any given moment, objective reality is taking place outside of you. Someone is criticizing you, or yelling at you, or complementing you. Simultaneously you have subjective, internal BFT reactions to this situation: embarrassment, anger, joy. EA begins with intentionally responding to the awareness of your BFT subjective reactions with an attitude of “let it be”. Ahh, there is embarrassment (e.g. a change in body sensations on one’s face): let it

be. We call this matter-of-fact, nonjudgmental, internal letting go of your physical, mental, and emotional response, *equanimity/ahh-llowing*.

To repeat, because it is very important, remember however, that *ahh-llowing* does not mean that you accept any harmful or negative situation with a sense that “It’s all good” or “This too will pass”. It always includes working passionately to improve the real, objective situation. AHH-llowing also does not mean creating a place where there is no pain, challenge or problem. It is in the very definition of being in life and in relationship to be constantly confronted with all of these things.

As surely and as powerfully as gravity holds the most inconsequential of particles of dust to the earth’s surface, so too do resistance and attachment control every life event, no matter how mundane or magnificent—until, that is, these reactions come into awareness and are ahh-llowed.

This *Self-Awareness and AHH-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart* tool just asks you to become aware of and then let go of your driven *BFT* sensory reactions in the moment with awareness and ahh-llowing so that you can consciously respond appropriately instead of semiconsciously reacting more to what is happening. When you are subjectively aware and ahh-llowing of specific external actions and situations, you will be able to find the most appropriate words and actions. Because you are mindful, you will be calm and conscious as well, so your heart will remain open. Your words will be useful, ethical, kind and timely.

The benefits from this new attitude and skill of ahh-llowing will be huge. You will experience much less emotional and physical suffering because you will not have resistant reactions to it. You will also be much less vulnerable to emotional hijacks, those situations in which your emotional reaction to a negative or difficult event quickly takes you somewhere you didn’t want to go. When you do experience an emotional hijack, you will recover much more quickly, resulting in significantly improved management of your feelings and behaviours. Another wonderful benefit from developing this quality is increased fulfillment from the things that bring you pleasure, simply because you are more consciously aware of more of the experience and non-attached to the pleasure – less truly does become more.

Think of what this could mean for your ability to be happy, for no particular reason!

Being an aware and ahh-llowing person can be compared to being an excellent bookkeeper. Bookkeepers meticulously enter all numbers on the balance sheet, add them perfectly and effectively prepare the financial reports. They do not become anxious, defensive or even excited about profit and loss—they just do their best, and rest with the rest. Similarly, you, in all your relationships can learn to compassionately manage and optimally respond to someone’s

feelings, behaviour, and personal needs without any need to control the outcome. This is called being self-awareness and ahh-llowing.

Emotional or Physical Pain with Much Less Suffering

The basic formula regarding challenging life situations (developed by S. Young in the Unified Mindfulness system) is this:

Suffering = Pain x Resistance. (*reference Chapter Eight for more details*)

Lower resistance and suffering diminishes. Lower resistance to zero and... you can figure out the rest.

Reference Appendix II practice exercise Re. Pain Management.

Another important formula is as follows:

Happiness = BFT x awareness x ahh-llowing (H = BFT x A x A)

As Pema Chödrön said:

We can put our whole heart into whatever we do; but if we freeze our attitude into for or against, we're setting ourselves up for suffering. Instead, we could just go forward with curiosity, wondering where this experiment will lead. This kind of open-ended inquisitiveness captures the spirit of equanimity.

and as we say:

*We work passionately to
change what must and should be changed
e.g. injustice, exclusion
And as we do our Best, we Rest with the Rest*

The Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing Operating System

The operating system of awareness and ahh-llowing that we will outline below is called **U,B-FIT Mindfulness**. This is how we learn to be aware and ahh-llowing.

U,B-FIT Mindfulness – is a secular awareness based practice that uses the following four processes: concentration – sensory clarity – equanimity – be here now. These processes allow us to transcend the survival- based drivenness of our four main PFP sensory experiences of:

- Body (B) – physical sensations from mechanical and pressure stimulation;
- Feelings (F) – emotions and feeling body sensations;
- Image (I) – way/form of thinking,
- Talk (T) – way/form of thinking.

This is how we become mindfully emotionally self-regulated.

Note:

From now on in this resource, we will integrate the two basic forms of thinking into our terminology. This means that we will replace the term BFT with B-FIT (Body, Feeling, Image and Talk). (Exercise #1 below will give you a first hand experience of this very important insight).



U,B-FIT Mindfulness – what is it and how to do it.

As we see it, we human folks are different than other animals with which we share this planet. Unlike them, we have the **potential** to know that we are here and as a result can make some choices that your average dog or tree likely can't. Now let's review the awareness process again. Stop reading for a moment and become aware that you are here now, doing what you are doing. Let's call this being somewhat more conscious than usual.

Remember that in Chapter Two we outlined the three levels of consciousness: unconscious, semi-conscious and fully conscious. We used the analogy of moving from deep sleep into full wakefulness. This Chapter has been about the last level of fuller consciousness:

- like when you are paying attention/noticing **what** you are doing *and*
- knowing **that** you are doing it *and*
- knowing how your Body sensations, Feelings and Image and Talk Thoughts are reacting/responding to or are a part of what you are doing.

Nature in its wisdom and compassion gave us a part of our operating system that can be developed into the skill of mindfulness required to activate the 3 other life tools. This part of our operating system is essential to our conscious self-regulating capacity. As noted it is called *U,B-FIT mindfulness*. This inherent potential will remain dormant in you unless you deliberately bring it online.

A Summary of The Skills of U,B-FIT Mindfulness to Manage the Mind and Heart

Each *U,B-FIT* skill and exercise will help you understand how to integrate both the practice and the skills into your daily life. *U,B-FIT* is a way of being, moment by moment, not a way of doing at isolated times. This is a real-time practice.

Mankind has evolved physically, mentally and socially as a result of physical tools. The first tool accurately carbon dated by archeologists was invented by our ancestors over three million years ago. Not surprisingly, it was a cutting tool—a fist axe/chopper knife—designed to cut up food supplies, to divide and separate meat into smaller more manageable pieces. Knives are such an elegant and perfect analogy to introduce the skills of *U,B-FIT mindfulness*, which are also used to “divide” *U,B-FIT* sensations into manageable pieces so that they do not overwhelm us and can be more easily managed.

As our skill with each of the following increases over time, our overall capacity to be mindful will increase as well. The benefit works both ways. The deeper our mindfulness becomes, the more proficient we become in using the skills.

Skill # 1: Concentration

One of the most important human faculties to enable us to have a meaningful and socially responsible life is **concentration**. Concentration is simply the ability to pay continuous attention to what we feel is relevant and important at the time. It is not hard to see the importance of this ability in all of our relationships. How often does the well-being of one person depend on another's ability to pay attention to physical changes and symptoms or nonverbal cues of emotional distress? Without the ability to concentrate—to focus and pay attention—our ability and motivation to be in the world in the best possible way, and to be the best possible person, will be seriously compromised.

However, every day we are confronted with the 'pandemic' of new electronic devices that appear to be decreasing our natural ability to concentrate. Much of this electronic, multi-sensory-stimulation gadgetry being operated by the average person for many hours each day, focuses the mind so well that the mind's natural ability to concentrate atrophies. Just like having your leg in a cast for eight weeks makes the muscles become incredibly weak from lack of use. So too does the mind's capacity to concentrate on its own seem to weaken this skill when it is constantly being concentrated, relatively speaking without any effort, by these devices and our multi-sensory lifestyle stimulations.

Being unable to concentrate with another unless we find them co-operative, appreciative, attractive or interesting is one of the most challenging barriers of relationships. Many moments when communicating with others can be boring to the mindless mind. At these times it often wanders to thoughts such as, "Oh, I must pick up bread and milk on my way home." Using *U,B-FIT mindfulness* concentration skills to focus on the person you are with, will do much to eliminate this barrier.

The *U,B-FIT mindfulness* skill of concentration is a proven and powerful way to develop and maintain this all-important ability. Each time we focus on the subtle subjective experiences of *U,B-FIT* senses coming and going we build this muscle of concentration. This enables us to focus even better, and so on. In turn, this significantly improves our ability to know and understand the needs of others and be more inclined to appropriately respond to their needs.

Skill # 2: Sensory Clarity

Sensory clarity is the ability to get clear about what is happening in each of the *U,B-FIT* senses (Body Sensations, Feelings, Image and Talk thinking), one by one and then eventually all together. It is unbundling these entangled senses that normally clump together so we don't know what is happening or why we are reacting the way we are. We need to "deconstruct," or take apart, this bundle of driven senses. As we become more aware of how the *U,B-FIT* senses

are inter-acting, we become less driven by the PFP Programming as it tries to control situations and others in order to regain emotional and physical security.

In *U,B-FIT* sensory clarity we are not focused on the content of the thoughts or meaning of the feelings, because in this moment reasons for them are secondary. Of course, as we are skillfully processing *U,B-FIT* internally, we are also taking appropriate and measured action to change anything that should be changed. We experience all situations in this simultaneous way. We need to be fully aware of our *B-FIT* subjective reactions so they no longer control us.

Deconstructing the *B-FIT* senses through sensory clarity requires the following specific steps.

1. Watch closely and observe each separate sensory strand on its own. What are your **Body** sensations? What are your **Feelings**? What **Images** are going through your head? What internal **Talk** messages are you ‘hearing’?
2. Become aware that one or more of these senses have been activated: for example, an upset stomach, or there is the feeling of frustration or there is self-talk about being upset, angry, embarrassed, happy, etc.

Observe the ever-changing intensity of body sensations, feelings and thoughts (e.g. stronger, weaker, same).

3. Fill this clarifying experience with intentional ahh-llowing (equanimity, let-it-be-ness).

Skill # 3: Equanimity/Ahh-llowness (EA) is:

- a way of being, not a feeling or thinking state;
- an active, dynamic non-attachment process, not indifference;
- always working passionately to improve objective “outer world” realities while simultaneously accepting and surrendering subjective “inner world” (*U,B-FIT*) reactions (Body, Feeling, Image and Talk Thoughts;
- to do one’s best, then rest with the rest and
- embracing uncertainty and after doing all we can to positively influence situations, trusting that the outcomes are just right for this moment.

Developing EA skills and building capacity requires specialized mindfulness practice. This tool has its own set of training conditions and strategies that are available to us during formal *U,B-FIT Mindfulness* practice sessions (Appendix II) and in the marketplace of informal learning as follows:

Sauna Equanimity

As referenced in my bio, I have been blessed to volunteer, work and live in twenty indigenous communities in the Yukon and Northern Ontario for approximately fifteen years. A part of this blessing was being taught by several highly evolved Elders and Traditional Medicine Teachers to participate in their ceremonies such as vision questing and fasting, and sweat lodges etc. In addition to these experiences of honouring the 'source', for me they have been extremely helpful in building equanimity capacity. For example, for about twenty-five years, I did a near weekly sweat ceremony in my home and meditation cabin. All practices of course were 100% safe and healthy.

To increase equanimity capacity, one could start a practice of doing a mindfulness exercise in a wet sauna at temperatures and steam levels somewhat higher and for a longer duration than is comfortable. As the searing heat touches the face, as breathing becomes a little more laboured and feelings of nausea arise, we suggest applying the process described in Appendix III, U,B-FIT Mindfulness Exercise #5.

These practices must of course be approved by ones health care professional to ensure they are safe and healthy. Elevated duration and temperatures can be helpful to develop enhanced equanimity provided one follows the guidelines in Exercise #5. The elevated duration of time and temperature is useful, however not necessary to develop equanimity.

A final note of caution is a reminder that equanimity has nothing to do with 'white knuckling' ones experience, but rather being subjectively ahh-llowing of each arising of resistance.

Examples of excellent EA training conditions are:

1. Intend ahh-llowing of *B-FIT* with deliberately generated or naturally occurring physical and emotional discomfort. For example, if you have a physical discomfort, take a moment and just sit and experience the feelings and physical sensations that arise.
2. Monthly, watch a movie showing man's horrendous inhumanity to man: for example, *Hotel Rwanda*, *Sometime in April*, *Schindler's List*, or *The Patriot*. Use the viewing as a formal equanimity practice by tracking and ahh-llowing *B-FIT*. Pause the movie as soon as your mindful ahh-llowing stops.
3. As a formal practice, apply *B-FIT* ahh-llowing strategies to marketplace generated difficult emotions: situations like waiting in line, receiving poor or disrespectful service, being stuck in traffic, being late for an appointment, being embarrassed, worried, criticized, or out of control, being betrayed, experiencing an emotional hijack, having a financial or job crisis or waiting for test results of a potentially life threatening illness or a serious medical diagnosis, or experiencing grief and anxiety. (reference Appendix II stress rehearsal practice)

4. As you work passionately to improve objective reality for self and others, in times of action, maintain awareness of “here now” and “ahh-llow” so as not to have an unknown, driven attachment to the outcomes –“I do my best then rest with the rest”.
5. During interpersonal activities become aware of resisting body sensations and intentionally release the sympathetic tightened muscle groups.
6. Practise with physical discomfort. At least weekly, create medium to strong but safe physical discomfort for 30 minutes or more (reference www.centreforconsciouscare.ca – Audio Resources “Preventing and Managing Physical & Emotional Suffering”).
7. Do service for others as formal ahh-llowing exercise.
8. A final EA practice is to use more actual real life PFP driven inclinations as a focus for your formal mindfulness sessions. Examples of real life PFP driven inclinations could be:
 - an addiction
 - unhealthy eating habits - excessive refined sugar, simple carbs
 - recalling a phobia
 - ‘hurtful’ - thoughts, words or deeds

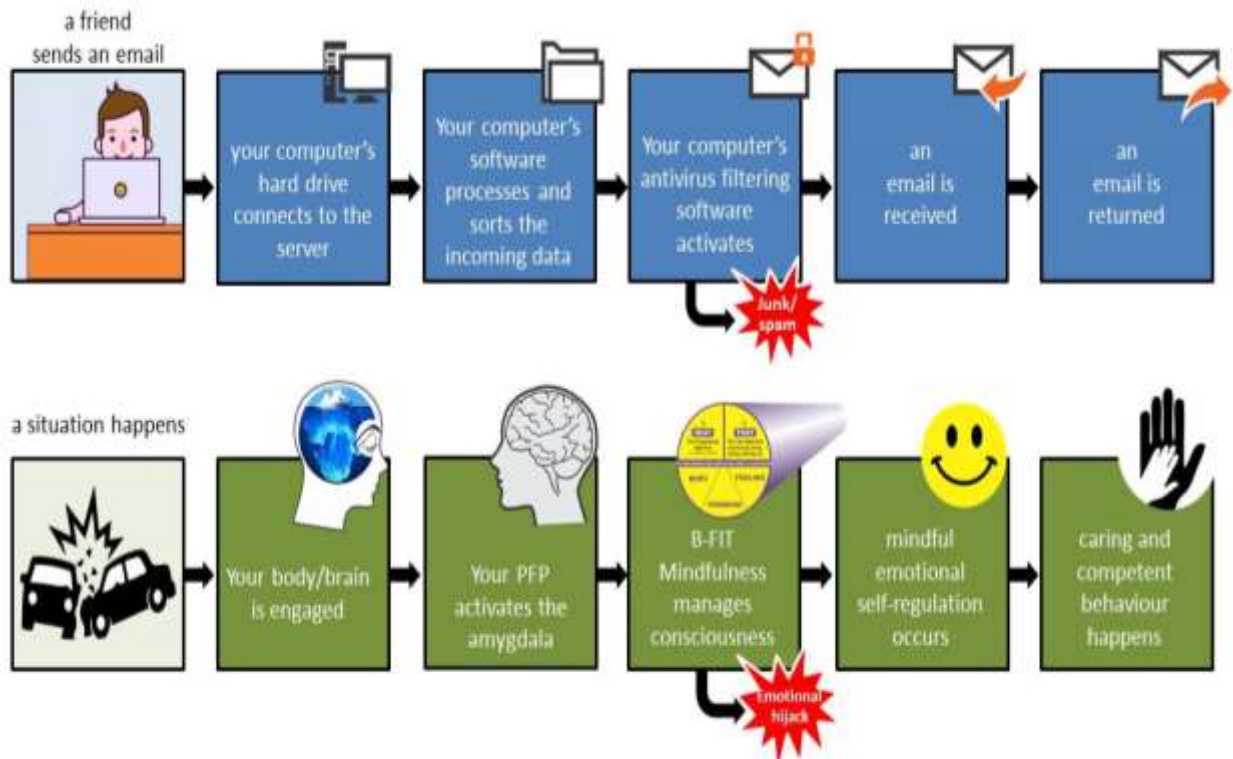
For example use the ‘hurtful’ actions toward others that you are involved in or contemplating doing as a formal EA practice to delay or terminate what could cause potential significant suffering to others. On a regular basis, when B-FIT delivers its ‘I got to have it’, activate a formal practice session using the pain clinic outlined in Appendix II, exercise #5 to guide your process. Apply the EA strategies to reduce/eliminate the drivenness of the B-FIT sensations that arise related to the craving/desire of the misconduct. Also consider using the experience of being mistreated in the same way.

(Reference Chapter Fourteen, Conscious Couples for more examples of EA in relationships)

Skill # 4: HERE NOW!

“Here” is simply being aware **that** you are experiencing this present moment: “I, Peter, am aware that I am writing this sentence”. I am focused on the task and simultaneously—“dual processing,” so to speak—being aware that I am Here, Now! As mentioned earlier it is the opposite of how you typically drive your car. As a skill of *U,B-FIT mindfulness*, we simply say to ourself, “here!” An excellent way to practise this skill is each time your mind automatically reads a sign along the highway, say to yourself, “talk, here”. With these two words you are first becoming aware of the internal *U,B-FIT* talk process and then bringing your awareness fully back to the present moment. With practice, this awareness becomes second nature. This is the “catching” (being lost in/driven by a random thought) that is the first step of the *self-management* process discussed in Tool #3.

The **Computing** Process and *U,B-FIT*



Making Sense of Non Sense

B-FIT Mindfulness is vital to challenge the way that PFP Brain distorts our perceptions of two of our senses. In order to survive we have evolved to have seven senses to stay safe in our world. These senses are smelling, listening, tasting, seeing, touching, feeling and thinking. Somewhere along the way however we got messed up and started identifying two of these seven senses as 'me' or 'I'. The following attempts to bring clarity to correct nature's very serious mistake.

Non Sense

'I am the smell of smoke'
 'I am the sound of a train'
 'I am the taste of cinnamon'
 'I am the view of the mountains'
 'I am the touch of fabric'
 'I am mad/glad/sad'
 'I am my thoughts'

Sense

'There is the smell of smoke'
 'There is a sound of a train'
 'That is the taste of cinnamon'
 'That is the view of the mountains'
 'That is a smooth fabric'
 'There is mad/glad/sad'
 'There is image/talk (thoughts)'

To the extent that we maintain this mindful clarity of 'there is' versus 'I am' we can skillfully observe and subjectively allow the B-FIT experiences of difficult feelings versus being mindlessly owned and driven by them.

As we quiet our mind and heart while supporting others,
our stillness nurtures their calm and courage.
Now they can peacefully manifest more of who they really are,
in part because of our mindful presence.

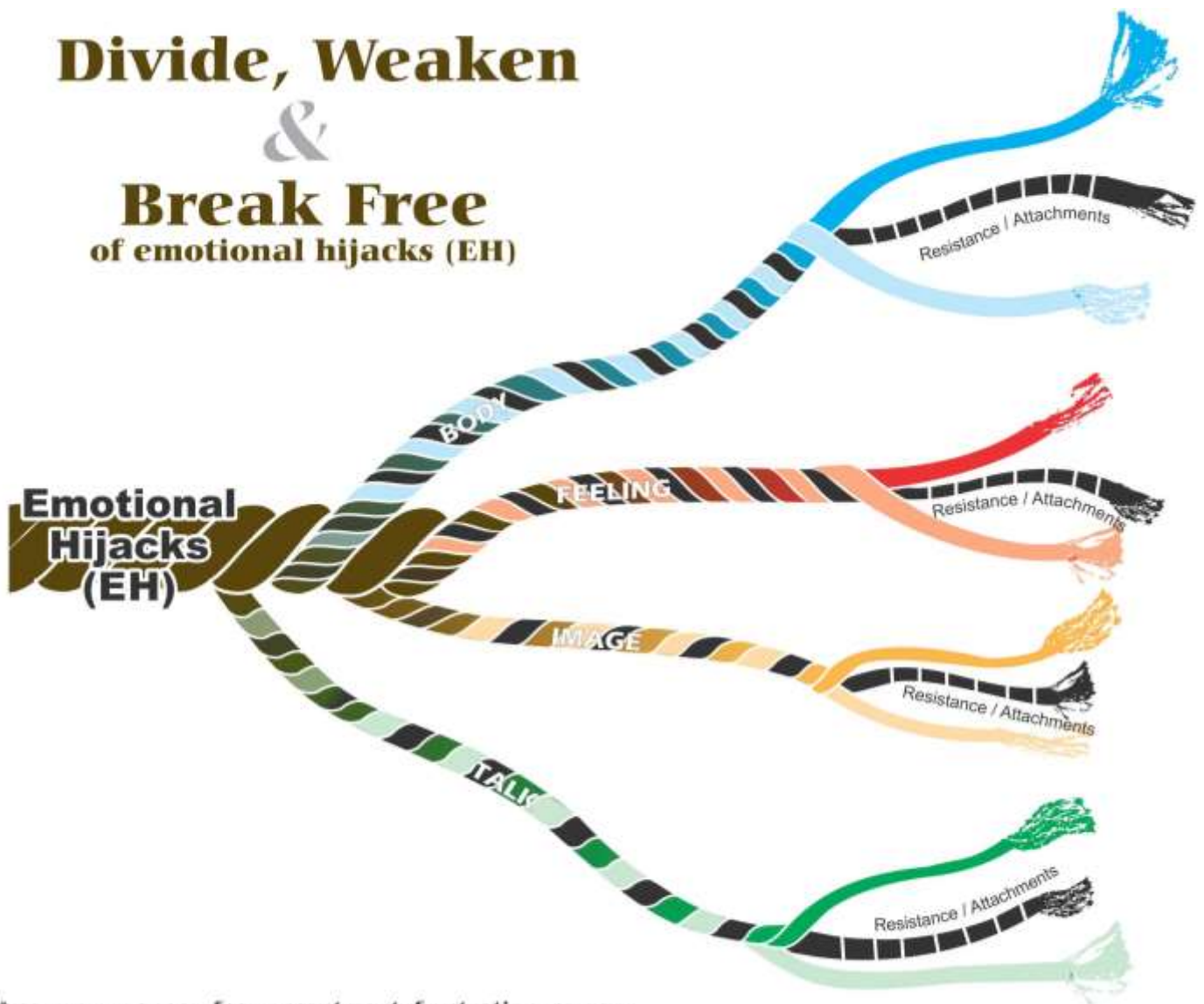
Divide and Conquer to be Self-Aware and Ahh-llowing

The general principle that applies to all *U,B-FIT mindfulness* strategies to become aware and ahh-llowing is to “divide and conquer”. Through the skills of focused awareness, sensory clarity, and ahh-llowness our mind observes and ahh-llows our specific *B-FIT* responses. Our EGO-based, survival-oriented, sensory reactions are diminished. This dividing and clarifying of our sensory reactions actually conquers our subjective resistance to the bad stuff (like criticism) and our attachment to the good stuff.

The following comparison will help describe what happens when we apply the skills of *U,B-FIT mindfulness* to these hard-wired and conditioned reactions. We all experience **emotional hijacks** when our reactions are literally hijacked by our emotions and taken someplace we didn’t intend to go. We all can remember situations in which we had the best possible intentions to be kind, but then something happened to trigger our anger or to embarrass us, and we behaved badly instead. That’s an emotional hijack.

Think about a typical emotional hijack like a strong, thickly braided rope that ties you up and keeps you from responding in the way you would choose. The following illustration shows how we can use the strategy of “divide and conquer” to break free. By dividing the braided rope into its four parts (*U,B-FIT*) we are able to weaken the strength of the rope. If we go another step and unbraid each of the four strands into three strings each, we now have weaker pieces of string that we can quite easily break. Note that the resistance/attachment strand is essential for the braiding in the first place.

Divide, Weaken & Break Free of emotional hijacks (EH)



* eg. worry, anger, fear, resentment, frustration, sorrow

If we use the skills of mindfulness to divide an emotional hijack into the various body responses, feelings, image thoughts and talk thoughts that are hijacking our reaction, we can weaken them and so conquer them. It's these *B-FIT* reactions, experienced semi-consciously and therefore with resistance, that create our suffering. This dividing and separating is achieved through constantly applying the skills of awareness and EA – Here, Now! Within just one hour of *U,B-FIT mindfulness* practice, you will experience the significant power of this divide and conquer approach to stressful life situations.

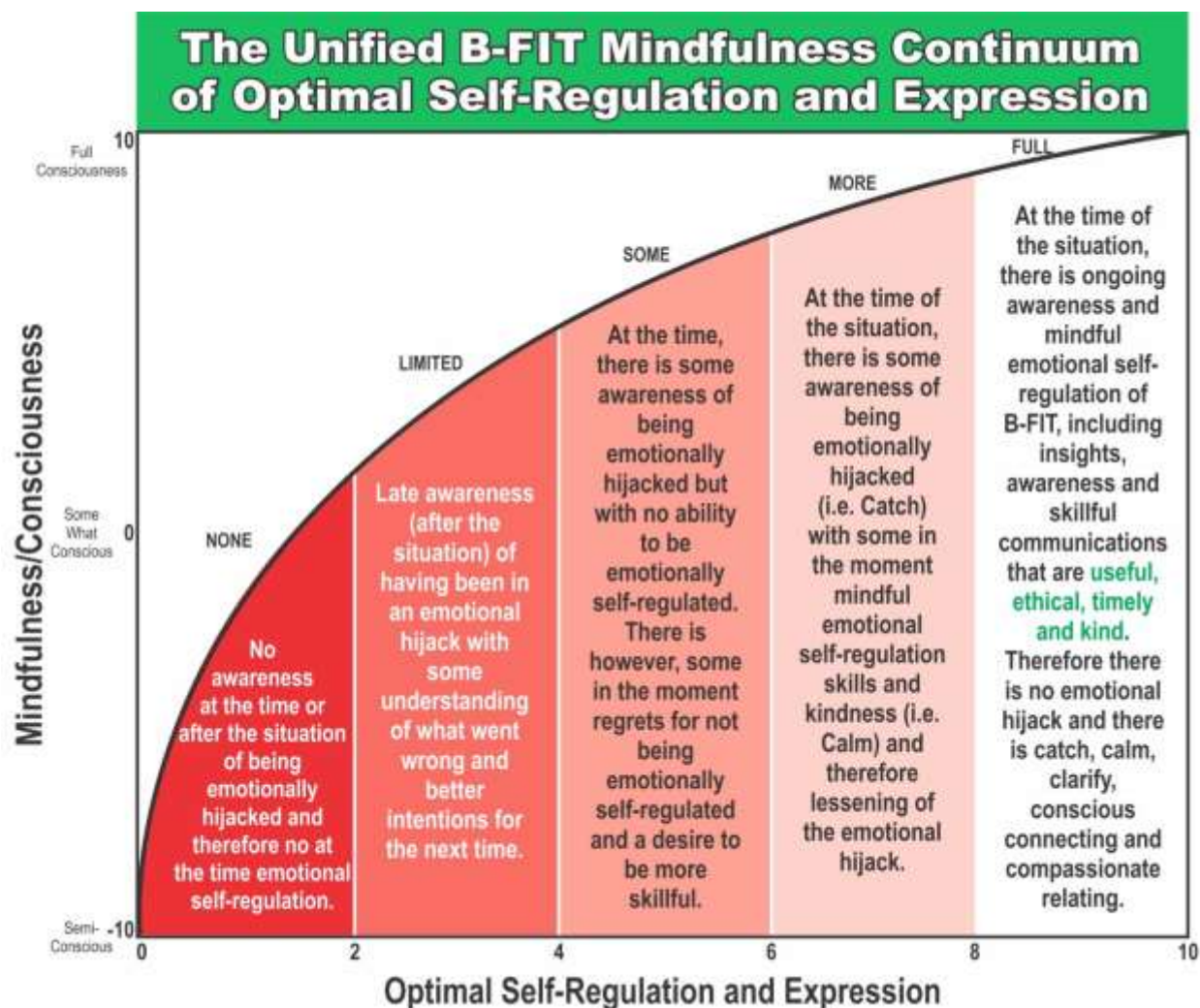
Most situations will not overwhelm you as long as you can, moment by moment, experientially (not cognitively) divide U,B-FIT into manageable parts.

Shinzen Young

Mindful Emotional Self-Regulated Expression

Review the *mindful emotional self-regulation* and Expression continuum below. Where you have no control over an emotional hijack (0-2) you are only semiconscious.

However, as you become more mindful and proficient with the other life tools, the conscious *you* can in the moment, recycle raw PFP impulses. With this recycling, the impulses get more and more refined and clarified and therefore slowly but surely you express more of your ideal self (8-10) - not your PFP algorithm.



In addition, as you continue to complete more intrapersonal growth processes, the brains ability to grow new neuron cells and connectors give you the potential to rework PFP into version 2.0 of you. This means that even the autopilot that activates as a result of PFP-programming is now at least somewhat more relatively aligned with your ideal self/A-game. We now have significantly more free will to make choices regarding *self-expression*.

One tangible, measurable manifestation of fuller consciousness, is that feelings and thoughts move across this emotional hijack continuum from anger, to indifference, to peace and finally with fuller consciousness, to authentic concern, caring and sadness for the other person's suffering. This caring is, even at the moment they are most trying to hurt us. At this time, B-FIT will still likely be somewhat activated in fight, flight or freeze reactions. Simultaneously however, a part of our conscious 'talk' is saying, "I so wish I could help them to not suffer like this." As this is happening, the heart is experiencing an openness for which the average mindless person has no emotional frame of reference.

At the same time, because we are more conscious, we can work optimally to change situations that should and can be changed. This change continuum could be from being silent to extreme peaceful action.

U,B-FIT Mindfulness - The Great Escape

*I join the ranks of a million others,
guilty of terrible crimes.
'It just happened' I tell the judge,
as I'm sentenced to do hard times.*

*Paying the price more and more,
in dark and dingy cell.
Alone I weep, the harm I cause,
lost in this merciless hell.*

*Don't know why after each vow,
heart closes, with no explain.
Anger, lies, another betrayal,
why do I cause such pain?*

*Time after time no will to choose,
to be free from PFP.
'20 to life', for so many thoughts,
how to make them not be me?*

*Then found painted on black cell walls,
in blood from other inmates.
Must kill driven, mindless self
to walk out prison gates.*

*Prison walls come crashing down,
as I awake to prohibit.
Suffering's source – the asleep me,
now freed, aware within it.*

Blessings P & J

Awareness and Ahh-llowing

My phone rang at 2:26 a.m. on a Friday morning. The garbled voice on the other end of the phone was my Dad in the midst of a massive cerebral hemorrhage. We rushed him to the hospital where for an agonizing week his five children struggled with the impossible yet necessary decision to remove life supports from our best friend—now brain dead. As I held his hand I encouraged him in his journey to the other side to be with Mom.

After my mother's massive heart attack she had been assured by doctors that she could live a good long life if she stopped gardening, caring for grandchildren, volunteering, cooking family dinners, and dancing. I recalled the night twelve years before when kneeling beside my mother, my dad's beloved wife, Mur, died on the dance floor—and took his heart with her. For twelve years, we, his children, actively supported him and tried in every way to help him retrieve his spirit, but to no avail. Now in our final act of mindful, loving care that tore our hearts apart, we gave permission to withdraw his life supports and helped him find that peace.

That night I wept fully and completely without resistance. One quality of emotional self-regulation is to experience life consciously and skillfully without pushing or pulling.

I must confess that I was on the edge of armouring my broken heart with anger during this process because, although our medical doctor at the time encouraged us to allow Dad to cross over, the head nurse accused me of being insensitive and disrespectful of life. I believe that only my *awareness and ahh-llowing* kept my heart open. I will quickly add that within an hour of this most difficult decision the nurse sincerely apologized.

The above is one of our best examples of experiencing horrendous pain with much less suffering than would normally be the case, because of *mindful emotional self-regulation*.

A Reflection on Awareness and Ahh-llowing

As I held my Dad's hand, with each long exhalation punctuated by longer and longer time between struggled inhalation and compromised breathing as fluid filled his lungs, time and time again a somewhat conscious me observed and released the B-FIT reactions that tried mercilessly to turn this sacred moment into a war of resistance and fear.

As each of my muscles were constricting (especially in my throat), the conscious me allowed them to release. Each tortured feeling was encouraged to expand and contract as it wanted.

Each painful image and talk thought was given permission to come and go or stay as they pleased.

I sobbed deeply during this vigil as hundreds of childhood memories were relived 'mostly' to once again give me their original magical, exciting and comforting gifts. Although far from perfect, my *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart* tool gifted me with crying all of my tears. They were experienced deeply in ways that although I would not describe as happy they also would not be described as suffering.

Example of a B-FIT mindfulness Exercise

Just to give you a direct experience of what it is like to be aware and ahh-llowing of B-FIT, we encourage you to read the following and then do this simple awareness and ahh-llowing exercise.

With this exercise we will help you to more clearly know how to become aware and ahh-llowing.

Step 1: You could select one of your favourite pieces of music or consider starting this exercise with one of ours which is **In Your Time** by Bob Segar.

Step 2: Close your eyes and listen to this song.

Step 3: As you listen to this song as the lyrics are sung, start to become aware of how your mind develops either images or self-talk as a result of hearing the music and words. Next, tune into your feelings that are being aroused as a result of listening to this song. Now see if you can become aware of any body sensations or feelings in some locations in your body.

As you become aware of any of these sensations say to yourself a word that describes what you are aware of e.g. body, feeling, image or talk. Finally with each of the experiences that you become aware of, ahh-llow for that experience to get stronger or weaker, louder or softer, bigger or smaller as it wants.

Strongly consider doing this exercise before reading on.

Congratulations you have just experienced the awareness and ahh-llowing components of *mindful emotional self-regulation*. For readers who at this time or later, are interested in a much more complete understanding of the U,B-FIT mindfulness system, together with guided practice exercises you are encouraged to read Appendix I, II, III and IV. As you practice the exercises in Appendix II and follow the audio guided instructions on our website www.centreforconsciouscare.ca/resources-mindfulness-exercises, you will gain the skills sufficient to enable you to consciously self-regulate in many average and even highly stressful moments of your day.

THE EMOTION IS NOT ME!

(excerpted from Jacob Needleman, *A Little Book on Love*)

At the core of the great traditions of the world, we are advised not to seek to destroy negative emotional reactions, but to allow their existence within the light of our free awareness. There is a discipline involved here [i.e. mindfulness training] that is a skill of intentionally relating to our emotions without, on the one hand, seeking to suppress them, or on the other hand, indulging in their expression. The theory behind this discipline is, in part, that mindful awareness, or pure seeing, can conduct the power eventually to free the human psyche from the pain and disorder of the egoistic emotions. [This is especially necessary when confronted with anger or aggression.]

But whether or not we are engaged in such a discipline and whether or not we envision for ourselves an approach to the ultimate goal that these traditions speak of, the first step along these paths is worth taking very seriously for anyone searching for meaning beyond the level of physical or social satisfaction. This first step involves the cultivation of an attitude toward the emotions that is not common in our society – namely, that they are not 'ourselves', that they are processes which need not have the authority in our lives that we usually give them.



U,B-FIT Mindfulness – It’s Not What You Think

U,B-FIT Mindfulness Self-Assessment

As you are thinking about increasing your capacity for enhanced self-awareness and allowing developed primarily by *U,B-FIT mindfulness*, a good starting point is an assessment of your current level of mindfulness. Completing the questionnaire that follows will allow you to do two things. First, it will help you identify examples of day-to-day experiences that are opportunities for you to be mindful. It will answer the question, “What should I look at to determine if I am experiencing mindfulness?” Second, it will provide a score that is a rough indication of the percentage of time that you are actually mindful.

Below is a questionnaire. Using the 1-5 scale, circle the number that reflects how frequently or infrequently you currently have each experience. Answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be.

Mindfulness Self-Assessment #1

	1	2	3	4	5
	Most of the Time	Frequently	Occasionally	Infrequently	Almost never
I drive to places on “automatic pilot.” I put the key in the ignition, and then realize I’ve driven some place once I get there.					
I experience important emotions (positive or negative) and am not conscious that I am having these feelings until sometime later.					
I eat without being conscious of what I am eating.					
When I am involved in an activity with a loved one such as bathing a child, feeding an elderly parent, or playing a favourite sport, my mind wanders to other things like what is next or a memory of the past.					
I seem to be running on autopilot when I am offering care and support to others. I have little awareness of what I’m doing at the moment.					
When I get anxious about something or angry with someone, it takes me some time—an hour or more—to actually catch myself feeling this way.					
I do mundane tasks or boring things mainly just to get them done.					
When I can’t fall asleep, I have a stream of unnecessary thoughts and					

feelings that continue to keep me awake.	
When I am caring for someone, I don't consciously intend for them to have an optimal experience: that is, to feel safe, to heal, to feel good	1 2 3 4 5
To keep having happiness in my daily life I need more and more of what seems desirable.	1 2 3 4 5

Scoring: Add the numbers you circled for each statement and multiply the total by 2. This number gives a rough percentage of the time each day that you are mindful.

Our sampling suggests that average adults are generally quite mindless. We also know that a score of 45-60 percent (which is highly attainable through mindfulness practice) suggests a level of insight and skill to make a significant difference in many of life's moments. Mindfulness, however, does not happen on its own. Later we will explore ways in which the capacity for mindfulness can be developed.

Research that Endorses Mindfulness and Equanimity/Ahh-llowing

We have described mindfulness, shown how it can help us be happy more independent of conditions by making human interactions more compassionate and fulfilling. Now we can look at significant research evidence that endorses the importance of mindfulness.

Credible institutes and universities around the world have been conducting mindfulness research projects for over thirty years. Their results indicate that even beginner practitioners of mindfulness improve in many critically important aspects of their life. The following brief statements summarize several key research findings. For more in-depth understanding, readers can refer to the articles cited.

1. Mindfulness significantly lowers workers' job stress. Workers in high-stress jobs, after eight weeks (three hours/week) of training in mindfulness meditation rewired their brain's emotional set point so that their normal brain functioning had significantly more activity in the area of the brain that creates positive feelings like calm, caring and concentration (Davidson, R. et al., 2003).
2. A 2010 University of Massachusetts study found that non-meditators who had eight weeks of training in mindfulness meditation were more likely than a control group to access the brain region of the "here and now" as opposed to the region associated with worry. In other research, brain scans of mindfulness participants with no previous meditation experience showed increased grey-matter density in regions involved in learning and memory, emotional regulation, self-awareness and perspective (Holzel, B. et al., 2011).

3. Research has proven that individuals with mental illness can control their aggressive behaviour through mindfulness training (Singh, N. et al., 2007).
4. Research has shown that mindful staff can increase learning and reduce aggression in adults with developmental disabilities (Singh N. et al., 2006).
5. A summary of the research into health benefits of mindfulness found the following results (Davidson et al., 2003):
 - increases flu antibodies;
 - lowers blood pressure;
 - reduces cholesterol;
 - strengthens immune function;
 - relieves insomnia;
 - decreases the production of stress hormones, like cortisol and glucagon;
 - makes it easier to reduce weight;
 - restores body and mind natural balance and
 - reduces chronic pain.
6. Clinicians who scored higher on the mindfulness scale were more likely to engage in patient-centred communication, meaning that the clinician and patient built a greater rapport and spent more time discussing psycho-social issues faced by the patient. The patients of mindful clinicians also reported high overall satisfaction. (*Dr. Luke Fortney MD, Meriter Medical Group, Madison Wisconsin*)
7. Physicians who were given a short mindfulness course improved in job satisfaction, quality of life and compassion for up to nine months after the course. The researchers found that at nine months, the physicians were significantly less burnt out and had lower levels of depression, anxiety and stress than doctors who didn't undergo the training course. They also scored higher on scales measuring compassion (*Krasner MS, Epstein RM, Beckham H, et al. 2009*).

The research information provided here is a small fraction of the evidence that has been gathered on the importance and effectiveness of mindfulness, but even these few examples should be sufficient to make a convincing case for the importance of mindfulness. Our bibliography gives references for further in-depth study.

We wrote this poem as a way to share our forty years of personal mindfulness practice and research into the nature of our PFP thoughts and feelings. The following reflects much about what we have and are learning and experiencing in our personal search for freedom from PFP-prison.

Awakening

***Primitives, Filters and hidden Primes,
the source of all suffering
since beginning of times.
Asleep we all carry
your beastly load.
Few to ever break
your vicious code.***

***Your limitless thoughts
on their drunken spree,
from inside life's cage
no way I can see.
Image and talk,
hundreds a minute.
Illusions that my free will
is in charge to spin it.***

***The most pitiful part
of this crucifixion,
relief from boredom,
our universal addiction.
From device dependence
to wars' abuse,
more toys for the boys,
bodies to seduce.
Anything to keep all senses in use.***

***Then finally heard wisdom
from an ancient master.
Consciousness transforms
all of this disaster.
From this nightmare awaken
more mindful and free,
released from self,
with clarity I see.***

*From “Here now” I know
it’s not them acting cruel.
Tis transmitters, filters,
and your ole gene pool.
Awakening heart dissolves
your separateness scourge.
A glimpse of loving kindness
starting to emerge.*

*The cost is high,
no sales at this store.
Daily must say no
to bigger, better, more.
Losing or loving - both the same Ahh,
no push, no pull, just hallelujah.
Mostly ‘here now’, the mindful key,
pain and pleasure with presence
sets suffering free.*

*Pain and pleasure with presence,
sets suffering free.*

Peter and Joanne

We NOW strongly encourage you to experience Mindfulness Exercise #1 by referring to www.centreforconsciouscare.ca

Resources – Guided Mindfulness

11 minute B-FIT mindfulness guided practice

Please Note, if you feel you are ready to learn the how-tos of B-FIT mindfulness, move on to Appendix II and the above www.centreforconsciouscare.ca and return to Chapter Four at a later date.

If you would like a deeper dive at this time into what mindfulness is and why bother, review Appendices I, III and IV.

Chapter Four

Tool
#1

SELF-AWARENESS AND AHH-LLOWING TO MINDFULLY MANAGE THE MIND AND HEART

Tool #1 – An Application Difficult People-

How To Restart or Depart - With an Open Heart

Parents, Kids, Siblings, Old Friends, Co-Workers, Strangers

Introduction – Failing Relationships

As noted, Chapter Three gives a complete description of Tool #1 *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart* and its four main skills:

- concentration
- sensory clarity
- equanimity, ahh-llowness, subjective surrender
- be here now

Here we start with an example of an application of the tool of *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart* by asking you to explore with us the near epidemic level of failing relationships, (e.g. estranged family members, life partners, friends and co-workers up to and including ‘hating the enemy’, etc.).

As we see it, failures in difficult relationships are most often one or a combination of two main variables. The first variable includes overwhelming stressful conditions such as mental and physical health challenges, financial pressures, living arrangements and job stress, etc. It is of course very important that practical solutions are found to resolve the resolvable. Tool #3 self-management has been designed to determine practical mindful solutions. As a result of one or more of these conditions, some relationships may be overdue to depart – but maybe not!

Often the failing and at risk relationships are triggered by relatively solvable problems and grievances. Too often, many relationships that have good potential to ‘**restart**’ to become a meaningful influence in peoples’ lives do not get rebooted. This applies for example to the

many conflicted relationships where the conditions that caused the disconnect are now even long passed, or relatively speaking never were that serious. Most often there is a lack of understanding of the human predicament (i.e. reference Chapter Two, Primitive Predispositions (P), Filters (F), Brain Prompts (P) – PFP) and absence of the 4 life tools that you are learning. Hopefully the following will close some of this gap for many readers.

We have learned from the hundreds of folks who we have counselled and coached that being authentically kind and respectful of people who we find difficult is one of the most challenging however gratifying joys of mastering *Self-Awareness and Allowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart*.

The following is not a paint by numbers set of communication strategies and problem solving techniques to reunite broken relationships. Those approaches, some useful, some not, are available in unlimited numbers on every information platform.

What is not so readily available are resources for folks to learn how to become authentically respectful, caring and kind with others with whom there is a major emotional and/or physical disconnect - regardless of whether the relationship improves or not. Although improvements in the relationship often happens as a result of what you are about to learn, you will also learn to 'love the unlovable and forgive the unforgivable' even if they remain unlovable and unforgivable as you 'restart' with them for whatever reason or 'depart' from them.

Most everyone has one or more of the following people in their life who they have designated as 'difficult':

- A parent who has knowingly or unknowingly hurt their child in one or more of the many ways a child can be hurt by a thoughtless or abusive mother or father.
- A sibling who you have grown to dislike, distrust or do not want to be with.
- An ex-marriage/significant other partner who has, as a result of an adversarial separation process become enemy #1 in spite of years of loving each other.
- A parent who feels unappreciated or taken advantage of by their adult child causing resentments and the parent's necessary self-isolating protection strategies.
- Self-centered (even obnoxious to you) family, friends or co-workers.
- A marriage partner who for now is not complementing what you want and need in a life partner relationship.
- Someone who has betrayed, abused or hurt you.
- People who once shared your interests or values but no longer do so.
- Annoying store clerks, government bureaucrats, politicians, the 'tax man' and thoughtless drivers, etc.

Sometimes it makes absolute good sense to activate the nuclear option to work to never see this person again. This said however, often this is not possible, needed, useful, timely or compassionate for everyone involved. Also, at times when disconnecting is necessary, the

disconnecter can still be tormented by thoughts and feelings like guilt and anger that continue to perpetuate their suffering.

The purpose of this chapter is to help you explore how you can better apply your *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing* tool from Chapter Three to:

- continue to never see or relate to this person again but release yourself from anger prison;
- treat the difficult person with genuine respect as you protect yourself from being hurt by them;
- skillfully manage the difficult feelings that result when you are unavoidably with difficult people;
- develop a greater window of tolerance for them;
- be authentically kind and compassionate as you skillfully ‘manage’ them in spite of the difficult feelings you have when you are with them;
- determine if it is necessary to skillfully disconnect from them and if so, then to disconnect but with an open heart without for example hate, malaise, anger or other forms of suffering for you or them;
- incorporate their presence in your life as a special teacher to help you ‘wake-up’ and
- restructure the relationship to not only be respectful of each other but to grow deeper in unconditional friendship and in some cases ‘love’.

Due to some of the PFP prison rules that you may be unknowingly driven to follow, (*Reference Chapter Two*) there is a very good chance that you will not know the **actual source** of your negativity. In most cases this is because the PFP mind has you convinced that it’s simply about them being the ‘bad guy’ and you being the ‘good guy’. As a result of this most prevalent illusion, minimal progress is made to reduce the suffering. From what you learned in Chapter Two about the fifteen algorithm defects, you know that there is much more happening that requires constant application of the *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing* tool (e.g. every story has three or more sides, right?). Below we will take you step by step to use B-FIT awareness to optimally restart or depart but first let’s get clarity on the problem.

Understanding ‘In’ and ‘out’ groups – Difficult People:

Now we ask you to explore the following research to better appreciate our statement that “there is a good chance you will not know the actual source of your negativity”. In the old days, in the jungle, **what was different could be dangerous** so two important parts of our brain Amygdala (AMY) and Medial Prefrontal Cortex (MPC) evolved to identify, categorize, accept and then reward taking care of our ‘in-group’ (i.e. folks not different from you) and to resist/reject others whom it (AMY) perceives are our ‘out-group’ (i.e. folks with whom we disagree, dislike, distrust).

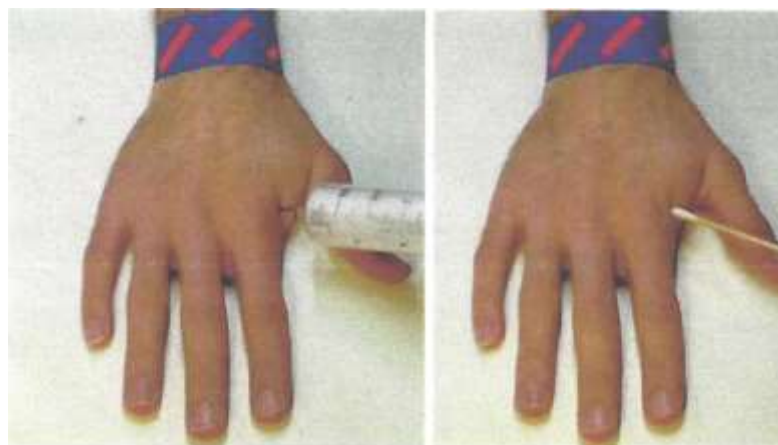
While your behaviour may be impeccable, your PFP animal brain parts like AMY and MPC, are wired to devalue and exclude others whom it perceives to be different, e.g. the homeless, people/persons with disabilities, and those with different values, ethnicity, sexual orientation, appearance, immigration status. Remember MPC and AMY are very personal and subjective. As you read on you will learn how to mindfully catch yourself (a.k.a. be self-aware) having these 'in-group preferences/out-group resistances' so as not to be semi-consciously driven by them.

Let's get a little more concrete with these technical terms, 'in-group' and 'out-group'. Although maybe too early for some readers, we feel that it is time for you to have some proof about this PFP human predicament/prison to which we have been referring.

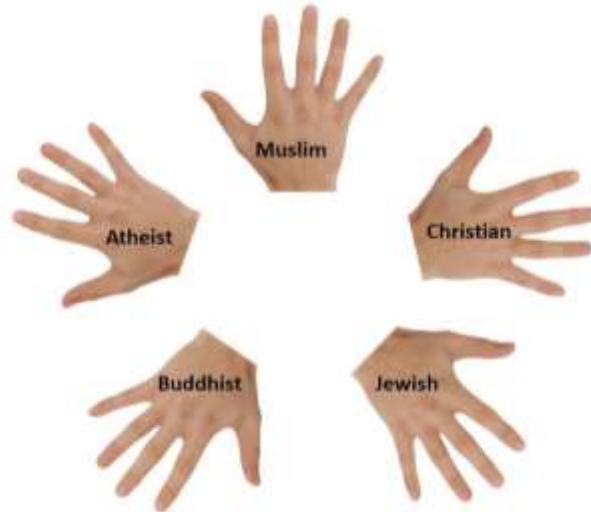
The following is a small sampling of the 'nasty neuro nonsense' that can be found in this resource that is compromising your ability to steal happiness. We'll start here with one of the most harmful of all PFP inherited brain architectural qualities. This is one of the main reasons why, generally good, caring and kind people mindlessly say and do things that are hurtful, devaluing, prejudicial and harmful.

Although all of what you are about to read concerning the autopilot PFP brain can be significantly neutralized through self-awareness and equanimity, the actual PFP reactions of the Amygdala (AMY) in particular will likely be with us for life. In other words, they are tenacious and unlikely to be replaced with 'just wanting' to be more loving, forgiving and happy. Unless you become mindfully aware in the moment of these subconscious PFP programmed drives and the autopilot process of perceiving others who are different as an 'out', PFP will continue to distort and compromise your feelings and behaviours. The neuroscience research appears to be quite clear. Our perceptions of 'different' could result from something as simple as another's appearance, their associations, or their modest offensive behaviour. Whatever the source, the PFP watch dogs (i.e. AMY and MPC) that fires every 3/5 of a second instantly judges good guys and bad guys and delivers the message to you (the you who is reading this) and you mindlessly feel and behave as directed. Consider the following neuroscience experiments.

One experiment published by David Eagleman in his book *The Brain* has subjects who are in a scanner view the following two pictures.



When the cotton swab touched the hand, there was no particular brain reaction. When the needle was inserted into the hand of the person however, the brain activated in the regions of empathy (e.g. the medial prefrontal cortex MPC) – a key measure of inclusivity and unconditional acceptance. This is one of the main places where ‘loving the unlovable’ and ‘forgiving the unforgivable’ lives. Taking the experiment to another level however, revealed a disturbing truth about the ‘nature’ of PFP brain.



In the next sequence five different hands were viewed by the subjects in the scanner. Each hand was labelled either Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Atheist or Muslim. When each hand was injected with the needle, on average ‘people’s brain’ (MPC) (totally unknown by and uncontrolled by the person who houses the brain) showed a larger empathic response when they observed a hand of their ‘in-group’ in pain and showed less of a response when the needle was injected into the hand of a member of one of their ‘out-groups’. With just a one word label, **the brain (PFP) without their consent or knowledge**, determines an ‘in-group’ person and activates MPC. As noted, this part of the brain enables us to feel empathy for someone. Simultaneously it judges an ‘out-group’ person and empathic brain responses lessen and stop.

Because the same burst of MPC energy only lit up when an atheist observed an atheist’s hand being assaulted, this indicates that this experiment has nothing to do with religion as it happens regardless of the religious affiliation of the test subject.

A second experiment is offered to confirm that we virtually inherited hard wiring of ‘in- groups’ and ‘out-groups’/good guys and bad guys. This experiment was first done by psychologists Kiley and Hamlin, Karen Wynn and Paul Bloom at Yale University.



Researchers have found that if you (or most children) are less than a year old and sitting on your mother or father's lap and are watching a puppet show, some very interesting reactions take place. Act 1, a duck waddles onto the stage and attempts to lift the lid on a box. It struggles until a little bear in a blue vest comes on stage and helps the duck to raise the lid. They hug for a moment and the bear leaves. Act 2, the same duck waddles onto the stage and again attempts to lift the lid on the box. It struggles and a bear in a red vest comes over to the box and pushes the lid down so that the duck cannot open it.

The show is over for you (remember you are less than 1 year of age). The puppeteer now comes to you and places the two bears close to you so that you can touch and play with them. In almost all cases the researchers report the child chooses the blue vested helpful bear to play with.

While the researchers draw the conclusion that because the child could not have learned to like the helpful bear at less than one year of age, we must be born to be good (i.e. we like trust worthiness, friendliness, etc.). While we draw the same conclusion, we take it one step further to suggest that at this age, if we prefer the 'good guy' it means we also reject the 'bad guy'. This we feel is an early manifestation of the 'in-group' versus 'out-group' algorithm.

As you read further in this resource you will learn much more about this critical part of the brain called the MPC. As demonstrated above, scanning shows how the MPC lights up when we engage with friends, family, i.e. our in groups. The less we engage with 'in-group' members the less the MPC is activated (e.g. when we are with neutral or negative 'out-group' members). As mentioned above, when we are examining an inanimate object, or just doing things like picking up a coffee cup, the MPC is virtually dormant.

In the case of relating to out group members, the stronger the 'out-group' is resisted, the less the MPC is activated. In other words the more the 'out-group' member such as a personally perceived 'enemy' or even a homeless person is **depersonalized**, the more they seem to become a 'thing' to the MPC.

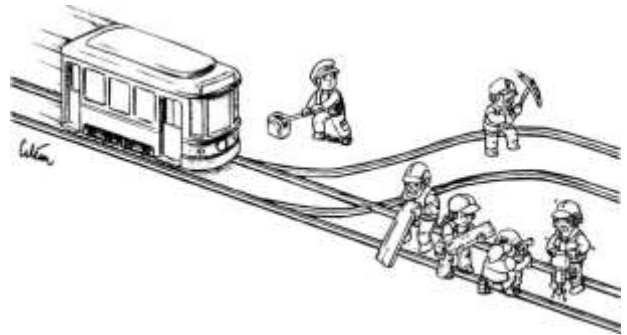
THIS "different can be dangerous" is we believe also at the heart of racism, exclusion, prejudice, wars and even genocide, etc. that have been prevalent since we left the African Savannahs. The problem is that the PFP brain is unregulated due to the lack of self-awareness. Without this realization we will continue to invest in inferior and ineffective solutions.

There is probably no better experiment than the well-known train trolley dilemma to prove how we are wired and programmed to react to situations as directed by the powerful MPC. When we associate directly with people who we care for and respect our MPC fires with all of its empathic fire power. When we associate with people we don't relate to or when we relate

only indirectly to people in general that empathic fire power diminishes. It would appear that the more indirect or more impersonal the occasion the less the MPC is activated.

A Brain Experiment Using Your Hundred-Thousand-Year-Old Brain Architecture

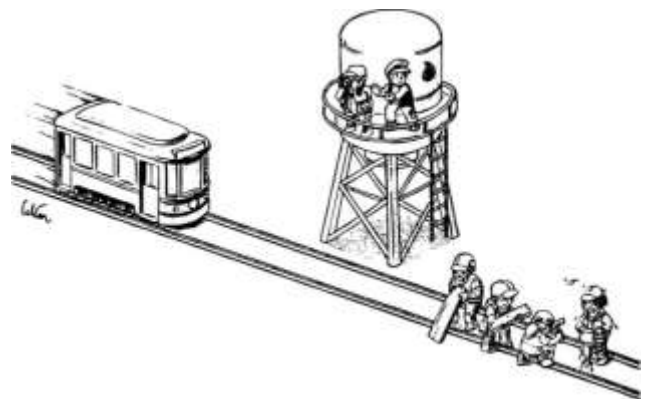
We invite you to participate in the following experiment. You are witness to a train trolley running out of control and likely to kill four workers on the tracks 100 yards away from the trolley. You are standing by a switch, however, that could shunt the trolley to another track where only one worker would be killed. Before reading on decide if you will pull the switch to the track with only one worker.



☐ Yes

☐ No

Now you are faced with the same dilemma, but you are not beside a switch. You are standing on a water tower above the tracks where the trolley is about to kill the four workers. In front of you is a person. If you push them off of the tower, their dead body will derail the trolley and save the four workers. Would you push the person to their death to save the four workers?



☐ Yes

☐ No

The majority of people (regardless of nurture conditioned ‘traits’ or nature inherited ‘states’, ethnicity, culture or religion, etc.) say yes to the first scenario and no to the second. Why?

Welcome to more of the world of how your brain architecture drives many of your decisions. In this case, the first scenario was significantly driven by a different part of your brain (i.e. the dorsolateral pre-frontal cortex) than the second scenario (i.e. MPC). The first, because the action of throwing a switch is a relatively impersonal logical math problem. Saving four is worth the loss of one life. The second scenario however, being more ‘personal’(i.e. a physical push), increased activation of the MPC emotional center in the brain developed for surviving in the herd or tribe: don’t hurt or kill other members of our ‘in-group’ because they are needed for protection, mating and survival tasks requiring cooperation, such as hunting.

Human nature is a lot of nature.

Developing In's and Out's

Below we offer a glimpse at some of the challenges that just your primitive brain architecture provides. This summary is offered at this time (and expanded on below) to emphasize the essential message that the 4 life tools are vital to “awaken” you to a world not driven by mindless out dated PFP Programming. This world of PFP Programming produces your emotional hijacks, resulting in power struggles that unintentionally often adds to the unnecessary suffering of individuals with whom we relate.

As a species, we have arrived at the top of the food chain. We can build hundred-story buildings and survive illnesses that killed hundreds of thousands only a few years ago. And yet, with a few rare exceptions, the average good person and even our most intelligent and powerfully influential minds in medicine, technology and psychology become for example, emotionally hijacked when they absolutely don't want to. Without enhanced life tools we can't begin to break out of this maximum security prison or even get the odd weekend pass.

These experiments give you a ‘taste’ of the complexity of the PFP predicament.

Let's reinforce a couple of key concepts and offer a readily memorable comparison – computer processing.

Let's say that what shows up on your computer monitor is your life (e.g. feelings and behaviours). To produce those images on the screen it took a functioning hard drive, several compatible software programs and energy to drive this operating system. Let's stay reminded of the need to have an anti-virus filtering system. Our two little bears story that had us (at less than one year of age) choosing ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups (good guys and bad guys) gives us a strong indicator that our primitive predispositions that we inherited from parental figures and ancestors from hundreds of thousands of years ago is hard wired to like the ‘good’. But simultaneously as it is deciding who is ‘good’ (or less good) it is always in effect making decisions based on fundamental tribal/herd survival based social interactions. This part of our hard drive could be called the ‘different could be dangerous’ default program (DDD). As noted above, we even came installed with a preference sensor called the medial prefrontal cortex (MPC) that becomes highly activated when those good guys are around us and it turns off when the programmed PFP bad guys appear. It also doesn't activate when we are just processing neutral impersonal data, like for example ‘that is a coffee cup’.

It seems then that we started installing (nurturing) ‘defining’ software very early in life. As childhood conditioning develops references and rules about life, us and others, our monitor starts to display outputs based on how these unique personal algorithms process incoming data from our outside world.

Another part of the setup are viruses, that for most unprotected operating systems (i.e. no self-awareness) have full access to corrupt our processing. Viruses have numerous sources (e.g. brain infections, vitamin and mineral imbalances and food intolerances).

One virus that is still beyond most anti-malware to catch and destroy are pathogens. A tragic example of this type of virus that is probably corrupting many brains/operating systems is brain inflammation. In some brains, growth of tumors have been found to be deadly. One night a young man named David Hinkly killed his wife and left a note saying that she was 'as good a wife as any man could have'. He then woke up the next day and with a gun killed many people at the University of Texas. An autopsy on his brain showed a big cause of his behaviour to be a growth on his brain pressing against his fight or flight amygdala aggression firing pin. **One can only wonder how many much smaller growths, inflammations and pressures are contributing to perplexing hurtful behaviours of others with whom we associate.**

Setting aside the 'virus' risk to our operating systems, we are also setup to be vulnerable to 'GIGO' (garbage in garbage out). It seems that our brain's hardware is extremely easy to program if it does not have the adequate protective system we are calling self-awareness. In the absence of self-awareness, the very literal and gullible PFP operating system can be overridden with commands from almost any source. For example, consider the average 'good' person's operating system that has not been programmed and maintained (i.e. protected) with self-awareness. Introduce that person to sufficient social media, trash TV, and fake news that readily activates a default program that 'different could be dangerous'. Incoming data such as 'those immigrants will take your job', or 'that minorities are less than because...', or 'you can't trust those – because...', – all can activate the 'out-group' default program to fill the monitor with garbage, unless the system is equipped with anti-virus filters (e.g. self-awareness).

This it is proposed is how a relative few 'MESSed' up German people had their PFP brain indoctrinated to see Jews as a threat/less than and how some Serbs in Yugoslavia had their PFP trained to view Bosnians and Croats. During the war in Yugoslavia, a few suffering mindless Serbs governed all media outlets and presented distorted stories to demonize Bosnians and Croats. For example they advertised how Serbian children were being fed to lions at the Savajevo Zoo. According to neuroscientist David Eagleman, this debasing activated neuro networks and turned off the MPC empathy neurons'.

This is how it was reported that people could hang their previous well liked dentist from lamp posts and leave the bodies decaying while their children who had been helped by these dentists walked to school on these streets. Coffee cups hanging from lamp posts it is suggested is no big deal. Both in Canada and south of the border, similar examples can be found with police brutality from some officers against racial minorities and other victims of human rights violations etc.

Do not dismiss how readily the PFP can be trained away from being 'born to be good', to activate the 'different could be dangerous' born to survive (emotionally, mentally, physically) default program.

Summary In-Groups and Out-Groups

As we read the research, we are reminded how relatively easy it is to upload – “they are ‘out-group’”. This can be done in subtle ways through social media and news outlets when exaggerations and lies are told. Stereotyping others as less than, and reframing (intentionally or otherwise) through stories and sometimes lies about some members of a community posing a threat e.g. they’ll take your job, etc. if told often enough, can create the average good person’s ‘out-group’.

These are just several examples of the potential power of brain architecture and algorithms. Throughout this Stealing Happiness resource you will learn to progress toward mindful, emotional self-regulation. This training actually grows MPC neuron cells thereby increasing the likelihood of the MPC staying online to relate to all others usefully, ethically, timely and kindly. This becoming more mindful and emotionally mature, then opens the head and heart to inclusivity and empathy (two fundamental requirements to be happy) for all others including the ‘enemy’.

If this bad guy/good guy illusion is working for you, with no regrets, we still encourage you to finish reading this chapter because of what you will learn about yourself to live to your fullest potential. Before we unpack this tool and applications on how to help you relieve yours and others suffering as a result of:

- a person in your life who you find ‘difficult’
- or where you have already initiated an emotional and/or physical disconnect
- or been forced to reluctantly accept a disconnect from someone

Please hear the following.

For a variety of reasons, it may make complete sense for you to not be associated with this person or to associate with them as little as possible on an as needs basis. Hopefully reviewing the suggestions below will help you to restructure the relationship in the best possible way. If this means a physical disconnect, you may still need help to learn to feel 100% equanimous with the relationship outcomes so as to eliminate your and their potential suffering.

Identifying and Correcting the Needs to Skillfully Restructure Failing Relationships Through Self-Awareness and Allowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart

While it is not possible or even necessary to examine the numerous specific ‘apparent’ causes/unmet needs for the wide range of disconnects, just a few highly effective insights and tools can be applied to relieve the suffering caused by anger, fear and/or sadness – the three big costs of unskillful communicating and disconnecting. Our approach here will be something like how the same password can be used to open many locks and files. This action then can stop

the suffering by skillfully restructuring the relationship including a complete disconnect (depart) or a complete reconciliation (restart).

Do your best right now to remain open and objective to this potential even though your PFP mind may already be telling you to skip this chapter because there is nothing new that you can possibly learn to change the relationship with which you are struggling. Trust us for 30 minutes and see what happens! Below we are going to explore 6 needs that are near essential for you to accurately determine this struggling relationship's potential to be restarted or to be departed.

Your skills in U,B-FIT mindfulness, the main skill of *Self-Awareness and Allowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart* (reference Chapter Three) will, through focused self-observation, cultivate your potential for unconditional love and compassion that will then manifest in practical ways in relationships (regardless of whether they restart or depart) to address the following relationship needs.

Need #1 – Is To Forgive People Who Have Hurt You

Let's start with one of the highly prevalent conditions in most of these broken or difficult relationships where one or both people feel some degree of anger or resentment as a result of having been hurt by the other person. Whatever someone has done that is keeping your heart closed toward them, no matter how horrendous, strongly consider the following. By all means do whatever is necessary and possible to stop the hurting but then equally as important – **'have mercy on you – forgive them'**.

If not yet, at some time in all probability you will start to see the wisdom in this teaching. The thousands of angry thoughts and feelings that continue to pop into your mind are toxic and will affect other parts of your physical, social and emotional life. Anger has a way of compromising other relationships resulting in influencing us to feel excluded, critical or judged, etc.

But most folks will say, "I can never forgive that person for what they did to me". We would ask you to reconsider this assumption by exploring the possibility that maybe the problem of not **forgiving/resisting is not so much a can't problem but a won't problem**. There are just too many millions of folks who have forgiven people who have done terribly hurtful acts against them once they became committed to **wanting to be free of their self-inflicted suffering** caused by their closed heart.

To start to help you more accurately assess this can't versus won't variable, Need #2 below (Removing the Mask of Anger from the Many Distressing Faces of PFP) will help you to better understand the destructive and superficial payoffs that you get from remaining angry and resistant. This will reveal for you the 'won't' nature of your resistance to forgiving. It is very

important to sort out can't versus won't in any problem solving process so as to know where to invest your efforts and time to work to optimally depart or restart.

As anger is successfully eliminated from difficult relationships, a deep kind of forgiveness will start to emerge to guide an optimal restructuring in the relationship (i.e. restart or depart) compared to the reactive crash and burn outcomes of typically induced stand offs.

As your U,B-FIT mindfulness skills and capacity mature, the armour comes down from your heart. At the first experience of catching 'there is anger', versus your typical subjective response of 'I am angry', forgiveness (not forgetting) begins.

Need #2 – Is To Remove The Mask Of Anger From The Many Distressing Faces of PFP

This essential offering is to help you prevent and better manage, and eventually eliminate your difficult feelings such as anger which will directly facilitate forgiveness to open the door to pursue a skillful relationship restructuring process. Let's start by getting some clarity on the two ways that anger is expressed. We express our anger overtly, or openly, by yelling and engaging in for example, power struggles and sarcasm. Alternatively we may also express our anger covertly, or passively, through for example, moodiness, sulking or giving someone the cold shoulder or the deep freeze.

The Anger Continuum



While anger is often the mask that disguises the real problem, sometimes it is anger as an emotional expression of for example irritation, all the way to a rage reaction to man's inhumanity to man. Let's call this anger A1.

Any point on this continuum could be felt as a result of a person or situation that:

- offers a personal threat;
- is a violation of ones values and ethics, e.g. cruelty;
- is irritating and overwhelming to one's PFP programs;

- is overwhelming due to one's fatigue or other biological vulnerability.

All of these expressions of A1 are calls to action by PFP, (e.g. fight or flight). In order to ensure an optimal response to these difficult people and situations, our suggestions provided in Tool #3, *self-management* will be required. To summarize this management process we are required to:

- catch ourself feeling angry;
- calm our body sensations, feelings and thoughts;
- clarify the needs of the situation;
- consciously choose and connect to others to resolve difficulties.

Anger 2 (A2)

Now let's discuss anger when it is the mask that disguises the real problem. We will call this anger A2. Let's remind you of a vitally important fact discussed earlier in Chapter Two.

As it turns out according to MIT and other creditable research institutions, the average person only has approximately 50 bits of data processing capacity per second (i.e. bandwidth) to observe and manage life events. This is why we miss three storey buildings that we have looked at hundreds of times on our drive to work until one day – there it is. This is because for some reason, you probably one day without knowing it redeployed your 50 bits from the thoughts you were having to now notice the building. This is an example of how you redeploy your 50 bits of brain bandwidth. This same process is happening all day long to every one of us. This is how anger redeploys the brain's bandwidth away from the much more painful thoughts and feelings.

None of the examples on the above anger continuum seem like something we would choose - and consciously we don't. In reality however, in a way (as you will see through the mindfulness microscope), they actually seem to our autopilot PFP mind like the better choice when they temporarily help us avoid something much worse. The following list gives examples of the painful subjective 'much worse' experiences that are, without our knowing, often crowded off the brain's bandwidth with the less awful experience of anger.

Examples of What Your Anger/Lack of Forgiveness could be Preventing You from Experiencing (a.k.a. the payoff)

- awareness and acknowledgement of your own level of personal insecurity and/or feelings of inferiority
- anxiety/worry/depression
- sadness

- **loneliness**
- **feeling unlovable**
- **living with no/low meaning and purpose**
- **feelings of abandonment**
- **guilt, shame, embarrassment**
- **the horror of solitary confinement – exclusion from social interactions**
- **mental health disorders' symptoms, e.g. delusions mania**

For example, the experience of anxiety, hurt, guilt or sadness, etc. to our feelings of insecurity or inferiority are much more painful than deploying our 50 bits of data processing per second capacity to being angry with someone. The PFP brain/body has learned through thousands of years of adaptation how to automatically protect its physical well-being by responding appropriately to a threat: for example, by exaggerating physical pain so we respond by changing what we are doing that is injuring the body. The PFP brain also works to protect its emotional self by using the relatively more user-friendly feeling of anger to avoid anxiety, etc. This is probably the #1 reward (pitiful as it is) that drives the average threatened person into anger/emotional hijacks resulting in power struggles with others, etc. Maybe even secondarily, the payoff for anger is to change the situation. We say secondarily because often trying to change the situation through anger makes it worse.

As you learn to work with U,B-FIT and the other 3 tools, you will learn to constructively process the 'worse' experiences and watch anger reduce proportionately as it is no longer needed to hide these painful real issues.

Our task regarding this need is to, with U,B-FIT focussed observation identify and then manage these upstream needs and concerns. This will help ensure that life can become more satisfying and happy, and thereby end the anger that was never really mostly about the person who you found difficult anyway.

This idea that your anger/lack of forgiveness is very often (not always) your PFP mind's pitiful way to keep you in the illusion that protects you from the even worse feelings as described above, may take a while to settle in. Give it a little room to breathe as even considering this idea 'pokes the PFP bear'.

This insight is for us one of the best ways for you to stop some of your suffering in the relationship by redirecting your efforts to identify and resolve the deeper issues. To start, ask yourself this question "if I didn't feel anger at that time with this person what would my mind be ruminating about?" Once identified it will be time to treat the wound not just band-aid the symptom with something like a TikTok video on 'anger management'. The skills of awareness and ahh-llowing (Tool #1) will be near essential for you to refocus your PFP mind away from the negative bad guy erroneous belief that **they** are causing you to suffer – because they are not!

Thank You Anger,

My Dear Friend

Anger's Unknown PFP Survival Based Illusion of Benefits

– Payoffs and Purposes

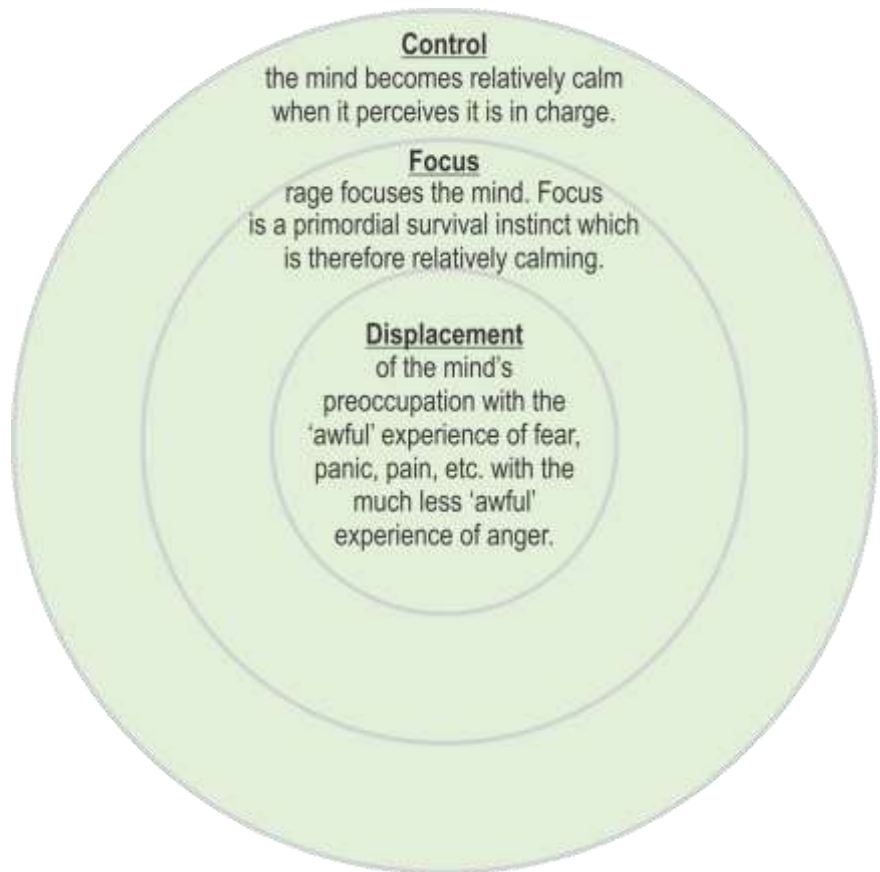
i.e.

When angry we

subconsciously have the
subjective seemingly positive
PFP experiences of:

- being relatively in control
- being relatively focused
- feeling better than if we
were for example anxious,
alone, deeply grieving, etc.

As noted however in the
mindless MESS, this is your lil
7 year old demanding its way
at the expense of you
suffering unnecessarily.



May You Be Filled with Health and Happiness

Once upon a time an old man was standing by the side of the road when someone sped past him and it appeared deliberately drove through a mud puddle and soaked the old man. The old man immediately shouted after the driver "may your life be filled with health and happiness and your every dream come true".

A person standing by came over to the old man and said, "Pardon me sir but I just have to ask what religion you are that you would have such immediate, authentic forgiveness and compassion for that driver?" The old man looked at his questioner and said, "It's got nothing to do with religion, I just know that if that driver gets their needs met they will not need to go about being angry with old men standing at the side of the road".

Adapted from Sufi Wisdom

Always On My Mind, Always On My Mind

*Into my room he creeps,
without making a sound.
Bodies and minds become as one,
our union knows no bound.
So seductive in his ways,
he plays the game unfair.
Putting words upon my lips,
and I don't know to care.*

*So much destruction at her feet,
so many souls she kills.
Weaponized words her stock and trade,
keeping me from still.
Chemicals ensure that she survives
is what gives her this power.
Merciless demands she makes of me,
can take me prisoner every hour.*

*Their pleasure and power is the prison,
where suffering is created.
Their plans and schemes for all times,
thrives when awareness sedated.
Oh the price I do pay,
since my freedom they have bought.
When unaware, forced to bow to them,
each mindless, angry thought.*

P & J

Need #3 – Is To Activate Free Will To Make More Reasonable Choices

Softening and eventually eliminating the anger/feelings of unforgiveness to kick start a skillful restructuring process is not a matter of just deciding to use your free will to choose a better alternative - as is suggested in many well intended counselling sessions. You will recall from Chapter Two our very clear message that only with *Self-Awareness and Allowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart*, can we have free will to make good choices. Clarifying these needs then builds on and applies Tool #1 to activate free will to be able to make appropriate choices to for example, experience some level of authentic forgiveness. The first step to optimal restructuring is actual authentic forgiveness which is only a real possibility for most folks once your free will to discern and choose is activated. Now having relative free will to make better choices also gives you the ability to better act on them.

Need #4 – Is To Be Aware That Memory Is Generally Very Inaccurate and Unreliable

It is vital to realize the important fact that our memory is extremely unreliable, inaccurate, and incomplete, and that we are hard wired to make things up to compensate for the gaps in memory without our knowing it. Believing that your memory is accurate is deadly because it continues the mind's harmful cognitive biases (e.g. I am a victim) that keeps the relationship disconnects alive and well. The research referenced in Chapter Two clearly indicates that our PFP mind is constantly fabricating our reality and how we so poorly remember past events. This algorithm defect is influencing your relationship difficulties and your closed heart.

As you recall your grievances with this person, your B-FIT mindful exercises will help you to stay conscious that your fabricating memory, your cognitive bias, your inattentive blindness, your lack of free will to make choices (unless you are conscious), the stinking thinking problem of being thought and your PFP faulty filters are all grossly distorting your feelings and blocking your awareness of how best and why to reconstruct your relationship.

Need #5 – Determine How Your Faulty Filters' Beliefs May Be Impacting Your Relationships With People Who You Find Difficult

At this time we will 'gently' review the possibility that your very personal and unique beliefs related to the faulty filters that you are going to identify in Tool #2 *Self-Understanding*, could be **resulting in making you a big part of the problem without you knowing it.**

Try this part of the *self-management* tool.

At this time recall the assets and limitations/negativity that you discovered so far about your filters' beliefs. Now ask yourself, could some of my illogical/outdated filters' beliefs be negatively influencing my feelings toward this person.

For example:

- Do I perceive being overly controlled by them mainly as a result of my outdated obsessive need to be in control/not out of control?
- Do I self-righteously judge them because of my problem of needing to be right/feel superior because of my inferiority complex?
- Do I feel that they treat me unfairly because of my problem belief regarding entitlement?

- Do I feel that I am not being approved of by them because of my problem of obsessively needing to be approved of?

Beliefs about others in our life must be deeply and carefully examined to help facilitate being equanimous with people who we find difficult as we relate to them in our roles and relationships.

Beliefs about one's self, others and the world we live in are as you will recall extremely subjective so much so that we must be constantly asking the question '**am I seeing them as they are or as I am?**' Beliefs related to others, the world and one's self are powerful influences. Some wise person said "yes seeing is believing, because if I hadn't believed it I wouldn't have seen it." (*Reference Tool #2 self-understanding for more information*)

As previously noted (and worth repeating), some anthropologists report their research from studying 'primitive' Indigenous tribes not yet influenced by Western culture. They share stories such as placing a wrist watch among five local household items like a stone knife, sea shells, a piece of broken pottery and ask people to select the item that is most unlike the other items. Most pick the broken pottery, seemingly not seeing the watch. The conclusion drawn from this research is that the watch had not yet become part of the native persons' belief (about reality) system.

Tool #2 Self-Understanding, prepares you to self-manage this most important insight to help with your relationship restructuring processes. The fact is that the average untrained person is conditioned to believe many erroneous assumptions about self, others, and the world.

When you read Chapter Five *Self-Understanding*, you will bring into awareness your specific faulty filters that you believe, and that are in great part without you knowing, governing much of the quality of your relationships.

The many layers of the onion metaphor could be very accurately applied to our belief systems which create very personalized subjective perceptions and interpretations of others behaviours and our reaction to them. For example,

- At one layer, we believe that someone's behaviour, for example is hurtful.
- At another layer, we may include a belief that the hurtful behaviour must be upsetting to us.
- At yet another layer, we erroneously believe that everyone would feel hurt if this person did the same to them.
- At still another layer, we may self-righteously believe that this person is less than, or not as good as we are because of how they hurt others gives us feelings of superiority.

All of these perceptions and beliefs are personal, unique, subjective, interpretations based primarily on our PFP conditioned beliefs. Possibly one of the most destructive forces that

results from mindlessness is how often and how deeply our subjective erroneous beliefs influence our experiences of others with absolutely not one bit of our knowing.

While this topic is too multi-layered to be given adequate inclusion here, three critical observations may be helpful to better answer ‘why do I feel so hurt by them compared to how others feel when they hurt them in the same way they hurt me?’

- Most of our beliefs about others are significantly influenced by our filters which for many are unknown or not remembered – especially in the moments of an emotional hijack.
- Beliefs (mostly based on PFP conditioning) are happening almost as consistently and as inconspicuously as gravity.
- Beliefs are as powerful as gravity in creating our realities of ourself, others and the world.

As your mindful emotional self-regulation skills are enhanced by applying them to these relationship issues, you will develop capabilities in the moment to catch yourself being emotionally hijacked by driven PFP reactions. Secondly your mindful emotional self-regulation process will develop a capacity in you to catch and calm yourself thereby preventing the emotional hijack. This is something like how riffs for a guitar player eventually ‘just happen’ without them thinking about it.

I so dislike that man – I must spend more time with him.

Doctor Martin Luther King Jr.

Early in my development about 35 years ago, one of my teachers encouraged me to do a deep dive to better understand several layers of the power of beliefs by doing a fire walk.

Mindful Walking to Change A Belief

I had just completed an intense one day training at York University to change my belief that walking barefoot over a 35 foot bed of red hot coals actually did not have to burn the soles of my feet. There is valid research related to conductivity that proves this theory. I was now driving up a long farm laneway looking at a fire of big logs in the barnyard with flames rising about 12 feet in the air. The fire had been burning most of the day to supply us mindfulness practitioners with sufficient burning embers to challenge the burning belief - a kind of graduation exercise so to speak.

Once we arrived, the flaming, burning logs were removed and the smoldering coals were spread to become our classroom. Most of my group did a strong concentration strategy to visualize and 'believe' that the coals were a blanket of snow. I applied the U,B-FIT strategy that I had just recently learned. I primarily worked with Image (I) and Talk (T) thoughts. As Image and Talk arose, with intense concentration and equanimity from the beginning to the end of each thought, I focused and allowed each arising to stay or go as it wanted with no/low identification with them, regardless of their content. (Reference U,B-FIT mindfulness below)

While this walk lasted less than a minute, it was extremely intense. As I stepped onto the bed of hot coals I had a flurry of 'I' and 'T' and also precognitive rumbles (performed thoughts). With each new eruption, the conscious 'I' did not identify with the content but more just experienced each arising and passing away of each 'activity' of thinking. I stayed present for what seemed like dozens of thoughts and pre and post not yet fully formed thoughts.

We were clearly warned in our training to 'catch' even the slightest provocation to speed up our pace as this is a most serious indicator that the MIND is believing that 'I am' in danger which then cascades into the belief 'I will get burned'.

Several people did get burned that day but we remaining firewalker/lifewalker participants were okay. Most of us reported feeling the equivalent of a moderate sunburn on the soles of our feet.

The skeptic in me wandered over to the fire before we left to see if maybe the whole thing was a set up. I bent down and touched the still smoldering coals believing that I would likely get burned and guess what - I did. I drove home still not sure what happened that day but somehow I felt compelled to go deeper into discovering more of 'we are what we believe'.



Once upon a time there was a wise man who sat at the side of the road just outside a village. One day a man stopped by and told the wise man he wanted to move to a new village to find work. He asked the wise man, “what kind of people live in this village?” The wise man thought for a moment and then asked, “what kind of people live in your old village?” The traveller said, “they are generally good and kind people” to which the wise man replied “well you’re in luck because that’s who you will find live here”.

A few hours later another man who was also looking for a new place to live asked the wise man the same question. The wise man then asked him, “what kind of people live in your old village?” “Oh” the second traveller said, “they are selfish and not very nice at all”. The wise man paused for a second and said “oh, that’s too bad because that is who you are going to find here as well.”

To learn to control these faulty filters’ beliefs we can initiate the following action:

1. Determine if your faulty filters’ beliefs could be contributing to the stress and strain of your relationship with someone you find difficult.
2. Using the tools you will complete in Chapter Five (*self-understanding*) develop a couple of statements that describes how your faulty filters’ beliefs could be partially or fully responsible for your ‘difficult person’ assessment.
3. Develop reframing statements to replace each of your faulty filters’ beliefs with more objective and positive beliefs.
4. Practice the mindful stress rehearsal exercise described in Appendix II and the audio guided session found at www.centreforconsciouscare.ca -resources-mindfulness.
5. Complete the exercises described below (*Reference So What to Do #2*) and open up discussions with the person accordingly.

Need #6 – Is To Realize That There Is No One to Blame

Finally we help you to do what is useful to skillfully restructure the relationship without the closed heart suffering of anger, sadness or fear by reminding you of who is really to ‘blame’ for how this person behaves toward you including what they did to you. Sorting out this blame game can have a profound outcome for us to start to forgive the unforgiveable through application of the *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart* tool to skillfully restructure the relationship.

Longfellow, I think, said it well: “If we could read the secret history of those we find difficult, we would find in each life sorrow, suffering or other reasons enough to disarm all our hostility or indifference”.

Just review the following examples of some of the ‘secret history’ that can be reinforcers that drive the difficult person’s behaviour and state of mind and heart.

- a mental health disorder, e.g. anxiety, depression
- PFP filters fear of
 - failure
 - looking bad
 - losing control
 - rejection
- a life threatening illness
- spousal abuse
- inattentional blindness
- no/low free will
- childhood trauma
- a ‘sick’ gene pool
- chronic physical pain

Given your potential to have had some of these unwanted ‘viruses’, consider the following. Because virtually any of these could have been forced on the difficult person by other people or ‘nature’, could it be a fact that who you are, and your ‘better than’ behaviour self, **is mostly your good luck**. It may then be appropriate when you are considering who is to blame, to be grateful for your good luck and reflect upon this reality before you in your role as judge and jury ‘throw your first stone’.

We have written the following to remind you of what you will understand about people who you find difficult as a result of your working with the *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing* and *self-understanding* tools. We have written the following in the first person to help you to better integrate these truths into your life.

I know (beyond thinking about it) that the people in my life who I find difficult, e.g. someone who has hurt me or who is generally difficult to be around are victims of their:

- inherited DNA gene pool from many previous generations;
- their family's influence on values, likes, and dislikes;
- the influence of their biological makeup on their behaviour, e.g. their prejudice;
- Their mental health or neural development disorder and
- Their 'bad luck' from life's unfairness.

I know how these five influences have dictated their PFP reactive brain (like they direct all brains) to give them a negative understanding/fear of who they think they are and of the world they live in.

I know that they are almost completely a victim of these PFP influences because they aren't aware enough to have free will to make optimal choices to control them.

I know if I had these same five influences I probably would be just like them.

Finally, I know that when I am with them, if I am able to stay present and aware, (of the above 5 needs) I will feel a deep sense of authentic compassion and empathy for them even as I work passionately to protect myself and others from the harm of their behaviours.

Even though I know that I must take every precaution to prevent them from ever hurting me again, I will always do this as best I can with an open heart as part of my *mindful emotional self-regulation* practice.

You will probably resist personalizing some of these 'I' statements because you have forgotten what the consensus of international research has proven about the PFP brain. Please review the ten algorithm defects described in Chapter Two to refresh your memory.

When we apply the 4 life tools we become more able to meet difficult people with an intention to help them manifest their best basic human goodness because we slowly start to remember the truth of the PFP dilemma - 'they know not what they do'. From *here, now* we mindfully relate to them beyond our ego dependence because we start to get it, because we realize that at some level we are, could have been, or could be in the future, in the same PFP human predicament as they are.

With this deeper knowing an important shift in consciousness is facilitated. We start to awaken to live in harmony with this most fundamental truth of nature—the law of interdependence. As we attempt to influence them to stop doing harm to us or anyone (which we always do), we in the moment 'get it'. We get that **what** we all are is a mish mash of survival based PFP directives

‘driven’ by the algorithm of our Body, Feeling, Image and Talk Thoughts (impoverish left brain) operating system – until that is we become conscious/aware/awaken to learn and live **the 4 tools**. We also see that beyond all that emotional and survival stuff, there is a consciousness there (i.e. the **who** we both really are behind the PFP survival codes), that needs a team of midwives to help with its conscious birth and one of those midwives is us.

As a key part of this birthing process, as a result of the Tool #1 skills *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing*, we know about the actual PFP drivenness in both of us that is compromising the relationship. Now we just naturally start to, slowly but surely offer our best unconditional capacity of non-resistance (equanimity), to whoever the difficult person is without even thinking about it. Individuals who to us are unlikeable, uncooperative, unappreciative and even hurtful can become as worthy of our conscious forgiveness as anyone else. **This means that we remember that it is our mindless forgetting about the PFP predicament of which we are also a victim (until we work to awaken) that is the source of all human suffering.**

We now just don’t have to feel kindness to authentically **be it**. With this mindful awareness, motivation to restructure the relationship does not come from feelings or thinking about it. It comes from the conscious you who, especially in the middle of negative feelings can be sufficiently aware to say to yourself ‘ah – there is P...offness and here I am watching P...offness do its dance’. I remember that it is the dance of a hundred generations before me. As I ‘watch’ the dance I break into laughter and start to sing the chorus, **‘how could I ever blame anyone who only walks and talks in their sleep.’**



**How can we blame
anyone who walks and
talks in their sleep?**

Even if I consciously choose to disconnect from them I do it with an open heart.

Give me one wish to stop suffering from personal to global, and that wish would be that all people wake up each morning to fuller consciousness instead of the semi-conscious sleep state that dominates virtually everyone you know. This sleep state that probably started the day we began to stand on our hind legs must be eliminated if we are to consistently live anywhere near our species' potential.

The key to accessing this deeper knowing and unconditional motivation to care about everyone (to even love our enemies a teacher said 2000 years ago) is to be mindful and present in each moment. When mindfully emotionally self-regulated in the moment, we are not identified with or lost in our thoughts of good guys and bad guys/in and out groups. We can therefore much better authentically manifest our ideal self, even with the people in our life who we find difficult.

Summary of the Six Needs to Optimally Restructure Relationships with People Who Appear Difficult

Before moving on to outline several very effective ways to initiate and manage skillful restructuring compassionate action, the following is a summary of the 6 actual needs we have been discussing and that will be required to be met in order to address the restructuring of failing relationships. This list will offer you a quick reference for your review.

Need #1 – Is To Forgive People Who Have Hurt You

Need #2 – Is To Remove The Mask Of Anger From The Many Distressing Faces of PFP

Need #3 – Is To Activate Free Will To Make More Reasonable Choices

Need #4 – Is To Be Aware That Memory Is Generally Very Inaccurate and Unreliable

Need #5 – Is To Determine How Your Faulty Filters' Beliefs May Be Impacting Your Relationships With People Who You Find Difficult

Need #6 – Is To Realize That There Is No One to Blame

So, How To - with Self-Awareness and Allowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart – Do We Self-Manage These Risks To Our Happiness?

Introduction

Once we start to awaken as described above you will need a couple of basic tools to consistently manifest your A game when restructuring. We start our 'what to do' by offering you what may be a fresh and revealing look at how to be in conflict with someone and skillfully manage the communications so as to keep their and our hearts open and to optimally problem

solve. You will immediately see the essential need of *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing* to make this happen.

Let's assume that you have started to soften your resistance to your anger and unforgiveness positions with someone just by reading and remembering the above 'need's based' insights. You will know if you are 'getting it' if you do not feel quite as justified with self-righteous anger toward the person who you have found difficult. This means that you have started to actually integrate the life tools.

The following is a specific mindful *self-management* skill set (*Reference Tool #3*) to apply as you now look for answers in how to restructure your difficult relationship to either work to reconnect (restart) it or as appropriate disconnect (depart) from it with an open heart. We call this skill **conscious compassionate conflict**.

What To Do #1 - Express Conflict Effectively - Feelings to Feelings, Reasons to Reasons

One of the most fundamental parts of these *mindful self-regulation management* and expression tools is to remain calm in 'conflict' and help others to remain calm as well. One way to make this happen is to mindfully speak feelings in response to feelings and reasons in response to reasons.

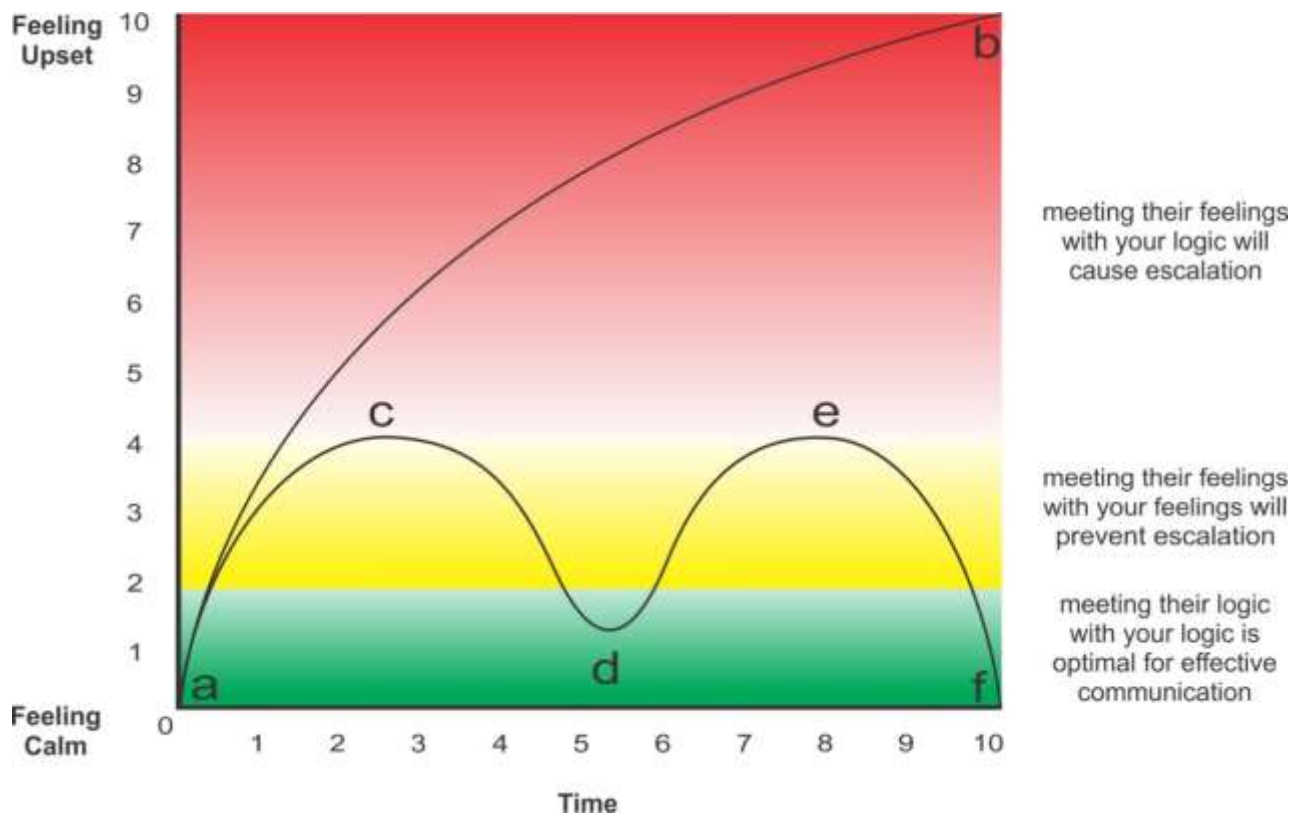
When someone is upset, anxious or angry, empathetic responses such as "OK I am listening, please tell me more" or "I can see how upsetting this is for you" or "Yes, and what else?" are the best ways to understand and respond to the person's needs at the time. Simultaneously this process keeps us calm. This response also optimally facilitates a process whereby logic and reason can, in a timely way, be effectively introduced.

Not until the person de-escalates to feeling relatively calm should you ever offer problem-solving statements or, worse yet, try to use logic or reason to justify your position to attempt to calm them down. When someone is upset, statements like "But that is not what I said (not what I meant, not what happened)" or "Don't you remember that . . ." or "Can't we discuss this reasonably?" will often only escalate to upset the other person. Attaching logical reasons to explain feelings is also the worst way for either of you to understand and objectively consider alternate solutions or perspectives. Have you noticed how when you are angry your IQ drops to single digits? Well your heart does that as well. We call that an *emotional hijack* because your reactions are taken over and taken to a place you never wanted to go!

NEVER miss a good opportunity to stay silent.

The following illustration demonstrates the outcomes of these different forms of expression.

Communication Skills to Prevent Power Struggles and De-Escalate Anger



Let's walk through a positive calming sequence, using the letters in the graph:

At **point a** the conversation starts with speaking **reasons to reasons**. "Peter, could we talk about _____ which is causing me concern?"

At the first sign of an **emotional hijack (point c)**, mindfully **meet their feelings with your feelings**. "Yes, I'm listening and what else?"

If we instead meet their feelings with our logic, expect to be talking with someone who is angry/overwhelmed, thanks in part to your **mindlessness** (reference point b).

When they return to calm (d), return to the topic (a) with **reasons to reasons**. "As I mentioned earlier I am concerned about _____."

If they escalate again, mindfully **meet their feelings with your feelings (e)**. "I'm sorry that this is upsetting you, please tell me more."

If this reignites their anger then - "OK, I am listening what else."

When they return to calm (f), return to topic (d) with **reasons to reasons**.

“Can I give you some new information that might help here?”

“If I could show you that _____ would that be helpful?”

Share one clear fact and ask:

“Is this helpful?”

“Can I give you some more information?”

Helpful Phrases to Clarify and Gain Consensus:

At **reasons to reasons** stage—introduce a concern:

“I have noticed that it often seems that when you state behaviour that person’s name and describe their reactions.

“How would you feel about suggest a change?”

If the person calmly disagrees with your suggestion, work for a **commitment to change**:

“What I heard you say was_____.”

“Is this your main concern?” (“yes”)

“If we can find a way to take care of this, then would you feel okay with making this change?”

(if yes). Then problem solve to consensus.

(if no) “Okay, can I ask what else is concerning you?”

“If we can take care of_____, then would you feel okay with proceeding?”

Throughout the entire process, implementing the awareness and allowing skills will be most important for the process to be authentic.

The following true story attempts to reflect this process in one of my conflict management situations.

Opening the Heart on the Run

For a time in my career I did community development work with Indigenous Peoples Communities in Northern Ontario and the Yukon. During this time I developed many deeply meaningful relationships and received many valuable teachings from highly evolved healers and elders. Through my twenty years of living, volunteering and working in Indigenous Peoples Communities, I was honoured to be entrusted with many ground-breaking social and healthcare projects.

One major project was to help a violently divided community come to terms with the distribution of millions of dollars of revenue from a large land-claim settlement with the federal government reimbursement for land that was to be used for a highway to be built through the reserve community of approximately five hundred members. I was retained by the Band Council to help mediate a dispute between two groups in the community. The settlement was to be divided equally among all band members. A small group of fifty or so, however, said they did not want to include older members (and their children) who had lost their status because they had married a non-native.

One evening I facilitated a large community meeting. Because I was contracted by the Band Council who had been elected by the majority of members who supported the rights of these disenfranchised members, I was seen as the enemy by the small group who did not support them. I had intentionally chosen this work because of my deep sadness for the tragic devastation from assimilation that (we) Europeans had inflicted (mostly mindlessly) on the “first Americans,” so I was deeply sensitive and appreciative of their frustration with my role as an outsider. Nonetheless, when the community meeting decided to include the disenfranchised members, the minority group focused their anger on me, the non-native outsider.

As I left the community centre that night after most members had gone home, I was met by about ten to twelve angry band members who yelled and threatened me. My body reacted to their threats with the force of billions of cells programmed through tens of thousands of years of evolution to fight, flight or freeze. I knew I needed to clarify the needs of this moment and make a mindful choice. Thoughts and feelings shot in and out of my mind and body like high-speed trains: What are my options? How do I de-escalate this? How do I get help? These questions were half of my mind’s response. I applied the other fifty percent of my conscious energy to observe and intentionally, subjectively ahh-llow what was happening, catching and calming myself. I reminded myself how my filter of being out of control was contributing to my fear and mindfully reframed that thought.

I started to respond feelings to feelings. As I made some neutral, empathetic comments, I mindfully, silently intended calm and peace for the band members and me. I stayed aware

of the changing intensity in my chest and my dominant arm and infused those sites with awareness and ahh-llowing. I kept focused on my feelings of fear and anger and just kept labeling, “there is . . . ahh-llow”.

Meanwhile, as the shouting and yelling continued, I met these people with equanimity to reduce the resistance that was amplifying my fear. Externally I did my best to be open (e.g. “I’m sorry that this has been so upsetting for you, that was not my intention.”).

Awareness kept me communicating with more non-powerful yet assertive and concerned statements, “Okay and what else”. Although I did not really know these men and women, I assumed their goodness and treated them with respect and caring. This situation could have gone either way.

I kept clarifying my options to change or leave the situation, but nothing came to mind. My informed choice was then to do what I was doing—staying aware and ahh-llowing of my stressors, intending something positive, keeping an authentic open heart and communicating usefully, kindly and ethically. This clarifying process was not a guarantee, but solid research put the odds on my side as I bet on others’ human goodness to ultimately influence their behaviour – if ‘I’ did not make it worse through mindless power struggling.

In about half an hour, the group started to break up. The most vocal were the last to leave.

I could have gotten seriously hurt that night, but in truth, when anger had taken over otherwise good people, I knew that time was on my side. The self-management tools of catching, calming, clarifying and choosing (reference #3 below) ensured that I didn’t make the situation worse by meeting their power with my power or out-of-control fear. Either reaction would have been disastrous.

On my next visit to this community two of the leading dissenters met me and apologized for their anger.

What To Do #2 - Restructuring Beliefs and Mindfulness Practice Exercises

Your Heart Transplant

Once you have learned the 4 tools, your *self-expression* during restructuring will include significantly enhanced internal/subjective *mindful self-observation* and *self-management* as well as optimal external expression with others.

In Tools #1 and #2, you will learn how to lessen your ego based reactions in stressful relationships and situations. Over time from here, in the moment you will experience a kind of

unprecedented flowing resilience, clarity, and ahh-llowingness that will internally manifest as a just right moment – even in the middle of social chaos, conflict, and other forms of emotional pain (because you have done your best to resolve the newly discovered actual PFP problematic issues).

For now however just hear this commitment from us to you. Know that optimal *self-expression* as we teach it in Chapter Nine is much more than what is happening in your objective outside world. You get much more than what others see and experience from your more skillful and conscious *self-management* and *expression* as you work to skillfully restructure the relationship.

Anytime we resist a conscious connection (or lose it) with a person, it is a clear indicator of the degree to which we still do not really understand the human predicament of the PFP algorithm. Once understood and when we are manifesting our mindful A-game, the inner dialogue changes from “gosh Donald is so self-centred, unkind, etc. and really brings me down”

To instead

“There is a PFP that is so self-centred, unkind, etc. who 100% controls Donald – I must right now skillfully process my resistant PFP mind. He is a victim, what can I do to help him be free as I work passionately to absolutely prevent his PFP from doing more harm.” This is the language of the equanimous mindful self-observer.

This may include control and even distancing our self from some of the Donalds in our life because many of them cannot be given (for now) this kind of a heart transplant to correct their PFP. As we either teach them or distance our self from them to help correct their PFP, our heart remains open.

Is There Ever A Place For Anger or Disliking People Who We Find Difficult? Absolutely!

For all of us, there are situations that mobilizes Body sensations, Feelings and Thoughts into varying degrees of readiness to fight, flee, or freeze. These reactions generally become ‘driven’ by anger to the extent that we experience them mindlessly. When experienced mindfully, these same *B-FIT* tremors of our difficult feelings may continue but they will more and more be subjectively experienced like any other sensory awareness. That is, we equanimously consciously ahh-llow them to come and go, get stronger or weaker, etc. As you learned in Tool #1 *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart*, these sensory experiences are not you when you mindfully clarify what is happening. As noted we call this transformational process *Conscious, Compassionate Conflict (CCC)*.

Here is how it works. Our *B-FIT* reactions resulting from any of anger 1 or 2 sources are our predictable PFP-programming cries for survival, justice, a change, etc. **These body sensations, feelings and thoughts are not the problem. Once we mindfully catch ourself becoming emotionally hijacked, we start to change even though our B-FIT continues its primordial**

dance. Through mindful self-observation, we first realize in the moment that our B-FIT reactions are not us! While we may need to immediately, skillfully respond to improve a situation, we need not close our heart with weaponized words and actions. The heart of compassion and lucid brain do not have to go offline and default to closed hearted anger and a single-digit I.Q. With our mindful presence to more fully experience and self-manage a poisonous power struggle overwhelm, we can still simultaneously be calm and with an open heart, work passionately, and skillfully to change what must be changed. This will require remembering and working to help meet their and our unmet needs as we work to skillfully restructure relationships or stop injustice, etc.

Loving Anger – “Are You Serious?” – “Yep!”

Conscious Compassionate Conflict (CCC loving anger) seems to be a child conceived by mother and father awareness and ahh-llowing that wisely guides the nervous system’s anger survival reactions so as to keep it from doing harm.

When we experience and express loving anger, on the outside recipients of our actions are perceiving our intense disagreement with what is happening. On the inside we are simultaneously objectively processing the other person’s perspective and also skillfully and calmly enabling our nervous system to search for our most helpful thought and feeling files to be opened and offered at this time. This is not acting as if. It is an expression of genuine angry behaviour (EN) lightened with the subjective experiences of being aware and ahh-llowing of what we are doing as we are doing it (*Reference Tool #1 Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing*).

This birth cannot be rushed. It requires a very delicate integration of these two mindfulness skills. Too much awareness without ahh-llowing, and our expression still somewhat closes the heart – for both of us. Although this is nothing like 100% mindless rage, it still has many of the unhelpful feelings of being upset. On the other hand, too much ahh-llowing can give the deadly consequence of seemingly and subjectively accepting for example, situations of suffering caused by man’s inhumanity to man.

Similarly we require CCC in primary relationships when we are sorting out for example boundaries, the other’s thoughtlessness, or self-centeredness, etc. in our roles as life partners, adult kids, parents, siblings, etc. From time to time in these relationships we need CCC to build and maintain deeply meaningful expressions and feelings of disagreement on one hand and at the same time loving kindness on the other.

In all cases of injustice and relationship building, there are three requirements to express our strongest disagreement (i.e. loving angry behaviour) with another’s words, actions, policies etc. Firstly, at these times, a measured tone and cadence may not be enough to activate being listened to by a mindless recipient (i.e. we need to get their attention). Equally as important as this CCC attention getting behaviour that we **decide to use** to carry the message in clear terms,

is the absolute requirement for internal calm to keep our upper brain online so that our words and actions are useful, ethical, kind, and timely. And thirdly, if we keep our heart open and the amygdala not being activated, we will also be creating the best possible conditions for the other person/people to bring their upper brain back online so as to be able to more objectively listen to our views.

So then, whether we are ‘throwing money changers out of temples’, involved in a social justice protest, or working through a disagreement with a life partner, CCC will sometimes be required.

As we develop mindful capacity for Conscious Compassionate Conflict, it is true that our primordial responses eventually become fewer, are less intense and we recover quicker. The nervous system’s rewiring schedule however is irrelevant because the conscious *us* keeps the heart open no matter what *B-FIT* attempts to dictate. Remember that liking or disliking are feelings that do not have to drive and distort our behaviours, provided we are mindful of them.

Sometimes we must ‘battle’ with others to prevent them from causing more suffering, but we need never put anyone out of our heart. As one great master wrote 2500 years ago, “We enter the battlefield as if we are attending the funeral of our best friend”. (Lao-tzu-Tao Te Ching)

There is a story told of an ancient samurai warrior who was dispatched by the courts of Japan to execute the man who had been found guilty of slaying the samurai’s master. One day he found and cornered the guilty man. As he was about to bring down his sword and deliver justice, the killer spit in the samurai’s face. With that the samurai stepped back, put away his sword and let the man escape.

Could it be that this samurai caught himself experiencing closed hearted anger and delayed the execution until he could experience his B-FIT anger equanimously with an open heart?

While we are with them (maybe even as little as possible), provided our actions are equanimously useful, ethical, kind and timely, this difficult person can become a special teacher to help us awaken.

What to do #3 - We Don’t Have to Feel Kind to Authentically Be It

Actual changes in the neural system can manifest in more complete compassion, altruism and empathy and can be developed through mindfulness training.

We feel that one of the most important contributions that we are making with this resource is the reminder that we can learn to consciously connect with all others (even difficult others) in

ways that transcend our basic 'off the assembly line' PFP brain/ego. Check out the following research study.

“People who received this compassion training showed increased activity in neuro networks involved in understanding the suffering of others and regulating emotions.” (reference research study - Compassion Training Alters Altruism and Neural Responses To Suffering – Helen Y. Weng, Center for Investigation of Healthy Minds, University of California, Berkeley)

If you practice the application found at www.centreforconsciouscare.ca -resources- compassion practice, for a total of approximately 20 hours, the region in **your brain** responsible for activation of compassion, altruism, and empathy will grow! Also see the compassion practice outlined below.

Our intentions for others really does matter for both us and them. The research associated with this part of this resource proves that statements that you make to and about others such as “may you be free from suffering and may you be at peace” grows our own neural capacity for compassion. Examples of the areas of the brain that are effected are the right hemisphere, Dorsolateral Cortex and the Medial Prefrontal Cortex.

Summary of Research

1. Mindful compassion trained subjects demonstrated significantly higher levels of compassion toward strangers than the control groups.
2. fMRI shows growth in the parts of the brain involved in empathy, understanding others and emotional regulation, i.e. inferior parietal cortex.
3. Compassion training also increased activity in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and the extent to which it communicates with the part of the brain responsible for emotional regulation and positive associations.

Reference, Enhancing Compassion: A Randomized Controlled Trial of A Compassion Cultivation Training Program – Department of Psychology Stanford University.

4. Practicing mindfulness activates the prefrontal cortex, and anterior cingulate cortex, and interior insula (Chiesa and Serretti, 2010, Areas that are Part of a Co-Network Activated During Empathy) (Fan, Duncan, de Greck, and Northoff, 2011; Masten, Morelli, and Eisenberger, 2011). Collectively these studies provide empirical evidence for the link between mindfulness and empathy.

In practical terms, the life tools that you are learning outlines many ways that you can help people to grow beyond the hurtful, harmful ways they behave. Sometimes however, the very best we can do is damage control with an open heart. To be able to optimally make this vital discernment, we must keep our 'upper' thinking brain online when we are with them and when

we are reflecting on what to do. Remember anger and fear experienced only semi-consciously forces your IQ into ‘single digits’.

The following practice can help you to communicate and awaken during times of conscious compassionate conflict by altering your beliefs. Simultaneously you will be training yourself to be authentically compassionate without needing to typically feel it.

U,B-FIT Mindful Compassion and Emotional Self-Regulation Training

After you have learned Tool #1 (mindful self-awareness and ahh-llowingness exercises), return to complete the following practice.

Step 1: Complete 10 minutes of *U,B-FIT* Exercise #2 (*Appendix II*).

Step 2: Next, in your mind’s eye visualize yourself in a familiar room sitting across from someone who is a friend or a loved one.

- Look at them and become aware of being here, now.
- Start *U,B-FIT* choice-less awareness.
- Reflect with gratitude on their love and presence in your life.
- Say to them “may you always be free of suffering and may you be at peace”.

Step 3: Now visualize that person leaving and being replaced by someone who needs your help, perhaps someone who is sick, disabled or dying. Don’t pre-select anyone; just be with whoever shows up.

- Look at them and become aware of being here, now.
- Intend their healing and well-being. Image/see them ‘well’.
- Say to them “may you always be free of suffering and may you be at peace”.

Step 4: Now visualize that person leaving and being replaced by someone with whom at times you can become upset, impatient or angry. Perhaps it will be someone who does not respect you, has hurt you or even betrayed you. Again, don’t pre-select anyone; just be with whoever shows up. Now move through the following four steps of our *self-management* tool (*reference Chapter Seven for more details*).

- **Catch**
 - look at them and become aware of being here, now.
 - Label whatever feelings are being experienced, e.g. “There is _____”.
- **Calm**
 - Start body awareness if a body sensation has been activated. Be aware of and label the location, the shape, e.g. “bigger”, “smaller” or “same” and intensity, e.g. “stronger,” or “weaker” or “same”.
 - Start a bilateral, bio-meridian awareness-based calming strategy such as the butterfly hug (*Appendix VII*).

- Start *U,B-FIT* choice-less awareness.
- **Clarify**
 - “I objectively clarify what my and their emotional states are and the needs of the situation”.
- **Connect**
 - Intend well-being for you and them, e.g. “may you be free from suffering and may you be at peace”.
 - “I choose action that is useful, kind, ethical and timely”.
 - As image or talk is activated, label and ahh-llow.

Step 5: Now visualize that person leaving and being replaced by a five-year-old child whom you welcome. Intend this child’s well-being. Now realize that this is the person to whom you were just connecting: continue to intend their well-being and a happy fulfilling life, e.g. “may you be free from suffering” and “may you be at peace”.

Step 6: Now say good-bye and return to an awareness of:

- being here, now
- *U,B-FIT* choice-less awareness
- gratitude
- intentions for yourself to be the best you can be and – “may I be free from suffering”
- intentions for you to help the other person to be the best they can be – e.g. “may they be free from suffering”

Please, please do the exercise we just outlined. Maybe for a while do it weekly. Then apply this new skill as soon as possible when you are confronted with a person who is for you very difficult to be with. If you do, there is nothing else we will need to say. You will know the power of this new skill for yourself. You will, indeed, be able to be relatively more ‘OK’ in the most difficult situations.

Reference www.centreforconsciouscare.ca -resources-mindfulness-compassion practice.

Difficult People – Special Teachers

In order to constructively use difficult people in our life as special teachers an essential mind shift is necessary. The shift is to transition in our understanding and intentions regarding our life’s meaning and purpose from ‘it’s all about do’n, get’n, hav’n, bigger, better, more for me and mine’ to it’s about ‘transforming to experience our fullest potential of consciousness expressed as compassionate action and happiness with self and others’.

With this transition, past, present, and future life experiences with difficult people take on new meaning. And while they are not sought out, when they do happen our typical resistance is replaced by a sense of adventure, challenge, and an attitude of this too is a just right moment.

This will not happen overnight or all at once. Our PFP survival instincts that developed over tens of thousands of years will not yield its 'gene pool' without a struggle.

And let us remind you one more time what is at stake here. Re-read the first page of this chapter of all the people in your life where difficult and hurtful relating can occur. Even turn on your TV to any news channel and immediately have examples of PFP manifesting at will as you weep, watching examples of man's inhumanity to man. Virtually every one of these examples are asleep semi-conscious people going about what they honestly believe is normal and OK. Observe also our societies' pitiful ultimate restructuring process of police, courts, judges and prisons and how the 'good guys' punish (not really reform) the 'bad guys' which keeps this sick virus alive, well, and mutating.

Our plea to you is to reconsider your past and present relationships with people who you find/found difficult. Review the 6 needs explored previously and slowly but consistently apply the suggestions.

Is this an easy or simple lift - hell no! It just happens to be a vital part of our necessary awakening process that is assisted by people who we find difficult, - a.k.a. our special teachers. They actually help us steal happiness from difficult relationships when we apply the 4 life tools to the 6 needs' areas.

For example with the tools we have outlined, these special teachers help us to learn to **catch** our mind as it reacts with resistance or self-righteous judging of those we perceive to be less deserving of our time and acceptance.

They can help us **catch** our hearts becoming indifferent as we do not pay full attention to their repeated requests or complaints.

They can also help us learn to **catch** ourself "losing it" and then to mindfully prevent the further escalation of the emotional hijack when our ego's little child reacts by taking their negativity personally.

We have literally dozens of opportunities each day to **catch** our PFP/ego doing its "me first" self-gratification dance. With each **catch** of a body sensation, feeling or thought we intend, "Let it be," and this brings our way of the heart life's commitment to mindful awareness.

Know Thy Self

***Ahh the sacred evidence
of knowing self so deep.
Anger with an open heart
now awakened from 'the' sleep.***

***Aware and ahh-llowing conflict
loving presence – each moment new.
To all who hurt and hate forgiven,
for they know not what they do.***

P&J

Let's conclude this discussion on difficult people with a personal example of the role that a difficult person played in the process of freeing me from the mask of anger and unforgiveness. Really understanding this role that some folks play in our life, can significantly increase our window of tolerance for difficult people. This then helps us to use them to wake-up and grow-up to our fuller potential.

Difficult People – Special Teachers

Every reader I'm sure can recall some of the most difficult people in your life and maybe in some cases, acknowledge how they at one level were a positive influence in your life – a mixed blessing so to speak.

I was in grade two when I was 'gifted' to meet the first and one of my most memorable difficult people in my life. Life was great. I had been dropped into the best place on the planet. Apparently I was a likeable kid with lots of friends. When I scored the odd goal in my budding hockey career to the delight of my Mom and Dad who attended most of my games, life seemed even better. My mom and dad had both come from homes where conflict was the norm so they vowed never to argue in front of me or my four siblings, I never really saw a conflict with them until I was 16. To the best of my memory and that of my siblings my world was a benevolent place to live.

About a dozen of my friends and I at school played baseball and soccer together and occasionally would play wrestling with each other. One day coming home from school about ten of us decided to have one of our play wrestling matches on someone's lawn. Something like how kids decided to have a pickup game of baseball. For me this was especially sweet because my girlfriend at the time was very impressed at how I pinned Billy, one of my best friends.

I guess it was quite the sight for someone passing by because they called our teacher to report this 'gang style' fighting of us 8 year old kids. He had all of us come to the music room to be scolded for this public display of violence. Before we could explain that we were just playing, the teacher started to yell at us and concluded by asking two of my friends to come to the front of the room. Like a moment in a horror story, he took out this big black piece of thick rubber, grabbed David and started to strap his hands for what seemed like hours. David screamed and screamed and pleaded for him to stop but he kept on strapping him. When he started to strap Billy, I wet myself. To this day when I hear the sound like a horse whip cracking, I can still be brought back to remembering that morning in the music room.

Although he had threatened to strap all of us, he stopped after Billy with the promise that any more fighting and we would all be next. I lived in terror for the next 6 years wondering if I would be next.

I don't know if it happened immediately or over the next few months as I was only eight years old but my fear became anger, seemingly at this injustice. Life was never the same for me again. In addition to my anger, around that time I developed a debilitating speech impediment that lasted until I was about age 25. Very soon I also started having asthma attacks and 'sick stomachs' that prevented me from going to school. When I wasn't being sick or just pretending I was sick, I acted quite angry and even aggressive with many of my peers to the extent that I never had a real friend after that until high school. I got in many real fights, often sticking up for a younger kid being picked on by an older kid. I actually went looking for these fights, it felt good. I got the strap two times for my Don Quixote efforts but unknowingly my anger kept my fears at bay so it was well worth it. With adults such as teachers and my aunts and uncles I kept my world from not getting out of control through acting pleasing, charming and polite.

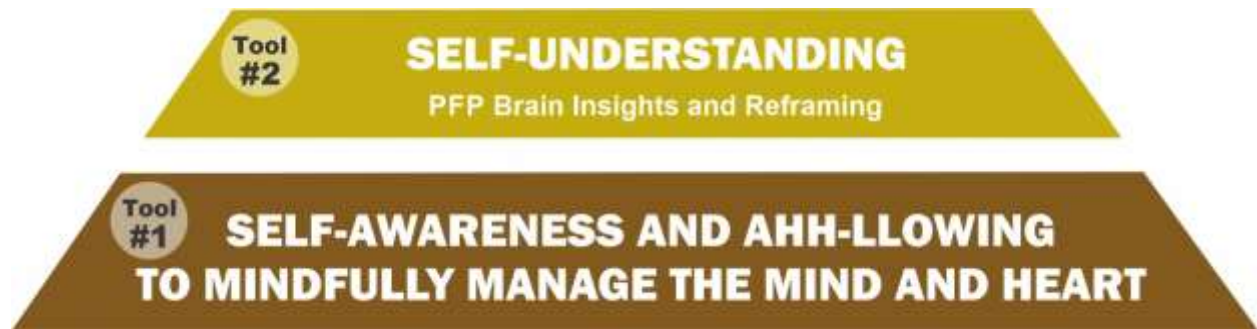
I believe it was this 'special' teacher that kick-started my passion for social justice, compassionate action and forgiveness. My Mom and Dad's values and examples of helping others certainly built the essential foundation and my commitment, but motivation I believe was somehow strongly influenced by this deeply personal experience of vulnerability and helplessly watching this cruelty. For many years later since that time, this incident still fuels my uncompromising efforts to stop the hurting of so many other 'Billys' and 'Davids'. If this is a stretch with reality, it is not intended. Even as I watched my two big heroes of the day, the Lone Ranger and Roy Rogers riding the country side to stop the hurt of other 'Billys' and 'Davids', I found that these heroes and their conquests had much more meaning.

As a result of many positive life experiences and several excellent teachers, I not only had my anger for this teacher completely dissolve but a deep understanding of and empathy for his PFP human predicament had started to emerge. With this gift I was motivated to visit him in the hospital a few days before he died a very painful death. I silently reflected in gratitude for this man's mixed blessings in my life. I especially credit my U,B-FIT mindfulness practice to have made this visit with authentic compassion happen.

Without knowing, let alone intention, my fear for what I perceived to be a hostile world was made somewhat manageable by a combination of psychosomatic illnesses, pleasing adults and anger depending on to who I was relating. To this day when I meet or hear about a difficult person with a negative or bad attitude, an argumentative or angry spouse, a finger wagging driver, a yelling teacher or a power driven supervisor, I can't help but think of how my anger and aggressive behaviour in my teens and 20's so **inaccurately** showed others how I was really feeling - and this opens my heart to them today.

Chapter Five

Essential Life Tool #2 – **SELF-UNDERSTANDING**



Self-understanding is the second break-in tool. This tool gives us understanding of how deeply controlled we are by our unique and personal **PFP** programming algorithm, i.e. the primitive predispositions (the gene pool-nature), our filters (nurtured illogical beliefs) and the primed prompts (cognitive bias/societal conditioning) that govern most of our beliefs and behaviours.

If you have not worked to gain *self-understanding* similar to what is offered below, the likelihood of your *self-understanding/*knowing ‘thy’ self sufficiently to live to your optimal potential in your roles as friend, adult child, parent, life partner, etc. is extremely limited. For many folks, this could be compared to what their mathematical skills could have been if you had not attended up to Grade 8 in elementary school.

Each time I hear of another cruel and brutal act of a terrorist or many of the other examples of man’s inhumanity to man, I try to catch my heart before it closes. I then ask, “I wonder what conditions had to have been forced onto this innocent 3 year old boy or girl to have produced an adult who could carry out such a senseless and crazy act?”

On good days, my mind quickly reminds me of a quote from Dr. Kurt Adler (son of Dr. Alfred Adler) one of my professors during my graduate studies. One day he gave us this profound teaching, “no act is ever senseless or crazy to the person who is doing it at the time they are doing it”. For you who are reading this, your senseless and crazy acts will not be so extreme as these examples but if you are normal and somewhat awake, there will be many times that you have asked yourself, “why did I feel, say and do that?”

Joanne and I believe that having some basic potential answers to that question to increase your self-understanding is an essential step to improved self-management and therefore more optimal self-expression. Some folks who reviewed this book prior to publication cautioned us that this chapter was too much for the average reader. You could skip it if you feel that you do not need greater understanding to live to your fuller mind, body and spiritual potential. To help you make that decision we ask you to ponder one question and then read our summary below

'I feel so bad...why did I just say, do, think or feel that?' The question is, why do you feel that even people who have read many self-help books written by wise and caring men and women who offer excellent suggestions on what to do to have a better life – don't have a better life. The answer often is because they seldom implement the good advice. We feel that while working to better understand 'knowing' one's self is a little harder work than just following the advice, it is a vital link in the chain for optimal self-expression. This we suggest is because **self-understanding can be such a strong motivator** for us to learn and actually do the practices to have the 'better life' (e.g. more fulfillment and socially responsible) skills.

Now consider the following as our intro into self-understanding that will start to answer the 'why do I...' question for you and what to do about it.

We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are. Anais Nin

Understanding (Discovering) and Disengaging from PFP Programming

"What is **REAL**?" asked the rabbit one day when he was talking with the wise old horse.

"Real isn't how you are made," said the wise old horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but **really** loves you then you become real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the rabbit. "Sometimes," said the skin horse for he was always truthful. "When you are **real** you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are real, you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."



The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams

'I feel so bad...why did I just say, do, think or feel that?'

There is a boy/girl in us (you and me), who is about 7 years old. They haven't learned much in 50,000 years.

From 1000's of generations of other children, this child inherited commands about how to save us from physical and emotional hurts and dangers, e.g.

- 'eat only meat that does not smell bad'
- 'different is dangerous' (i.e., minorities/'out-groups' are a threat)
- 'be driven by your feelings'
- 'only pay attention to what might happen next versus the present moment of what's happening now'

This child also went to 'somebody' training school up until age 12. Here they learned how to be accepted in the specific family/tribe they arrived in.

What they learned in this 'somebody' training school, was processed and remembered through the mind of this 7-year-old child so it is for the most part wrong and outdated. Here they learned things like:

- 'look good to/get approval from special people in your tribe/family'
- 'always be in control'
- how to 'judge' others
- how to get 'I am loved' and 'accepted' feelings from the tribe/family

and 101 other Survival, Sex, Satisfaction and Security Rules.

Today we erroneously believe that we still must use our 'somebody beliefs' to relate to everyone we meet.

Because of this child we have survived a lot, so they get some of it right. At this moment, they have 5 ideas as to what we should be doing, saying and feeling. Because our jungle has near totally changed, 4 of these ideas are outdated, wrong and could even cause harm.

Everyone we meet today, who are not working hard to 'wake up' will be in the same fix as we are.

It can be a *Mindless MESS*.

The really great news however, is that even though our brain architecture 'nature' and our learned 'nurture' traits are producing and processing all of our feelings (that then results in our behaviours), provided we skillfully apply the

4 mindful tools to our roles and relationships, we can be fulfilled and kind to others because we will then not be driven by the MESS.

P & J - Adapted from a poem by Robert Bly

Examples of Parts of the Brain that Produces and Processes Feelings

Feelings	Brain Regions
1. Anxiety and Fear	Amygdala, Hypocampus
2. Anger (anger releases pleasure giving chemicals)	Amygdala, Hypocampus
3. Jealousy	Left Side of the Cerebral Cortex
4. Hate/Contempt/Disgust	Putamen and the Insula
5. Guilt and Shame	Dorsomedial Prefrontal Cortex - Frontal Gyrus - Supramarginal Gyrus - Anterior Frontal Gyrus

Possibly the least appreciated of the root causes of the average person's suffering in their life is the near total absence of awareness of the power of this brain architecture and how it dominates each second of each hour, when we lack mindful self-management and expression.

Furthermore, we have not found sufficient evidence to suggest that psychotherapy alone changes much (if any) of the mind and body's dependency on this electronics and chemical factory's operations. When we feel anger for example, we most often react impulsively as dictated by the amygdala and hypocampus.

Optionally, when we activate the following 5 steps of mindful self-management and emotional self-regulation, we are no longer driven to act as our paleo jungle developed brain hardware and childhood programmed software is demanding.

In Chapter Seven (Mindful Self-Management), you will learn how to skillfully process the reactions of this part of your human energy system through the following 5 steps.

Step 1 – As I am having the reactions, with Awareness and Ahh-llowing, I **Catch** myself in the moment – 'Being Here Now'.

Step 2 – With Awareness and Ahh-llowing I **Calm** my B-FIT reactions to the brain's autopilot response.

Step 3 – I **Clarify** the needs of the moment, i.e. how can I be **Caring** and **Competent**?

Step 4 – I make an informed non-reactive **Choice** to respond appropriately.

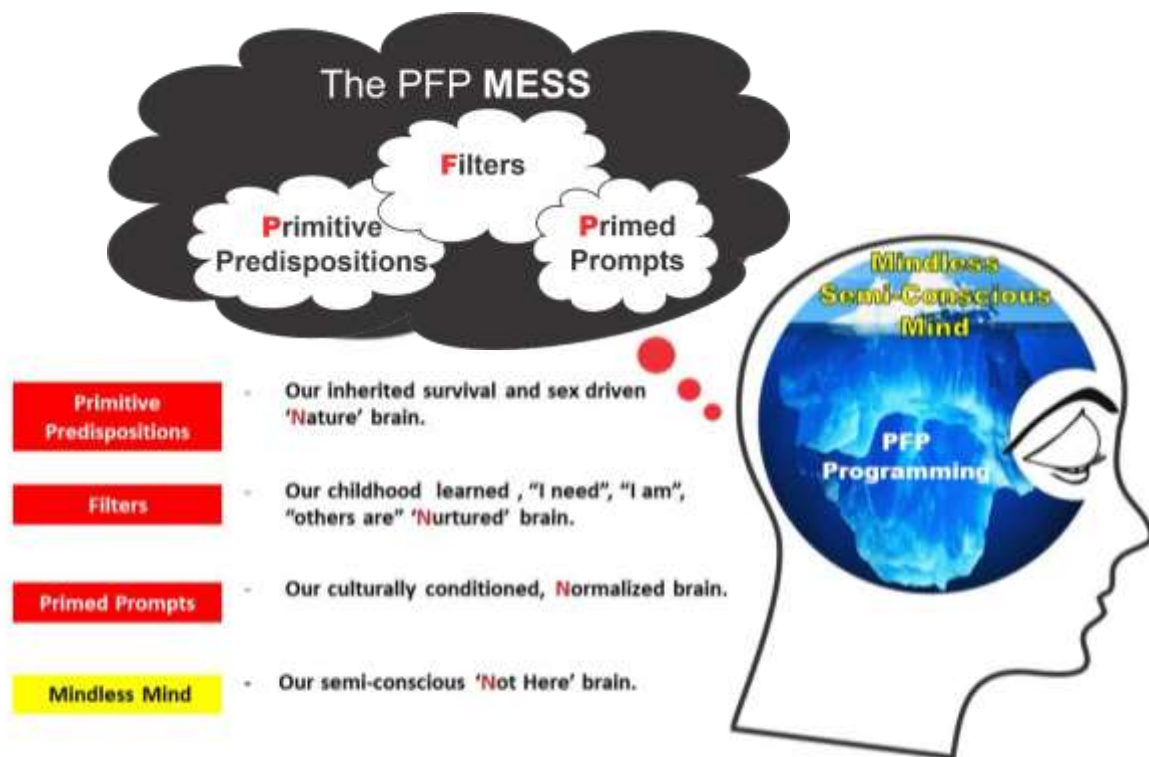
Step 5 – I **Consciously Connect** with others to ensure an optimal exchange.

The Inner Journey – Home

As we experience 'growing up' and 'waking up' in our development, we start the inner journey to have a more complete understanding of who we are, why we respond the way we do, and how we can respond to life's gifts and challenges more effectively. For example, we learn to be happy for no particular reason, in part by skillfully moving from fear and anger to calm in crisis and conflict situations.

Galileo and friends destroyed the illusion of an earth-centred universe. So too the sciences of mindfulness, evolutionary psychology, bio-technology and others, are destroying the illusion that you—the you who is presently reading this sentence—is in charge of most of your thoughts, feelings and behaviours. The consensus of folks who study these things is that it is much more your good luck (and using much more of your fair share of natural resources) than good management that you are happy at all (until that is we wake up).

As introduced in Chapter Two, we are now going to offer you a little more clarity to help to further persuade you to explore and do something very tangible about the possibility that without your knowing it, the most important parts of your life are being dominated by inherited survival and reproduction codes (**Primitive Predispositions**), childhood conditioning (**Filters**), and brain architecture influenced by societal and cultural norms that promote (**brain-Priming Prompts**). As you will remember from Chapter Two, we call this your **PFP**-programming prison. Being dominated by this PFP limits your ability to clarify situations and to make good choices. It is like being in prison and not knowing it.



Finding the answers to why we react as we do and find it so difficult to change (even when we want to) requires a little perspective on human nature's work to date. Mankind was making stone tools over 3 million years ago—and psychological tools as well. In order to survive as a species we had to develop this thing called *human nature* that is passed on to all of us at birth as a package deal. Then in addition to survive emotionally as individuals, we are conditioned into another whole set of personal survival codes based on our upbringing. We call this learning to become a "somebody". Nature's and nurture's work, it seems, most often keeps us vulnerable, self-centred and generally discontent. We are too often mindlessly driven by those

aspects of our PFP-programming that, like stone tools, are no longer necessary in our adult lives.

The Prison Break

We will never work to break out of prison until we know that we are in one. In fact, most folks are unknowingly living in a maximum security prison. This lockup is limiting their ability to be happy and all that they can be and seriously compromising their potential to help others be the same. This section will hopefully offer you sufficient motivation and know-how to escape into the freedom necessary to clarify and choose the most appropriate and best responses to life tasks – especially when under stress.

We must stress the need to be absolutely clear about the emotions that are colouring any situation. In the absence of *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing, self-management* and *self-expression*, we will be driven by thoughts and feelings of which we are completely unaware. Before we discuss how to self-manage and self-express, we need to spend some time coming to an understanding of those hidden sources of emotional drivenness, which too often result in difficult feelings and power-based behaviours (i.e. overt yelling or covert silent yelling, e.g. moodiness/sulking).

Other parts of this resource provide you with specific exercises to complete in order to increase your capacity for mindful, conscious responses in any situation. This section is a little different. It asks you only to have the courage to reflect deeply and honestly in order to come to a new awareness of the hidden conditions that drive your unhelpful feelings, thoughts and behaviours from a psychological and biological perspective. Knowing your unique personal inheritances and conditioning that produce many of your feelings, thoughts and behaviours (your algorithm) will help enable you to prevent your emotional hijacks more effectively. As a result, you will be ready to respond to the needs of yourself and others more wisely and sensitively. You will also experience more complete meaning and fulfillment even from having less positive external conditions in one's life.

Without development of this life tool you will in all probability only have the basic survival capacity of an underdeveloped good person.

Each of us has been programmed with a biochemical and physical energy system with its own rules and beliefs conditioned by thousands of personal childhood experiences. As a result, each of us develops unique ways of perceiving and responding to life situations. This PFP programming is responsible for our positive temperament and desired personality traits. It also determines when and how intensely we experience difficult emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, guilt, impatience or embarrassment—and all their associated behaviours.

Primitive Predispositions



The human brain appears to be over 95% the same fundamental architecture as it was 50,000 years ago with the few main changes being in the frontal cortex region. This then predisposes us to 'cave person' reactions.

You will recall that *primitive predispositions* is the term that we are using to describe your inherited physical brain architecture, chemistry and energetic nature. It is the you composed of instinctive drives for survival and reproduction (the hard drive, so to speak). Let's dig down to explore this root a little more completely. As you read through this section, remember why we are talking about this: your primitive predispositions will frequently prevent you from 'stealing happiness'.

Outdated Hard Drive for Survival and Reproduction

This primitive predisposition PFP root is probably the deepest simply because it is the oldest. It includes all influences associated with our physical and instinctive make-up resulting from our inherited gene pool. Remember that this pool goes back millions of years and is made up primarily of the qualities that have allowed us to survive as a species. The problem is that survival instincts are, of necessity, "me first" instincts, what we are in part trying to transcend. These qualities combine to give each person genetic, inherited predispositions that trigger both helpful and less than helpful emotional reactions. These are physical responses that manifest themselves as resistance and attachments that we unconsciously experience that distorts our thoughts, feelings and behaviours. We can discover the insights and learn the skills to disengage from age-old, outdated tendencies. By doing this, we will ensure that this root does not contribute to the suffering of ourselves and others.

The body's nervous system, with miles of nerve fibre and millions of circuits, processes the perceptions brought in by the seven senses. This system routinely sorts out thousands of pieces of information; it shunts messages up and down millions of cells, each containing pieces of data. Much of this data has been accumulated by our ancestors and passed on genetically. Some is also learned after our birth (i.e. filters). All of this data works to determine whether any new situation presents a threat or a promise of a good outcome, and all of this happens in less than a second.

As we discussed above, we process eleven million bits of information per second in our subconscious mind and only sixty bits per second in our conscious mind. What's more, we are genetically predisposed to be overly-vigilant and sometimes misperceive situations as threats.

This makes it difficult for us to live in accordance with our highest values and intentions. This PFP system always defaults to seeing a possible threat in unfamiliar situations. We may therefore react negatively to change or to unpredictable moments with others as if there is a threat. **We are actually wired to over react.**

Because of neuroplasticity, some of this wiring can be imprinted after birth and still be just as destructive. A well-researched and published example of this is life in New York City since the attack on 9/11. On that bright, sunny day two planes flew into the highest towers of New York, causing the towers to fall in pieces to the ground, literally filling the sky with dust and debris in one of the most terrifying moments in our collective experience. As a result of that terror, thousands of New Yorkers now have a social anxiety disorder triggered by a bright, sunny, blue sky. Many of them cannot leave their homes when their newly hard-wired nature illogically reacts to this trigger. On a much smaller scale (usually) this same kind of reaction and processing of feelings is happening throughout most hours of most days in our everyday lives. The practice outlined in Chapter Seven is designed to help us better manage this part of PFP programming.

Imbalances of Chemicals and Energy Systems

Hundreds of chemicals, hormones, neurotransmitters, minerals, vitamins and amino acids course through our bodies and minds daily to feed and protect us. These chemicals must maintain a delicate balance to ensure our emotional and physical energy and well-being. Levels above or below an optimal balance cause serious physical illnesses and mental distress that literally take over our life. As an example, if we have too much adrenaline, we can become anxious, irritable or abusive. Imbalances of neurotransmitters are both the result of and the contributor to many mood and personality disorders such as clinical depression. Interestingly, these chemicals appear to guide our feelings and behaviour.

Thirty-five years ago, I was two years into my own totally debilitating clinical depression while I helplessly watched brain cancer end my twin sister's life. With a weight loss of sixty pounds, and nine out of ten of the depression diagnostic symptoms so severe, I was dying. Then, after just three to four weeks on a therapeutic level of an antidepressant medication, I was 75% of the way back to my old self. What happened? Welcome to the world of hundreds of thousands of us who thank chemicals, together with our support systems including families, doctors, proper nutritional supplements and aerobic exercise, for saving our lives.

Chemicals (food, herbal remedies, vitamins and minerals, pharmaceuticals, hormones, neurotransmitters) are the building blocks of our fluids, cellular tissue and brain-firing mechanisms that make up our bodies, mind and heart (in both the physical and emotional sense). Imbalances in these chemicals have destroyed countless lives.

This is not to say that chemicals alone are the ideal way to prevent and manage the moods and even severe, life-threatening mental health disorders that accompany these conditions.

Our happiness model is based on a comprehensive approach to life. In our view “comprehensive” must include an intentionally nurtured and balanced biomedical system to ensure that this variable does not have devastating impact on our personal and professional lives. A balanced bio-system however is still not enough.

Many neuroscientists make a radical claim that you, an average human, are mindlessly driven over 90% of the time by your subconscious, PFP programming and that your free will to make optimal decisions based on facts is pretty much an illusion when you are only semi-conscious/mindless. This same programming and lack of free will are major contributors to your inability to be happy.

PFP Programming unknowingly takes many of the following orders from a brain and body evolved to ensure physical survival and reproduction as directed by thousands of ancestors before you.

The following are more examples of some of the primitive predisposition influences as discussed by neuroscientists over the last number of years. These are related mostly to the PFP of physical and emotional survival and reproduction codes that are directing your life without your knowledge. Try to identify how many of them you have seen in action in your own life (reference bibliography for more details).

- We make very quick judgements about situations and others. Details don't matter; it is speed that counts when judging anything that the brain's hardwired firing pin, the amygdala (AMY), determines in a second to be different and therefore potentially dangerous. It therefore speed dials to PFP to direct your next thoughts, feelings and actions. Interestingly, these first-impression reads can be accurate. In one study, students gave detailed evaluations of professors after the semester was over at the end of four months. Other students watched three minutes of video with the professors and gave the same ratings. Remember that most of our assets come from our PFP as well (e.g. intuition).
- On sunny days or if you are holding a warm cup versus a cold cup, you are more positive, kind, and open to agreeing to suggestions from others.
- You make up much of what you see, hear, and think - reference the checker board test in Chapter Two.
- Everyone has a pitifully poor memory, but think they accurately recall most past events (eyewitnesses to crimes often do not agree on details).
- Your medial prefrontal cortex (MPC) significantly favours helping people who are like you in colour, social status or ethnicity, compared to out-group people.
- Right-handed people (left brain dominant) have a greater sense of obsessing for order and reason than left-handed people, because of their brain wiring.

- Virtually everyone has a grossly inflated assessment of themselves, even after being shown that they are well below average.
- Placebo medications and belief alone are effective one third of the time.
- We live on the top rung of the world's socioeconomic ladder: excellent health care, education, recreation and opportunities, food and no armed troops walking up our driveway. Despite all these advantages, a minor upset often brings normal people to emotional hijacks. The mindless PFP Programming so controls us that awareness of our 'big picture relative good fortune' is rare and, even if present, seldom brings us to the genuine gratitude that could have prevented the emotional meltdown.
- Given your sexual orientation, if you have an average level of hormones and are relatively healthy, you will often have 'mating' feelings, thoughts and behavioural tendencies, and attractions to your preferred mating gender (not necessarily your partner). If you are in a committed relationship, there is a 50% likelihood that you will painfully betray (i.e. have a secret relationship including sexual activities with someone else) your partner primarily as a result of PFP Programming.
- The average person becomes anxious with nothing to do. Try taking one day of doing nothing to experience this primitive addiction to staying busy. The primitive mind is wired to constantly scan its environment to stay safe, reproduce, and stay comfortable. When the mind's capacity for fifty thousand thoughts a day becomes unused, the nervous system appears confused and anxiety is often the result. The PFP seems to associate staying busy to staying alive. This may well be one of the greatest reasons behind the success of social media and trash T.V.
- The majority of people will report thefts that they observe in department stores on a ratio of 3:1 of 'street' looking men and women compared to business looking men and women. In addition when reporting, there is significantly more hesitance and unsureness when reporting the business looking people versus the street looking people.

Brain Primed Prompts

The next example of our PFP Programming algorithm is the numerous present-day societal and cultural norms that influence thousands of thoughts, feelings and desires every day without our knowing it. We inherit the medial prefrontal cortex (MPC) and amygdala (AMY) hardware but brain priming is some of the software. We call this part of our PFP's functioning "**primed prompts**".

Priming means simply that your brain becomes wired to fire when it receives the same messages over and over: for example, higher price means better wine.

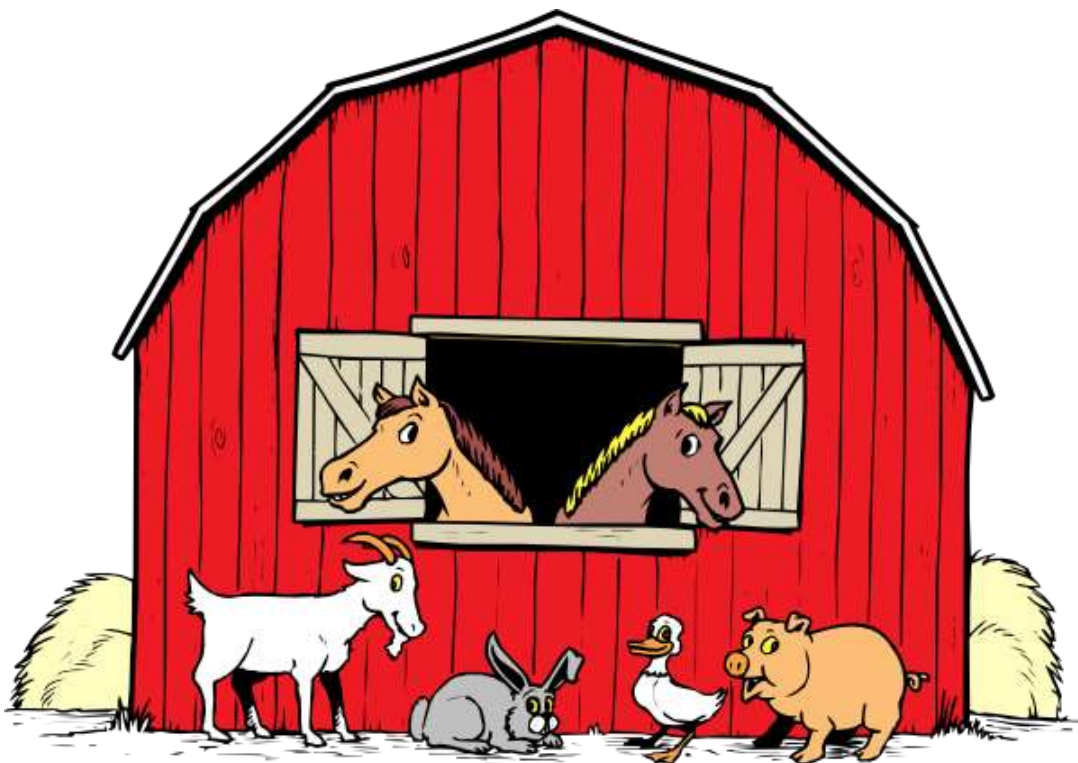
Priming is cultural day-to-day influencing whereas filters programming is mostly the result of early family conditioning. This conditioning is even more dominant when experiences early in

the brain's formation are influenced by strong emotions associated with the event. For example, if as a child, mom and dad praised you when you did things very well, or if when you did something wrong you were consistently criticized or made to feel embarrassed or, worse, banished from the safety of the 'tribe' for an hour or two, your subconscious brain could be conditioned with the message, "I am loved and connected to the herd only when I am right and don't make mistakes". You then live out your adult life with a distorted sense of needing to be right in most everything you do. Even when you clearly are in error, you catch yourself giving a ridiculous rationalization of "Yes I was wrong this once, but it was for the right reason".

Many repetitive brain priming and programming incidents since birth has conditioned you with very personal, emotionally preferred outcomes to situations that you experience in your adult life, especially in your relationships with others. When we have choices, we then most often choose what we have been pre-programmed and primed to want. We then build a logical case around our emotionally-based desire even if it objectively does not make sense.

So if you are primed—exposed to information mostly without your knowledge—that information has a profound influence on your conscious decisions. For example, if you receive cordial priming, you are patient and respectful. If you are unknowingly primed to feel vulnerable, you are more aggressive in later unrelated situations. The following are some examples to show how priming works.

How many farm animals do you see in this picture?



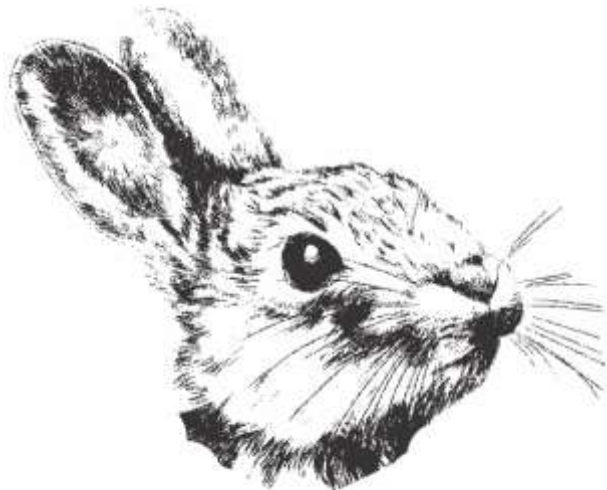
Now, what do you first see in this picture:



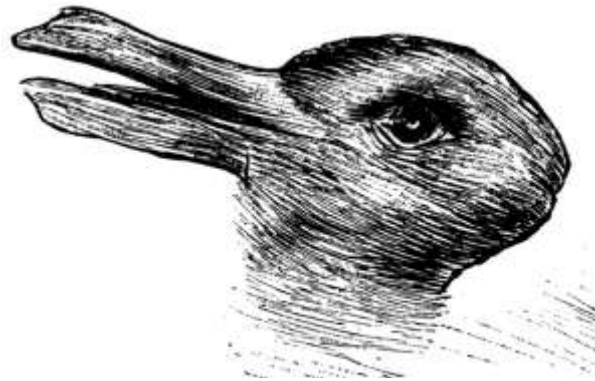
- To the vast majority of people, the above drawing first looks like a donkey or a horse's head because you were primed with a picture of a barnyard on the previous page. If you have first been shown a picture of an ocean, the above drawing first looks to you like a seal.
- Elections are predictable with 72% accuracy from voters just looking at pictures of the candidate with no other information or affiliation. This happens because the brain has been primed to respond positively to certain looks. Have you ever wondered why almost all TV news anchors or actors in commercials are attractive people?
- If French music is played in a wine store, there is a much better chance that you will buy French wine that day.
- Teachers of average students who are told that their students are gifted produce students who perform significantly better than the norm. Teachers of average students who are told that their students have learning disabilities produce students who perform significantly worse than the norm.

Instruction:

Observe this picture for
5 seconds.

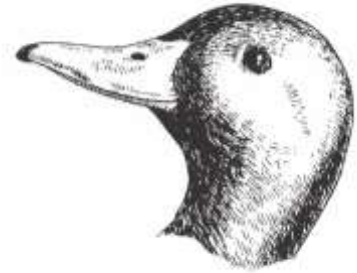


**What is the first thing you see
in this picture?**



You probably saw a rabbit, but can you now see a duck as well?

You saw the rabbit first because you were primed from the previous image to see a rabbit.



Our Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing tool (Chapter Three) and this self-understanding tool provides the 'password' to reduce and eventually eliminate the potentially destructive many influences of PFP roots of suffering.

Now! Now! Now!

Much of the power of PFP programming relies on being only semi-conscious (e.g. when our thoughts are in the past or in the future). Remember that being semi-conscious is the case **when you are some place and your mind is someplace else** e.g. driving and thinking of where you have been or where you are going.

With mindful presence (Tool #1), paying attention to body sensations and thoughts that are happening **now**, paying attention to what you are doing **now**, being aware that you are doing it **now**, significantly and measurably reduces the power of the PFP brain. **Your past memories and future plans and previous programming are crowded off your brain's bandwidth when it is applying most of its conscious and focusing power to experience the present moment.**

The positive functioning of both AMY and MPC can be much more effectively managed in the moment by mindfulness (i.e. being aware of what we are doing and experiencing it as we are doing it). This is why mindfulness is such a powerful tool to break out of PFP prison.

The mind and the mind alone determines the quality of one's life. Sidhartha

Discovering and Disengaging from Faulty Filters' Beliefs

Above we looked at two parts of your PFP: the impact of your primitive predispositions, and your brain's primed prompts. The following will help you discover, understand and learn to disengage from **filters** (the F in PFP) that may be limiting your potential to be happy. We think of filters as your *nurtured* programs. *Nurture* refers to the **beliefs** that we have learned from our earliest childhood. We will then teach you how to prune this root and to nurture those filters' beliefs that help you to live a more fulfilling life.

We thank Dr. Alfred Adler for his insights in developing the idea of filters, which he called *subjective private illogic*, and Dr. Carl Jung, who called them *complexes*. I will refer to them as *filters*, both faulty and fruitful.

Why Bother?

You will find that discovering and disengaging from your faulty filters is particularly helpful to you if:

- ✓ you logically know that you over-react to a certain situation or person, but just can't pull yourself out of it;
- ✓ throughout your life you have had difficulty feeling close to another or have fallen out of a relationship with someone and really can't explain why (except to blame others);
- ✓ you realize that what upsets you wouldn't or doesn't seem to upset others nearly as much as you, or that different things upset them but not you and you don't know why;
- ✓ you feel that certain situations need to be changed now. Others would agree that it is important, but feel your urgency is a little over the top. This is often a clue that you are being driven by your filters in this situation.

Understanding the Set-up

Every child starts life perceiving that "I am weak and vulnerable," both emotionally and physically. They therefore grope for ways to be included, to have their needs met. This gives them a sense of counting for something and connection in the family, or more primitively, the 'tribe'. This then gives their algorithm moment-by-moment survival processor reassurance that they are safe and secure (or not). To figure out how to do this, the child becomes a good mind reader.

With these deeply-rooted primary directives, the child observes and makes quick (usually very incomplete) judgments about how to win this game. The child learns very quickly what will bring reward (inclusion) and what will bring punishment (exclusion) and acts accordingly. Many highly subjective judgments are made that soon become **filters' beliefs** through which all adult life situations must pass and be tested.

*When a pick pocket meets a saint –
All he sees are the saint's pockets.*

Ram Dass

Examples of Faulty Filters' Beliefs

One or two of the following filters' beliefs are generally developed during the first twelve years of this 'fitting into the tribe' strategy. They are mostly unknown to the 'owner' however they are driving a major part of how you relate to others and your world.

- **Faulty Filter #1: Need to be in control in order to feel normal**

I must be in control of life's situations in order to feel secure, happy and okay. Life in general is agitating if I don't know or am not in control of what is happening. I really need predictability, order, and structure not to feel anxious.

- **Faulty Filter #2: Need to perceive myself as not being controlled**

It is critical to my well-being and good feelings that life situations or other people do not control me. If they do, or I perceive they do, I feel irritated, anxious, fearful and somehow restricted. No matter what I accomplish or contribute in life, I still feel inferior to others in position of authority. I can become preoccupied with "managing" them.

- **Faulty Filter #3: Need to get it right and be right**

I need to be right. One benefit of this for me is avoiding criticism (which feels awful). My sense of being perfect in several or even most parts of my life is very important. I procrastinate and avoid making decisions in order to avoid making mistakes. "Better to not run in the race than to risk losing it". In my secret life, I am often highly self-critical.

I don't accept criticism well. Criticism makes me angry or gives me hurt feelings. I sometimes lie to avoid criticism.

I have developed an unconscious habit of being critical of others. I am constantly affirming my own rightness to help me feel good, okay and even sometimes self-righteous. It sometimes seems that I am still that child, fearful of not living up to Mom's or Dad's or someone else's expectations of me.

- **Faulty Filter #4: Need for approval from others**

I must have the approval (expressed or self-perceived) of significant others in my life for what I do and say. Being right is one main way I ensure this. Pleasing others can also be an obsessively high priority in my life to achieve this approval. Complements and *kudos* are very important to my feeling good, perceived self-worth and security.

I find myself exaggerating and embellishing the truth. I even lie about things for no apparent reason. I like impressing people; I may even need to. I am almost obsessive about my appearance to others: for example, hair, clothing, body, intellect.

What people will think can be an ongoing preoccupation for me. I sometimes use gossip to buy acceptance or impress.

- **Faulty Filter #5: Need to be treated fairly**

If life treats me unfairly (or I think it does), I have a right to feel irritated, vengeful or uncooperative. I came from either a home where I was spoiled or a home where I was treated unfairly as my parents' way of controlling my behaviour. Now my judgments about what I am entitled to are often mistaken (but I usually don't realize this).

I have genuine anxiety, anger or sadness when I perceive unfairness toward me and others. When I don't get what I think I deserve, I often react powerfully (aggressively) to get or even take it! To get what I want I may also act weak, vulnerable, or sick so that others will come to my service, which I often interpret as the only way I can be loved.

- **Faulty Filter #6: Need to feel self-righteous**

I need to perceive myself as better than (morally and/or socially), in order to feel self-righteously worthwhile. I therefore often become addicted to an ideology, career or belief with clear and simple do's and don'ts, good or evil, and self-righteously relate to others as good guys or bad guys. Being good or right often elevates my feelings of superiority that I need to feel happy and okay. I often find myself judging others.

- **Faulty Filter #7: Need to achieve and be busy**

What I have or have achieved is never enough because my self-esteem is directly attached to what I do or achieve, and this activity therefore must be on-going. I believe that I am known and valued as a "doer".

Possibly my greatest fear is to be bored or have nothing to do. My life is therefore filled with "to-dos," social events, work, emailing etc. These activities all appear necessary to me, and I can justify them to anyone. At their root, however, may well be a panic that will be triggered if I am not busy.

Boredom or having nothing to do, for me, is like being locked in solitary confinement.

It would be almost impossible for me to spend a day doing nothing.

- **Faulty Filter #8: Need to be included**

I must be included and respected in social interactions or else I feel excluded, hurt and unimportant. I unconsciously feel that people who exclude me do it on purpose, so I have a right to be angry with them (which is one way that my mind protects me from deeper hurt). I must be emotionally accepted by most people I know.

- **Faulty Filter #9: Need for ongoing proof of others' worthiness of trust**

Others must continually prove to me that they can be trusted and that they like me. I often can't be sure.

Possibly abandonment, (perceived or real) by my mother, father or other important figure from my childhood taught me not to trust and not to get close to someone special because they will likely just leave and hurt me.

Being intimate is a challenge for me. Therefore, I have many friends but guard against getting too close or dependent with one or two due to fear of rejection or betrayal.

- **Faulty Filter #10: Need for excitement**

In order for me to feel good I need excitement, things happening around me. I plan many (more than average) exciting events for months in advance and would feel uneasy and restless without them to look forward to.

Obsessive thinking, feelings and behaviour or even regular angry outbursts make me feel calm, good and alive. As illogical as it seems, I know I sometimes "look for trouble," for example by starting an argument, but I just can't help myself.

- **Faulty Filter #11: Need to see myself as a victim**

Life and others will always let me down or hurt me.

Bad things happen to me much more than to others. I am a magnet for trouble.

I feel normal, when I am a victim in life. I misbelieve that I am victimized (and have no choice but to be a victim) much more often than others.

When my "suffering" serves to make people pay attention to me, I can sometimes have feelings of being okay because of the supportive attention that I now receive. I generally, however, believe that I am not lovable.

- **Faulty Filter #12: Need to and deserve to have comfort**

Getting and keeping physical, emotional and psychological comfort is my main goal. When life conforms, I am most happy. When it doesn't, I have a right to feel bad or even to take what I need.

I like to keep the peace and avoid constructive conflict as it is very uncomfortable for me. I am skilled at avoiding conflict by making light of conversation that gets too serious or by not making decisions.

One of my favourite hobbies is to "veg out."

I try to hide it, but mostly I think of myself first.

I like immediate gratification, so I don't tend to plan or think too far ahead.

I let others plan and do for me, but they better get it right or I will feel and show my “justifiable” upset—often by becoming moody or sulking.

When these comfort goals are met, there is no one more likeable and loveable than me.

These are many of the major themes of the most prevalent filters’ beliefs through which we, each in our own unique way, see the world, ourself and others. At the end of this chapter we will help you to complete an assessment to discover the particular ones that, unknown to you, govern/control most of your own reactions. We encourage you to complete that self-assessment. You will discover the tremendous power that filters have. They are very purposeful, and if you can’t fulfill that purpose in positive ways, PFP programming will direct you to mindlessly fulfill it in negative ways.

The rules created by filters define a person’s gifts and assets as well as their self-limiting beliefs, difficult feelings and maladaptive behaviours. They create their own **subjective reality**, a “private illogic” that is learned mostly before the age of twelve. Everyone develops filter rules as they attend “somebody school” from age zero to twelve.

Filters not only define us, they define our reality: “When I think I am a hammer, everything looks like a nail”.

I can win an argument on any topic against any opponent. People know this and steer clear of me at parties. Often as a sign of great respect, they don’t even invite me anymore.

Lily Tomlin

However, with insights into your personal filters, the other components of PFP and the other 3 tools, you can reframe filters to be positive and less addictive, driving and gripping. The subconscious stores and prioritizes all of our filters’ data within its eleven million bits per second processing capacity. Discovery and U,B-FIT mindfulness facilitate the conscious 50 bits per second of data processing to lessen the filters’ driving, gripping power (i.e. enable you to self-manage and self-express).

Factors Influencing our Private Rules/Filters’ Beliefs Development

The Birth Order Influence: firstborn, middle, youngest, only

Birth order is a very significant factor in the development of filters’ beliefs. A first-born child, or a child born more than five years after other siblings, receives the full force of their parents’ attention, love, expectations and attitudes—or the lack of any of those. They also receive the full force of the parents’ discipline and protectiveness. Therefore, they will have

a great respect for authority and achievement, sometimes to a fault. Whatever the parents value and expect—for example, education or work ethic—they will try to achieve to have a meaningful place in the family. If the first-born has younger siblings and is expected to help out, the first-born child will learn to value responsibility and independence. However, if a younger sibling, particularly of the same gender, challenges the first-born's position, the first-born may struggle with self-confidence and modify some of their previously-held positive values and behaviours.

An only child or youngest child may also grow to be independent, responsible, intellectual and dominant, but if they are over-protected or spoiled, they may as adults have a self-centred, entitlement or an expectation to be taken care of and made comfortable. They will learn to do things by themselves and like solitary projects and being alone. They will have a very high respect for authority—sometimes too high.

Second or middle children learn to try harder because they are not born into a place of special recognition, e.g. a first born or youngest or only. They therefore must try harder to earn their recognition. They are good negotiators with the strong social skills needed to compete against older, more competent siblings. They are often the best at maintaining good relationships. Because their parents are generally more relaxed and less demanding of them, they tend to be more flexible themselves.

Heredity

- physical limitations
- delayed social or intellectual development
- gifts, for example high IQ or artistic abilities

Family Atmosphere (climate at home)

- Competitive vs. cooperative
- Authoritarian vs. egalitarian
- Critical vs. encouraging
- Excessively high standards
- Over-protective
- Pampering/spoiling
- Abusive or neglecting

Family Values (Mom/Dad “ideals”)

- honesty
- loyalty
- caring
- hard work
- orderliness
- impressing others
- being good

Role Models

How Mom and Dad behave significantly influences the child to feel to secure and worthwhile or insecure and inferior. As an adult, this same behaviour will be sought or resisted.

And The Beat Goes On and On

Not surprisingly, then, people who do not work to discover and disconnect from their faulty filters and accentuate their positive fruitful filters use the same subjective illogic throughout their entire life.

Most often, even when we get poor results, we keep trying to achieve our goals of security and inclusion with the same thoughts, feelings and behaviours. For instance, a child raised in a family where being right won acceptance, would get rewarded through treats, privileges or approval for meeting the parents' definition of rightness. However, being wrong would often result in criticism, punishment, or worst of all, being sent away to what felt like solitary confinement.

This child for example would reach adulthood with a distorted perception of the importance of being right and not being criticized. They would believe they must be right or be above criticism in order to be okay, and that most of life's situations and people must be judged in accordance with their standards of wrongness and rightness. As a result, the child would screen many of life's situations through this faulty filter. They would remain unaware of the fact that there is no fixed definition for rightness in many situations and relationships. Further, as an adult, self-worth shouldn't depend on getting it right or not being seen as wrong. For people with this faulty filter, stress builds until they find a distraction that is strong enough to temporarily remove this feeling of inferiority. This process then is repeated again and again throughout life.

Those fortunate enough to have grown up without rightness and perfectionism as a major preoccupation of one or both parents are far more likely to develop a standard for right and wrong that is balanced and reasonable.

All other filters have a similar ability to drive and even distort your feelings and behaviour without your being aware of it. Your filters give your behaviour purpose and meaning: if I do _____, then I will feel good, be safe, 'loved' and not feel inferior. Remember that we are talking about your subjective and subconscious thinking here: PFP programming, not objective reality. However, once you learn about the illogical message of your filters you can discover the purpose of and pay-off from many of your behaviours and their associated positive or negative feelings.

Why Do I Continue When I Know Better?

Each person's filters are unique.

Five different people may choose to do or say the same thing. In a particular instance, they may all do their absolute best to get something right. One may be doing this because they just feel really good in getting it right. One may do it right to impress others. One

may do it right to be completely fair, another to gain dominance or control of a situation, and still another mainly to avoid criticism. The behaviour is identical for all five, but the pay-off is totally different based on each person's filtering belief system that gives meaning to the action.

Your own faulty filter is the main reason why, even when you know better, when it is clearly logical for you to change a behaviour that is causing you problems, frustrations or disconnects, you continue to repeat it—with the same negative consequences. This is why many problem-solving, talk-counseling and behaviour-modification programs are ineffective in the long term unless filters and the rest of PFP are discovered through these cognitive insights. These driven and distorted filters must be discovered and disconnected because the wires and circuits in our brains that are used the most will get replayed the most. Reacting and therefore reinforcing a filter's circuit is like driving down a muddy road again and again. Eventually, you create a rut, and the rut in the road must be eliminated or the wheel will get stuck every time.

Hopefully you are starting to see the need for this self-understanding tool!

Good News and Bad News

Using western psychology to identify our subjective, private logic and to learn how to rethink it, is potentially as powerful a growth strategy as could be developed. Our strong belief is however, that if in the moments preceding or during an emotional hijack we cannot be conscious of what is really happening—if we can't mindfully catch ourself being Here Now!—we will not make optimal choices and will not implement known insights and skills necessary to prevent and control the damage.

U,B-FIT mindfulness, which is highly aware of and subjectively non-attached to what is happening when it is happening, enables us to activate these cognitive insights and skills. In fact, without this awareness, the natural neural wiring often dominates, and the basics of freeze, fight or flight (activated by filters) takes over as they have for years. Filters have been given many other names like schemas, gremlins, tapes, convictions, illogical beliefs or complexes: these terms all basically mean the same thing.

In the attachment below you will discover some more of the most prevalent faulty filters that need no longer drive and distort your feelings and behaviour. Each filter has many sub-filters, but just discovering even one of your filters will contribute greatly to disconnecting from harmful thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Remember, filters are kept private from us and control us throughout our entire life unless we discover and disconnect from them.

Essential Considerations: Disengaging from Faulty Filters

- *Self-understanding* is not enough. *Self-management* is also essential.
- We must also practise, practise, practise—especially the *U,B-FIT* exercises (*Appendix II*)—IN ORDER TO OPTIMALLY PERFORM THIS DISENGAGING PROCESS.
- *U,B-FIT mindfulness* practice also develops capacity to **outgrow** the mind/body predisposition to be driven and gripped by filters in the first place.
- Practice and performance require maximum effort as well as a gentle self-forgiveness and compassion for not getting it right or for becoming hijacked in spite of our best efforts.

Resource Recommendations for Deepening Understanding:

The following resources are excellent aides to your all-important life task of discovering and disconnecting from your hidden filters:

Emotional Alchemy, by Tara Goleman

Taming Your Gremlin, by Rick Carson

Reference Attachment 1 below to complete a filter's self-assessment.

The Critical Importance of Understanding and Disengaging from PFP-programmed Roots of Risks

Understanding and disengaging from (not destroying) this PFP programming results in the significantly enhanced feelings and behaviour that you require to be consistently happy and help others be happy. Many benefits will result for you. You will have new-found energy for your day and the work it holds. You will develop an increased capacity for compassion. Your *self-understanding* will bring you a wisdom that will allow you to help others, and also increase your capabilities and capacity for new ways to enhance your relationships.

Not knowing about your PFP programming, and therefore being unknowingly driven by inappropriate feelings and behaviours, is a constant threat for everyone. Selfishness, moodiness, anger, indifference, prejudice, gossiping, irritation and frustration are all primarily caused by our PFP programming mindlessly running our life (remember the master servant, left brain right brain predicament).

On the other hand, some of the benefits of getting to know your PFP programming include a new confidence as you are no longer driven by your unknown and unmanaged feelings, thoughts and behaviour.

Without Personal Growth and Development, Is Free Will Really Possible?

To review, free will can loosely be defined as one's natural ability to make choices about how to think, feel and behave. We assume this to be an innate personal quality. In fact, our court system and many religions base their judgement of a person's guilt or innocence, or sinfulness on whether or not that person was capable of exercising this freedom of choice. **Erroneously** (according to the vast majority of neuroscientists), we assume humans are born with free will and that strong and good people therefore use their free will to make good choices, and weak people make poorer choices.

However, it is critical to understand, that free will is not a given. Instead, PFP drives the bus—unless we work to develop our awareness of it. **Free will ain't free**, and believing that it is results in most folks not recognizing the need to develop the ability to make conscious choices that truly reflect their intentions. Heck, if we think we have it, why bother to work to develop it?

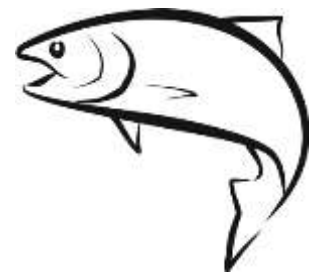
Once again to review, as it turns out, this *you* who is reading this sentence has about 50 bits per second of conscious energy-processing capacity in which to feel, think, decide and do. Your subconscious PFP, on the other hand, has a capacity of about 11,000,000 bits per second. Even comparing just these capacities suggests a strong mismatch of wills.

Many scientists agree with us that free will is not a given. Highly creditable neuroscience studies of the subconscious, such as those published by Benjamin Libet and David Eagleman, indicate that most of the sorting out of moment-by-moment reality and decision-making happens one second or more before our conscious mind has registered it. This is one of many indicators that *you* are not in charge. You do not have as much free will to clarify and choose as you think. However, U,B-FIT Mindfulness in the moment makes you aware of choices to facilitate discernment and give greater self-control.

The Predicament

"I don't know who discovered water, but it likely wasn't a fish".

This pithy little piece of wisdom is appropriate to introduce a claim that is one of the most critical root causes of unsatisfactory relationships, and also almost everyone's less-than-optimal quality of life (e.g. to be happy for no particular reason). This includes our potential, as friends, parents, partners, adult children or anything else, like being able to meet the needs of others. The simple truth in this comment about the fish is that—like the fish that is so close to the water it doesn't notice it—we are oblivious to what is constantly happening around us in our daily interactions. Our PFP has become so familiar that we don't notice it.



The 'water we swim in' is the terribly faulty way that our brains process most messages from people and our environment. The discoveries in neuroscience that now give us a much more complete window into the brain's way of processing information could not be scarier. The research shows how incapable we really are of living in accordance with our ideal values, our A-Game—unless, that is, we become more conscious of what we are doing, feeling, and thinking, as we are doing it.

Inattentional Blindness

To conclude this partial description of our human predicament, here is one more disturbing part of the setup. One discovery that could possibly be our species' most costly limitation to living a personally satisfying and socially useful life (when we are not aware of it) is something called *inattentional blindness*—missing the forest for the trees.

Inattentional blindness works like this. First a story about our feline cousins. There is a popular story in the research literature about an experiment of leaving new-born kittens in a home with only rounded corners and shapes. After three months of being raised in this environment, the kittens were put into a normal environment with vertical and horizontal objects. These poor little fellas kept bumping into legs of chairs and tables because apparently their brain could not register such shapes. In other words, for these kittens straight edges did not exist.

Similarly, some early anthropologists located Indigenous tribes not influenced by differently evolved man and performed some experiments with them and their interpreters. One experiment had a researcher place five familiar objects, such as stone tools, weapons, shells, or ornaments, in front of various people from the village. Added to these objects was a wristwatch. When the villagers were asked to pick out the object that was most different from the rest they would always pick something like a broken shell: they apparently did not see the wristwatch.

As mentioned earlier, inattentional blindness is why we miss the three storey building that we have looked at a hundred times and then one day we notice it.

Hundreds of thousands of years of evolution devoted to survival and reproduction has left us reluctant to explore or adopt new ideas about our self, others and how we see our unique place in the world. This is particularly disturbing when we logically believe that an idea would be good for us, yet our pigheaded brain still keeps the prison door locked. We must presume that any ancestor who started exploring new ways of thinking and changed perspectives too quickly either got eaten or couldn't attract a mate to produce similar progeny!

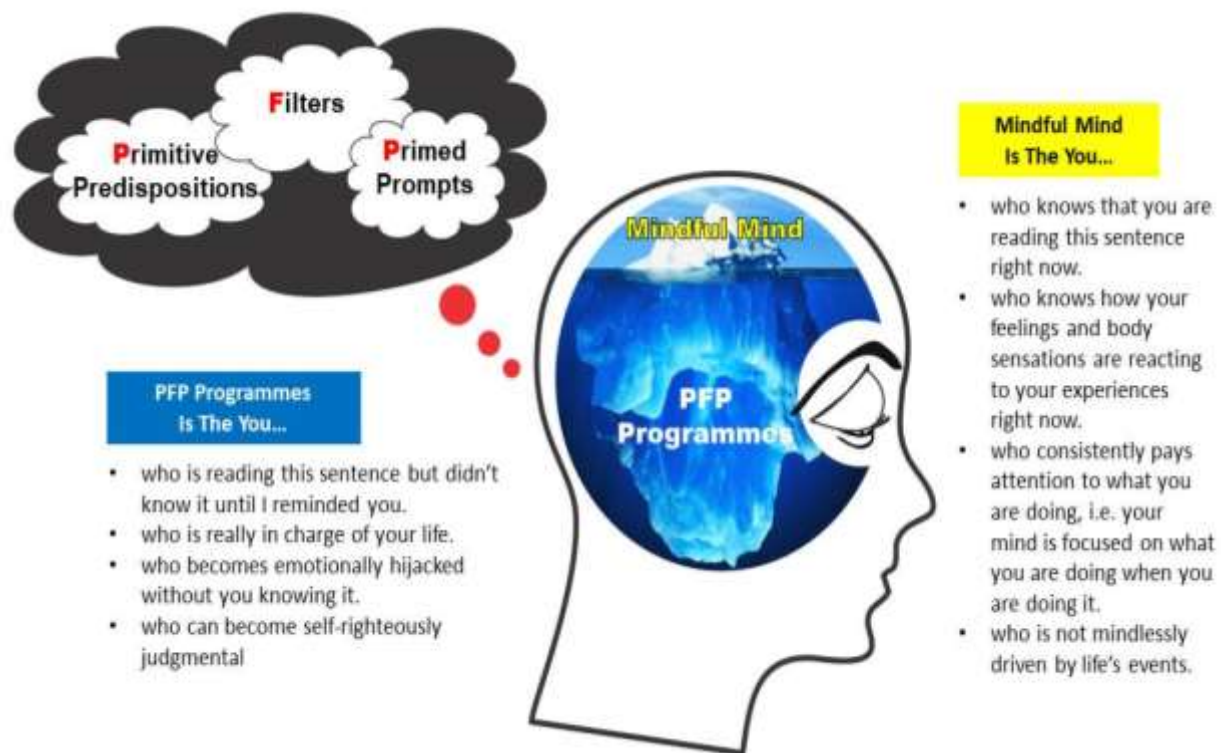
Levels of Being Awake Required to Have Free Will

Now that we have described some of the human predicament of PFP, let's increase your understanding of who you think you are.

A reminder: we call the *you* who is unknowingly reading this sentence (until I drew your attention to it) the mindless semi-conscious *you*.

As noted in Chapter Two, we have three main levels of being awake or conscious. Last night as you slept, you were totally unconscious of what was going on around you and your ability to influence it. This is Level One. You woke up from sleep into your present state of consciousness, a radical shift in your awareness of the world and your place in it. Your PFP was rebooted and ready to manage your day almost totally without you noticing it. We called this your semiconscious mind, or Level Two. (Remember it's like how you drive your car, you are doing something but your mind is some place else)

Level Three is what we called Mindful Mind or being more fully conscious. This is the set-up:



Why then do you wrongly continue to believe that you are in charge of what you say and do?

So about now you should be asking, "With all this evidence to the contrary, how is it that I continue to believe that I (the me who is reading this) am sufficiently in charge of my life that I do not have to grow up any further (i.e. to have for example, free will to make choices).

Our PFP has evolved with several ways to not be detected, and therefore not be displaced. One of the most significant tactics that PFP uses to remain covertly in charge is the illusion of control. Unless your feelings, values and beliefs about self, others, and your world are involved, you actually are somewhat responsible and decisive because you react from your universally acceptable PFP data bank.

Also, when something out of the ordinary happens, your natural mindful mind becomes sufficiently activated to notice the situation, and in doing so, temporarily works with your PFP, assesses the new situation, and—together with your PFP—decides what to do. We call this awakening *beginner's mind*. Unfortunately, it then often hits the snooze button and goes back to sleep.

When your senses experience an event that threatens your survival, feelings, ego or values however, the amygdala, immediately calls up PFP to filter the message and 100% directs the troops.

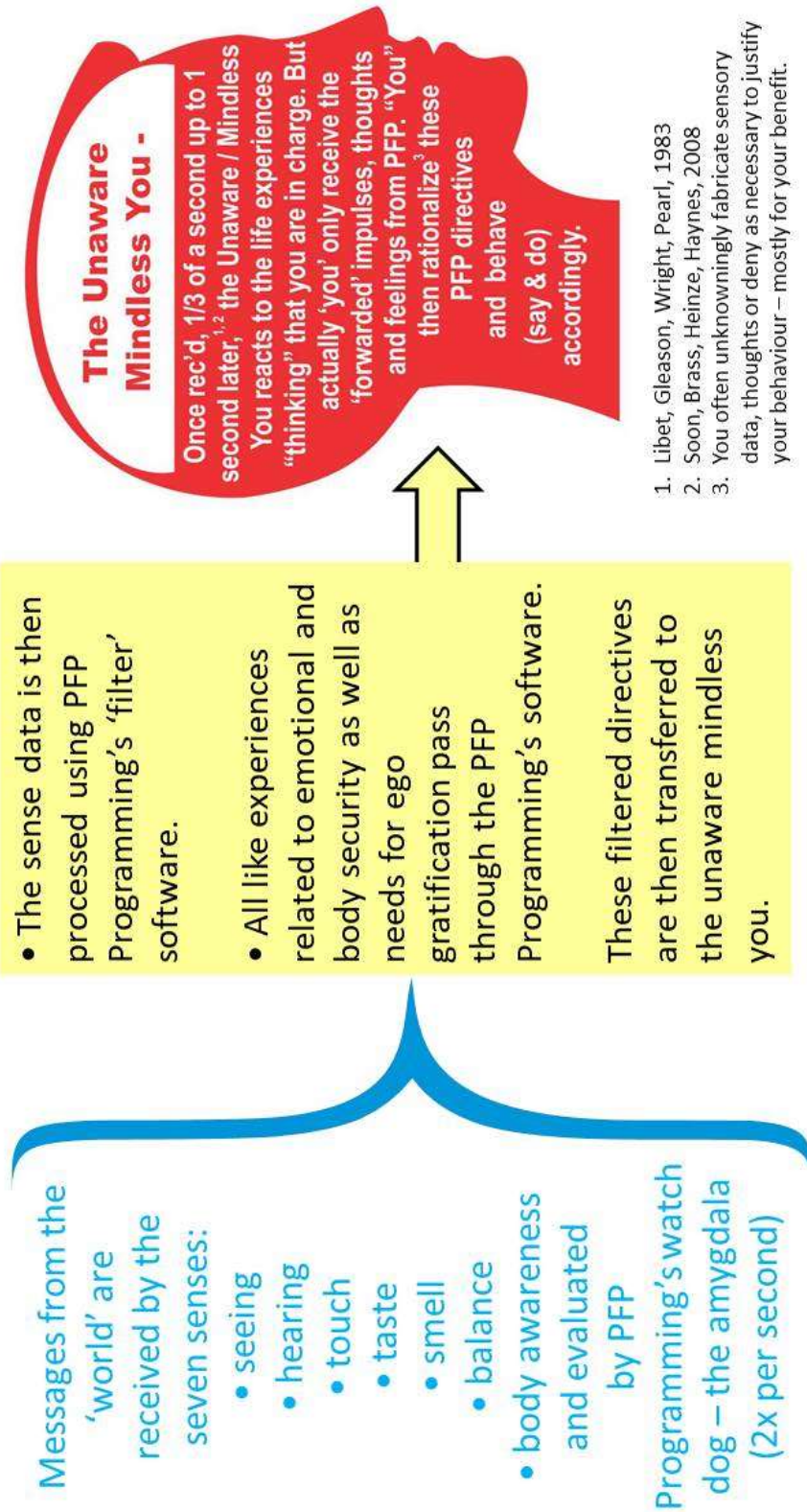
Another reason that you do not believe your PFP is in charge of many of your decisions is because mindlessness fogs over the complete picture. We'll use an every-day example to make the point. Become mindful of your sexuality. If you are healthy, you will be able to recall a moment recently when your sexual response was stimulated by a person and you experienced a mild (or not so mild) attraction.

A mindless reflection would have you believe that *you* initiated the feelings and thoughts, and behaved appropriately (or not) and therefore have you believe that you were in charge. A fairly quick and honest objective review of this event, however, would have virtually 100% of healthy men and women agreeing that their thoughts, feelings and behaviour were probably the result of all three PFP influences at work—not just hormones. For fun, start tracking some of your thoughts and feelings and see if a case can be made for something other than *you* being responsible for them, i.e. they just pop up like those annoying commercials on your computer.

A final reason that you do not realize that you are driven by terribly outdated, or faulty hardware and software is the speed at which the transfer of PFP directives happens. It's like a highly skilled illusionist playing tricks with cards or frame-by-frame movies seeming to be continuous.

The following illustration summarizes how your PFP programming has such incredible power to compromise your ability to **objectively clarify and choose** the best possible response to any relationship situation, especially when you are stressed. Even when you learn what your PFP Programming has been up to, your mindful mind must work constantly to stay alert and awake to prevent you from going back to walking and talking in your sleep. Here is the sequence of events that is happening to you almost every second.

How PFP Is In Charge Until You Become Mindful



A Waking Up Exercise

Try this little exercise.

When you have the urge to move one of your fingers—look at it and move it.

If you had been hooked up to a functional MRI scanner, approximately 1.4 seconds before you raised your finger your brain would have shown a massive amount of neural activity. Billions of synapses throughout your brain fired up. This activity was mostly activation of your primitive predispositions, filters, and primed files of data (PFP). They were opened and reviewed to ensure that what you were about to do was fully aligned with the directives of those pre-determined, subconscious, physical and emotional survival files. Once satisfied, your PFP directed the raising of your finger.



Given what we're learning about our deep programming, what do you think is happening in relationship situations when issues of belief, values and actual emotional risk conditions are prevalent? How much control do you really think you have over your responses when you are mindless?

So let's explore more deeply who is really in charge of your optimum potential to be happy. Doing so will enhance not only your own happiness and fulfillment but also your motivation and skills to help others enhance their potential as well.

“Ok, but there must be better reasons for PFP programming’s existence than just to covertly dominate my life”.

Survival has a lot to do with PFP dominating our life. This is why it is so difficult to discover and change it. It goes like this. The brain needs energy to think: it runs on a battery of about eight watts of electromagnetic energy. It, like any battery, runs down when overworked and must get recharged. This happens when we sleep. It therefore has evolved to have a built-in energy saving device to conserve energy throughout the day for survival thinking and reacting, should this be required at any time that day. Survival depends on making speedy decisions and conserving precious brain energy to react to potential future threats. When presented with new situations, the brain's default response is always to call up PFP program's **existing files** whenever possible because figuring out each situation anew is just too time and energy consuming—much more economical and efficient to speed dial!

Try this exercise. Have a friend look at you and count backwards from one hundred by units of ten, while you observe their eye contact with you. When they finish, ask your friend to once again count backwards from one hundred, this time by units of seven. Observe what happens to their eye contact this time. Most folks can hold eye contact when counting by tens because it is a relatively simple calculation that occurs often in our culture, so PFP programming has developed a file to accomplish it quickly. However, your friend probably diverted their eyes

when counting by sevens because a file has not been established. Second-by-second reading of your facial expressions uses up energy needed to problem solve. Their PFP therefore decided to focus instead on just the counting task because it felt safe to not have to read your facial expressions, which together with the counting task probably exceeded the brain's processing bandwidth. This defaulting to speed dial is true for not only numerical calculations, but for all beliefs, values and mental habits inherited and developed since childhood.

Simply put, PFP programming uses significantly less energy than the thinking mind. This energy conservation helps to explain why our “pigheaded” mind struggles to change its point of view, even in the face of substantial evidence contrary to our beliefs. Existing files get called on first before working to problem solve or learn something new.

Scientists and Lawyers

Leonard Mlodinow, in his excellent book *Subliminal*, identified two main ways to come to a conclusion, decision or solution about anything: we can act like a scientist who collects all data from all possible sources to ensure an impartial, objective conclusion. Alternatively we can act like a lawyer who selects only the evidence that will support their desired outcome. An overwhelming body of research supports Mlodinow's claim that “We humans are average scientists, but outstanding lawyers” (i.e. left brain driven). As you read, consider whether you are a lawyer or scientist in your most important human exchanges and relationships.

Consider all of the examples of PFP programming we included above. For every one of these situations, and many more, if our scientist-self were in charge, we would objectively assess each situation on its own merits, including both pros and cons. We would then impartially weigh the evidence (clarify and prioritize options) to make the best choice and proceed.

The following example will help you better understand your scientist-self and your lawyer-self. Mlodinow describes experiments in which people in functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) studies (taking pictures of the brain as it makes decisions) were asked to evaluate a ten-dollar bottle of wine and a ninety-dollar bottle of wine. All but a few subjects declared that the ninety-dollar bottle of wine was by far the best wine; the pleasure receptors in their brains actually lit up significantly stronger when the ninety-dollar bottle was tasted. The only problem is that both samples were actually taken from the same ten-dollar bottle. Even the brain was tricked with this process of *brain priming*.

Without the faintest idea that we are looking for reasons that support our subconscious, biased PFP beliefs and self-assessments, we lock onto belief-based logic and proclaim our conclusions with such conviction that not even the best fMRI can tell that we are confabulating our conclusions.

In this wine-tasting case, our mindful scientist-self would not have been swayed by the prime that says “Hmmm, this wine is way more expensive, so it must taste better”. It would have tasted and assessed the wine on its own merits. Our lawyer-self, however, started with the premise that a more expensive wine must be better, then proceeded to prove its case.

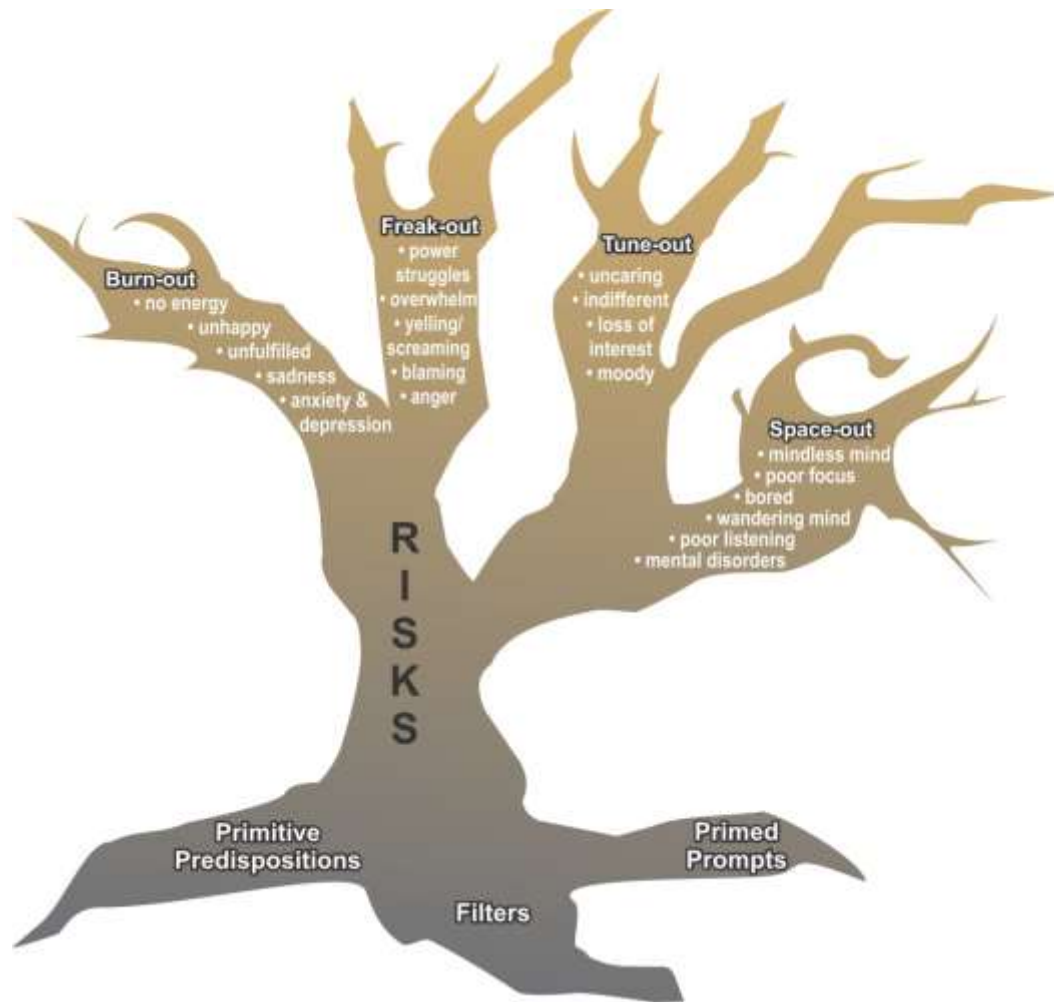


As soon as you possibly can, set aside time to explore your own version of PFP programming by using the tools we have already given you, i.e. the tools below in this chapter and Appendix II. Check whether your denial mechanism (your defense attorney) will allow you to ask others whom you know and respect for constructive feedback to help you nurture your mindful, emotionally-mature scientist-self.

Summary of PFP Roots of Risk

Before moving on, let's make sure that you fully understand what we mean by the PFP Roots of Risk.

We call PFP programmes our **roots of risks** – ‘roots’ because they are often so well-buried that we are unaware of them. “Risks” because as long as we remain unaware of them, they can continue to control our behaviours and experiences, and leave us at risk of becoming vulnerable to one or more of the four “outs”: burn-out, freak-out, tune-out and space-out. If we do not develop *mindful emotional self-regulation*, these outs become lenses through which we see and judge most of the reality around us throughout our entire life. As you have seen in Chapters Three and Four, mindfulness assists us to become aware and allowing of many semi-conscious behaviours and feeling reactions. This essential clarifying (*self-understanding*) step enables you to discover more of the sources of your roots of risks and learn how to better disengage from them.



As previously discussed, this tree has three main roots that determine its unhealthy growth:

- **Filters:** are your deeply-held, subjective beliefs about what you, others and the world should be or are. They were learned through thousands of repetitions of messages from your unique childhood environment. These beliefs now filter your perception of life through your outdated lens without you knowing it. For example, messages like “In order to be happy I must please others, be in control, be right, not be criticized or be treated fairly by all others”. If one of your filters gets activated, you usually have an unusually strong emotional reaction. The need to please others for example could lead to an irrational outbreak: “You never notice what I do. I never seem to get things right for you!”.
- **Primitive Predispositions:** are our inherited body and brain elements that are “wired in” to ensure our safety, survival and reproduction. All of the following factors have profound and direct influence on our personal and professional feelings, thoughts, personality traits, moods, decisions, and ability to relate to others.

- Brain architecture: a conscious thinking system with nearly 200,000 times more powerful subconscious processing power than the conscious you who is reading this sentence;
- The subconscious: our brain/body computer filing system that is instantly accessed whenever an event triggers an “open file” command, such as “impatience”;
- Neurotransmitters: for example, serotonin and GABA are calming stress managers dopamine gives us feelings of pleasure and rewards that direct us to get bigger, better, more (too much causes addiction); and norepinephrine and glutamate are energizers that prompt us to get up and go;
- Hormones: for example, testosterone promotes “take charge” feelings and thoughts and promotes action (people have killed because of too much testosterone); estrogen promotes gentle, receptive feelings and behaviours; oxytocin enhances mating and caring desires and is a building block of the immune system; plus dozens more hormones, all with their genetic codes and directions to promote specific feelings, thoughts and behaviours;
- Genes: basic body-building blocks, for example, the make-up of male and female sexual orientation; another example is one particular gene that causes Huntington disease that affects the frontal cortex and can lead to aggression, hyper-sexuality, impulsive behaviours and disregard for social norms, even before this disease is diagnosed. Why do some people raised in an abusive home turn out to be abusive and others not? Well, it’s mainly a gene thing. There is a particular gene that we all have, but one form is bad and the other form is good. If you were raised in an abusive family with the good version of the gene, chances are you won’t abuse later in life. If you were raised in an abusive family with the bad form of the gene, chances are you’ll abuse. If you are raised in a good family with the bad gene, chances are you won’t abuse.
- Micro-organisms: viruses and bacteria. These critters make more decisions to direct our feelings and behaviour in one day than we make in a lifetime. For example, we all have a clostridia colony living in our gut made in part from a short-chain fatty acid called propionic acid (PPA). When PPA is introduced into the food of healthy rodents it causes several severe symptoms of autism including withdraw, social aversion and repetitive behaviours. PPA is in great part responsible for and the result of mindlessly eating too much refined sugar and simple carbs because that’s what these micro-organisms in the gut thrive on and drives *you* to binge on. This is one of millions of critters who live in our gut and who have a mind of their own.
- Electromagnetic fields (EMF): We are governed in great part by EMF, which is directly influenced by chemicals, sleep, dirty electricity from Wi-Fi and 110 volts outlets and even other people’s EMF. For example, according to the HeartMath Institute, if you

are in a good mood and another person is in a bad mood, that person will draw actual electromagnetic energy from your system—leaving you feeling depleted in their presence. You may even exclaim after they leave, “Gosh they bring me down”. We can also be energized by other people who are positive or by large crowds such as at concerts and sporting events. This exchange is called *entrainment* or *emotional contagion or emergence*.

- Pathologies and injuries to the brain: we are subjected to many changes in the brain from injury, strokes, lesions etc. which can significantly compromise our feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Charles Whitman was a young man who in 1987 murdered his wife and mother and then climbed a tower at The University of Texas and shot many more innocent people. He left a note behind that said something like this: “I haven’t been myself for two years. I just murdered my wife, and a man could not have asked for a better wife. I am now going to kill many more people. I hope after they kill me they study my brain to see if it is normal”. Doctors did study his brain and found a tumor pressing on his amygdala which they determined caused all of his actions.
Primed Prompts: Lurking below the level where you are aware of them are societal and cultural subconscious messages that often hijack your feelings and decisions.

For example, if in an experiment, you are first shown negative and fearful words at a speed too fast for you to read them, you will feel more vulnerable. As a result, you will then give responses to questions that make you seem more racist and prejudiced. If you are shown words or pictures that disgust you, you will vote more conservatively. (Welcome to some of what is significantly influencing the 2020 election in the USA.)

Let’s return now to our tree metaphor. The barren branches we produce from these three roots, experienced mindlessly and virtually without awareness of their existence, represent the burn-out, freak-out, tune-out and space-out that we too often experience in our relationships.

Reminder: for simplicity we have referred to Primitive Predispositions, Filters and Primed Prompts as PFP Programming (PFP).

The very good news is that with personal growth and development of self-understanding awareness *self-understanding, awareness and ahh-llowing* these roots can be nurtured to produce an abundant harvest of optimal *self-management* resulting in competent and compassionate self-expression.

In summary then, our subjective sense of self is created by three key influences: filters, primitive predispositions, and primed prompts. We live in an illusion because we think we are in charge even while we have this PFP structure in our brain and riding around in our body. However, according to many credible neuroscientists and my own forty years of deep, mindfulness mind-mapping practice, because of these programs, predispositions and prompts, you are not in charge nearly as much as you think you are. This is especially true whenever your

feelings, values and beliefs about yourself and others, and your world are involved—that is, unless you become mindful and conscious.

Brain-mapping studies are proving **that the mind often has a mind of its own** where values, beliefs and feelings are concerned. Furthermore, the you who thinks you are in charge is often not much more in charge than the computer monitor that projects the output after the hard drive and software have done their work. Once again that is, unless *you* are conscious and mindful.

In this section of the book we are deliberately asking you to examine fundamental (but not complex) truths about your own reality that up until now, your PFP has not been inclined to permit much more than a passing interest. We have been asking you to examine vitally important influences, of which you may be unaware, that produce most of your feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

The subliminal aspects of everything that happens to us may seem to play very little part in our daily lives. But they are the almost invisible roots of our conscious thoughts.

Carl Jung

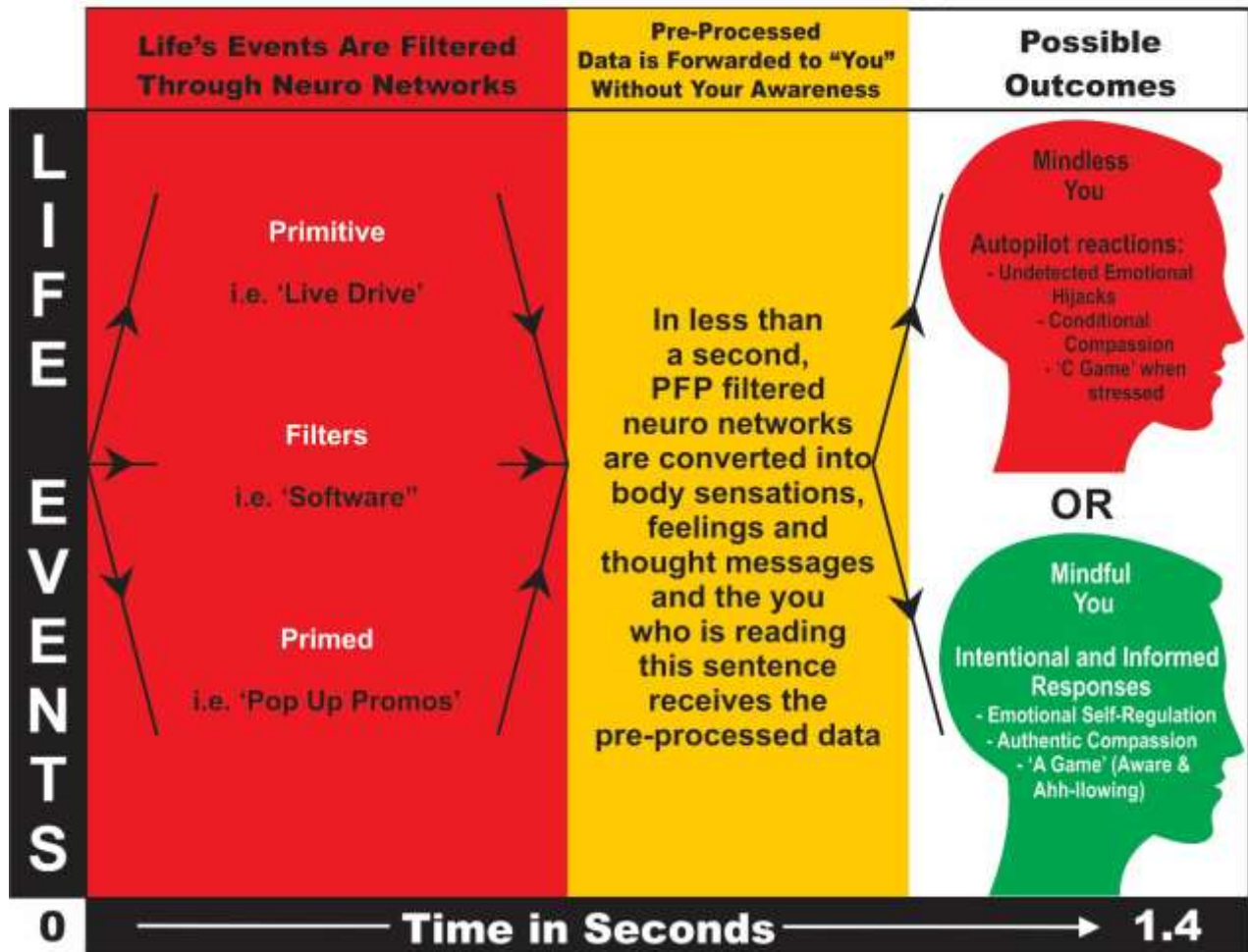
Highly credible fMRI studies have confirmed that the PFP programming operates in great part separately from you—the aware, mindful you. You have the illusion that you have free will to choose how you respond to situations and events. As it turns out, if you are asked to add two plus two, your subconscious PFP programming does the calculation and feeds it to you in less than half a second. The same thing is true for values and intentions about the most important issues affecting your life. However, when dealing with our thoughts and feelings about self, others and the world, your PFP programming is not always as accurate as it is with simple, well researched and learned calculations.

Because the transfer from your subconscious PFP programming to the unaware you happens so quickly, you erroneously believe that your thoughts are deliberate and calculated by the you who is reading this sentence. However, as mentioned above, fMRI shows that the time delay in computing your positions, preferences and prejudices is about 1.4 seconds.

Stop worrying about what others think of you because, it's none of your business.

The following illustration, “Our Human Predicament - Optional,” is a close approximation of how almost every moment in your life is filtered through your PFP. Follow the illustration from left to right. Note that countless minor and major moments pass through this filtering system before “you” get a chance to weigh in. The illustration concludes by showing you the choice between continuing to be mindlessly driven or becoming mindfully responsive and in charge.

Our Human Predicament - Optional



The speed of this transfer is why untrained (mindless) minds are often victims of thinking thoughts that others say are "just not like you," and even saying and doing things that you deeply regret. It is very probable that your PFP programming makes most of the snowballs in your life and the unaware you just throws them.

Who Are You – Really?

Typically, depending on our feelings, we describe who we are by saying – I am this or I am that e.g. worried, happy. In other words, your sense of 'yourself' is ever changing and most often without your consent. It is also almost without your knowing it!

Depending on how fiercely a PFP 'bundle' to which you are unknowingly attached (e.g. rage, fear, guilt, embarrassment, joy), you may need to acknowledge that instead of there being one you (CEO) in charge of the corporation so to speak, you are many different 'temp' sub – 'yous' who are not in charge of much at all.

Would you agree that when you are pleasant, when things are going your way and then you become upset when things aren't going so well (e.g. jealousy, money problems), that it sure looks like your company has another temporary new CEO? In other words, there is 'no one self'.

No CEO

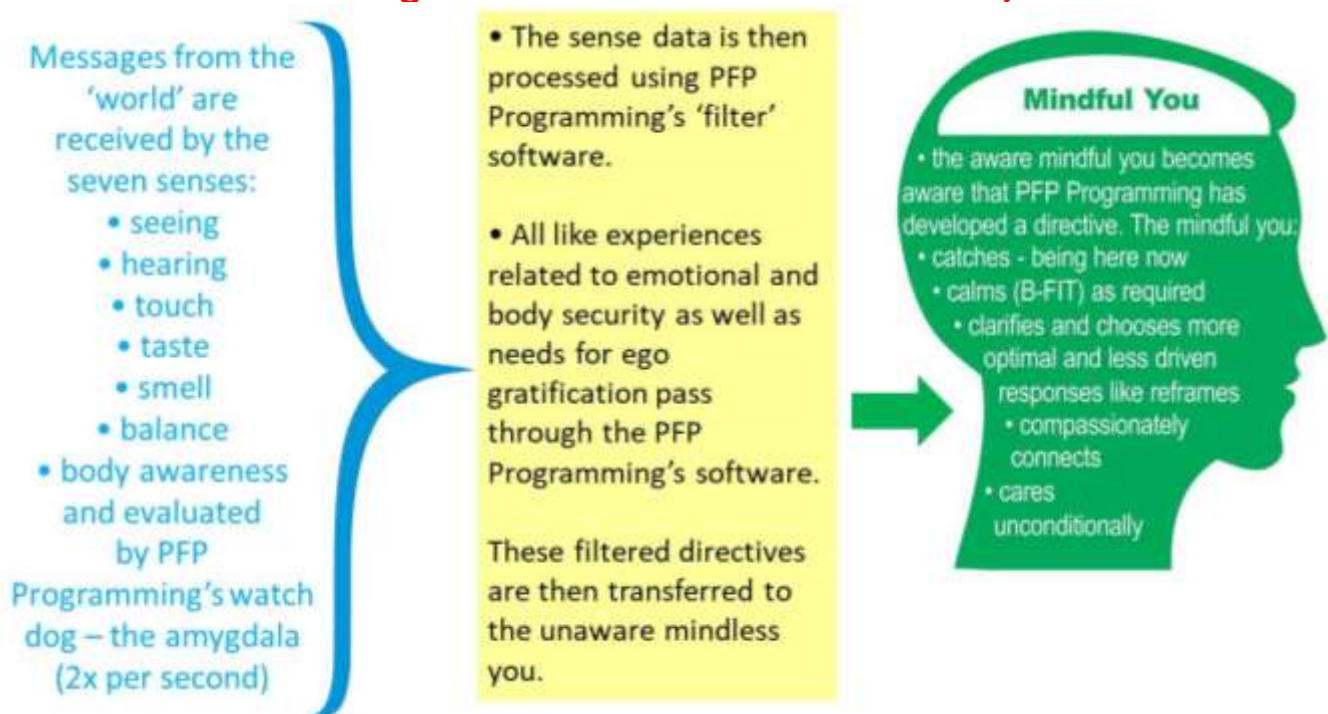
So then, not only is your sense of an 'I' self not as real as you would like to think but the 'you' who experiences body sensations, feelings and thoughts is not nearly in control as much as you think either. There is no 'in control' CEO on the ORG chart.

Now, the conscious, mindful, 'present' (more right brain influenced) you continues to consistently manifest the only you with whom you would want to be CEO of your company. We call this the 'conscious you'.

Become aware that you are reading this sentence. This aware 'you' is more often available when you are mindful. It is really the only constant 'you' or 'self'. This 'you' is not driven by reactive, self-centred, survival codes and therefore we can be authentically useful, ethical and kind in most of life's situations or your feelings.

Without this conscious 'you', free will to override PFP Programming's drivenness is virtually nonexistent. **This PFP driven process, of course, significantly compromises one's ability to clarify situations and then to make optimal choices. The following illustration offers a mindful alternative.**

How PFP is in Charge Until You Become More Awake/Aware



Such Unnecessary Suffering Caused by Ignorance of this Human Predicament

As we move forward to explore what we can do about this predicament, ask yourself this question—could it be that the annoying person whom we so readily (and self-righteously) resist, criticize or punish without a thought is really responding through their own PFP programming without any deliberate intention on their part? In other words, could it be more likely that their hurtful behaviour is really the result of this person's PFP programming, made up of a bad gene pool, bad programming and bad societal priming—and maybe bad luck?

And further, could it not be possible that if you had their brain architecture, their gene pool, their conditioning as a child, and their societal priming, you would be very much like them in your behaviours and responses? If you answered no to this question, stop reading and reflect on why you said no. What or who is really to blame here?

So we ask what part of others' behaviour — their annoyingness, anxiety, anger and aggression—is their “fault”? Of course they must not be allowed to hurt others or themselves. However, because we now understand that in that moment, they are helplessly mindlessly driven by PFP Programming, they should always first and foremost evoke our deepest compassion and not resistance.

We don't think there is a bigger and more costly mistake being made by almost everyone, than the erroneous assumption that the person who just triggered your impatience, frustrations, anger, embarrassment, fear, guilt or any other negative emotion is actually really responsible, because “they” are not! We know better. We know it is really their PFP mindless reaction met by the poor interpretations of our own PFP Programming.

So instead of saying, “Damn it! Donald makes me mad,” We should say “Poor Donald. He is driven unknowingly to deliver those messages from his PFP Programming and then he suffers the consequences—he is a victim, and he experiences such suffering”. Poor Donald doesn't even know that he is being used and controlled by dozens of other people in his past life (who also didn't know, and so on).

As I passionately work to stop him from hurting himself and others, I will stay compassionate and be kind with him.

The following is intended to reinforce the above message of our nasty human predicament and what to do about it.

Hey You

Hey you, inside my head,
The mind who is not me.
Every time you take control,
I'm kept from being free.

Do appreciate all you've done,
To keep us safe and sound.
As a babe so many times,
When lost you got me found.

But now that child, more fully grown,
With mind to call my own.
No longer needs your constant chatter,
That self-aware has shown.

The fruitful filters, you blessed me with,
I'm filled with gratitude.
To be clear, it's your faulty rules,
That keep me so unglued.

As I regret what 'we' just said,
No higher self can claim.
Hijacked words still find their way,
Hey you, it's you to blame.

Driven by your selfish musts,
Resisting and craving more.
Must wake-up from the sleep,
The conscious me implores.

Pleasing, Entitled or must be Right,
Your distressing disguise.
A child growing old, but not up,
Hurt from every criticize.

Yell'n or cry'n, you have many faces,
Pop-ups on brain's screen.
Your fuel keeps a constant flame,
Burning my 'impossible' dream.

How you seduce with your anger,
Such a cunning trick.
Covering over more painful feel,
The cause of staying sick.

Told by sages throughout the ages,
I am more than my parts.
To become this whole, must not resist,
To know all others' hearts.

I catch 'hey you', doing your dance,
In moments of now and here.
And I become faulty filters free,
Escaping chains of fear.

Now something said, still feels to me,
Must react with attack.
Then que the troops, aware and ahh-llow,
Gone is ol' hijack.

Each time I catch you owning me,
Silences you to still.
Then intuition calls to me,
To live with full free will.

No longer driven - filters free,
Still working hard to heal.
'Here' I can be all I can be,
Happiness I now do steal.

P & J

Filters Self-Assessment

Action Required!

- Complete the self-assessment on the following page.
- Using your new insights about your filters, take ten minutes each morning and mindfully reflect on recent hijacks. This practice will bring you the vital wisdom to outgrow the emotional upsets of these situations. This is your inner work. It is also your responsibility to change what should and can be changed. Continuing to play the game of blaming others—as you have since childhood—is no longer an option.
- As part of this reflection, practise the positive self-talk offered with your faulty filter. Change it as much as you need to make it your own. Repeat the reframed, positive self-talk every day!
- Practise *U,B-FIT mindfulness* skills to build the ability to be aware in the moment that a faulty filter hijack is occurring and maintain that awareness. Be able and willing to disconnect from your driven *U,B-FIT* hijack into a more conscious healing and transformative process. For example, make amends, recommit, change behaviour, and celebrate progress.

The Filter Discovery Process Self-Assessment

The following is a basic filters' self-assessment tool. Just follow the instruction for PART A and PART B. PART A starts by asking for your initial reaction to a series of words that describe many personality traits/qualities.

Research suggests that we may have a couple of primary filters and many secondary – all of which significantly influence our feelings and behaviours.

PART A

Instruction: Start by putting your name or names of your siblings (or friends if you are an only child) on the most to least continuum of each of the following qualities.

Quality	Most	Least
• Sensitive to others' needs		
• Hardest worker		
• What I have or what I am is never enough		
• Very likeable when life is going well		
• Best grades in school		
• Seeks others' sympathy		
• Temper tantrums or moody		
• Guarded against getting close		

• Spontaneous		
• Overtly or covertly aggressive		
• Known as “the doer”		
• Above average social skills		
• Likes to “veg out”		
• Slow decision maker		
• Loyal friend		
• Slow to anger		
• Worry what others may think of me		
• Secretly often see myself as better than others		
• When asked I’m always busy		
• Conditionally giving		
• Rebellious		
• Becomes bored with repetitive activities		
• Trustworthy		
• Idealistic		
• Boundless energy		
• Committed to help others		
• Justified anger if excluded		
• Life of the party		
• Perceived/Actual abandonment		
• Discouraging of others		
• Likes scary/fearful activities/movies		
• Dislikes routine		
• Generally a good person		
• Punished		
• Seeks out novel experiences		
• Reader of others’ moods		
• Likes to please others		
• Conflict averse		
• Seemingly a disaster magnetic		
• Considerate		
• Sensitive (in the easily hurt way)		
• Champion of the downtrodden		
• Generous		
• May act weak or feel ill if treated unfairly		
• Critical of self		
• Angry and sad when anyone is treated unfairly		
• Selfish		
• Materialistic		
• Equate fairness to being loved		
• Boredom is my greatest fear		
• High standards of acceptance		
• Challenged to be intimate		

• Look for the best in others		
• Feeling guilty		
• Not critical of others		
• Giving/Generous		
• Thoughtful		
• Intuitive		
• Like immediate gratification		
• Spoiled		
• When life is dull, I can make life exciting		
• Sense of nobility when suffering		
• Above average fairness to others		
• Suffering brings meaning and purpose to life, relationships		
• Many friends, few close friends		
• Judgemental when critical of others		
• Sensitive to criticism		
• Am a passive resistor		
• Will shift positions to accommodate others		
• Above average awareness of others' faults		
• Highly confident		
• Conforming		
• Above average awareness of others' needs		
• Achiever, doer in life		
• Peacemaker		
• Like having my own way		
• Sense of humour		
• Somewhat calm in chaos		
• Try to please		
• My life is always filled with 'to dos'		
• Broad range of interests		
• Very fair to others who treat them fair		

PART B

Instructions: Working with your list from PART A, check off any traits/qualities in each of the filters below where you rated yourself "most".

Need to be in control and/or not out of control

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Generally hides feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> Orderly/Well Organized |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rebellious | <input type="checkbox"/> Needs to have own way |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent | <input type="checkbox"/> Articulate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical of others | <input type="checkbox"/> Good problem-solving skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dislikes surprises | <input type="checkbox"/> Good decision maker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dislikes authority | <input type="checkbox"/> Spontaneous (least) |

Need to be right and/or get it right

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical of others | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive - easily hurt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical of self | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong sense of right and wrong |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conforming | <input type="checkbox"/> Really likes guidelines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very high standards | <input type="checkbox"/> Really likes authority |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Procrastinator | <input type="checkbox"/> Very good writing skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Above average grades in school | <input type="checkbox"/> Dislikes making decisions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Cautious to try new things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Uses extreme descriptors,
e.g. always, very, never | <input type="checkbox"/> Best best or worst worst |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling guilty | <input type="checkbox"/> Slow decision maker |

Need for perceived approval from others

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not critical of others | <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict averse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Giving/Generous | <input type="checkbox"/> Considerate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intuitive | <input type="checkbox"/> Likes to please others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good social skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive to criticism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peacemaker | <input type="checkbox"/> Good reader of others' moods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slow to anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Will shift positions to accommodate
others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Really concerned of what others may
think of them | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling guilty |

Need to feel self-righteous/superior

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> High standard of right and wrong | <input type="checkbox"/> Idealistic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical of others | <input type="checkbox"/> An 'agin it' person |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hardest worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Highly confident |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loyal friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Discouraging of others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conditionally giving | <input type="checkbox"/> Generally a good person |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Judgemental when critical of others | <input type="checkbox"/> Passive resistor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secretly often sees self as better than
most others | <input type="checkbox"/> Above average awareness of others' faults |

Need for excitement

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of humour | <input type="checkbox"/> Spoiled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rebellious | <input type="checkbox"/> Idealistic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Selfish | <input type="checkbox"/> Spontaneous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dislikes routine | <input type="checkbox"/> Seeks out novel experiences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Becomes bored with repetitive
activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat calm in chaos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Likes scary/fearful activities/movies | <input type="checkbox"/> When life is dull they will make it
interesting |

Need to see self as victim

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seemingly a disaster magnetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Idealistic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of nobility when suffering | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive (in the easily hurt way) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suffering brings meaning and purpose to life, relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> Punished |
| <input type="checkbox"/> May seek others' sympathy | <input type="checkbox"/> Tries to please |

Need to be included

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive/Easily Hurt | <input type="checkbox"/> Generous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Likes having own way | <input type="checkbox"/> Loyal friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Temper tantrums or moody | <input type="checkbox"/> Looks for the best in others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tries to please | <input type="checkbox"/> Justified anger if excluded
(which protects me from feelings of rejection) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Champion of the downtrodden | |

Need to and deserve to have comfort

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peacemaker | <input type="checkbox"/> Selfish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Likes to "veg out" | <input type="checkbox"/> Doesn't plan ahead |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very likeable when life is going well | <input type="checkbox"/> Life of the party |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor decision maker | <input type="checkbox"/> Likes immediate gratification |

Need to be treated fairly

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having own way | <input type="checkbox"/> Equates fairness to being loved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Materialistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Above average fairness to others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rebellious | <input type="checkbox"/> Selfish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive to others' needs | <input type="checkbox"/> Temper tantrums |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger or sadness when self or others are treated unfairly | <input type="checkbox"/> Very fair to others who treat them fair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overtly or covertly aggressive | <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> May act weak or actually be ill if treated unfairly | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent social skills |

Need for ongoing proof of others' worthiness to trust them

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perceived or actual abandonment | <input type="checkbox"/> Above average social skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Challenged to be intimate | <input type="checkbox"/> Trustworthy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Many friends, few close friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Generous, thoughtful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guarded against getting close | <input type="checkbox"/> Achiever, doer in life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very, very loyal | |

Need to Achieve/Be Busy

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boundless energy | <input type="checkbox"/> Hardest worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highly committed to causes | <input type="checkbox"/> Boredom is my greatest fear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broad range of interests and skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Achiever, doer in life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Known as 'the doer' | <input type="checkbox"/> My life is always filled with to dos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> When asked – I am always busy | |

PART C

Filters Summary Statement

Now summarize your outcomes by adding how many 'most' qualities you have.

The filters in which you checked the highest number of 'most' qualities will probably be a strong indicator of your filters' preferences.

There is a very high probability that many of the unknown rules that you have will be found in these filters' preferences. Review these preferences and respond to the following statements to summarize some of your filter's rules.

- Some of my operating rules for life are _____ (e.g. I believe that I must be___)
- My assets are _____.
- My reframing of some of my rules could be _____.

Summary of how to minimize filters hijacks

1. As soon as possible catch yourself being emotionally hijacked by a filter.
2. With deliberate and intentional self-talk, e.g. "there is anger, frustration, embarrassment, fear, guilt, shame, etc. Happening to me because of _____ (state the filter that has been activated).
3. Reframe the filter as recommended below in Part D.
4. Activate Tool #1 to become aware and allowing of the B-FIT components that have been activated. Abide and ride in the flow (expanding and contracting) movements of one or more of the B-FIT activities.
5. Do not attempt to eliminate the experience. Just skillfully process the resistance in B-FIT as directed in Tool #1.
6. Make amends if your emotional hijack has been hurtful to others.

PART D

U,B-FIT Mindfulness Exercise – Reframing Filters – Divide and Conquer

Always, always tune-in to your own filters that are activated in a moment of crisis. Once you have identified them, activate *U,B-FIT mindfulness* and non-attachment skills.

The key to success in this step is your capacity to “catch”, identify and address your own emotions in a given situation. The additional exercise below will build on your “catch” and “calm” capacity with the aid of your *U,B-FIT* awareness.

- STEP 1: Name one or more of your filters (e.g. “I must gain all others’ approval”).
- STEP 2: Recall a situation where this filter unknowingly drives you to feel and behave a certain way (e.g. needing approval so therefore not constructively confronting someone who is being insensitive to the needs of someone else).
- STEP 3: Describe a typical, real-life situation whereby you would be in a filters hijack (e.g. being pulled into a conflict with your partner).
- STEP 4: Image that situation again however, this time see yourself “living” the reframe, e.g. say what you really think, even if you know the other person won’t agree, or may even challenge you.
- STEP 5: Begin a *U,B-FIT mindfulness* session.
- STEP 6: After settling in and becoming very comfortable with the process of being aware and ahh-llowing of your *U,B-FIT* senses, deliberately recall the person or situation that activated your filter and caused you stress. After one or two minutes, drop this deliberate recalling and move to step seven.
- STEP 7: Observe your *U,B-FIT* and ahh-llow your resistance to decrease.
- Whenever you become aware of a body sensation related to a feeling—for example, weakness in your arms which you know is associated with anxiousness—bring equanimity/ahh-llowing to that sensation, fully experience it and then return to your present focus.
 - At each step, as often as possible, intentionally bring a subjective ahh-llowing, surrendering, and matter-of-fact attitude to everything that is being observed. This is being non-attached.
 - Conclude all practice sessions with intentions for loving kindness and gratitude and review intentions.

Summary

Each of us will probably relate to one or two of the filters themes much more than the others. We all have very personal, unique, private (il)logical filters and are driven by them when we are not mindful. The good news is that with practice we can become highly proficient at immediately being aware of faulty filters when they activate. We can skillfully disconnect from them (that is, not be gripped or driven by them). These *U,B-FIT* reactions will eventually come much less often, and our recovery time will be much quicker.

We all probably make hundreds of poor or downright harmful decisions regarding partnering, parenting, friendships, work and change, based primarily on our unknown faulty filters. These outdated programs result in unnecessary resistances, greed and attachments to habits such as over-consumption, jealousy, anger or fear—and we don't even know about them! With skill these programs can be brought into awareness and controlled. Only then will we become reliably able to clarify the situations we are confronted with and choose the best response.

The key to developing authentic compassion for all others—even the most difficult and harmful people we know—is always remembering that they have their own faulty filters that are driving and distorting their reality (thoughts, feelings and behaviours). The moments in which we recognize the filters controlling our own or someone else's behaviour are the moments when we can best assess our own progress on the path of healing, maturing and transforming.

This presence then, ensures the greatest likelihood that we can and will optimally prevent them from doing further harm.

We know for absolute certain that if you have worked with us through this very important Chapter Five, you now have a much clearer sense of how to achieve true *self-understanding*. You have already started out on the journey to clarify what is really happening in each of your encounters and interactions, whether they occur in your most personal and intimate relationships or social or work related relationships. You are already a step closer to real *self-understanding*.

Now, take a moment before we end this chapter to imagine what that kind of *self-understanding* could add to your happiness, every day, regardless of what is happening.

Chapter Six

Tool
#2

SELF-UNDERSTANDING

• PFP Brain Insights and Reframing

Tool #2 – An Application

Developing and Sustaining Meaning, Purpose and Happiness from Life Roles

Finding and sustaining meaning and happiness in life . . . means an ordering and guiding of our energy and our desires, a partial restraint in some directions in order to secure greater abundance of life in other directions. It involves a daily deliberate (mindful) organization of life for a purpose.

Richard Gregg

Introduction:

Let's review a little history to help you more completely increase your awareness of how the world we live in has evolved to influence the creation of your PFP and then to use that *self-understanding* to develop and sustain meaning, purpose, and happiness from your life roles.

Having meaning and purpose in one's life is considered by most folks who inquire about happiness/fulfillment to be an essential variable in the happiness algorithm. We need to know that our being here makes a difference, that what we do matters, and we matter. An observation that we have made and that we feel is very much worth noting is that the vast majority of people born before 1950, going back thousands of years, found much of their meaning and purpose in living in accordance with the creed and expectations of a God or gods. This is still the case for many.

However, with the sharp decline in religion's and other spiritual practices in our society over the past approximately fifty years, many folks today have found themselves without a north star to help fulfill their need for meaning and purpose – and social media isn't doing it!

This is not to say that spiritual practices manifested through religion, ritual and prayer are or are not an effective complement to help live to one's fullest experience of meaning and purpose. Even a quick rear-view glance will find ample evidence of the very positive influence these spiritual practices have had and still have on the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

Political and economical, historical and current events such as imperialistic land and mind grabs in the form of supposed faith-based wars, persecutions, inquisitions and crusades, along with

numerous psychological and lifestyle influences causing tens of millions of people to suffer however, continues to severely compromise the relevance of 'religions' for many in the 21st century.

In addition to an actual faith-based life, many people born in the years before World War II also had much more skin in the game than today to help facilitate experiencing meaning and purpose in their life. They watched, assisted and learned from their parents' examples of tangible hard work in agricultural-based communities and urban centres driven by manual labour, compared to the mechanized, data-driven, knowledge-based economy and now social media dependencies since that time.

Old Fashion Roots – Meaning and Purpose

Joanne was raised on a sixth-generation farm. As a child she saw firsthand that if they didn't work, they didn't eat. She also saw her Mom and Dad, without hesitation, feed and give a bed in their own home to the homeless strangers who rode the rails and walked the roads looking for work. They built barns for their neighbours and collectively volunteered to harvest each other's crops. By age eleven, I was stocking shelves in my parents' general store for eight hours every Saturday, and it was just something you did without being asked. One day, I watched my dad catch a man stealing some food. Dad said to him, "If you need food for your family, tell me, and I will try to help you. But don't steal from me". Such was the administering of social justice for the majority of citizens in Ontario not that long ago. Social justice is inherently meaningful. Without naming it, meaning and purpose was happening in these everyday events with one hand just naturally washing the other.

But in the 50's, it started to happen. The pendulum started to swing to an interesting field. For many folks, God started to be reincarnated from the "Big Guy in the sky" to "I, me and my". Also working to live and share with others, for many, changed to working to have more comforts and conveniences for me and mine. As the goal of work shifted, the meaning we took from it was degraded.

Most everyone in our part of the world participated in some way in the post-war decadence of the 50's and 60's which gave birth to this new 'God' of *me*. The cars of the 50's with their over the top size and 'fins' are a symbol of it. The passion that fueled some of the fire of these times, seemed to us to birth the 'God' of individualism with its dependency on unlimited capitalism. This '*ism*' demands exponential growth to survive—regardless of the cost to the environment, families and life's meaning and purpose.

Family life, traditionally one of the most fundamental sources of meaning and purpose started to dramatically change during the last part of the 20th century. This was significantly influenced by the new religion of Capitalism. For example, formal rituals of doing things together like

picnics, family TV watching, church/synagogue and eating and preparing meals together with kids on clean-up duty changed with ‘necessities’ like automatic dishwashers.

Not too far behind came the ‘need’ for family dual incomes, two cars, air conditioning, post-secondary education far from home and fast food outlets on every corner. The family sharing one centrally located ‘hi-fi’ where all family members took turns listening to each other’s ‘45’s’ evolved into kids isolating in their bedrooms (one per kid) equipped with their own TV, digital sound systems, computers and devices to dial into others’ lives (virtually) within seconds. Now for many, even eating together is more of the exception than the rule.

Capitalism took most folks prisoner. Our meaning and purpose now came from do’n, get’n, hav’n, bigger, better, more for me and mine. Much has been written about this cultural transformation so we will not belabour the point but conclude by stating the obvious. Over no more than 50 years, inflation (e.g. the dollar, it ain’t worth what it used to be) also seems to have happened to the potential for meaning and purpose in family life.

Fortunately, however, our tribal-based primordial instinct of “us-ness” survived all the *isms*. The undeniable truth is that the vast majority of normal folk today can experience the rewarding feeling of meaning and purpose whenever we help others in need – family, friends, strangers and even enemies. As we prepare to launch this work, we are in the midst of COVID-19 shutdowns, and we are keenly aware of how this crisis has brought meaning and purpose to people who are stepping up to help others, especially front line health workers and also neighbours helping the high risk elderly with shopping, etc. The intrinsic worth of giving can grow the more we help others. This can then lead to a second tsunami of service when we willingly start to live more simply so that others can simply live.

At its core, this chapter is about applying your increased PFP *self-understanding* to experience meaning and purpose more fully from living and consuming responsibly and from acts of unconditional service to others as a potential significant part of our transformational journey with the by-product being happiness.

Regardless of where you are on the questions of ‘religious-isms’, individualism, capitalism or any other *ism*, for folks who need help to find more meaning and purpose from your life roles, this chapter and the rest of this book will be helpful for you. We will explore how to apply your increased *self-understanding* tool to meet your meaning and purpose needs (beyond your PFP ego, self-centered, space and time, materialistic experiences)

Instruction:

Consider your new self-understanding insights while reflecting on the following suggestions for enhanced meaning and purpose in your life. Select 2 to 3 areas to prioritize your commitments to action.

- Possibly add to your traditional spiritual practices;

- Develop your experience of meaning and purpose by dedicating more of your life to something beyond mainly do'n get'n, hav'n, bigger, better more for you and yours, such as:
 - Relieving suffering directly through volunteering to offer support or caregiving services to others in your family, friendships and to strangers.
 - Contributing in indirect ways to support others and organizations that offer direct services in your local and global community.
 - Become active in planetary well-being by helping to stop the raping and pillaging of the environment.
 - Eat only foods that are grown and harvested in a way that reflects ethical and moral values. Work to normalize this value.
 - Live all of your roles as a life partner, adult child, friend, helper, worker more consciously.
- Develop more meaningful relationships—*Being Love*, beyond bodies, beauty, bean-counting, betrayals, boredom, blaming and breakups!
- Maintain authentic gratitude. Cultivate a still, inner calmness in response to life's challenges, regardless of external conditions and chaos.
- Live as simply as possible—then ratchet it down two more notches. Consume and share responsibly.
- Experience the many subtle, invisible lines of connection to the mystery that happens every day: like moments that seem to transcend time and space, like help from hidden hands and manifestations of **emergence**. (*Reference Appendix V*)
- Commit to loving kindness – helpful, ethical and responsible connections to all beings, plants and animals we meet and know each day.
- Make intentions. In the moment, intentionally cultivate an open attitude of “I’ll do my best then rest with the rest”.
- Be non-efficient as much as possible. Learn to ask yourself, “To relate positively with this person or do this task effectively, is doing it quickly really necessary?” Remember efficiency often smothers fulfillment and authenticity.
- Hold no attachment to outcomes. Be mindful of drivenness to do, to get, or to have something more or different. Be practical, but just ahh-llow the by-products of this process to unfold.
- Be aware of inter-being-ness—our comprehensive connection to all.

We are not trying to recruit you to any ‘ism’ or take you back to the good ole days. For many they were not good – but not only because of poverty, illness, sexism and abuse. We just want to make a very strong case that your chance of Stealing Happiness from Life will be much stronger if you get even greater *self-understanding* about how to find real meaning and purpose beyond the short lived and falsely promised deliverables of do'n, get'n, hav'n, bigger, better, more.

Finding Meaning and Purpose by Creating New Rituals

We start with the very good news to take you even deeper into *self-understanding* by showing you that we all have a hardwired system of nerves and mirror neurons designed specifically to give very special meaning and purpose by activating our natural human goodness and compassion. Once activated, we can live it! This is not unlike how when anger is activated we live it. Without for example the tool of *Self-Awareness and Allowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart*, tragically we become anger as well. Just like our *fear, freeze, fight or flight* nervous system must be triggered to fire anger, so too, our human goodness system also needs to be triggered to fire. The following strategies (triggers) will help you to build (fire up) kindness and compassion in your heart and sustain the heart-health nutrients of meaning, purpose and value.

A beautiful first step is creating regular rituals to celebrate life or to grieve the loss of relationships, or to encourage more meaningful relationships with family, friends and even enemies in our life (I believe that it was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who said “I so dislike that man, I must spend more time with him”).

We see rituals as any activity that helps to bring the chattering left brain dominated mind to relative silence. In being present with oneself in this relative stillness, we create a space that crowds out the left brain dominate PFP mind and body’s incessant frenzy of doing, feeling and thinking about ways to temporarily satisfy its ego—as healthy plants in a garden crowd out the weeds. Rituals such as mindful nature walks, unconditional service, contemplative reading or more formal mindfulness practices bring calm to the chattering mind. *Self-understanding* of how this law of nature applies to us is so vitally important to experience meaning and purpose in what we do.

The following are some examples of rituals that we can practise in our life and work.

- Share stories of past meaningful moments. When we share memories of meaningful moments, it keeps roles real and heart-felt. The following prompt questions could be put forth at get-togethers with family or friends or in an organized group similar to a book club:
 - What was meaningful in your involvement with someone recently?
 - What did a person you helped teach you about yourself recently?
 - What is an example recently of how you caught your mind being resistant or indifferent and how the mindful you just stayed present, kind and connected?
 - What is an example of a meaningful moment that you have recently experienced?
 - A special story I recently shared is_____.
- Choose mindfully to be with positive, up-beat role models. Happy begets happy; negativity can breed negativity. Make the time and even ‘buy lunch’ for people who inspire you to be your best self and help you become alive. Regardless of whether they reciprocate or initiate time together or not, continue to build this positive and meaningful relationship—provided they are willing. Model your role model by keeping your words useful, ethical, timely and

kind. Also ask for feedback so that you can get even better. Ask for, welcome and act on constructive criticism. Aspire to be this kind of role model for others.

- An example of a person(s) in my life whom I regularly share positive time with and who is a consistent source that meets my needs for constructive feedback is_____.
 - The last time I asked for feedback on anything was_____.
 - What I did as a result of the feedback was _____.
- Experience another's pain and suffering more fully through conscious connecting. Learning to experience another's pain more fully truly enriches our understanding and awareness of the value of what our caring means to another.

By now most have heard the story of a little girl being laughed at by an older person for saving starfish by throwing them back one by one. "Little girl, there are thousands of dying starfish on this beach. What difference can you possibly make by throwing a few back into the water?" As she threw one more back into the ocean to live she replied, "It made a difference to that one". This little girl found meaning and purpose by offering one small act of kindness at a time.

Sometimes Joanne and I use the human tragedies of the daily news to become more sensitive to the devastating pain and suffering that is in the world. It reminds us of the importance of doing our part to relieve suffering.

- An example of how I expose myself to suffering, contemplate it and take action is _____.
- Build ongoing awareness of the damaging consequences for a person who is devalued. One fundamental way that we find and sustain meaning and purpose is to value all people through quality time together, respect and absence of self-righteous judgement. To reinforce the meaning in what we do, become a keen observer of how our culture (mostly PFP unintentionally) de-values individuals who are homeless, cultural minorities, LGBTQ, or people who have mental health and/or have developmental disabilities and notice, the subtle but often significant negative impact on the individual. The next time you observe a vulnerable person being devalued, do what you can to prevent it and simultaneously observe the humiliation and maybe fear experienced by the person being de-valued.
 - An example of a time when I consciously observed the devaluation of a person and what I did about it was_____.
 - Put forth effort, discipline and sacrifice to promote your own personal growth. This growth and maturity doesn't just happen. This is especially true in our society that normalizes the obsessive use of trash TV and social media and promotes comfort more than hard work. Our society also delivers an unbalanced educational system designed primarily to address mainly the life task of employment at the unintentional expense of other life tasks such as altruism, love, or friendship. Learning and applying the values and skills taught in this book

will require daily passionate commitment to effort, discipline and sacrifice. As mentioned earlier you can't drift to the top of a mountain!

- An example of a daily practice of effort, discipline and/or sacrifice that fosters my personal growth is_____.

One of the best ways to more completely understand and satisfy this fundamental human need of being valued and having personal worth is by connecting authentically to others. As we have this experience while serving or even just hanging out with each other, we now see more opportunities to be kinder, more tolerant and less judgmental. As this awakening process unfolds, we more deeply understand the illusion of our separateness from others and this understanding helps it to slowly start to crumble. From the heart, we begin to see others with new empathy and equality. This valuing manifests as a new fulfillment from our lives when skills, discipline and energy are mindfully offered as unconditional acts of kindness and respect, regardless of the mind's messages of deserving or undeserving.

It's hard to find meaning in what we are doing when we don't know at the time that we are doing it. This awareness is one of the qualities of learning and near daily Unified B-FIT Mindfulness practice. Being mindful in this way helps us to experience moment-by-moment meaning and purpose and forms an unconditional heart connection with others. This awareness brings the fulfillment of a purposeful life to us and others.

Service to Others: Liking What We Do Is Nice – Valuing What We Do Is Essential

To live a fulfilling and meaningful life (a.k.a. Stealing Happiness) through service to others, it is helpful to enjoy what you are doing and like who you are with—but it is absolutely not essential. What is essential is *valuing* others and also valuing who you are. Valuing is to unconditionally appreciate who the person is beyond their PFP persona. To the emotionally mature and compassionate person, valuing will always be a stronger motivator than feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction. When we can, even for a moment, not be mindlessly driven by our left brain dominate PFP mind's craving for enjoyment and gratification, our roles manifest naturally from this universal source of human goodness. This sense of purpose motivates us to compassionately and respectfully relate to all others. Sensing our value to another is often the most essential element that transforms just being with someone into having a meaningful and valued relationship. But what about the routine, boring, and unpleasant parts of life and relationships?

Service – Being It Versus Feeling It

Some years ago I was doing a private retreat at the Tai Chi Centre of Canada. This weekend was the centre's annual international retreat, with two hundred men and women studying with a well-known Tai Chi master who had been flown in from Asia to lead their retreat. I arranged to meet this master as I was very interested to talk shop with another mindfulness teacher.

Late Sunday afternoon, I noticed a line-up of dozens of people waiting to use one washroom. Apparently, the main pump-house had shut down because of over-use, leaving six washrooms unusable. When I arrived to meet the Tai Chi master I was told to come back later as he was still busy. On my way back to my room, I passed the pumping station where several people were working to unplug the blocked lines, bucket by bucket. I asked if I could help but was told that it was almost fixed.

Later that night, I met the Tai Chi master, and I recognized him as the man pulling the raw sewage out of the blocked pipe. Yes, many parts of our life are seemingly unpleasant, boring and meaningless. It is, however, only the mindless mind that identifies with resisting and judging good from bad, pleasant from unpleasant, meaningful from not meaningful.

In order for our actions of service to others to bring meaning and purpose to one's life, we encourage you to learn to understand four key principles:

1. The More Self-Aware The Better (*Reference Tool #1*)

As the signs in casinos say, "You must be present to win".

2. Do More Good Than Harm

No long-term relationship will ever be perfect. Volunteering or paid service is no exception, especially because service implies that there is an imbalance of needs: someone *needs* help to have their daily, physical, emotional, social needs met. Helpers also have needs that sometimes, without optimal *self-management* (*Reference Tool #3*), can result in the cost to the person being helped being greater than the gain.

Three of these 'helper' needs that are serious risk factors requiring *self-management* (minimizing) are needs for:

- appreciation
- co-operation
- good feelings.

These three often surface when we are called upon to help another. While all three are nice to have met, meaningful helping can happen even at times when one or more of these needs are not being met—provided we continue to deploy the 4 life tools.

3. Competence

We must learn how to help and then help to the best of our ability. As appropriate, we need to ask the person being helped, or one of the other team members who know us, "How am I doing?", "Please give me some feedback on":

- What I should continue
- What I should stop
- What I should start

4. Commitment and Persistence

I'm not a great shot, but...I shoot often.

President Theodore Roosevelt

As much as possible, we commit to have a certain role in a person's life and stay with it as much as it is welcomed and is physically and emotionally possible. Of course, often service roles need change for both the helper and the helpee, so there will always be adjustments required. This said, barring these out of control variables, keeping our commitment (persistently showing up – shooting often) is very important for both of us.

We will not always feel like offering optimal care and support. Feelings, however, are just part of our primordial PFP messaging system to direct us to get closer to the “good” guys and away from the “bad” guys. We are much more than our feelings and thoughts when we are mindful. (Re. Tool #1)

The following story of a volunteer experience with Bill, Pauline, Joanne and I is an example of shooting often. Although not specifically discussed, over the ten years we supported Bill and Pauline, there were days when he did not “feel like” going through his often painful exercises with us. There were also days when we had competition for our time but showed up fully committed without needing feelings as a motivator. When present we usually win.

Shooting Often

Thump! Only hours before, Bill had come home from work feeling a little off but OK. Quite suddenly he felt weak and went upstairs to lie down while Pauline, his life partner, finished making dinner. Within an hour his body had shut down—an acute attack of Guillain-Barré Syndrome. The thump was the sound of Bill intentionally falling out of bed, which was the only way he could call Pauline for help. Within the hour he was on the life support machines which would keep him alive for the next year. For the first six months he was totally paralyzed, unable to even blink his eyes that were frozen open in terror. For the ten years since that day, each week I visit, help with physio therapy exercises or drive my quadriplegic friend to doctors, swimming and physiotherapy appointments. With humour and mindfulness, we work through another stretch of rocky road on their unexpected “Freedom 55” retirement journey. We continue to be awe-struck with how well their relationship is thriving within the frustrations, fears and fatigue because of how Bill and Pauline delicately dance back and forth, gently leaning into but not identified with the ever-changing roles of wife/nurse/husband/patient.

Meaning, Purpose and Heart - A Self-Reflection

The following self-reflective exercise offers you an opportunity to increase your self-understanding of your Heart Health. The higher you score, the greater the likelihood that you have been proactively engaged in many of the above strategies to help ensure happiness for self and others through meaning and purpose.

Instructions:

Complete your rating (strongly agree to strongly disagree) for each statement below that reflects some aspect of finding and sustaining meaning, purpose and heart in your role as a person, partner, parent, professional, friend, volunteer, leader or caregiver/supporter.

Heart Health Considerations	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Somewhat Agree 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
I am a disciplined person who often makes personal sacrifices to help others.					
I know what I need to do in my life's roles to sustain and enliven my feelings of fulfillment.					
Every few days I intentionally do something to sustain my positive feelings of fulfillment.					
In my life I have at least three people who help me sustain my fulfillment in my roles e.g. role model, mentor, person I support.					
I am quite clear about aspects of my basic PFP temperament that could be in conflict with my daily activities as a volunteer, leader/supporter (e.g. I take comments from others too personally; I get frightened by certain behaviours).					
When work colleagues or family members are talking about or doing something that does not reflect positive values, I take action to correct the situation (e.g. I interrupt gossiping).					
I usually have some fun and laughter in my roles.					
I know what my emotional strengths and limitations are and how they are influenced in my roles.					
My daily actions show that I am truly committed to living meaning and purpose values.					
I have developed a good capacity to inhibit my impulsive thoughts, feelings and behaviours.					
I offer optimal care and support even when I don't feel up to it.					
If there were serious blockages to my ability to find and sustain meaning, purpose and heart, I believe that I could overcome them.					

Heart Health Considerations	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Somewhat Agree 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
When I get discouraged, angry and/or frustrated about something pertaining to any of my roles, I become aware of my mood within minutes.					
I take positive action A.S.A.P. to correct difficult situations and my negative moods.					
I pursue ways on and off the job to make my role more meaningful and fulfilling (e.g. I celebrate life stories of people I know. I participate in personal development retreats).					
Generally, being a volunteer is fulfilling for me, even in stressful times.					
Throughout the average day, I become mindful when I am bored or resistant to something and reframe these thoughts to experience value in most everything I do.					
In the last year I have read at least two resources that helped me find and sustain meaning and purpose in my life's role.					
It is very important to me to consistently be the best that I can be.					

These twenty statements reflect the areas for personal growth and development related to the Essential Competency of “Finding and Sustaining Meaning, Purpose and Heart”. Your total score (the higher, the better!) reflects the degree to which you currently have or have the potential to have, meaning, purpose and fulfillment in your roles.

Select three areas where you can and will work to improve your commitment to actions that will lead to stronger Heart Health. Develop a written plan of action: detail how, when, where. Prioritize your action steps. Share your goal with a couple of friends or work colleagues and ask them to help make you more accountable.

Conclusion

Let's conclude this chapter on applying *self-understanding* insights to finding meaning and purpose as one of the main variables to nurture your own and the happiness of others with several key reminders. We'll start with a touch of grandma's wisdom.

Creating sustainable meaning and purpose in one's life can be an essential component to being happy/fulfilled, however it does require being vigilant, aware, and honouring the big picture of

the human predicament. Happiness/fulfillment as a result of some achievement, event or recognition is by its very nature transient. It has a beginning, middle, and end, because for most folks it is mostly based on external conditions which are always changing and impermanent. Meaning through the lens of self-awareness and the other life tools can however be predictable and sustainable, directly proportional to the awareness that we bring to each moment of living to our fullest, body, mind, service and spiritual potential. This inside focus transcends our dependency on the consistent need to do, get, and have positive external conditions in our life to keep us happy.

Secondly, as discussed throughout this chapter, much of this outer and inner work must include how we consciously and caringly work passionately to relieve others suffering and help facilitate their well-being. Here, only our intrapersonal (inside) growth and development has the potential to maintain meaning and purpose in our life from our actions in the face of a difficult reality. When we mindfully work to the best of our abilities and resources, we simultaneously are constantly reminded that the external conditions of life that are causing suffering are endless – always have been and always will be.

- Soon after the development of covid-19 vaccine there will be a different pandemic.
 - Soon after getting financial security and a great job, the business closes.
 - Soon after helping someone find affordable housing, they receive a diagnosis.
- ...and so it goes.

Often in our personal and family relationships, and in our local and global community, it seems like for each bucket we bail from life's boat, another bucket comes in over the side. Meaning, therefore, must be found in each present moment of rowing, bailing and yes to some extent in the final results. Attachment to outcomes is however the seed of much unhappiness. In one of our personal discussions with Ram Dass (a most important influence in our life), he stated with that mischievous twinkle in his eye, "life is simple for those who are not attached to their preferences." Our humble paraphrase of this truth is "we peddle, but 'God' steers." And as Mother Theresa with her 'grandma wisdom' reminds us:

*People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.
If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.
If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies.
Succeed anyway.
If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.
What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.
If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.
The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.
Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.
In the final analysis, it was never between you and them anyway.*

Anonymous

However, In the absence of increasing your *self-understanding* and learning and living the other 3 life tools, this wisdom can quickly be the beginning of delusion and just another meaningless message. The word **anyway** can only bring meaning to our life if it is nurtured by daily discipline and effort to learn and live to our fullest **conscious** potential.

And finally let's close this most important discussion regarding *self-understanding*, happiness and fulfillment as a result of finding meaning and purpose in our life by adding a final serious warning that committing to do something as revealed in the above self-reflection and discussion is both critically important and urgent.

Even as the 21st century unfolds with the Covid-19 worldwide pandemic that could claim more hundreds of thousands of lives, there is a much greater threat to human happiness already well on its way in the laboratories in Silicon Valley.

Once again my nerdiness sneaks up from behind my poor disguises to reveal my passion for research publications concerning bio-technologies and artificial intelligence (AI). These studies report on the new 'isms' that are being created.

It is reliably reported that these scientists are on track to wind down this 4 billion years experiment called humanism as we know it. Within a few generations it is predicted that cyborgs, (the integration of electronic gadgetry with biological tissue) will replace we mere mortals. Even dying is seriously discussed in these laboratories as now being a technical problem - well on its way to being solved within this century.

Reputable scientists are even predicting that suicide will become the number one cause of death in the not too distant future because of our great-grandchildren's inability to find sufficient meaning and purpose to stay alive. This trend in North America appears to have already started with a dramatic leap from 2010 to 2015 with teens aged 13 to 18 increase in suicide by 31%. Coincidentally (or not) during this time 71% of teens in North America now owned the electronic gadgetry of a smart phone.

Wherever you are on the continuum of *self-understanding* and denial, distractions or delusions concerning our species future, we feel that one relevant truth is vital to our life's meaning and happiness here and now. As the illusion of finding sustainable happiness from only do'n, get'n, hav'n, bigger, better, more is exposed to 'Dorothy on this yellow brick road' as being more irrelevant, adherence to a new and deeper truth must emerge.

This truth is that the need to discover/strengthen meaning and purpose in one's life and then proactively live it with awareness and equanimity each hour of each day is one of the most compelling must do's to be happy. This process must of course also include being motivated and capable of helping others beyond 'me and mine' to be the same.

Making Maple Syrup with Our Grandchildren

We thought we would complete the self-understanding tool by sharing a story that we wrote for our seven grandchildren to help them learn how to fully experience the wonder hidden in the sacred mystery – the part of life's journey that is mostly beyond understanding.

As with all good stories we intended that they would still be learning from it as they teach their grandchildren about the inside job of Stealing Happiness.

Dear Kaelen, Anthony, Olivia, Alyssa, Logan, Brandon & Sophia,

You will remember how many years ago Grammy and Papa taught you how to make maple syrup. Because you learned those skills so well, we decided to write this *Stealing Happiness* collection of break-in tools to help you with life's other farming chores, now that you are more grown up. As you learned earlier in life on our farm, please eat this mindfully and slowly giving lots of time for digestion, processing and experimentation.

Remember that success is most often preceded by making some mistakes, so keep growing your courage to be imperfect!

Thank you for teaching us so much about loving and learning.

Blessings and love, Grammy and Papa

Instructions for Making Maple Syrup

Dear Grandchildren,

Did you know that not one scientist in the world has any idea how gallons of sap in trees go against the laws of gravity every spring. The sap flows and floats a hundred feet up from where she has been sleeping in tree roots all winter to the top of her tree to nurture her baby buds. She does this at approximately the same time every year.

This little story is to tell you that sap isn't just sap. Sap doesn't believe that it is just sap and so it isn't. This is likely the most important truth that Grammy and Papa will ever share with you. How sap comes to us by *being* beyond the laws of gravity, is only one of its many mysteries and miracles.

If you will work and play with her, using the following instructions, you will always be discovering more of Mother Nature's secrets and eventually you will know, far beyond thinking about it, that there are no *ordinary* moments in growing, harvesting and transforming sap into something very special.

The sacred gift hidden to us, present just under Mother Nature's dark bark. In life lots of special gifts hide in the dark. Should you choose to look—really look—her special energy will flow to nurture you too, just like she nurtures her baby buds at the top of the trees.

Here deep in our family's forest, each spring Mother Nature sings her sacred song. *Silence, splash, silence, splash* as each drip ripples out of her loving body. Grammy and Papa find that we really have to pay attention to hear her. She has now selflessly done her part for another season and awaits our response. We must expect to see nothing more from her for a while. After giving her sap to us she surrounds our Sugar Shack and waits patiently.

As we mindfully chop wood to fuel the fires that are so necessary to purify her gifts and discover her secrets, we find that it really helps when we mindfully pay attention when we are chopping the wood.

For years Grammy and Papa have experienced difficulty in finding the right equipment, like an open pot for cooking. This year we searched in places that we had looked many times before, in hopes of finding what we needed. One day there it was, right under our nose, the perfect pot that we needed to do the cooking. Other years we even went to many special stores to buy the equipment but what we bought just didn't seem to work. We now think that a lot of the problem was us – just not looking close enough.

So often in past springs, boiling in small, restricted containers we have foolishly attempted to evaporate the sap's impurities only to waste firewood and even create dangerous pressure. This season will be different!

We have also learned the importance of how to carefully start and manage the fire. Mindfully paying attention really helps to manage the fire. Birch bark and small pieces of dry soft wood to start, just little bits at first.

For so many seasons (and reasons), we thought that because it was good for starting a fire, softwood could give sufficient heat to bring the sap to a boil long enough to purify it – NOT SO! This was a very disappointing lesson because softwood is so much easier to work with than hardwood. Mindfully paying attention to our disappointments really helped here.

We have now learned that once the fire is started, a consistent, ongoing supply of hardwood like Ash and Maple are required to sustain the heat. Ash and Maple require much more effort to cut and split but the job cannot be done without them!

That's how your Mommies and Daddies have been so helpful to us in doing this job – we could never do it alone. Your Mommies and Daddies will also need help from you children to boil down their 'SAP' – just like they helped Grammy and Papa boil down ours. The more they mindfully pay attention to you children, the more help they will get from you. Grammy

and Papa hope that whenever you see them not keeping their fire hot enough, you will bring them some *hard* wood to burn.

For some reason, most people don't like to harvest and boil sap to find the special secrets and gifts that it has to give, but Grammy and I really hope that you will keep up this tradition that we learned from our Mommies and Daddies and other farmers many years ago.

All you have to do to know all of the secrets and powers, mysteries and miracles is to believe that sap isn't just sap, agree to keep boiling it each day to discover its many more delicious truths, and mindfully pay attention to what you are doing.

Because ash and maple are so important and require a lot of effort to cut and split, Grammy and I have asked a number of other sap-cooking farmers how to be as efficient as possible in keeping the heat strong with the smallest amounts of hardwood. They taught us 4 tools to make this happen, and we are passing them on to you in this book. They said that one of the most important things about the 4 tools is to learn how to really pay attention to what we do. Your great-grandfather, Bups (my Dad) always use to say to me, "**mind** what you are doing **now** son". He and Gran (my Mom) were great maple syrup farmers.

Once boiling, the heat just naturally seems to carry off the excess water. The trick is to use all your resources, knowledge, support and effort wisely to keep the sap boiling and purifying.

It's also very important to stay awake. Many times in the past Grammy and I fell asleep and the fire went out or got out of control. It felt good to sleep at the time, but then we had to start all over to get the sap boiling again. Papa truly regrets some of the times that he fell asleep but these times did teach me important lessons.

Although you will find that the water just seems to evaporate on its own, when the fire is hot enough, many other impurities must be constantly skimmed off – **heat alone is not enough**. It seems that the more we boil, the more impurities just seem to come to the surface from nowhere. Using the 4 tools, we skim and the brew is clean, we come back a bit later and more skimming is required. Sometimes I need Grammy to help me with the skimming because there are so many impurities I don't even see.

This season we started to boil and everything seemed to be going perfect. The sap was plentiful thanks to Mother Nature and our magic forest. We kept a well-managed hardwood fire, got a more open pot for cooking, but something seemed very wrong. After boiling many hours, the pure clean sap started to turn dark brown. This is not what we expected! We felt anxious, a little frustrated and even a bit embarrassed thinking that maybe our friends would find out that we made a mistake. Now, wouldn't you think that

after all these years of learning to get this far along that we would have learned not to get so attached to the way that this purified gift of Nature is supposed to look?

Ahh- so much more to learn!

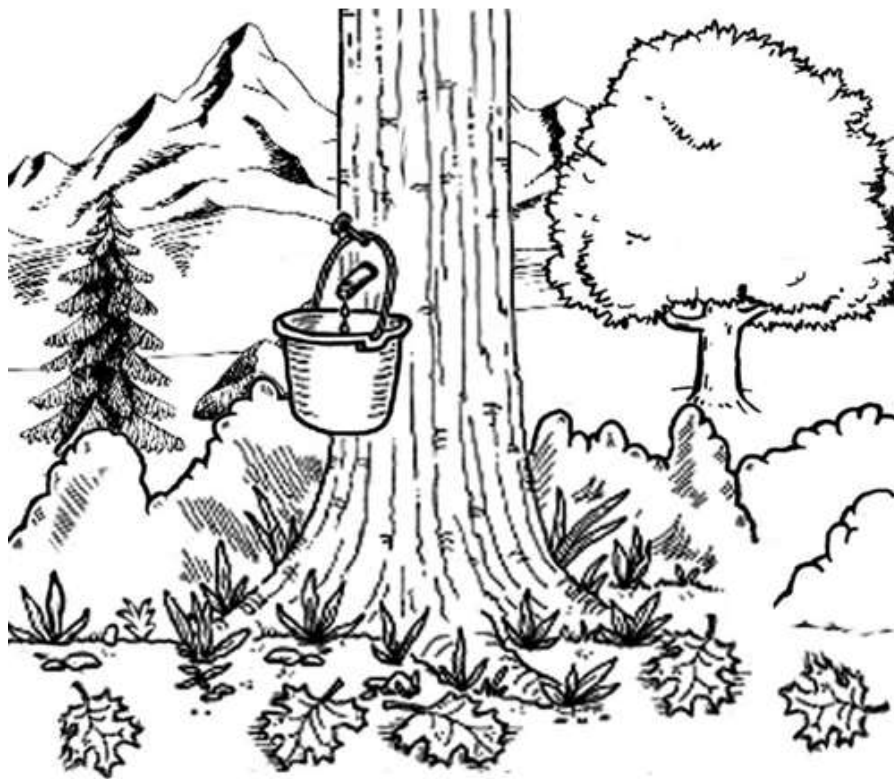
But mindfully paying attention over and over helps us remember.

We taste the dark brown brew and it is delicious maple syrup; and it's just right, just like we heard it would be. Sometimes light in colour, sometimes darker—but it always tastes just right. But how can it **be** this good – *we* added nothing?

We can hardly wait to have some this year with you children – and give the rest away.

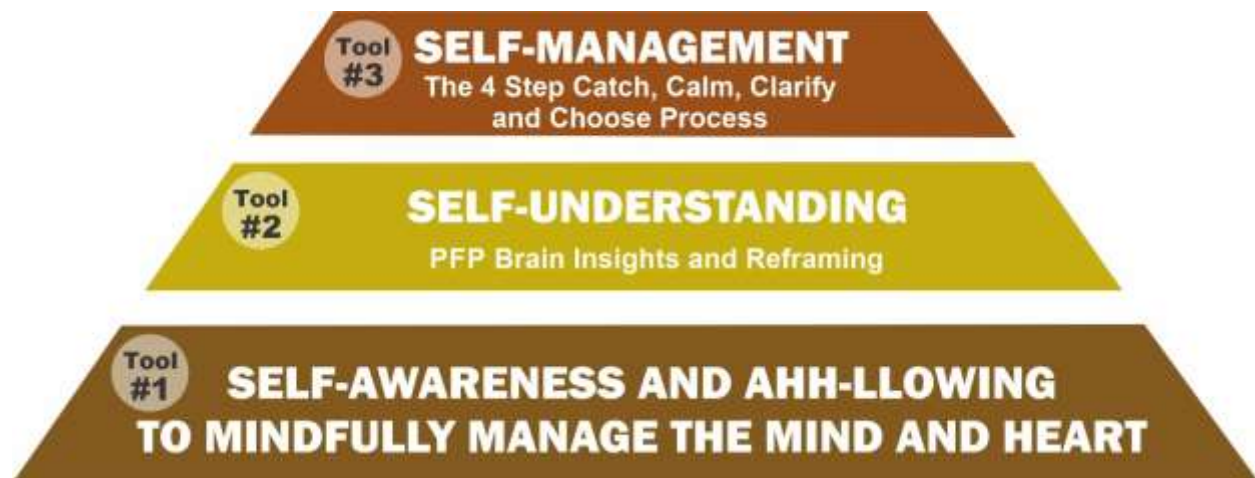
We'll see you in the Forest! You'll find us by the big tree, mindfully listening to the silence in between the splashes.

Love – Grammy and Papa



Chapter Seven

Essential Life Tool #3 – **SELF-MANAGEMENT**



Introduction

The average semi-conscious person has a serious problem with effective *self-management*. Let's return for a moment to describe a little more of the PFP prison, the source of that serious problem. The purpose of this review is to break through the unintended and unaware cognitive bias and inattentional blindness 'guards' that patrol left brain driven PFP prison to ensure that you don't escape.

Let us start by sharing a true confession that demonstrates how the vulnerable and asleep me started my journey towards *self-management*.

Self-Management in Action

As an enraged 6' 6" man attacked Dr. Adler, five of us from the class rushed to restrain the attacker—but were calmly and gently asked by Dr. Adler to leave while they "completed their conversation". And so my journey into Stealing Happiness grew to a deeper level.

At this time, about thirty-five years ago, I was completing some graduate training in Counseling Psychology at 999 Queen Street, Toronto, Ontario. This institution supported and treated residents who had serious developmental disabilities and/or mental health disorders. (After working many years since that time in Addictions, Corrections, Long-Term Care and Developmental Disabilities Services, I have not experienced anything like the tragic human suffering that was an unintended near daily occurrence for many patients and health care providers who worked there).

I was thirty-something and still pretty much operating from my naïve, adolescent life view of “not knowing what I didn’t know.” This regrettably manifested in my “believing I was always right” approach to my roles at work and as a life partner, parent and adult child. At times I even seemed “to really not resist” being brought to anger in arguments when I self-righteously fought for people who were devalued or disabled.

My graduate studies class was gifted to have as one of its professors Dr. Kurt Adler (Dr. Alfred Adler’s son). That day at the Queen Street hospital awakened me to experience one of those very rare and special life-changing moments. Dr. Adler (who was 5' nothing tall and about 75 years of age) asked the hospital if they could arrange for a dual-diagnosis patient to be interviewed by him in front of our class. Two male nurses arrived with a patient named Tom who was prone to aggression. We were briefed prior to the interview that Tom had a developmental disability and a bipolar disorder. Dr. Adler conducted a most interesting interview and thanked Tom for his participation. We all thought the “lesson” was over, but in reality it was just about to begin.

Tom proceeded to ask Dr. Adler for his pass to leave the hospital for the weekend. Unknown to Dr. Adler, Tom had been promised the pass by hospital staff if he agreed to be interviewed. When Dr. Adler informed Tom that he was not aware of this arrangement, Tom instantly started to threaten him. He lunged at Dr. Adler, lifted him out of his chair and held him with his feet off the ground.

Five of us from the class rushed to restrain Tom. Adrenalin pumping, I led the charge. I had been trained in a form of Non-Violent Crisis Intervention, and Dr. Adler was about to get hurt. I had no choice but to restrain Tom to ensure Dr. Adler’s safety. I must confess that on many occasions I had fantasized about this kind of a situation—helping the weak by overpowering the strong.

As we rushed toward them, Dr. Adler looked down at us and calmly said, “Please, please stop and leave. My friend and I are just continuing our conversation.” He continued to talk calmly to Tom as we all filed out of the room. He similarly dismissed the male nurses who came running in from the hall to help. From the window outside the classroom we could see that Tom had set Dr. Adler down, and they were talking as if nothing had happened. Tom began to cry as Dr. Adler held his hand and “cradled” him with his kindness.

I don’t know what happened with Dr. Adler and Tom after that, but I do know what happened to me.

As I left the building, I realized that I had experienced what I now call ***mindful emotional regulated self-management***. I had never seen anyone so effectively meet power and

potential violence with calm, clarity and compassion in the face of serious danger and fear. How Dr. Adler responded did not at all seem like a technique. He was clearly genuine and authentic. What a revelation! What I had believed could only be achieved through forceful restraint was completely managed with mindful, emotional self-regulation calm and kindness.

Until about 20 years ago we Western world folks mainly had to struggle to break free from:

- Nature's gene pool/prison bars
- Nurture's programmed filters, complexes and schemas, chains and shackles

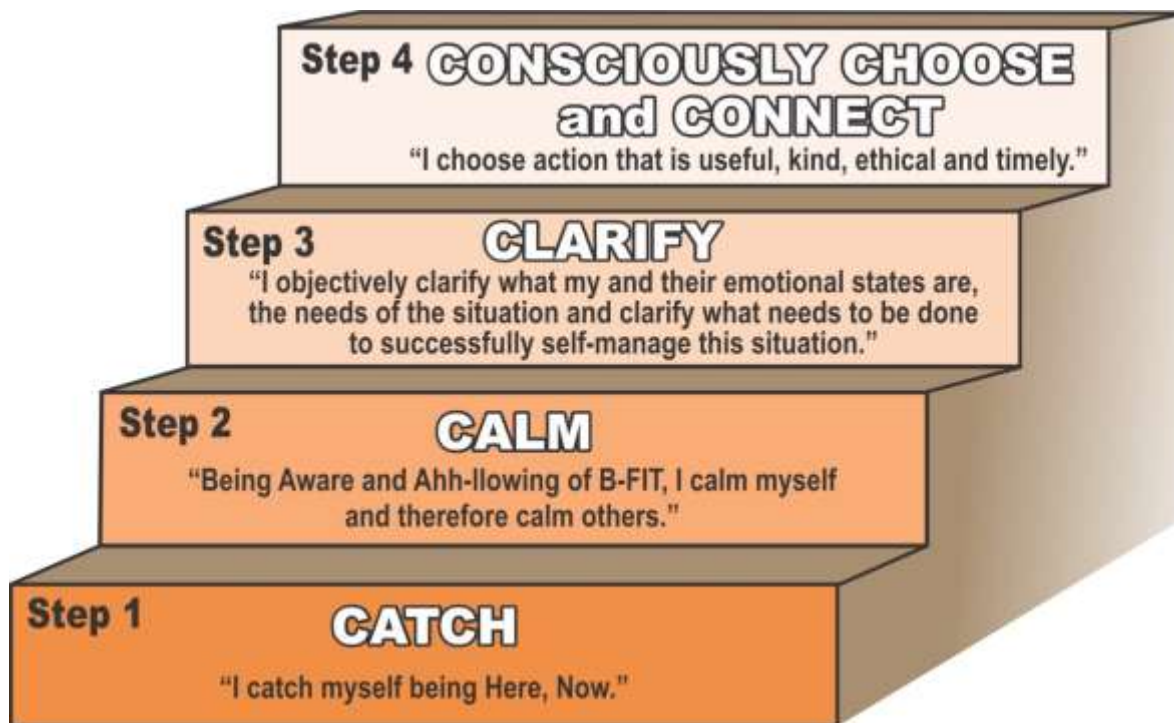
Then it happened! We had an explosion of social media, and millions of bits of information streamed into our brains from wireless platforms and other media, too many to count. We describe this problem as a haystack growing exponentially in size while the needle (the wisdom of how to be happy) staying about the same size.

This third lock on the PFP prison door then is brain priming. This is millions of societal and cultural bits of 'right or wrong' data becoming the way it is, not because it's fact but because when the brain hears something often enough it becomes absorbed by the left hemisphere brain as fact. This now becomes the new normal/cognitive bias.

Ironically, now one of the biggest barriers to breaking free from PFP prison is far too much even good and practical information. In addition, seeing hearing and reading this volume of information can become a serious distraction to applying much of what you are learning. This is because it gives you the illusion that you are growing and developing just because you have more knowledge.

Our first requirement then to enhance personal *self-management* is to be consistently vigilant **to take massive action on a few very good ideas and to not major in minor things.**

To make this first 'rule' and others described below possible, we encourage you to approach each situation with a simple 4 step process. The following illustrates these 4 steps of the *self-management* process.



No matter what situation presents itself, from fun to fear, in order to respond optimally we need to follow these steps:

1. **Catch** our self being *here*, in the moment with awareness and ahh-llowing (Tool #1).
2. If applicable, we then become aware of getting stressed, impatient, angry and move into a **calming** strategy (*applying for example the Awareness-Based Calming strategies outlined in Appendix II*).

Just catching ourself, starts the process of calming.

3. Now we **clarify** the needs of the situation. What is happening in my B-FIT? Should I back off? Should I say something useful, ethical, timely and kind? Should I be empathetic because they are upset? What is the best way to meet their needs and mine?

Without catching and calming, this clarifying process will not happen as it needs to because our fear, left hemisphere default PFP program has already hijacked our 'upper' brain and took it offline.

4. Now and only now can you **consciously choose** (i.e. **actually have some free will and relative control of not being driven by the thinking process**) and **connect** in the most helpful ways.

How to Develop the Skill of Conscious Connecting

- become aware of the fact that you are here NOW;

- become aware of what you are doing, saying, feeling and thinking NOW;
- become aware of your body sensations, feeling and thought reactions;
- deliberately self-talk conscious positive intentions, e.g. “may we be at peace now”.

When we fully and consciously connect as described above, we move beyond what our senses tell us to a place of stillness and wisdom. This guides our every action, not against anything but in harmony with it.

When we become mindfully still, like in the moments of “ahh”—the birth of a child, the dying process of a loved one, being in a special place in nature, experiencing someone’s unconditional thoughtfulness toward us—we know that there is something more to life, something bigger than ourselves.

With this *self-management* process guided by awareness and ahh-llowing, we learn that the mind’s reaction to situations is not the fundamental cause of suffering when triggered by situations and other’s difficult feelings and behaviours directed toward us. We learn that our suffering is actually directly proportionate to the mindless resistance that the unaware mind brings to most situations. Through this clarifying step in the moment of *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing*, we learn that this resistance can be transformed into non-driven energy that results in deep inner peace regardless of the situation. This more optimal form of self-management also helps us to bring optimal *self-expression* problem solving skills to the moment.

This four-step process is like the pilot override found in many cars. When our driving needs correction, it is managed for us. The following true story of a terrible accident that I witnessed and became involved in shows just how following the four-step process allowed me to self-manage as effectively as I could.

Ben, Me, and Me – Self-Management and the 5 ‘C’s

Several years ago, I was driving home on a rainy morning when I came upon a terrible accident. I arrived just minutes after an SUV rolled and tumbled many times, leaving the young driver pinned upside down by the crushed roof. Smoke was coming from the car.

One person had stopped to direct traffic, while another was on her cell calling for help. I pulled over to see how I could help. Part of the driver’s upper body was hanging out of the window, suspended in the air by his seat belt. As I approached his semi-conscious body and realized he was bleeding from many sources, my mind tried to figure out what to do.

The smoke coming from the vehicle indicated more danger, but he was crushed so tightly he could not be moved. As he moaned, I looked for ways to stop the bleeding, but some of the sources couldn’t even be seen.

I knelt down, held his blood-soaked hand and offered him all that I could: my barely coherent words of “hold on” and “help is coming” and “I am HERE.”

Help did come. Skillful and dedicated paramedics worked to stop the bleeding and reduce shock. Firefighters with jaws and saws tried to pull the metal off his mangled body.

I just kept talking to him as the emergency responders worked to save his life. I stayed to comfort him and to keep him focused on living, to fight for his life, telling him to hold on and breathe —until he lost consciousness. The noise of sirens, machinery and urgent voices were like a distant background hum.

In about two hours it was over. He died. I sobbed as if I had known him all my life; but no, we were just two strangers meeting at the side of a road, connected—by what? As I washed the blood from my hands in a rain puddle, a police officer came over and sensitively said, “Good work. Thanks for your help.” I looked at him, but neither of us said anything else.

Anyone at the scene would have reported my role just as I have but this is a very incomplete picture of what was happening to me subjectively, internally.

When I first saw the accident I felt physically weak. I CAUGHT my mind racing with two main thoughts. I watched a self talk thought that said, “This is awful; I want to help, but what can I do?” The second thought I caught was rationalizing why I didn’t need to get involved: “The vehicle could catch fire; help is on the way; the professionals will be here in minutes.” BEING AWARE of these survival thoughts helped me to not be driven by them so that I could leave some space for my brain to more objectively clarify how to respond to the best of my abilities. I consciously chose to stay and help.

As I rushed out of my car, I INTENTIONALLY directed some of my awareness to being mindful to CALM myself. While I logically assessed the situation, I also focused some of my attention on the body sensation that was most obvious—my arms—saying the words “HERE, NOW, AHH-LLOW. This dual focus on CATCHING and CALMING helped me to CLARIFY the needs of the situation objectively, so instead of being overwhelmed I could effectively offer care and support. This little technique of catching, calming and clarifying gave a bit of space between me and my resistance: I would lose that space, then get it again, lose it and get it again. The mind has a mind of its own, right?

By paying attention to my thinking, feeling and body reactions I became aware of the source of my resistance, and labeled them: “Ah, there is fear—ahh-llow.” *Ahh-llow* is the word I mindfully say to myself to lessen resistance to my most difficult feelings of anger,

fear etc. I observed my talk thoughts as they came and gently whispered to myself, “Talk—Ahh-llow.” This mindful observing kept me less identified with the anxiousness and insecurities (no longer my anxiousness) and helped me maintain my calm.

As I approached the young driver—his name was Ben—the fear and the thoughts heightened with each step: “What if the car caught fire, what if, what if” Although the reactions almost drowned me at times, I worked to relate to the fear (there is fear) rather than continuously reacting from it (I am afraid).

When I took Ben’s blood-soaked hand I CAUGHT myself having more resistance—the fear of contracting AIDS, highly unlikely, but still an automatic resistance. My chest was tightening: I labeled it “chest” and INTENDED it to ahh-llow, CALM. As a result of this mindful catching, calming and clarifying that I was working to experience, I was able to respond to Ben’s needs.

Within about five minutes, the mindful presence I was able to summon brought me to my first real moment of awareness of Ben’s suffering—the incredible body, mind and emotional pain he must have been experiencing. This was a clear shift away from my preoccupation with my shocked senses’ reactions to a much deeper level of CONSCIOUS CHOOSING and CONNECTING. This shift carried me from my concern for me, to my concern for Ben, from my passion about me, to compassion about us. From here, I could offer him the best CARE possible at this time.

A little later I CAUGHT myself feeling a little irritable, almost angry. I realized that the apparent source was that no one who really knew what to do was relieving me, but in truth anger just auto-piloted its way onto the scene to distract me from my more painful feelings of vulnerability. I CLARIFIED this, and said to myself, “Ahh—anger. Ahh-llow.” Throughout, I kept my focus on Ben’s needs and kept reassuring him that he was not alone.

When it became obvious that Ben had died, a deep grief came over me. A terrible sadness. I sobbed. I had experienced death before in my palliative care work but Ben’s dying process had been so violent. My throat felt totally closed; I was taking slower and shallower breaths. Such suffering that lay ahead for Ben’s spouse, child and/or parents when they received the news. “Ahh—there is sadness. Ahh-llow.” As I washed Ben’s blood from my hands, I worked to be ahh-llowing of my judgments: such an unnecessary tragedy! How unfair! “Ahh—judging. Ahh-llow.”

When the policeman said, “Good work,” my mind added shame and guilt to my confusion and vulnerability: I knew one part of me hadn’t wanted to be there. I gently CAUGHT and CALMED the new body and mind activities that shame and guilt had brought.

Throughout this two-hour experience, mindfully catching, calming, clarifying and connecting enabled me to draw on my learned skills, such as mindful emotional intelligence. This Conscious Care and Support Process also helped me to have the presence to disengage from the unhelpful messages that continuously came to me from my “little boy’s” roots of vulnerability.

As I caught myself having stressful feelings, this awareness helped me to calmly experience them so they did not escalate into uncontrollable levels. From this calm place I was able to have perspective, confidence and a more skilled self-managed response. The capacity for authentic compassion that my mindful practice had developed in me spontaneously activated, opening my heart to do what I could for Ben, as if he were my own son.

Reflections About Ben

Being mindful/conscious in extreme and even not so extreme times is not a neat and tidy, choreographed process. From the inside, it often ain’t too pretty. It is however, much more skillful and meaningful—and less scary—than our PFP-identified little boy/girl self would have it. I sense that this little boy will demand attention until about an hour after I die, and that’s okay. He is what he is: a graduate of my “somebody school” who has served me well at many times throughout my life. Bit by bit I am learning to **simultaneously, mindfully live with him** and also **with awareness of him** and therefore **be less driven by him**.

This process, as uncoordinated as it seems to be in the marketplace of life, has allowed me to know a vitally important truth through direct experience. The truth is that there is potential in all of us for a very unique experience in each moment when our vulnerable little boy or girl (i.e. PFP identified self) is no longer mindlessly driven. Because of mindfulness, ahh-llowngness, intentionality and the other personal and professional *self-management* essentials, we can more consistently bring our A-game (optimally self-express).

Ben’s story is true. It’s also the perfect working example of how the *self-management* skills you are learning will guide you through even the most high-stress situations. Although this resource will bring these insights, skills and perspectives to the situation, we still subjectively experience much of the normal and predictable mental, physical and emotional responses to others. However, at the exact same time we can now authentically consciously connect to the person/situation in a more effective and meaningful way.

The process is explained in steps because there is a natural order to how we move through them. In practice, however, you will find that once you have mastered them, they occur almost concurrently when you are called upon to respond to someone in need, as I did in Ben’s story.

Once the four steps are activated, you will be self-managing by being more fully conscious instead of being only semi-conscious. You will recall from the *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing* tool how semi-consciousness is like being someplace but your mind being either lost in an irrelevant thought, or lost deep in an emotional or relevant thinking response, but not being aware that you are *here* in this situation or discussion.

Being sufficiently aware in the moment to catch, calm, clarify and choose helps to facilitate *self-management* so as to be able to effectively implement all of the life tools for tasks and roles.

Note – Very, Very Important:

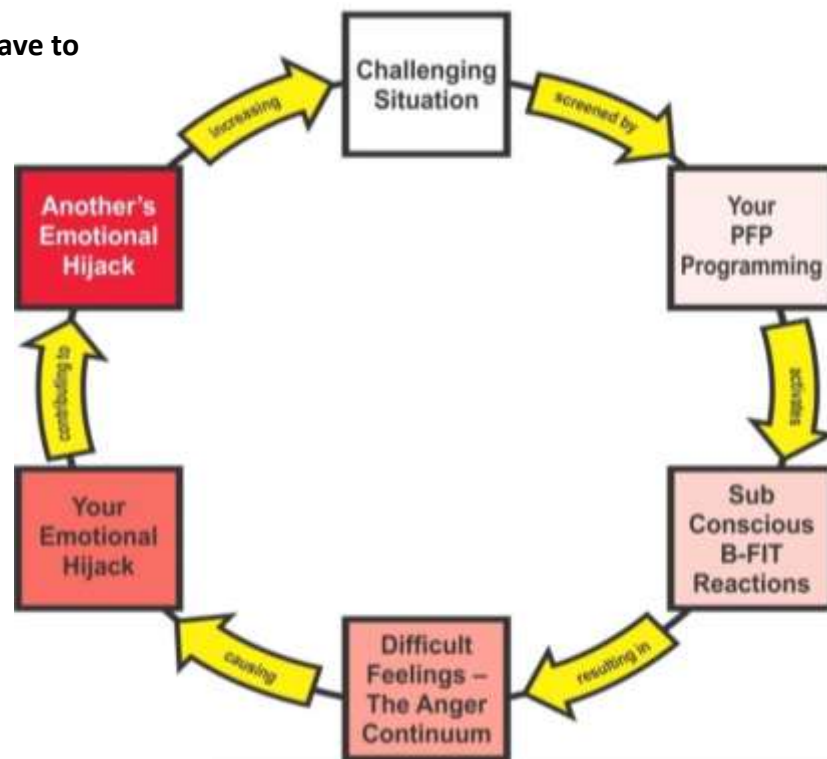
The importance of spontaneously becoming aware that you are *here, now* in this moment (catching) cannot be overstated. For perspective, however, if catching happens for you even once an hour for even just 10 to 15 seconds, over time that will make a powerfully positive change to your *self-management* skills and therefore your life and others to whom you relate.

You being optimally calm in crisis and chaos and able to consciously connect with another is dependent on your direct implementation of the acquired skills of Catch, Calm, Clarify and Connect, leading to a spontaneous response from a developed capacity. Most of these qualities result from the integration of all 4 tools.

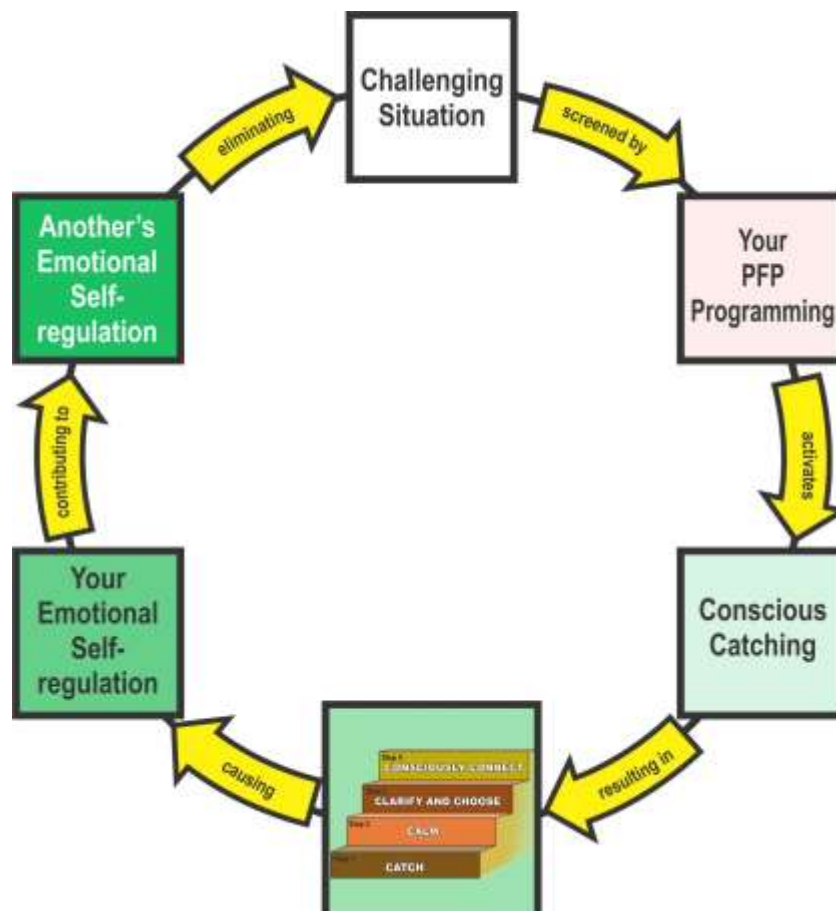
The following graphic describes the outcomes of using the 4 steps to breaking the emotional hijack cycle.

Breaking The Emotional Hijack Life Cycle

It doesn't have to be this.



Instead, it could be this!



Self-Manage in the Moment by Accentuating the Positive About People and Conditions.

Next we describe managing the PFP brain/body by **tricking** it with logical challenges to normal adolescent reactions (e.g. *awfulizing*). For example: mindfully introduce conflicting information to the PFP brain/body reactions. As soon as you catch yourself, use self-talk statements such as:

- ✓ “Yes this situation is bad but **relative to** being blind, starving or in unbearable physical pain, etc. (as many people are today), I am very fortunate”.
- ✓ **Calm** the PFP brain/body by identifying one or two body sensations that have been activated by it. Say to yourself, “**There is** anxiety,” (e.g. a tight chest) instead of “I am anxious,” and intentionally relax those body sensations.
- ✓ This situation **could be worse** because _____.
- ✓ A **possible benefit** that could result from this horrible situation is _____.
- ✓ As you come to awareness throughout your day occasionally remind yourself, “This could be **the last time** I experience this situation or person”. Let this awareness awaken your innate gratitude and compassion.
- ✓ Build muscles of resilience by **stretching limits of comfort** each day, (e.g. make some sacrifices and be equanimous with them).
- ✓ **Celebrate successes** but **make failures painful**. Own it! “I am unhappy today because I didn’t or don’t _____.”
- ✓ As you come to awareness throughout your day, **activate intense awareness of the moment** by moment pleasant experience that you have with routine interactions and situations, i.e. one bite of food or saying good morning to a friend.

Self-Management – Motivation to Learn and Live It

Once you have started your upstream journey to steal happiness from life by learning and practicing the 4 essential tools, you will significantly improve the odds of building and sustaining a good and happy life. Your formal education and societal influences have mainly only prepared you to get a job and be a law-abiding citizen. To have sustainable happiness you will have to work harder and smarter for it. Although constructing as good an outer life as possible will at best be only 25% of what you will need, it is of course still important.

When working harder and smarter you will have to stay highly motivated as one of the guards in PFP prison is mindless complacency and hopeless hope e.g. ‘life isn’t great but hopefully it will get better’

3 Essential *Self-Management* Heads-Ups and To-Dos To Consciously Motivate You To Do The Work To Be A Good Self-Manager To Create Sustainable Happiness:

1. Before you commit to work for it you will need reasons to stay motivated that are based more in feelings than in logic. Do you have a couple? Stop and write them in your journal. (e.g. I want to feel more fulfilled with what I have)
2. Motivation for most people comes through one or more episodes of crash and burn. It doesn't have to be that way. Just learning firsthand about the suffering that comes to almost everyone from often predictable painful situations will help you commit to growing to your fullest potential. For example, volunteering at shelters (or dozens of other social justice activities) to help relieve the suffering of homeless or abused people will simultaneously enhance your awareness of your own vulnerability. This is an excellent way to keep feeling motivated for compassionate action as well.
3. Sometimes no matter what you do to prevent your suffering and to increase your odds of having sustainable happiness, you may still occasionally crash and burn for a while. Learning and living the "happiness" tools we offer will however significantly increase the likelihood that;
 - ✓ your crash and burns will be fewer,
 - ✓ they will be less intense, and
 - ✓ you will recover more quickly.
 - ✓ your times of happiness will be more frequent,
 - ✓ they will be more intense, and
 - ✓ they will last longer.

Self-management with Body, Mind and Mental Nutrition

Your chances to have a good, and happy life will significantly increase if you give healthy daily nutrition to your mind and mental capacities like you do for your body.

Just as our body requires nutrition and exercise to sustain its health, so to does the mind and spirit. A non-negotiable commitment to a daily mental/spiritual daily regime of a secular and/or spiritual meditation will be extremely important to manage mind, body and the spirit's well-being. (e.g. transform B-FIT 'energy' to lessen left brain driven so as to have right brain spontaneously manage more moments). Reference additional resources at a centreforconsciouscare.ca.

Physical Nutrition and Fitness – Self-Management

- Only eat food that has been morally and ethically raised and harvested.
- Healthy eating begins in the grocery store. If this fails and you bring home a big bag of carbs and sugar, stop yourself as soon as you can (even if it is after you have pigged out) and throw the rest of the bag in the garbage.

Our physical body is a massive electromagnetic energy system that requires fuel, down time and ongoing maintenance. Do no harm. Each body is a machine with a standard model plus unique, optional extras. You need to do testing to learn about its needs, intolerances, infections and imbalances. Then you must support the needs accordingly. An Organic Acid Test offered by most naturopathic doctors is an excellent place to start.

- Physical exercise. Our ancestors worked and ran 15 miles a day to forage, hunt and survive being hunted. Operating a mouse on a screen is just not an equivalent exercise. Check out *Spark* written by one of my former advisors, Dr. John Ratey of Harvard Medical School.

Calming Exercises

Learn and practice the bilateral, biomeridian awareness based calming strategies outlined in Appendix VII (BBABC).

Meaningful Work

- If possible pursue livelihood that is meaningful and socially useful. This may require working harder to be prepared with the necessary skills and tools. It may also require taking justified risks to leave a safe job to explore your full potential elsewhere.
- Your meaningful role may not come from a paying job; this is the case for many. Instead, explore volunteering your gifts to find meaning and purpose. Finding meaning and purpose in what you do is the richest of all compensations and it is not taxed.

Changing Jobs

I was sitting at a stop sign and about to enter onto Highway 2 near Welland, Ontario. I had just narrowly avoided being hit by a tractor trailer going full speed as the driver swerved to try to miss a car that had failed to stop at the intersection. His truck did hit their car and killed two women instantly. The truck rolled down an embankment, turned over, hit a tree and caught fire. Reluctantly I ran toward the vehicle to pull the driver out. Just as I approached the cab he climbed out and we ran to safety.

I drove home very slowly, in shock and filled with 'what if' mind chatter. At that time I was at the peak of my career as a metallurgical consultant to architects and engineers of manufacturers of special equipment. I started this career after working in the aerospace industry for a number of years. It was good work, I enjoyed it and we were making more money than we could spend. I had however been volunteering in three maximum security prisons for a couple of years and had started to feel a deep sense of fulfillment from this human service as I worked to teach life skills to men and women to prepare them to rebuild their life when they were released.

When I arrived home and told Joanne about my afternoon I finished by saying “if I had died today, although I would have been quite satisfied in my role as a good son, husband and father, I would not have been satisfied that I had lived my professional life to the fullest. We started talking about options and within three months, I took an entry level job as a street worker for the Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario for about 30% of the compensation that we had been receiving from Atlas Alloys. We gave up our new company car each year and I returned the company’s season passes to the four gold seats right behind the visitor’s box at Maple Leaf Gardens. We downsized and Joanne and I both took on extra jobs. This is how we transitioned into more meaningful work to complement our life at this time.

Fulfilling Relationships

- Determine your most fundamental relationship gifts and needs. Stay focused on your intention to have these needs complemented by people who pop into your life as a result of you making yourself available.

Expect numerous relationship challenges, including some failures. When experienced mindfully, these become grist for your growth mill. Keep your heart open to those who hurt you, knowing that all hurt is inadvertent because of their PFP. Find some way to say to yourself, “Thank you for being such a pain”. (*See Chapter Four: Difficult People - How To Restart or Depart - With an Open Heart*).

- As you grow and mature you will have to let go of some relationships that no longer complement your growth process because of different priorities, values, etc. See your day timer as a life raft that can only handle so many relationships.

For significant-other relationships, as soon as possible, sort out lust, from love, from liberation. All may have a place in your world but clarity is essential. (*Reference Chapter Fourteen*)

Develop Non-Negotiable Skills - Self-Discipline, Effort and Integrity

- Cultivate an attitude of indebtedness instead of entitlement, especially about happiness – no one is entitled to it!
- Stay mindful of the difference between subjective and objective reality. For example, subjectively (inwardly) “be loving presence” while effectively asserting yourself with positive conflict resolution of objective (outside) reality.
- Most human interactions are happening simultaneously on at least six different levels: social, logical, hormonal, filters based on childhood conditioning, ego-based, and energetic. Mindful awareness is essential to ensure compassionate connecting at all

levels at once. Ask yourself, “What am I missing at this moment that would be helpful?” Remember that every story has three sides because of inattentional blindness.

- The best way to successfully change conditions in your life, to become happier or manage a crisis is first to work hardest on changing and growing yourself—not more communications and behavioural strategies.
- Some things in life are not fair or just. You don’t have to like it; it is just the way it is. Move on! “When the horse is dead—get off”.
- Study other evolved happy people. Success leaves clues.
- Life is a matter of odds, so plant many ‘crops’.
- Ignorance is not bliss. What you don’t know can and will hurt you. Pay attention to your physical and emotional health.
- If you want your share, you have to care (for others).
- Think big, then start small, but for sure do some small every day.
- Honour mood disorders and get help.
- Life requires resolve: “I will”.
- Life requires action: “Do”.
- Life demands commitment: “I am”.

(Thank you to one of our earliest teachers, James Rhone, for inspiring many of these suggestions.)

Self-Manage Happiness with Expectations

As we have studied prehistoric civilizations that thrived in architecture, stone tool fabrication, art, community development, food harvesting and production, one universal observation comes to mind. These people appear to have had happy and fulfilling times in spite of the fact that they lived, relative to us, in poverty and terrible living conditions such as extreme heat and cold, physical pain, starvation, etc. In more recent times even just a hundred years ago, our ancestors lived in most of the same primitive conditions, and yet we have more than enough evidence that these folks had normal happy times as well.

Given that happiness is such a subjective experience, it is impossible to compare anyone’s experience of happiness to another’s, but a general conclusion can be drawn. It is that authentic forms of happiness have been possible throughout the ages without medicines, air conditioning, central heating, or cosmetic dentistry, etc.

How so?

We propose that a very big variable in the happiness equation is **expectation**. As the song goes, “How do we bring him back to the farm after he’s seen Paree.” Put another way, “I was miserable because I had no shoes, until I met a man who had no feet”. These quotes confirm that happiness is relative and dependent on what we expect to have.

We often reflect on our parents’ generation. Joanne’s farming family of six sisters lost their barn to a lightning strike with no insurance to rebuild. They knew that every year could bring drought when no crops can grow and no insurance. My mother and father raised five of us. For over two years mom and dad gave palliative care to my great-uncle in our home in bed—before the luxury of disposable briefs. There was no money for doctors or medicine. At the same time, they had a flood that destroyed 90% of their General Store’s stock that also was not insured.

Almost everyone in the province had a similar story at that time. These challenges could happen any time, and yet we were both raised in very happy homes. It seems that the people who expected that hardship was normal somehow kept it in relative perspective and really valued the good times. For some people today however, the expectation seems to be that there will be/should be a ‘fix’ for every problem. Maybe this is setting a mindless mind up with “happiness entitlement”, expectations that could be limiting one’s potential to be happy.

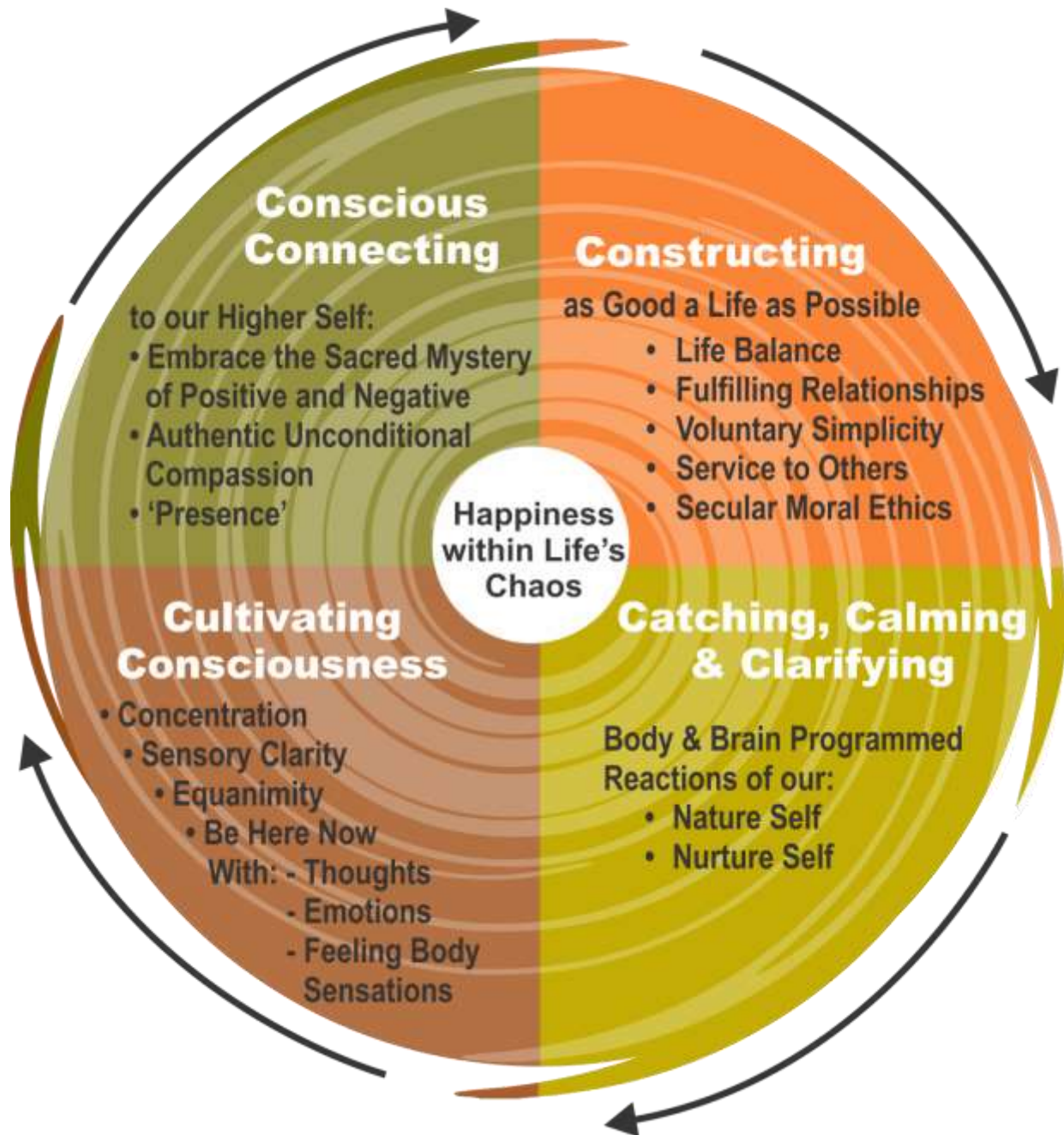
Self-managing happiness with expectations needs to be learned and lived. By using the life tools as often as possible, we will learn to live more in each present moment. Here now, we optimally experience ‘what is’ vs ‘what’s coming’. This seems to have a way of keeping our life real, with realistic expectations not entitlements. Review our story of the wise old Chinese farmer in Chapter Eight.

Summary - Self-Management

We are well aware that we have just given you enough homework to last a life time. This is not the kind of homework that you should delay and then try to cram before the exam. Life is the exam and most failing grades (suffering) results from folks not being prepared for life’s absolutely predictable tests.

This summary is a good time to go back and repeat the great quote “I am not a good shot, but I shoot often”. Be persistent! Be persistent! Be persistent! We suggest re-reading a page or two of this chapter every day then look for ways to apply what you have learned. Learning and living the *self-management* tool will be essential to activate the other 3 tools.

**Summary –
The Four Critical Areas of One's Life
Requiring Self-Management**



Chapter Eight



Tool #3 – An Application

Difficult Feelings with Much Less Suffering

PAIN'S POTENTIAL

When I coach my students in the midst of some terrible emotional pain and suffering, I do not hope for their eventual peace and happiness. This, for almost everyone, is a foregone outcome of the work we do together. Rather, my intentions are reserved to ask, “May you continue your disciplined and courageous journey long after your pain has been ‘temporarily’ replaced by laughter and love for your life”.

The temptation is great for us to go ‘back asleep’ when the crisis is over. I must admit that I am sometimes tempted to slow down recovery for some folks so that the authenticity and wholeness discovered in the search for relief from pain can last long enough to awaken them joyously and wisely to the point of no return.

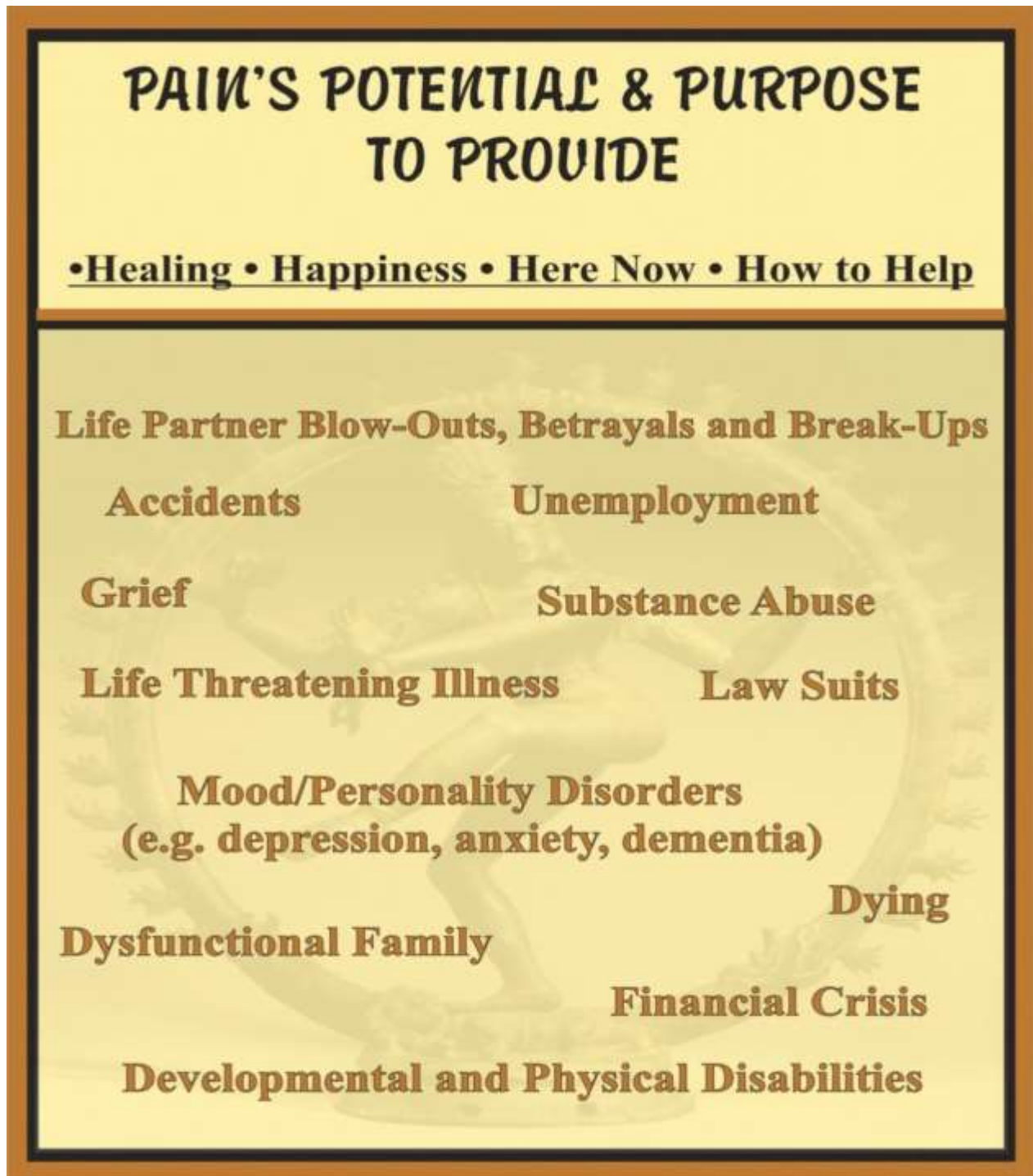
Much of this insight was developed as I survived through my own life-threatening mental health disorder 30 years ago. The true human tragedy is not the betrayals, break-ups, life threatening illnesses, or mental health disabilities that force us out of our deep sleep. Rather, the true tragedy is returning to the human predicament of addiction to the nasty narcotic of comfort and control.

May this offering keep you sufficiently awake and passionately excited to open the door to the mansion of universal love and awareness that your pain can unlock—if you are with it skillfully.

Let us start by telling you what we intend to accomplish in this chapter. We hope to:

- 1) Help you become highly competent and committed to practicing and implementing *conscious self-management* in all parts of your life.
- 2) Encourage you to prepare for the inevitable physical or emotional pain and suffering that is on its way (or already taking over your life).
- 3) Show you how to better minimize and manage pain and suffering beyond just denying and distracting yourself to survive it (i.e. how to be fulfilled, happy and kind in spite of it).

- 4) Teach you how to use each painful or challenging situation to grow to a significantly more beneficial level of awareness and emotional *self-management*.
- 5) Help you to develop authentic kindness for all others, regardless of your feelings and thoughts.
- 6) Have you use your relationships to awaken consciousness instead of deepening ego attachments.



The Hidden Treasure Disguised as Pain

Before teaching you how to use *self-management* to skillfully process pain so that it doesn't result in overwhelming suffering, we decided to remind you of an extremely important element of our PFP human nature regarding pain and suffering.

Possibly the most challenging of all laws of nature to understand and accept is this radical claim that pain can be a door opener to help us realize our fuller mind, body, and spiritual potential. While 'no gain without pain' sounds trite, at some level this statement holds a nugget of wisdom. For example, when conscious, we notice that even the smallest particle of pain can at some time yield or uncover surprising gifts:

- the job loss that resulted in a new wonderfully fulfilling career.
- the devastating breakup from a betrayal that made way for growth and self-reliance, and/or an outstanding relationship with someone else, or a reconciliation into a new level of conscious connecting.
- the clinical depression that birthed a depth of authentic compassion never to be found in an MSW degree.

The Chinese Farmer – A Gift from Allan Watts

Once upon a time there was a Chinese farmer whose only horse for working his farm ran away. That evening, all of his neighbors came around to commiserate. They said, "We are so sorry to hear your horse has run away. This is most unfortunate." The farmer said, "**Maybe.**" The next day the horse came back bringing seven wild horses with it, and in the evening everybody came back and said, "Oh, isn't that lucky. What a great turn of events. You now have eight horses!" The farmer again said, "**Maybe.**"

The following day his son tried to break one of the horses, and while riding it, he was thrown and broke his leg. The neighbors then said, "Oh dear, that's too bad," and the farmer responded, "**Maybe.**" The next day the conscription officers came around to conscript people into the army, and they rejected his son because he had a broken leg. Again all the neighbors came around and said, "Isn't that great!" Again, the wise old farmer said, "**Maybe" etc., etc., etc.**"

The whole process of nature is an integrated process of immense complexity, and it's impossible to tell whether anything that happens is good or bad — because you never know what will be the consequence of the misfortune; or, you never know what will be the consequences of good fortune.

'Maybe' we pick up clues as we go along, labeling situations as either misfortune or good fortune. But 'maybe' after we have done everything possible through right speech and right action, it is the way it's supposed to be: the yin can't exist without the yang, the shadow depends on light and vice versa.



One of the by-products of *conscious self-management* is learning how to say 'maybe'.

A law expressed often in the Marks' household for over 50 years has been: "we know far too little about the future to be pessimistic".

The clinical depression that I had from 1989-1992 took my pain continuum to a whole new level of 10^{10} . Since that new scale that was developed approximately 30 years ago, in spite of numerous difficult hardships, losses and fears I have had since that time, I have yet to experience over 4 on my 1989-1992 recalibrated continuum of suffering. In addition, my authentic conscious compassion for others' pain and suffering, including total strangers, has grown exponentially as a result of my depression.

We ask you to stay open to the possibility that there seems to be a law of nature that operates beyond cause and effect. This law that has yet to be in anyway measured by scientists' most sophisticated gadgets, is well understood and discussed in length in all of the wisdom traditions. In this chapter we are going to show you how to apply the tool of *self-management* to see if we can at least point to the 'out there' non-measurable conditions that can help to create this recalibrating experience in you.

It was grace that taught my heart to fear.

And grace my fear released.

There appears to us to be an experience of growing and healing into wholeness that only pain seems to be able to awaken.

Sooner or later everyone gets pushed or pulled into overwhelming emotional or physical pain and suffering. The list is long:

- marriage blow-outs;
- betrayals and break-ups;
- unemployment and financial crisis;
- mood or personality disorders like depression, anxiety, or dementia;
- substance abuse;
- life-threatening illness of self or a loved one;
- death and dying and
- grief.

As predictable as these conditions are, few folks are even remotely prepared for the devastation, let alone be somewhat skillful at working our way through the storm. We are seldom able to see or experience any potential positive pay-offs or purpose for life's catastrophes. Our culture has become considerably better at offering ineffective distractions: sleep aids like materialism, social media, drugs, sex and "Rock & Roll"- but no real solutions.

It is almost inconceivable how the average person is unconcerned and uncaring about preparing to meet and manage the absolutely predictable pain and suffering that comes to everyone.

Added to the tragedy is that, for the most part, we are not trying to develop and equip our children, youth, and young adults to become emotionally ready to skillfully manage pain so that it does not cascade into suffering. Such is another part of our human predicament. Even if we invested the same time and resources in them that we put into minor sports, mathematics, dance, and music lessons etc., we could go a long way to prevent and better manage the current levels of suffering. Probably every part of our society could accept some blame. Family, education, religion, governments are all primarily trying to close the gate long after we have left the barn.

So as adults, one day we literally find that our world is falling apart and we grope to find the fix for effective survival and escape. There is a better way.

The self-help field offers many behavioural and cognitive strategies to react to and try to get rid of the conditions and chaos. Some are very useful. Some are ineffective, and still others can be harmful. Being able to effectively react and fix is important. It is significantly more important to also give each person the necessary insights, skills, values, and awareness to become better prepared and resilient – immunized, so to speak. How could the suffering from difficult conditions and chaos be minimized and best managed, and used to further develop one's potential to be significantly more socially useful, kind, fulfilled, and happy?

In addition to self-help books, courses, counselling and medication etc., a tool like *conscious self-management* can be learned and used to help minimize and manage the suffering. This tool is simultaneously targeted at helping one not only relieve the suffering, but also radically alters how they see and experience their life. This new perspective opens the gateway to a whole

new way of being fulfilled, happy, and relatively stress-free **within** the chaos and pain producing conditions as we work skillfully to change what can and should be changed.

About Minimizing the Chaos

Before our offering on how to work skillfully within the pain and chaos to minimize suffering by applying the U,B-FIT mindfulness and the other *self-management* skills, let's do a little work on how to prevent the chaos.

Let's travel further back upstream to better understand a large part of the chaos that is the object of resistances and attachments that are causing unnecessary suffering. In order to suffer as a result of being resistant or attached to ideas, things, people or situations, there needs to be something to which we are resistant or attached. Let's first explore what it is that has so much power.

As we write this, the world is suffering under the weight of Covid-19. There are 3 million dead without an end in sight. Two of the most important variables as to why a disease like Covid-19 ravishes our health is because our immune system has not yet sufficiently evolved to fight off a new or mutated pathogen. Treatment and prevention vaccines work to relieve our vulnerability by identifying the pathogen, then building our immune system to somehow neutralize the 'bug'.

We are facing an identical out of control pandemic in our happiness health crisis. After tens of thousands of years of evolution, two totally new unhappiness pathogens were mutated into existence with the industrial revolution and started to more radically mature in the 1950's.

Similar to Covid-19, humans had not yet (and still haven't) evolved (developed 'herd immunity') so as to not be at serious risk of chronic unhappiness as a result of their lives being dominated by these two unhappiness pathogens.

The two lethal and contagious 'bugs' are the expectations and the fundamental beliefs that have infected millions of folks. They are that living a successful life has become defined as having as much **Comfort** and **Convenience** as is humanly possible. This tragic condition has reached epidemic proportions as manifested in the symptoms of **entitlement**. Like Covid, the symptoms of the illness are not known by the victims until it manifests as unhappiness – very often as a result of a relatively trivial first world problem. Daily 'rashes' and other more serious symptoms happen without the host even knowing the cause of their unhappiness.

Re-exposure to the pathogen happens every morning to most unsuspecting victims as they watch a commercial on TV for the latest time, and energy saving gadgets, goodies, and got-tos. Everyone in our culture is exposed to these pathogens dozens of times a day, as they work and

play, mindlessly being driven by the mantra of ‘I need to be do’n, get’n and hav’n, bigger, better and more, for me and mine’ to be happy.

While all 4 life tools will be helpful to become immunized to this pathogen, the tool of *conscious self-management* will be the essential vaccine for us to survive, and to lessen our resistance to not having the mind’s addictive fix of comforts and convenience. In the absence of mindfully managing the many messages that each day normalize one’s entitlement assumptions, the unnecessary suffering from the pain and chaos of believing that “I do not have enough”, “I am not enough” and “others are not doing enough for me”, will continue to reinforce the infection.

Now that we understand more of what brings folks suffering, let’s explore what to do about it.

Conscious Self-Management of Physical & Emotional Suffering

Most people experience physical and emotional suffering. Being able to teach people how to prevent, manage, and minimize that suffering is one of the most meaningful and heart-felt gifts we can offer anyone. This level of service to another becomes a rich source for our happiness. The following insights and process will move you toward this goal.

$$\text{SUFFERING} = \text{PAIN} \times \text{RESISTANCE}$$
$$(S = P \times R)$$

Shinzen Young (www.unifiedmindfulness.org), the gifted contemporary teacher and creator of the Unified Mindfulness System (*U,B-FIT mindfulness*), uses this formula to describe how pain becomes suffering (both physically and emotionally), unless it is experienced mindfully. Physical *pain* means the actual physiological signal sent to your brain to warn you something is wrong. You often can’t really change that. *Resistance* is how your body, feelings, and image and talk thoughts (B-FIT) subconsciously reacts to that signal. This resisting determines much of how strong your reaction is. You can change that, and as you do, you also change your level of *suffering*—the actual discomfort you feel from the pain.

For example, pain at level 8 (on a 1-10 scale) and resistance at level 7 creates 56 units of suffering ($8 \times 7 = 56$).

However, the same pain (level 8) with less resistance (level 2) creates only 16 units of suffering ($8 \times 2 = 16$).

The numbers may change, but the principle is powerfully accurate. In life we often cannot remove the inevitable physical and emotional sources of pain, but we can learn to modify or lessen much of the resistance that we unknowingly bring to the process. Less resistance means less suffering. Take a moment to consider what this could mean for your relationships, a person you are caring for, or for yourself as you face emotionally painful situations.

Missing The Forest for The Trees

When I first learned of this $S = P \times R$ formula, I set out to 'get me some of it'. As a result of a number of personal challenges at the time, I had been looking for something that would be the magic bullet to relieve my suffering.

Finally, I thought after hearing this revelation ($S = P \times R$), I started out to conquer my fears, and in addition my PFP illogical filter of needing to never be out of control of my life. This, I must confess was my deep motivation to practice U,B-FIT mindfulness every day for at least an hour. I also added to my practice, for example, safe, but very intense, saunas (e.g. extreme heat and steam for 1 hour or more). These practices were extremely painful and frightening for me, but I stayed with the practices, mistakenly believing that I could 'force my fears out of my life and live happily ever after'.

My most extreme experience on this path of delusion to freedom was a so called awakening shamanic ritual called holotropic breathing. At the time it was known as legal LSD. No drugs were involved, except what was created in the brain as I, with the coaching of a well intended leader, guided me through 2 hours of intense hyperventilation breathing. I was only encouraged to slow down when I came near to passing out (which was often). Once stable I continued again with this forced fast breathing. Within about 30 minutes my body was totally paralyzed from the neck down. My panic attack appeared on que and I was guided to go deeper into the technique. This 2 hours seemed like 2 years.

When it was over I drove home with the illusion I had purified my consciousness. For days I had many more panic attacks and approximately 2 weeks after the experience I had a panic attack in a traffic jam on the 401 north of Toronto and had to leave my car. I attribute this harmful experience to be one of the causes of my clinical depression –one of my most significant, but extremely well hidden gifts from the pain.

Reflection

I share this experience for 2 reasons. The first is that I totally misunderstood how to use the formula $S = P \times R$ to awaken. For the most part my intense practices were misguided because I was doing anything but learning how to equanimously reduce resistance. It turns out that white knuckling one's self through pain, does not reduce it. I was merely practicing what is known on

the path of awakening as spiritual materialism (i.e. working harder but not smarter). This means to use a practice to get more goodies – not to purify consciousness. While I was warned many times by several teachers at the time, my PFP pig headed little boys’ frightened mind prevailed. Finally, several years later as a result of my near death clinical depression, I learned that the actual meaning of how to significantly reduce the suffering from pain was by equanimously dissolving the resistance, not by just experiencing more intense pain or denying its existence. The self-management tool offers highly effective complementary strategies to develop capacity to experience pain with less suffering.

Divide and Conquer

The following is what I learned about actually skillfully reducing resistance, and therefore the suffering by dividing it into more manageable parts.

As discussed in Chapters Three and Four (*Self-Awareness and AHH-llowing*), if we can skillfully/mindfully explore what is actually happening in *B-FIT* as we experience emotional or physical pain, the nervous system it seems somehow does not have sufficient conscious energy left to resist the pain.

For example, let’s say that you experience a physical injury. Your nervous system, which is wired in layers to protect your injured tissue, has (let’s say) 100 units of conscious and subconscious energy. The average untrained nervous system (the average person), without being aware of it, uses all 100 units of energy to automatically flood the body with hormones and other messages to activate the layers of tissue to resist and tighten, in order to give the brain the message to stop this harmful external activity—it hurts, it is dangerous.

Suppose, however, that you use your conscious, mindful energy to explore and ahh-llowingly experience the different locations and qualities of the pain, such as:

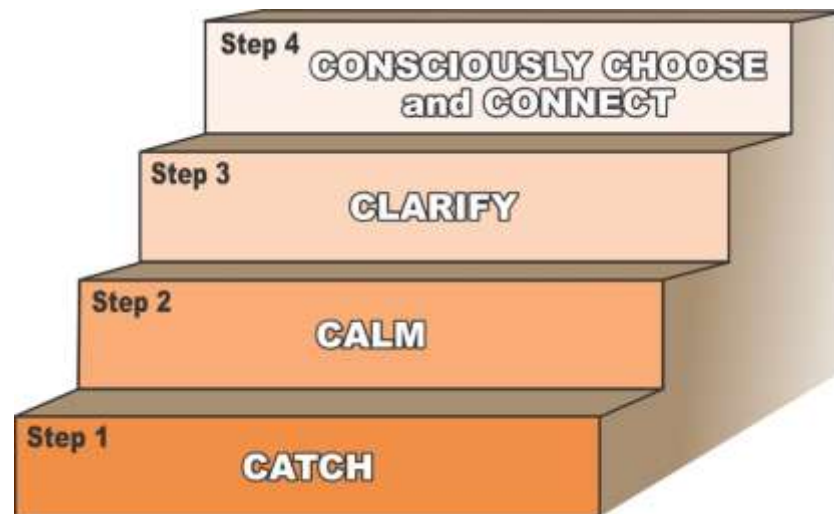
- the location of the body sensation; for example, knee, back;
- the spatial form of the pain—the shape of the area affected;
- the intensity of the pain—stronger or weaker and
- the changing “flavours” of the body sensations.

Say that you invest 20% of your limited units of awareness into exploring and ahh-llowing each of these elements of the painful body sensations. It seems like those units of awareness are no longer available to build resistance to the pain and actually increase the suffering.

In *U,B-FIT mindfulness*, (especially the skill of AHH-llowing – reference Chapter Three) **we redeploy conscious energy 100% into studying the form and movement of the B-FIT reactions to the pain.** We thereby use up much of the energy that otherwise would have been used naturally by the nervous system to over-compensate in the production of resistance, and therefore increased the suffering. Once this process is successfully completed many times, the

nervous system seems to start to say, “Hmm, I like this lack of suffering,” and seems to start to manage its resources better on its own. The same is happening for emotional suffering. We call this conscious emotional *self-management* capacity building.

Outcomes from this mindful self-management process will be our ability to, almost without effort, implement the 4 step self-management process.



Summary

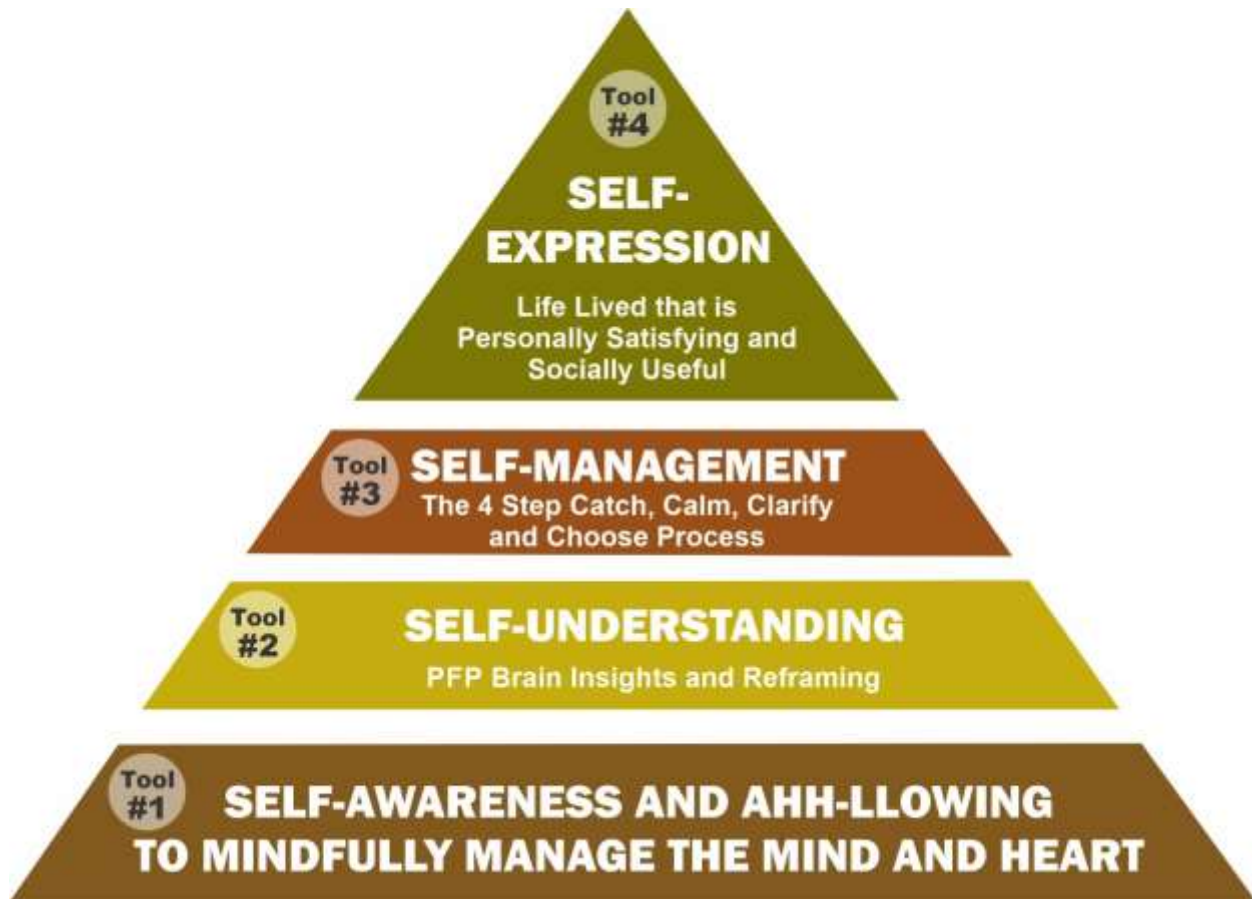
Appendix II offers a guided mindfulness pain management exercise (#5). This exercise is also given as an audio resource at www.centreforconsciouscare.ca/resources/mindfulness.

In addition to this application of *conscious self-management* to reduce suffering from inevitable pain, the other life tools also offer many useful ways to prevent and better manage/treat the pain from difficult feelings.

And finally we plead (again) with you to also always stay open to the possibility that your difficult feelings could be potential teachers to motivate you to grow deeper in your journey of realizing your fullest potential. This potential includes unconditional authentic compassion and service to help others who are suffering.

Chapter Nine

Essential Life Tool #4 – **SELF-EXPRESSION**



Now, let's proceed to put it all together with the final tool of *self-expression*.

What does mindful self-expression look like?

What we say and do, and how we say and do it, is always a direct reflection of what we believe (most often unknowingly offer), and how we feel about things. The tools are offered to help you discover, develop, and to create what you need to *self-express* in ways that consistently are useful, ethical, kind, and timely.

Our Words are Useful, Ethical, Timely and Kind

Let's start by looking into what helpful and compassionate *self-expression* looks like. Remember—we express ourselves as much in our actions as we do in our words, so we must be mindful in both.

Take a moment to review a few exchanges you have had with a life partner, child, parent, friend or work colleague that went south very rapidly. Now ask yourself:

- Were my words useful for both of us?
- Did I speak ethically and truthfully to the best of my recall?
- Was my heart open, coming from a place of kindness and cooperation instead of just trying to win?
- Did I wait for the best possible time to have this exchange?

We would give you ten-to-one odds that if you could accurately recall your communications, at least half of the time you violated one of these components of this communications gold standard.

However, your accurate self-reflection is virtually impossible because your memory is selective. This is one of the biggest barriers to implement the 4 tools because our PFP convinces us that we are already the shining model on the top of the hill. It is inaccurate because of what neuroscientists call mindless *cognitive bias* and *inattentional blindness*. Also, because of your PFP human predicament that we described earlier, most folks are seldom motivated to grow up to become more conscious.

Daily “must-dos” to find mindful happiness in your self-expression:

Control Conditions:

- Nurture supportive relationships.
- Keep your feeling reasons to stay happy and healthy clear and obvious. Feeling reasons dominate motivation over logical fact based reasons in most all major decisions (e.g. I will exercise to be able to live my life to prevent depression versus to just be healthy).
- Start each day with a daily ritual of being grateful and intentional.

Clarify Thoughts and Feelings and Behaviour:

- As often as possible, throughout each day, reflect about how PFP programming is compromising not only your well-being but the well-being of others. As a reminder, PFP refers to your *primitive predispositions*, part of your ‘nature’ brain architecture; your *filters*, the outdated subconscious ‘nurture’ illogical beliefs you hold that need to be identified and reframed; and your *primed prompts*, culturally normalized cognitive bias, e.g. the capitalist consumer mantra “to be happy I need bigger, better, more”.

Help Others to Be Happy:

- Perform random acts of kindness. For example, routinely give homeless people a few dollars, eye contact and respect.
- Volunteer in your local and global community.

- Live as simply as possible. For example, buy recycled clothing and resist consumerism.

Note: We are born to be good to each other and this has 'happy' benefits. Self-expression by helping others has a profound influence on our potential to be happy. We are social beings who need each other's presence and touch.

In nursing homes, just several five second touches of residents each day significantly reduces depression. Premature babies grow and develop much better if held for just several minutes a day more than babies who are not.

Rid the Weeds that Kill Good Seeds in Life's Garden –

- Negative is normal but do not ignore it – change it. Stop complaining and gossiping.
- Make rest a necessity, not an objective.
- Indifference is a disease – go for inspiration or desperation.
- Indecision – get down off the fence. Even the wrong side is better because you will learn sooner what you must do;
- Self-Doubt is mainly a lack of awareness. Process it with mindfulness.
- Affirmations without these tools and the action they facilitate are often the seed of delusion.
- Substitute good activity for worry. New behaviour almost always changes moods.
- Overcaution: take justified risks and process your reactions skillfully.
- Pessimism: "As you think, so you will become".
- Avoid passive hope – "Maybe it will get better". Avoid happy hope – "It's not great, but it's okay".
- Monitor your use of social media. Stand guard at the door way of your mind: garbage in, garbage out.

Maybe the mindless 'semi-conscious' you blocked the 'more conscious' mindful you from registering the above 'musts'. Also, maybe you don't believe our statements about the serious potential negative significance of your left brain dominated PFP predicament (as described in previous chapters). Therefore let's quantify your thinking problem more completely.

The likelihood of self-expressing even a couple of the above values and meaningful actions when we are stressed, discontent, bored or becoming emotionally hijacked, seems at best a hopeful illusion unless we have learned and earned the 4 essential life tools.

To optimally self-express, as described above, not only requires knowing what to say and do but even more fundamentally, it requires the ability in the moment to know that PFP

influences are attempting to control your every thought, feeling and behaviour. From this knowing, it further requires the ability in the moment to be fully mindfully aware of what you are experiencing as you are experiencing it, so that you can exercise free will to make informed choices that are not dependent on your PFP wants and desires.

Start your quantifying process with the following:

Free Will Thinking Self-Assessment

Do You Have A Thinking Problem?

Unless you are conscious and aware, your life is virtually driven by PFP autopilot. In case you still doubt this truth, read on.

We ask you to complete the following self-assessment to explore the possibility that your power to think for yourself (not driven by PFP) and thereby use your free will and make informed decisions/choices may be grossly over estimated.

To become more aware of your inability to be in charge of your life through your thinking processes only, answer the following five questions.

- **Do you know what your next thought is going to be before you have it?**
☐ Yes ☐ No
- **Can you stop yourself from thinking when you want?**
☐ Yes ☐ No
- **You talk to yourself all day long, but there is nobody listening inside you. If you did this audibly in front of people, they would call for help or avoid you. As ridiculous as talking to yourself about thoughts all day long is, can you stop doing it?**
☐ Yes ☐ No
- **When you become emotionally hijacked, and you say or do things that you'll later regret, do you know that you are thinking, saying and doing these things at the time?**
☐ Yes ☐ No
- **Yesterday you had 50,000 thoughts. If I could download these thoughts onto a computer and protect this file with a password, would you give your password to anyone?**
☐ Yes ☐ No

The more that you checked off 'No' in this self-assessment, the more your ability to regulate your PFP thinking and expression is severely compromised. This acknowledgment is critical and another reason and motivation to make a commitment to learn and practise *U,B-FIT mindfulness* and the other essential life tools!

An Example of Self-Awareness and Allowing and Expression

Over the past fifteen years we have trained thousands of Moms, Dads, support professionals, and health-care practitioners in how to support people with autism and other developmental disabilities. We specialize in training supporters of people who have serious unmet complex needs that often manifest as agitation, anger and aggression.

The following story offers an example of when the *self-expression* of competent and compassionate care required all 4 of the essential life tools. Hopefully most readers will not have to de-escalate physical aggression, but we all at times require a similar level of mindful emotional self-regulation to prevent and manage emotional power struggles in your personal and professional relationships.

Learning from Jim

Learning doesn't always come from those we call teachers. Sometimes those we support become our teachers. This is the case with many Jims who I have supported.

Jim was relatively high functioning but given to bursts of anger and aggression. When I visited Jim's home for the first time, I was deeply saddened to see the holes he had punched through the drywall. Jim's family and supporters were convinced that his autism made him helpless to control his impulsivity. Jim could not communicate verbally.

Given my familiarity with extensive internationally published research, and my experience with hundreds of people with developmental disabilities, I knew there was an 80% likelihood that these assumptions were incorrect.

His staff told me that when Jim was aggressive with them they responded with approved crisis intervention procedures as they were certified to do. The incidents would typically last for about half to an hour from the time he threw his first punches to when he was finally physically restrained. They sometimes lasted longer when he had a panic attack from being restrained. About three times a month the staff had to call 911. Police would immediately put Jim in mechanical restraints and take him to the emergency psychiatric unit. He sometimes waited in handcuffs for three hours before being triaged and sent home, now severely traumatized and without treatment.

As the staff and I were talking I heard a loud noise behind me, and Jim came rushing into the room. He lunged at one of the support professionals, who quickly stepped out of the way. I moved in front of Jim to attract his attention. I asked the others to leave immediately.

I started to talk to him softly but firmly: “Hey Jim, it’s okay.” At the same time I noticed my arms become a little tighter and intended them to release as I do each day during my mindfulness practices exercises. I also started saying to myself, “Be calm, my friend, be calm,” knowing that my intention was to help Jim to be just that--calm. Then Jim threw his first punch at me. I stepped out of the way as he passed me and made sure that he didn’t lose his balance. It was a bit like we were partners in a ritualistic dance. I blocked and stepped aside, while continually talking to him and myself, “It’s okay Jim, it’s okay.” “Peter, be aware, be ahh-llowing.” The dance continued, as I continued to intend calm, awareness and ahh-llowing of my body sensations and feelings.

I kept eye contact as best I could, and held my internal intention of being connected and being friends. Each time I cradled Jim’s force with my arm, I renewed this intention and softly repeated, “It’s okay, Jim, it’s okay.” This went on for a minute or two before he calmed. I looked at him with my arms open and softly said, “It’s okay, Jim. You’re just having a bad day.” I asked him if he wanted a drink of water, but he shook his head no. I could see that he was confused, so I asked him to show me his room, a safe and familiar place. As he walked away I followed, and was soon enjoying pictures of his family.

Each situation in which you skillfully express yourself in a way that is conscious, competent, and compassionate, will also work to develop your own deeper potential for fulfillment and happiness in most of your life roles.

Conclusion to the 4 Tools

This concludes the outline of the 4 tools. Please visit the referenced appendices for more detailed information. The following chapters are more specific applications of the 4 tools.

In the next chapter we will explore my clinical depression as an example of how *self-expression* and the other tools can be life changing, and how life changing events can grow optimal *self-expression*.

Chapter Ten



Tool #4 – An Application

Anxiety and Depression and Other Dark Nights

– Hell Hole, and Hell to Make Us Whole

Our best personal example to demonstrate how *self-expression* in action helps to develop this 4th tool and the other complementing 3 tools is my three year totally debilitating clinical depression/anxiety disorder. Although approximately 25% of our readers will experience a similar devastating life event, most other readers will as a minimum experience a different devastating dark night such as the loss of a loved one, the betrayal of a life partner, a child with a chronic illness that compromises their well-being, a life partner with dementia, etc.

The Great Depression

One day about 30 years ago as my twin sister and I walked off the court after winning our regional mixed doubles tennis championship, I encouraged Polly to push her doctor to find the cause of her recent severe headaches. I can describe in detail when I called to get the news that the CT scan had revealed an untreatable cancerous brain tumour. It would take her life three years later. Her devoted husband, family and siblings fought to save her, but eventually we had to let go as she gracefully embraced “Thy Will” with sacred gratitude for her forty-nine years. I helplessly watched, by then totally consumed by my own life-threatening clinical depression with medical complications that left me disabled for three years.

Beyond any doubt, this was the most painful and devastating time in my and our family’s life. On a scale of 1 to 10 with the ‘great depression’ being 10, since that time I have yet to experience a stressful situation that has made it to 4 on this scale of suffering.

I had unintentionally lost 70lbs, had been only able to sleep three hours a night, in and out of panic attacks on a near daily basis, cried most days for 3 to 5 hours and had lost all anticipatory excitement for anything. My depression inventory (reference below) that I tracked weekly for two years was levels 8, 9, or 10 for virtually all anxiety and depression symptoms.

When I was depressed, I longed for the day when I once again could feel the good old bad emotions like worry, shame, guilt, impatience, anger, disapproval, unfairness, etc. What a relief that would have been from the absolute nothing of the darkness and the terrorizing fear - happiness can often be relative.

The worst moment of the day was when I opened my eyes to start my day of suffering. The only meaningful relative release from this hell came when I, together with Joanne, gave primary personal care to Joanne's 91 year old father after his stroke. Changing briefs and bathing, miraculously was able to bring me temporarily to at least a level 3 on my 1 to 10 happiness scale.

For over a year I had refused to get medical help. Why would I need to get medical help because I was:

- extremely happily married with an incredible family;
- director of a regional centre for the Addiction Research Foundation Of Ontario (CAMH);
- a very committed and active volunteer;
- a highly respected social and health care professional;
- a vegetarian;
- an elite amateur athlete;
- had done graduate studies in counselling psychology;
- a 10 year mindfulness practitioner;
- loved and respected by many people.

Before this time my skills and insights, from *U,B-FIT* mindfulness and my work with the other 3 tools had cut down many of the big trees in my personal growth forest that I was preparing for more "planting". Unknown to me however, two large stumps still required blasting from deep in the ground: fear, and the illusion that I had transcended my PFP ego's drivenness/filters.

Through this experience I learned that awakening to our fullest mind, body and spiritual potential is an ever-deepening spiral and that we are always just a phone call away from being brought to our next 'classroom'. I now try to awaken each morning in gratitude and commitment to see the joy in every moment because of my understanding that even challenging situations and difficult people can be special teachers.

Reflections

The value of learning, developing and practicing the 4 life tools during the 10 years before the depression cannot be over stated – but it may not initially be obvious!

Recently I have tried to list the benefits that came to me during the depression as a result of investing 10 solid years of developing and living my life in accordance with the 4 tools. After an exhaustive search, I listed a few benefits that appeared to be related to the 4 tools but they were so subtle I can't say for sure. My memory of this time is so clouded with the fears, emptiness and despair of this trauma that it is hard to accurately recall much of significance.

Although I continued to practice mindfulness at this time I was forced to abandon my one hour per day formal practice due to my loss of concentration and focus. I was able to continue to practice somewhat with more active forms, especially with walking and my other exercises. To give you an example of my near daily experience at this time I remember Joanne driving me each day to a swimming pool where (though I hated it) I swam for an hour and cried most of the time. For this kind of daily episode of anxiety attacks and crying, I feel that I had little awareness or equanimity.

After the loss of 70lbs and the other symptoms, one of Guelph's more qualified and experienced Endocrinologist advised us that I could be dying and should 'take care of business'. When I informed my mindfulness coach he said "well do your best to stay alive, but if you are dying, do your best to use your dying to awaken your consciousness". I was angry with his comment at the time, but sometime later that thought seemed to help restart my equanimity engine.

I did have one recurring positive thought throughout the depression however. This outcome I am sure can be directly attributed to my 10 years of growth and development that resulted from my 4 tools preparatory work before the depression. The thought that played in my mind like a mantra was my renewed commitment to help others if I lived through this experience. At the time of my depression I was a Regional Director of the Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario and had probably directly and indirectly coached and counselled over 1000 men and women who were using drugs and alcohol to self-medicate their anxiety and depression disorders. During my depression I would often be brought to tears because of my awareness of my lack of empathy that I had with these people. It was a most humbling experience. In retrospect, although at the time it was my best effort, and I still feel that it was as good as most therapists I knew, I was relatively uncommitted to help these people relieve their suffering, relative to my post-depression understanding of empathy and commitment. **This shift in compassion and insights was one of the most significant results of how my 4 tools had opened me to further awakening and transformation within the depression.**

I feel that for the most part, my 4 tools only marginally lessened my suffering because it appeared to me that I suffered pretty much as most others I have known with this same mental health disorder. This said, it is really too subjective to accurately determine.

At first, this failed search to find evidence that mindfulness had significantly and measurably lessened my suffering was quite discouraging. This is because all of my work with mindfulness and the other tools did not seem to ‘bullet proof’ or deliver me out of this hell hole much faster than untrained victims. But upon deeper reflection after my 3 year dark night was over, I could see and know for an absolute fact that the depression, experienced with at least some consciousness capacity, had permanently dissolved numerous PFP fears, phobias and primordial drives. The depression experienced with this capacity had significantly deepened my path of authentic relating (i.e. *self-expression* and service to others).

For example, before the depression although my behaviour was near impeccable, even my volunteering in maximum security prisons was somewhat PFP ego based, something I could brag about to look good to others. Also before the depression, unaware, I gave more preferential treatment, attention and ‘caring’, to people in authority and attractive women. I could now especially see that these were all well intended acts but still they were corrupted ‘spiritual materialism’.

Since that time my capacity to be more fully and unconditionally committed to **all** others, even the so called ‘very difficult people’ in my life has continuously grown. For me, it took this hell hole to make me more whole to really start to even understand unconditional love so as to increase the likelihood of transforming to **be** it. During this period in my life it grew exponentially and since then has been nurtured by the hundreds of people who have honoured me to be one of their coaches.

During the time of the depression I had no realization of the transformation that was taking place. Most everyone (not all) who I have talked to who have gone through a similar dark night (e.g. depression, loss, physical illness, chronic pain, forced to experience a loved one’s betrayal, etc.) have, when the crisis was preceded by a consciousness raising practice, shared similar life changing experiences. When the mind and heart are ready, the healing that can happen to us during hellish times can be truly transformational, beyond any linear psychological growth process.

Without trying to be overly dramatic, ‘Amazing Grace’ captures the experience quite beautifully. Needless to say our (me and my family) great depression significantly influenced our understanding of and commitment to the perennial wisdom that we share in the 4 tools.

The following summarizes our experience with depression and the roles that the 4 tools can play.

1. My conscious compassion capacity developed as a result of the depression. Using the U,B-FIT tool deepened my authentic relating and caring for and about others.

2. Our experience with people who have developed the 4 tools to recover from their depression/anxiety, appears to confirm that the tools can at least somewhat shorten the intensity and duration of the suffering.
3. While I may personally have suffered less and even survived the depression because of my 4 tools preparatory work, I cannot say for sure that my 4 tools growth and development significantly lessened the suffering or helped me survive this illness. We are however absolutely certain that the 4 tools, especially U,B-FIT mindfulness have significantly prevented a relapse which is highly likely after the average person's first depression/anxiety episode.

We share this history of our depression to start our first aid for depression/anxiety offering for several reasons. For example, generally in our experience it seems that for most folks who are plunged into the deep darkness without any attempt to learn or practice U,B-FIT mindfulness and the other tools, most often come out the other side even more driven by PFP fears, anger and higher risk to relapse.

It doesn't have to be this way.

First Aid

The following is what we learned and decided to pass on in public speaking forums and coaching services with others who have a similar mental illness.

1. **Personal growth – why bother** - Many people have asked me “if you were a daily meditator and had a graduate understanding of western psychology, etc., and still became mentally ill, why bother to learn the 4 tools, practice mindfulness or discover and disengage from PFP predispositions?” My answer is quite simple and direct. The causes of mental illness are abundant. While mindfulness meditation and psychology have been well researched to be effective preventative practices (and I believe as noted, very responsible for my not having recurring cycles of depression), the benefits of these essential life tools have much more potential in one's life than merely ‘bullet proofing’ against life's inevitable pain and chaos.

However, from our perspective, as noted above, my in-depth understanding of PFP and my *U,B-FIT mindfulness* practice enabled me to take my next step of transformation from a frightened little boy, to become more body, mind, and spirit, ‘whole’.

2. **Causes – life out of balance** – The known causes of anxiety and depression are abundant. For me, in addition to working intensely for a couple of years to save my twin sister from her brain cancer that had a 100% certainty of inevitable death, I was working and volunteering 70 hours a week, had an incomplete vegetarian regime, became involved in extreme shamanic practices such as holotropic breathing, and had stopped my daily exercise regime because I ‘didn't have the time’. Any one of these variables could have contributed to my mental illness. All together they became the perfect storm.

3. How to prevent and treat

How best to prevent, best treat and also transform as a result of a mental health crisis are listed below.

Research that studies the primary treatment options cover a broad range. As we interpret the research, the following approaches for us hold the most potential for recovery and transformative healing.

- recruit a friend, family member or professional to be your coach and encourager
- cardio exercise
- nutrition
- medications
- lifestyle coaching to manage environmental/social stress inducers and reducers
- cognitive behaviour therapy and/or ADD therapy
- mindfulness, meditation, yoga, etc.
- transcranial magnetic stimulation

The following are our suggestions that have resulted from our clinical depression 30 years ago and the successes we have had with dozens of folks we have coached since that time.

We offer the following for educational purposes only. Needless to say everything you decide to do must be approved by your primary care physician.

- **Recruiting a Coach**

If possible recruit a friend, family member, or professional who will assist you to stay committed to your treatment plan. All of the following suggestions are best accomplished with someone who can objectively assess the recommendations from community treatment partners, and ensure your adherence to the regimes.

- **Cardio Exercise**

You will be hard pressed to find a study that does not strongly recommend daily cardio exercise. Dr. John Ratey, psychiatrist from Harvard Medical School (one of my former personal advisors regarding the treatment of Autism) has done an excellent job regarding exercise in his bestselling book **Spark**. For now, have your coach read it and plan an exercise regime with you. It will also be important that as much as possible your coach exercises with you and ensures your daily commitment to this vital treatment component.

- **Nutrition** – work with a qualified naturopathic doctor or registered nutritionist to assess your nutritional needs to:

- prevent and treat GI infections;
- identify food intolerances and eat accordingly, especially avoid refined sugars and simple carbs;
- identify and treat imbalances of vitamins, minerals, amino acids, etc.;
- consume healthy and ethically raised and harvested food;

- take supplements only as recommended by a professional but generally do not rely only on your MD to manage your supplement needs.

- **Medications**

Recruit a competent medication manager. Most primary care physicians will be adequate for a 'best guess' start up until you can be linked to a psychiatrist or a primary care physician who specializes in depression treatments. The research varies but many studies indicate that almost regardless of the first medication that is trialed, once a therapeutic level is achieved you can expect approximately 70% likelihood of significant symptom reduction.

The options for trials are near endless with new medications being approved every year. Except for very hard to treat, over 95% depression/anxiety disorders eventually respond to medication, so stay hopeful. Except when there is an obvious negative reaction to a medication, the golden rule is to generally stay with each trial for a minimum of 8 weeks and in some cases 12 weeks.

In my case after 3 false starts on medications, within a couple of weeks beginning a therapeutic level of the 4th trial, I was 75% recovered.

- **Anxiety**

Anxiety is most often part of the symptoms of depression. This most painful symptom can often be managed with 'fast acting' anxiety relief medication. While they are quite addictive, once the depression/anxiety is successfully resolved, researched withdrawal schedules are highly effective.

Anxiety medications in general fall into two categories. PRN's (i.e. as needed) are used for unpredictable panic attacks or acute occasional short term/situational anxiety episodes. These medications are generally fast acting but are only effective for approximately 4 hours to get through the crisis. These PRN medications are not recommended for ongoing daily use. When an anxiety disorder is ongoing, it is important to not treat this with a PRN medication, but with a medication that has an effective time of 25 to 30 hours (half life) so that a daily dosing will ensure constant therapeutic levels.

- **Lifestyle Coaching**

You or your coach can help guide structuring your days so as to complement your treatment plan to:

- ensure that you are taking medications as prescribed;
- help you adapt to your daily responsibilities to match your coping capacity. In other words, keep your environment as stress free as possible;
- help you to determine your nutritional needs and to follow them;

- keep your social activities at levels that complement your treatment plan, (i.e. not too over or under whelming);
- help you organize your financial affairs, (e.g. loan payments, rents, etc. so as to reduce your stress);
- help you find non-stressful ways for you to contribute to have meaning and purpose in your life, (e.g. non-stressful volunteering).

- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**

While CBT and/or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) therapy can be an important part of your treatment plan it must be offered by a therapist qualified and experienced in depression treatment.

Only when the time is right do we encourage CBT. This means that it is stress reducing and not stress inducing. For some people, pulling back the curtain on some of the fundamental psychological causes for their depression can be too overwhelming in the early part of the treatment process.

Also identify if ADD is relevant as it will require different or additional therapy (*Reference Taking Charge written by Barkley*).

- **Mindfulness, Meditation, Yoga**

The research encourages mindful meditation and yoga as a complement to the treatment plan with the following qualifications. In general, it is not shown to be effective as a stand alone treatment and has not been researched to significantly impact recovery for hard to treat depressions. The research is however very favourable when treating low to moderate grades of depressions, and especially relapse prevention. Mindfulness benefits are significantly more broad than only managing mental health disorders.

- **Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS)**

TMS has been used quite successfully for over 10 years with depression including hard to treat depression. It is non-invasive and from studies published by the Center for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH) can be a strong complement to most treatment plans.

4. **Re-read Stealing Happiness - The Inside Job** - the 4 essential life tools offered in Stealing Happiness and applied to the most critical parts of your life, will absolutely be required to navigate the inevitable times of *groundlessness*. Dedicating the time to keep your mind in optimal condition is as essential as doing the same for the body – we become our habits. There is a 100% chance that you will have a life crisis at some time that will be strong enough to seriously destabilize your emotional and mental well-being – be prepared.

The mind and mind alone determines the quality of our life. - Buddha

Chapter Attachment 1

(based on the BECK anxiety and depression inventory)

Anxiety/Depression Symptoms Tracking

This tracking tool is designed to give you a daily record of the severity of your symptoms. This is essential to be shared with your primary care physician for them to moderate the success of the treatment and for you to track your progress

<i>Symptoms</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>10</i>
	<i>Very Normal</i>			<i>Very Abnormal</i>	
Meaning & Purpose to Live					
Anticipatory Excitement					
Happiness					
Sleeping Patterns (more or less)					
Weight (gain or loss)					
Concentration					
Energy Level					
Decision Making					
Fatigue					
Tearfulness					
Interest in Daily Activities					
Overwhelmness					
Interest in Sex/Making Love					
Worry					
Feelings of Fear					

Interest in Work	
Interest in Socializing	

Feelings of Shame	
Prone to get Angry	
Prone to Aggression	
Prone to Judgmentalness	
Feelings of Guilt	
Feelings of Sadness	
Satisfaction with Life	
ACTION REQUIRED	<i>Poor Compliance</i> <i>Complete Compliance</i> <i>1</i> <i>5</i> <i>10</i>
Taking Prescribed Meds.	
Exercise Regime	
Recommended Diet	
Working with 'Filters'	
Acts of Service/Kindness	

Date:

Comments:

Chapter Eleven

Conscious Caregiving – Fulfillment from Caring ‘For’ and ‘About’ Others

Unconditional Compassionate Service to Others

Service to others is one of the most natural and fulfilling manifestations of a good life in action. It can take many forms, from volunteering or working in any capacity in human, education and health services, to being a thoughtful and kind co-worker in any job, parent, adult child, partner, sibling, friend, or supporting people and organizations by fundraising, etc.

We believe deeply in service to others as a necessary vehicle for living a meaningful, personally satisfying and socially useful life. That’s the wonderful irony: by giving to others we steal happiness *for* ourselves. The purpose of this chapter is to take you a little deeper into how to be of service to others in ways that nurture our happiness and fulfillment by applying the 4 life tools as discussed in the previous chapters.

The only question really worth asking each day is what will I do for someone else today.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Meaning and fulfillment in one’s life will often be directly proportional to the consciousness we bring to each moment of caregiving, organizing, volunteering, protesting or in some other way helping in our local or global community.

The unmet needs of others are limitless. The needs to help others, from loved ones to strangers, and in doing so more completely experience meaning, purpose and fulfillment is therefore also limitless.

There is no more concrete experience of fulfillment than when we watch as the illusion of our ‘separated-ness’ falls away in each mindful moment of service. To experience this us-ness we first turn to Tool #1 *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart* in order to immunize ourselves against the unnecessary and potentially harmful caregiver – ‘I needs’.

- I need to be appreciated for what I do;
- I need to be thanked for what I give;
- I need the people I care for to be likeable.

Once you start the process of ‘immunization’ against the I needs, be mindful to minimize the potential of PFP hijacks: i.e. the mindless driven self’s addiction to judgemental-ness, insecurity with the unknown, fear from being out of control, hurt from not being appreciated, or whatever you have identified as your PFP needs.

Breaking Out of 'Me' – Prison

One of my early PFP 'I need' emotional hijacks when offering service came when at about age 30 I volunteered to bring life skills to inmates in maximum prisons: Halton County "Bucket," Vanier Prison for Women, and Maplehurst Correctional Services.

I had no idea of the fear I would experience from being locked in a prison cell with six men, several of whom were violent offenders. Adding to my fears for being out of control, some of the guards in those days would leave me locked in for an extra one to two hours after my session was over.

One night two men in one of these cells threatened to take me hostage to escape using glass from a broken TV monitor as a weapon. At that time, I witnessed real service when four other men in the cell block saved me from what could have been a very dangerous experience.

Over the 15 years that I did this volunteering, managing my fears and not having my 'needs' met helped to soften my resistance and attachments to needing to be appreciated, thanked and being in service with likable people because these needs were seldom met.

Once we grasp the deepest truth of our species PFP predicament that puts so many people at extremely high emotional, social, and health risks, our awakening self stops its judging others as deserving or not deserving of our help. From this new focus, dependence on needing to like or feel kindness toward someone is not required to be authentically kind.

I share this story because almost everyone will eventually find their PFP in conflict with the needs of the moment of service. We believe—and we have experienced ourselves—that if you learn and practice *mindful emotional self-regulation* through U,B-FIT mindfulness as described previously, you will be able to prevent many of your emotional hijacks while simultaneously keeping your heart open.

One final note to encourage you to stay committed to your daily mindfulness practices, is that for many of us who support people with extreme unmet needs, it gets harder to take time for the simple and fun things in our own life if our acts of service are mindless. For example, without formal mindfulness practice you will be at risk of not being able to enjoy your personal life activities because of ongoing, unaware resistance to the suffering that you are directly experiencing in being a part of others' life struggles. This can be the start of burn-out or tune-out/indifference if not addressed with daily mindfulness practice to lessen this resistance.

People who are mindful are positive role models not so much because they are admired by others but because the skill of mindfulness makes it possible for them to admire everyone else.

Thomas Merton

What to do? Recycle the reactions. With awareness and ahh-llowing, in part this means to 'catch' the resistance in one or two body sensations or image and talk drivenness, and 'calm' them. Bring these feelings to your Stress Rehearsal practice (*Mindfulness Exercise #4, Appendix II*) and also share your concerns with mentors or a personal coach to address the PFP variables contributing to your psychological stress. PFP can be neutralized by skillfully turning 180 degrees back into each moment of resistance with awareness and ahh-llowing. This is just another example of how conscious service and relationships in general can always be just one hand washing the other, provided we are conscious.

Caring About – Not Just For

I was just a young boy the morning I held my mother as she cried and cried after supporting my great Uncle Rob as he died in our home. Uncle Rob was eighty-seven; he had been in bed for the last two years of his life. During this time he was incontinent, coughing up blood and mucous and requiring complete personal support, such as feeding him, changing him, and washing his old-fashioned cotton non-disposable briefs. My dad, myself and four siblings, and some neighbours helped. But it was my mom who was his 24/7 caregiver in the 1950s when Homecare and Hospice did not exist. Mom was also homemaker for our family and did a full shift with dad in our family grocery store.

Somehow she also made time to come to my hockey games, take me fishing, and still make sure Uncle Rob always felt **cared about –not just cared for**. Her warm greeting, "How are you Rob," had such mindful intensity that even as a young boy I recognized this kindness as real! Without even thinking about it she offered authentic kindness and compassion that ensured Uncle Rob's best possible feelings and experiences for this time in his life.

This story was being replicated at this time in many city homes and on farms throughout Ontario, and probably Canada. Healthcare was limited, as was insurance to rebuild the barns that burned, to hire supporters or replace the wages of bread winners.

As a result, it was typical for the community, family, and church members to spontaneously offer unconditional support, and it was no big deal. A home-cooked meal from a neighbour would just show up, or a friend from the church would offer to stay the night. At this time in our history mindful compassion seemed natural to many. Then we as a society started to 'institutionalize' care.

Mindful Kindness Matters

Many vital and necessary societal changes have taken place over the past sixty years. However, **there has been one most regrettable loss through institutionalizing care.** Far too many volunteers and paid caregivers are, in their perceived need to be efficient, sacrificing authentic mindful kindness and compassion. This is usually a result of mindlessness and these mindless caregivers are generally good and caring people.

Our shared human predicament is that even good and kind people are subject to forgetting where they are (i.e. here and now) and therefore not being fully present with others when we are with them. For the person who needs our support this must often feel like they are alone even when we are with them. Acting without awareness and allowing, we may help someone to eat or do what needs to be done, but we don't make "I" contact—or any other contact. When this happens, we are experienced as someone "just covering a shift" without really connecting.

Regardless of our feelings about the person, we can help those we support live a life with meaning through simple acts of mindful kindness. This consistently happens because mindful kindness is **not** dependent on feelings of being kind. The mindful caregiver has learned the importance of a component of conscious service called *emotional contagion*. This important form of connection is based in part on what neuroscientists call mirror neurons and neuroception. It seems that there is similar brain/body 'firing' in two individuals when one person's calm energy state has activated a similar state in another.



The mindful person is aware of this capacity. He or she can guard against being overwhelmed by another's seemingly endless needs and use positive conscious intentions to engender positive experiences in another. Caregivers (volunteer or professional) can be constantly confronted with crises from a distraught care recipient who needs relief from pain or needing help to survive a life-threatening seizure. Mindfulness training prepares us to recognize this influence of one's emotional state on others.

Physicians who were given a short mindfulness course improved in job satisfaction, quality of life and compassion for up to nine months after the course. The researchers found that at nine months, the physicians were significantly less burnt out and had lower levels of depression, anxiety and stress than doctors who didn't undergo the training course. They also scored higher on scales measuring compassion

(Krasner MS, Epstein RM, Beckham H, et al. 2009).

We believe that our growing lack of kindness and compassion is a problem of under-developed *Self-Awareness and Allowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart* (Tool #1) and limited discovery of our innate compassion. It takes no more time and energy to be mindfully present, yet this naturally ensures kindness with the people we are taking care of—and this really does matter.

Efficiency Kills Conscious Connecting (the truth of the moment).

When in service to another stay sufficiently mindful to ask yourself, “given what I am doing at this moment, must I really be efficient with my time?”

The following is intended to speak to all caregivers and specifically to supporters of people with compromised brain functioning, e.g. autism, developmental disabilities, dementia and other similar needs for our support.

CONSCIOUS CARE

*To know the real you I had to travel far,
Beyond separateness born of my closed heart's scar.
Thought support meant only to help you conform.
Just didn't know of my need to transform.*

*Until this journey – sadness and shame.
No way could I love you as those of my name.
Not seeing your gifts, caused my heart to freeze.
Believing my role, only to train you to please.*

*The best of plans, always incomplete.
To connect I needed deeper to seek.
Found Conscious Care to open heart's door,
Now whatever I give, you give me more.*

*Finally heard the Master's words, "through ME we are one",
And the prison of separateness becomes undone.
Awakened consciousness – the ME who spoke.
The path to compassion in one sacred stroke!*

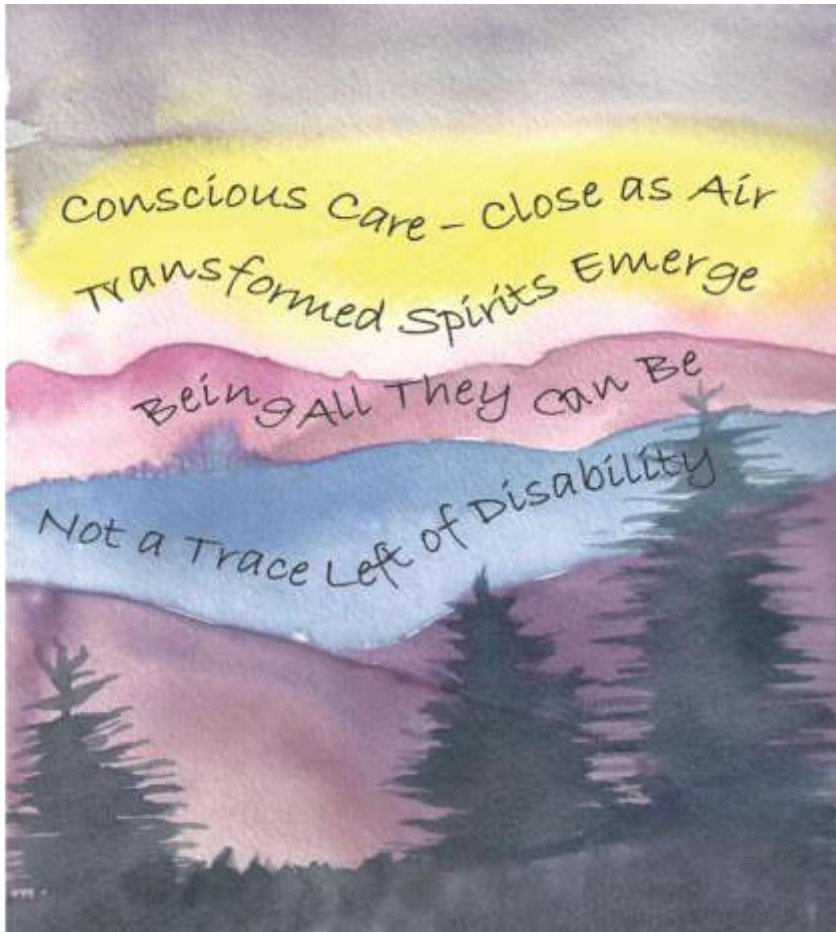
*So I learned to be still while on the run.
U,B-FIT Mindfulness got it done.
Just 'covering my shift' finally started to die,
'Fully present' with you, my heart's new cry.*

*Awakened the 'us' behind ego's fraud.
Some call this sacred – like talking to God.
Conditional support, does just not compare.
Conscious Care now, close as air.*

*As mindless efficiency fades away,
Your life being precious, my care does convey.
Now from your silence I hear laughter and such.
My 'I' that is 'We', can finally touch.*

*As we experience each other in this here and now,
Greeting every moment with soft ahh-llow,
Transformed spirits emerge, being all we can be,
Not a trace left of our dis-abil-it-y.
Not a trace left of our dis-abil-it-y.*

P & J



Alyssa Marks

When we are more conscious, love and compassion appear as being selfless. In mindful relationships we do not relate only to the other; we relate to "us". Compassion's communion brings us together in a whole. It does not see the world's pain and sorrow as other, it is shared, and it is ours. When we allow our shared vulnerability and humanness, love and compassion are as natural as our breath and without hesitation we act to help.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Chapter Twelve

Conscious Couples: Relationships Beyond

- Blow-outs • Boredom • Blaming
- Broken-ness • Betrayals • Break ups



Seldom, or perhaps never, does a marriage develop into a truly intimate and authentic relationship smoothly and without crisis. There is no coming to consciousness without pain.

Carl Jung

One afternoon, according to an old Sufi tale, Nasruddin (a wise old sage) and his friend were sitting in a café drinking tea and talking about life and love.

“How come you never got married, Nasruddin?” asked his friend at one point.

“Well,” said Nasruddin, “to tell you the truth, I spent my youth looking for the perfect woman. In Cairo, I met a beautiful and intelligent woman, with eyes like dark olives, but she was unkind. Then in Baghdad, I met a woman who was a wonderful and generous soul, but we had no interests in common. One woman after another would seem just right, but there would always be something missing. Then one day, I met her. She was beautiful, intelligent, generous and kind. We had everything in common. In fact, she was perfect.”

“Well,” said Nasruddin’s friend, “what happened? Why didn’t you marry her?”

Nasruddin sipped his tea reflectively. “Well,” he replied, “it’s a sad thing. Seems she was looking for the perfect man.”

Introduction

In spite of the hundreds of books written, films made, and ‘wisdom’ shared by caring friends, very few people who decide on becoming a life partner are adequately prepared to even understand why they decided to couple, let alone learn the insights and acquire the tools to do the job successfully. Most couple’s initial decisions are unknowingly made on orders from our PEA chemical factory and other fairly superficial criteria.

I was fixing my car one day and my new girlfriend was keeping me company. I asked her if she would get me a screwdriver. To which she asked “flat head, Phillips, Robertson or vodka?” In that moment, I knew that she was the one for me!

This can result in generational cycles of far too many good and caring men and women, moms and dads, lost in *hormego heaven* (a.k.a. hormones and ego gratification) which becomes hell when the easy part is over. Even for many couples whose relationship is a positive force in their life, we would suggest it is mostly more because of good luck than good management.

If you are not part of a couple, consider reading this chapter and doing this work now so you can offer your best possible self when the opportunity presents itself. If you have no interest in life partnering, consider doing this work now to grow into a more conscious friend or family member, etc. While this part of this resource uses the example of primary relationships to offer insights and skills into the Awakening and growing up process, it has much to offer for all important relationships.

Whatever your motivation, welcome to the *Awakening/Growing-Up* journey of Conscious Couples where you could learn how to:

- use each other's 'waking up' as grist for your own "growing-up" mill;
- grow and develop your fuller potential as life-partners. As you do, the effect will ripple out to your parents, grandparents, children, and community;
- become less materialistic, angry, jealous, or self-centred;
- modify your need to be in control, to be right, to impress, to win arguments - whatever your PFP mercilessly leads you to think that you need;
- become more unconditionally loving and supportive of all others;
- grow from destructive hormone reactions, to conscious, constructive relationship skills;
- Awaken consciousness to more of your fuller potential.

Throughout our more than fifty years together, we have had many challenges and made mistakes that have been accelerators to force each other's development and growing up. Through it all, we have learned much about how to manage our own little boy/girl PFP-brains as they attempted to limit our potential to experience unconditional love. It has been wonderful to be present at the execution of some of our PFP ego brain. Being conscious in a life partnering relationship, can be a rich opportunity to use both pleasure and pain to transform to one's fuller potential for happiness and fulfillment.

Whether you are in one of these relationships, coming out of one, considering going into one, or vowing to never be in one again, all options offer growth including Awakening to one's fuller potential. Here we can learn to skillfully not resist the bad times as we work to improve them. We can also learn more about not mindlessly being attached to needing bigger, better and more of the good stuff to be happy. In addition, as you discover the potential for your primary relationship to Awaken you, keep your mind open to the possibilities for Awakening in all of your relationships.

While it is for sure helpful for both to be working at the growing-up/waking-up process, Awakening consciousness through relationships absolutely does not require two people to be working at it. More often than not, one person starts their process of Awakening, and then their partner sometimes join in the process – sometimes not. You can make a significant difference to your well-being just through your own work as an Awakening life partner.

Some of the richest examples of conscious couples that we have witnessed have been men and women who have used the blow-outs, blaming, boredom and even betrayals (including sexual infidelity) as classrooms to grow to their fuller potential. They ultimately either left the relationship or found sufficient common ground to work with this intense curriculum. Either way, they used that classroom to gradually learn to keep their hearts open while they

passionately worked for positive change. For many of these couples, as you will see, U,B-FIT mindfulness and the other life tools made the difference.

A Funny Thing Happened On Our Journey Home

"Wasn't that incredible, darling?"

"You have no idea," Joanne replied.

As a couple we had been lost in a 'dry spell' for over a year. We decided to do an intense mindfulness retreat to perhaps discover what we could do to recover that 'lov'n' feeling.

It was July 7, 1987, and Joanne and I were just completing our first seven-day mindfulness retreat with Ram Dass. He had led us with ritual, humour and wisdom into a Sacred world that we now call the "way of the heart". This time together, even after countless other indescribable moments on our journey of awakening, remains for us one of our most meaningful and memorable transformative experiences.

Every day the temperature was over 100 degrees Fahrenheit by mid-morning in the soupy humid Catskill Mountains, with no air conditioning anywhere. We spent each day from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., deep in meditations, fears of the unknown, storytelling, and exquisite instructions to discover, and then to 'lose' our mind. We birthed and rebirthed a non-negotiable call to service and to each other. We sat with our fellow seekers with pained crossed legs, hoping that this posture had some magic to speed up our transformational process—but to no avail. In spite of discovering that there are no short cuts to awakening, we were inspired not so much by this teacher's words as his presence – loving presence.

The last night we gathered together in the Great Hall to do an intense two-hour meditation. Joanne and I took our chairs by an open door where a slight breeze cooled our already sweaty bodies. Our meditation was accompanied by sitars and hand drums. Just as we closed our eyes and started the meditation, the storm that had been threatening all week started, with gentle flashes of lightning barely registering through our closed eyes. The flashes were followed sometime later with a faint, gentle rumble. Such an apt metaphor for our stormy journey of awakening: only flashes and rumbles but still very real and with an intuitive sense that something very powerful was about to happen 'out there' and 'in here'.

Time had simultaneously stopped and also become infinite. As the sitars and drums held our minds in the present, each more intense flash of lightning radiated through our closed eyes, and the drums offered a kind of harmony with the thunder which guided us into deeper consciousness. We could not have planned a more appropriate soundtrack for this dance. It was like becoming the chanting, the thundering and every other person in the hall.

Although time was beyond knowing with flashes and bursts of thunder now singing to us with only a slight pause between each chorus, I was spontaneously moved to stand up and *be* the dance. Mindful, I just let it all be, expanding and contracting, me, no me. I stayed sufficiently aware not to direct any of it so I wouldn't get in the way of its potential healing.

I had left my chair and had been dancing for a of couple minutes when, as if on cue, the Great Hall was physically shaken. A brilliant flash of lightning that even with closed eyes was as bright as the mid-day sun and at the same time, an explosion of thunder as loud as a war-time cannon shocked every cell in our body.

Shortly thereafter the bell sounded and relatively more egoless, we returned to the group from wherever we had all been. "Wasn't that incredible, darling?" I said as I walked back to my chair from where I had been suspended in time. "You have no idea," Joanne replied.

I looked in her eyes to lovingly share what I could of my extraordinary experience. She put her hand over my lips, held me and as tears rolled down her face she explained to me that when I left her side to dance in the circle, she had opened her eyes and virtually danced with me— until **it** happened.

Jo revealed that minutes after I had gotten up to dance, the big boom was thunder but also the sound of the lightning bolt that had gone directly through the metal chair where I had been sitting and blown out the speakers on the far side of the room, now silent and smoldering.

We walked back to our cabin in silence, just listening to the cicadas, and as we lay in love together we were different. Not because of our near-death experience, but rather, a little of our insecure and self-centred little boy and girl seemed to have softened this week. Just a little mind you, but that experience of exploring who we could be, beyond our egos, seemed to kick start the next level of our intimacy and transformational journey.

The next morning we walked to our car across a parking lot of millions of little stones when suddenly I was compelled to stop, bend down and pick up one little black stone. Following more instructions from who knows where, I turned it over to discover a perfectly carved "J" – a reminder of my discovering more of my beloved's true being. From here, we would more consciously ask, "How can I help?"

Something in us died that week and from that death we birthed a way of being different with each other and all others. Although the "high" faded, we continue to this day to experience the wisdom of T.S. Eliot "as we do the same things in our life but discover them for the first time". Upon returning home with renewed commitment and insights to be

with each other, our way of the heart became abundantly clear. With this enhanced clarity we started to get just a taste of what it meant to not need to feel love but to simply be it.

Our new-found consciousness and happiness seemed to expand exponentially until four years later when I was plunged into my clinical depression. We should not have been surprised that winter always follows the bountiful harvest of autumn to be eventually and predictably followed again by spring. Through the years that followed and to this day, as a result of learning to be more and more mindful, we have found (with the help of/as a result of the 4 life tools) much unconditional happiness in the abundant gifts that life has offered.

The reasons for sharing this story may be subtle but significant. We hope that your take away will be that we believe that experiencing dry spells in life partnering relationships (i.e. when that loving feeling leaves) is natural and normal. We also have attempted to give a clear message that the way to reclaim it is not to deny or distract ourself away from the 'elephant in the room' but to explore it as completely as possible.

Our approach to developing deeply meaningful and lasting intimacy with each other has been influenced by our incredible teachers and by some of the world's wisdom teachings. One of our favourites is Kahlil Gibran who offers us some of the most delicious (and fearful for our PFP ego) descriptions of The Path of Conscious Couples.

Then said Almitra, Speak to us of Love.

And he raised his head and looked upon the people, and there fell a stillness upon them.
And with a great voice he said:

When love beckons to you, follow him,

Though his ways are hard and steep.

And when his wings enfold you yield to him,

Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you.

And when he speaks to you believe in him,

Though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind lays waste in the garden.

For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is
he for your pruning.

Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver in
the sun,

So shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth.

Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto himself.

He threshes you to make you naked.

He sifts you to free you from your husks.

He grinds you to whiteness.

He kneads you until you are pliant;

And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God's
sacred feast.

All these things shall love do unto you that you may know the secrets of your heart and
in the knowledge become a fragment of Life's heart.

But if in your fear you would seek only love's peace and love's pleasure,

then it is better for you that you cover your nakedness and pass out of love's threshing
floor, into the seasonless world where you shall laugh, but not all of your laughter, and
weep, but not all of your tears.

....

[But more importantly not be attached or resistant respectively.]

Our intention here is to help the average person or couple nurture the kind of love through which they fully and skillfully experience “the world where you shall laugh all of your laughter and weep all of your tears”. Our main stream culture has sold so many people the tragic materialistic illusion that we can achieve this while living in *hormego heaven* (reference glossary below). This is a sad illusion. Our unknowing search for comfort and pain-free relationships has bred an industry of fixers, fighters, and freedom seekers who breakup their relationships to avoid the ‘tears’. While for some, break-up may be necessary, this mindless avoidance for many others regrettably lengthens their sentence of suffering in *groundlessness* prison.

Let us be clear. We are not simply endorsing “til death do us part,” no matter what. Sometimes the horse is dead, and it is therefore time to get off. In general the good news is that we can learn either through staying or leaving, or being left, how to more completely and skillfully experience our *groundlessness* (reference glossary below) and therefore break free from it through the inevitable opportunities provided by illnesses, disabilities, boredom, blow ups, and betrayals, etc.

Glossary of Conscious Coupling Terms

Hormego* Heaven - The Easy Part

- Incomplete Special Friends
- 'Filtered Love' (based on PFP mistaken childhood assumptions)
- PFP / Ego Preservation & Gratification
- Hormone Hype – e.g. that lov'n feel'n
- Mothering/Fathering our partner

**(Hormones + Ego = Hormego)*

Groundlessness – Experiences of:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| • Loneliness, even when you are together | • Unemployment |
| • Insecurity | • Depression/anxiety |
| • Boredom | • Guilt |
| • A challenging, disabled or ill child | • Grief |
| • Jealousy | • Physical illness/disability |
| • Constant Compromising | • Mental health disorders |
| • No / low trust | • Financial crisis |
| • Irritation & anger | • Substance abuse |
| • Lost that lov'n feel'n | • Dementia |
| • Resentments | • Life threatening illness |
| • Strong attraction to another/s | |

Awakening Conscious (AC) Stage 1 - Conscious Connecting - 'The Inner Journey Begins'

- A Daily Formal Awakening Practice e.g. mindfulness
- Compassionate Conflict
- PFP Discovering & Detaching
- Compromising as Mindfulness Practice
- Useful, Truthful, Kindly & Timely Speech
- Embracing Differences

Awakening Conscious Stage 2 - Being Love

- Deep fulfillment and passion from pleasure, play and pain
- Helping each other grow with and through Hormego Attachments (e.g. fears & filters)
- Unconditionally Nurturing each other's Awakening even at the risk of losing one's sense of comfort and control – Transforming Trust to Faith - ain't no guarantees
- Authentic Kindness beyond feelings

Awakening Conscious Stage 3 - Universal Love

- Manifesting '*being Love*' through a Commitment to Compassionate Unconditional Service to others
- Relating to others, beyond the illusion of Separateness i.e. when conscious there is no meaningful difference between forgiver or forgiven / betrayed or betrayer, etc. e.g. learning to love enemies
- Reminding all people of their Basic Goodness
- Reinforcing *Being Love*

DEAD (Deeper Ego Anxiety & Drivenness)

DEAD Level 1 - 'Normal' Relationships Surviving Groundlessness

- Love based on conditions and compensations
- Mistakenly expecting bigger, better, more hormego pleasures to answer the question 'is this all there is'

DEAD Level 2 – Mindless Blaming & Blow Outs

- Covert & Overt Power Struggles
- and / or Betrayals

DEAD level 3 – Mindless Breakup (Leaving or Being Left)

- Physically Leaving or Staying but Resentful

Essential Conscious Coupling Principles

- Discovering and detaching from PFP is critical to Awakening Consciousness
- Great hormego sex is only great sex
- Awakening/Growing-up is always painful
- The best time for growing-up is during the good times

Primary Relationships – Used for Awakening/Becoming More Conscious/ Growing-Up

Let's start by reviewing what we mean by Awakening/becoming more conscious/growing-up.

A human being experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. The striving for such achievement is, in itself, a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.

(Albert Einstein)

In practical day to day terms, what does it mean to use one's primary relationship as part of our Awakening process? We'll start with a secular description of how we define Awakening. Awakening implies movement, change, becoming radically different, etc. Recall for a moment our discussion about algorithms in Chapter Two where we referred to our inherited ancestral brain, our childhood learned ways of filtering each life experience from our world and societal cultural brain priming, i.e. PFP. As shown in the previous chapters, the PFP dominated operating 'survival' based system is inherently corrupted with our predispositions to be less than our potential in the areas of for example:

- unconditional compassion for others
- forgiving
- tolerance
- non-prejudice
- loving 'enemies'
- living in accordance with secular moral ethics
- responsible stewardship of the planet
- being happy without needing bigger, better, more
- other

So then, one way to understand Awakening is that it is a process to help us grow up beyond adolescent survival codes. For us, these manifestations of being more grown up are essential qualities for happiness/fulfillment.

To be practical and specific, how would using one's primary relationship to live a life of what we have termed *Being Love* and Universal Love of self and others, happen?

For each of the situations/conditions that we will call *groundlessness*, as we use our primary relationship to lessen the drivenness of our PFP predispositions, we develop to become more conscious by:

- Simultaneously bringing consciousness/loving awareness to the moment when PFP attempts to emotionally hijack us.
- Skillfully processing B-FIT at times of emotional hijacks.

- Keeping a universal loving perspective toward others at times when we are humiliated, not included, criticized, not treated fairly, etc. – even as we prevent them from hurting us.
- Keeping a clear mindful balance of tolerance, patience and equanimity on one hand, and compassionate, skillful action to change situations and help educate our life partner/friend on the other hand.
- Mindfully refusing to accept PFP directives to armour our heart/remain indifferent/tune-out, as a way to avoid freak-outs and burn-outs.
- Applying the mindful stress rehearsal exercise, (*reference Appendix III*) to search and find inner wisdom to more skillfully walk the groundless ground.
- Maintaining a clear relative perspective on the seriousness of issues compared to other potential life challenges.
- Using groundless moments to sharpen the 4 life tools.

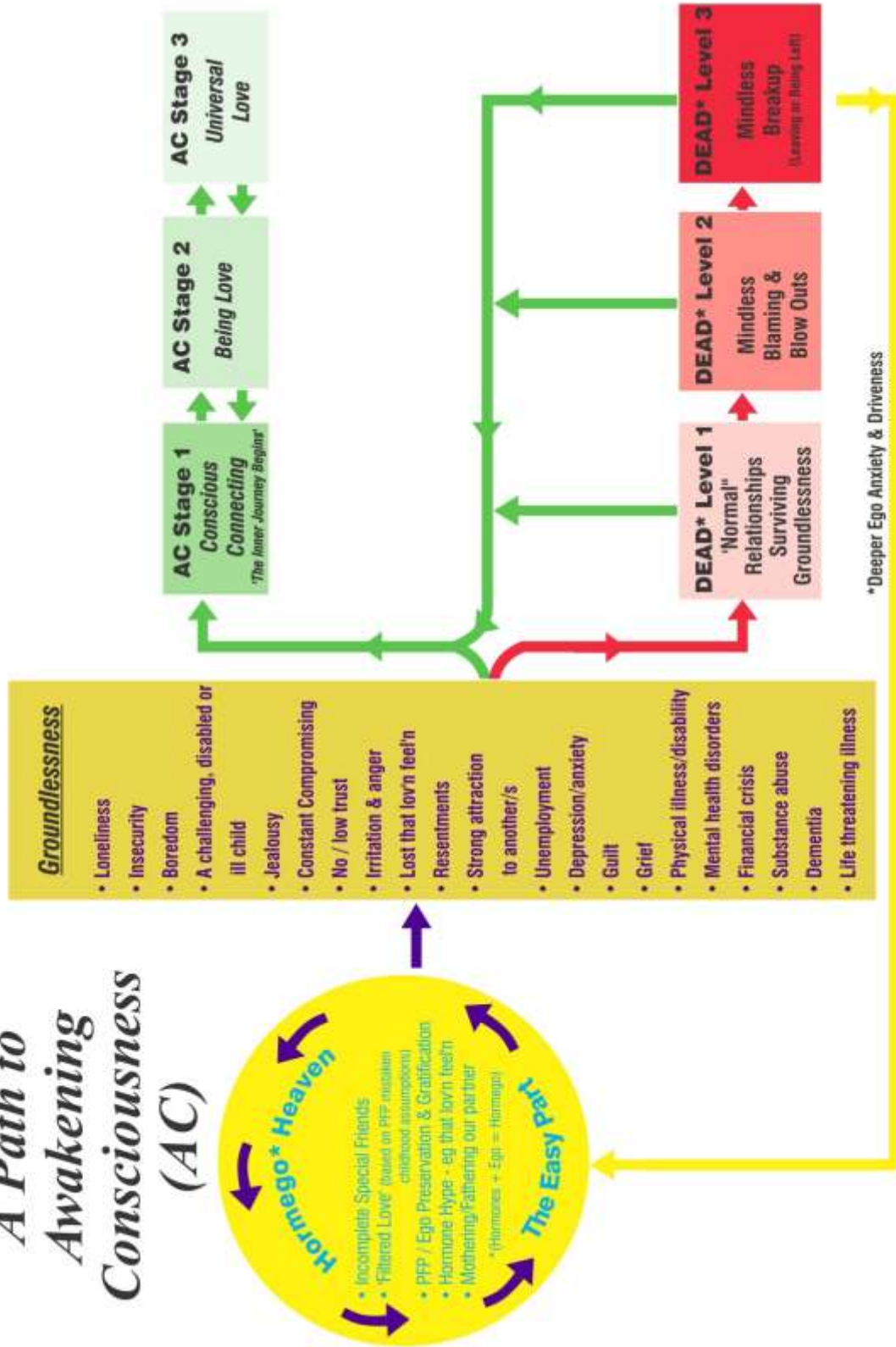
Primary relationships can be a useful classroom for learning and applying the life tools in spite of and because of the emotional stress they offer. These are the tools that are required to live a relationship of *Being Love* and to live a life of Universal Love – both coincidentally that result in learning to be happy much less dependent on living conditions.

Stages of Loving and Awakening

Below we illustrate the various stages of the conscious coupling process. One option is to Awaken consciousness and grow deeper into *Being Love*. The other option is for the relationship to wind up in Deeper Ego Anxiety and Drivenness (DEAD)

Conscious Coupling

A Path to Awakening Consciousness (AC)



Truly committing to transforming our PFP-ego into unconditional love within a primary relationship can be one of the most complete and fulfilling paths for Awakening consciousness and in general growing-up. The path of conscious couples with the extremes of passion and pain is both seductive and terrifying, because it requires annihilation of attachment to some of our most basic survival instincts.

No other path presents the compelling contradiction and trickery of pleasure's empty promises and pain's potential to purify. Especially when we first fall into romantic love (*hormego heaven*), it is just so hard to know, what is true. However, if we choose (often unknowingly at first) to experience love of another as part of our life's Sacred Journey to transform us from self-centred adolescent PFP ego, to unconditional, selfless love, this "knowing" really can happen.

Everyone who has experienced the initial high of romantic love (i.e. that loving feeling), knows that the laws of gravity will always bring us back to the ground. It's what happens before, during, and after this crash that determines so much of our potential to develop more authentic intimacy (including enhanced loving feelings beyond belief) in our primary relationship and be more useful, ethical, timely, and kind in all others.

This potential can be developed whether one stays to work at it, or leaves and works to Awaken without a life partner. Either consciously loving or consciously leaving can be liberating. *Liberation* for us means developing our fuller consciousness and more complete potential as a person.

Hormego heaven describes where most of us begin and where many relationships in our mainstream culture stop being fulfilling. It describes the revolving cycle of relating from mindless hormone hype and PFP-ego gratification. We call this *hormego* love. This includes being driven by biological impulses such as sexual attraction. Having and experiencing sensory sexual pleasure is of course not a problem: in fact, it is one of nature's wonderful gifts. The problem is that when it is experienced as mindless, driven sex, it lacks deep fulfillment (and real pleasure). In fact, it keeps us asleep. We suggest that this illusion will hold us captive until we experience it consciously.

Our major goal of this chapter is to offer some ideas as to how primary (and other) relationships can be used for us to Awaken and grow up in order to be happier. We are suggesting that living forever in *hormego heaven* will most likely limit your potential for using your relationships in this way.

A Path to Sustainable Happiness and Fulfillment Through Awakening Consciousness as Part of Being a Conscious Couple

An Overview

Note: We must learn, practice and apply the 4 life tools to succeed on this path!

- To be in a normal relationship, most of us start our living a life with a partner where we are preoccupied with the goals of gaining material and physical comfort and emotional control. We call this living in *hormego heaven (hormones and ego)*. While this false heaven can be comfortable and even exciting (thanks mostly to the hormone PEA), it seldom will result in individuals growing to their fullest potential to be happy. It requires Awakened consciousness to transform it.

Right now, deliberately become aware that you are reading this sentence. Stop reading and do it again. Even say to yourself “I am aware that I am here now and reading this”. This moment of awareness could be labelled *Being Here*, or being *mindful*, or *present* or somewhat more awake. This is an example of one part of more Awakened consciousness. (Review Chapter Three, re. mindfulness for more details)

Conscious couples use their relationship to learn about, nurture, experience, and apply Awakening consciousness. Most normal couples are not present, here now, when they are with each other because they are unknowingly lost in thought and other cells in PFP prison. They drive their relationship like they drive their car: they are driving, but their mind is often someplace else. Most of the time they are not really aware of being with each other. Sadly then, if they don't mindfully know that they are with their beloved, they may as well be with anyone.

Being consciously awake and in the moment significantly enhances and strengthens relationships. The relationship can then also develop an Awakened consciousness. Ideally this decision to develop an Awakened consciousness happens prior to the extreme *groundlessness* which awaits most couples.

- Initially, most of us bring a good deal of emotional dependence to an intimate relationship. When working from *hormego heaven*, we tend to love someone who shores up our emotional needs and incompleteness. Here, we live in *hormego heaven* with filtered love, based on PFP brain/body like, for example, mistaken childhood assumptions, tapes, filters, schemas, or complexes. Discovering and detaching from childhood filters is critical to Awakening consciousness, so conscious couples choose to use their experiences as classrooms to develop and transform (*Reference Tool #2 self-understanding*). They make radically different decisions in how they live with or resolve the inevitable experiences of *groundlessness*. For example, they see conflicts and the

many needs to compromise as sacred asceticism, opportunities to be aware and allowing while simultaneously sorting stuff out.

On average within 3 to 5 years, many individuals in normal relationships find themselves merely trying to survive endless painful cycles of *groundlessness*. They continue reinforcing their basic semi-conscious drivenness of PFP ego preservation and gratification. If not done skillfully, we see this as **Deepening Ego Anxiety** and **Drivenness (DEAD)**.

- Awakening is always somewhat painful because giving up adolescent comforts (including emotional dependence) leaves one feeling insecure, out of control, and uncomfortable, (a.k.a. groundless). Just as pain is automatic and exaggerated to protect our bodies, we humans are programmed with emotional pain regulators so that our adolescent self/ego will survive. Trying to keep the adolescent ego alive kills the potential for many relationships.
- The best time for this growth is during the good times when the relationship is relatively supportive. Sadly, we are wired to be motivated to grow or change when things are at their all-time low, when times are not good. Instead this chapter is about encouraging readers to fix the roof while the sun is still shining!
- Sex can be both helpful and hurtful to the Awakening and relationship-maturing process. It is somewhat helpful because it gives an initial ‘kind of’ experience of intimacy and closeness, which motivates us to grow through adversity and insecurity. The romantic “lov’n feel’n” that is initially experienced however, is primarily a temporary surge in hormones (e.g. PEA) designed to keep the herd’s population growing. A powerful sexual connection only, can however, compromise the Awakening and relating process because:
 - Great hormego sex is still only great sex. This great sex focuses mainly on what is coming next, versus what is happening now. With consciousness, however, sex increasingly becomes a much more complete mindful experience far beyond sensory stimulation. It even takes on a note of sacredness between the two people. In addition, being here in each moment of sexual intimacy radically enhances fulfillment in each moment of pleasure.
- The first stage of Awakening consciousness is achieved through Conscious Connecting applications of the life tools, all based in *U,B-FIT mindfulness* practice. Here are a couple of examples of how to apply the tool:
 - A daily formal Awakening practice such as *U,B-FIT mindfulness*. In the absence of practise, effective performance is very difficult. This is similar to trying to perform with a musical instrument without practise.

- Compassionate Conflict. With mindfulness we can remain aware and allowing of our own and our partner's insecurity, power, sadness and fears, as we work to help our self and our partner discover and detach from some PFP ego-based preferences or resistance.
- Compromising as Awakening asceticism. By asceticism we mean to skillfully, without desire or resistance, fully experience allowingness of that which cannot or should not be changed at the time. Conscious couples work passionately to change what can and should be changed at this time—and together, rest with the rest.

For conscious couples, compromising in the moment of our partner wanting or needing things to go their way means we have to: (*Reference self-management Tool #3*)

- **Catch** ourself being here and bring awareness and intention to the Awakening potential of this moment.
- **Calm** our body sensations, feelings, and thoughts using *U,B-FIT mindfulness* strategies.
- **Clarify** the issues and consciously **choose** a response or no response.
- **Consciously connect** to experience closeness and non-separateness regardless of feelings. Take intentional, kind and effective action or non-action, including gently letting go of the mind and the body's insatiable need to feel entitled to receive something in return in exchange for sacrificing. Being mindlessly driven by this need leads to mutual, but conditional, back scratching and bean counting—and could ultimately lead to a mindless breakup.
- Right Speech. Right speech must be mindfully useful, ethical, kind, and timely. Conscious couples take a vow that all four qualities are simultaneously used for all exchanges.
- Whole-hearted commitment is essential. It will seem that once complete commitment to a conscious relationship happens, hidden hands—some unknown energy source (like the energy that pushes the grass through cracks in the concrete sidewalk), guides and nurture the process far beyond anything that could be planned, let alone implemented. This is not to say that screw ups don't happen on a regular basis, because much of our PFP nature will not die until an hour after we do. Nonetheless, those necessary "I'm here and okay" experiences just happen more often. Commitment says that I work passionately to prepare and perform with no attachment to the outcome. Don't despair and it will be there.
- Blaming, blow-outs, betrayals, and even break-ups—as painful as they are—can be very helpful gifts for Awakening to your fuller mind, body and consciousness potential, as long as you understand and practise all of the 4 life tools **and also change what must be changed**. (e.g. restart or depart with an open heart).
- Your PFP brain/body will give you more resistance to being a conscious couple than you can image. Here are three of the biggest obstacles you will bump up against.

I don't have the time.

Start by asking - relative to what? What else would I be doing instead?

Track the time that you invest in repetitive cycles of meaningless blaming and arguing and you will see how irrelevant the time obstacle is. Remaining unconscious in life is generally not a 'can't' problem but it is a 'won't' problem.

My partner isn't interested in conscious couples and I can't do it myself.

It certainly is easier if your partner participates. Some relationships with excessive ongoing abuse do need to be ended (with an open heart) and professional help may be required to plan and take the best course of action. However, many challenging relationships, offer excellent potential for even just one person in the short or long term to develop and implement the PFP prison break-out skills.

I'm too tired, overwhelmed with parenting, work, financial problems, taking care of my elderly parents or too sick to do this.

There are definitely times in all relationships when it is healthy and necessary to tread water and put some of the process on hold. Even during these times however, we can practise awareness and allowingness of each new challenge. It takes no more time and will eventually become part of the wise, problem-solving skill set that you will need to make optimal choices.

Remember, hormone pleasure with all its conditions and compensations will always leave you with the question, "Is this all there is"? *Being Love* and Universal Love (reference the glossary of terms) have a much more complete answer. Keep the path of being a conscious couple fun and fulfilling; honour it as a very important Awakening process.

Growing-Up/Awakening Consciousness

Let's now explore in more detail the several options available to most couples to use to either Awaken or fall further asleep in their primary relationship, i.e. groundlessness.

Intense Experiences of *Groundlessness* - A Potential Sacred Catalyst

Perhaps the many PFP predispositions, and physical or mental illnesses that complicate at least half of all relationships, have even more potential than the “big betrayal” to carry us to the more complete stages of *Being Love*. My 3 year totally debilitating depression is an example of this kind of catalyst. The vast majority of healthy partners leave these relationships because of the formidable challenges of the complete change in lifestyle that is brought with these illnesses. Please do not hear criticism or blame here. With one’s basic unawakened PFP, separation, emotionally and/or physically during difficult times is highly predictable and must evoke our deepest compassion equally for both people. As in the case of the betrayer or betrayed, both are victims of their unresolved human predicament.

In the next section, we take a closer look at the PFP predicament, how it compromises relationships, and try to better understand it.

Groundlessness is the point in relationships **when the easy part is over**. At this time we can start to experience loneliness, insensitivity, boredom, jealousy, lack of trust, irritation, anger, confusion, and resentment of the other for our lack of happiness. At this turning point—sometimes very clear and sometimes not so clear— couples either:

- 1) Physically or emotionally leave the relationship as it appears to be too formidable a barrier for either of you to love, Awaken, grow-up and be happy.
- 2) Stay in the relationship, change nothing and hope for the best.
- 3) Start to work to better experience love in the relationship that is generally emotionally fulfilling and makes practical sense where both, through mutual co-operation, have your human needs met.
- 4) Start to work to better experience love in the relationship that is generally emotionally fulfilling and makes practical sense where both, through mutual co-operation, have your human needs met. This relationship will then provide the ‘home base’ required to grow to your fuller consciousness/Spiritual potential in different ways not directly guided by the relationship. (e.g. a primary practice of devotion and/or service)
- 5) Start to work to better experience love in the relationship that is generally emotionally fulfilling and makes practical sense where both, through mutual co-operation have your human needs met. This relationship also becomes a primary path to grow beyond being driven by ‘hormego/PFP’ and to Awaken to your fuller consciousness/Spiritual potential, etc.

Many people in troubled relationships go through numerous cycles before they make a choice to settle, leave emotionally, and/or leave physically and start the cycle over again with another PFP ego based boy or girl. Making this a path to Awakening (conscious connecting) is less common but certainly very possible. In the next pages, Joanne and I will offer what we have come to understand about the stages of Awakening that one can move through on this path.

The work of Awakening with option 5 above also very much helps us meet our mutual needs for companionship, fun and fulfillment.

The first stage could be called ***conscious connecting***. With uncompromising intention, mindful presence, and supreme effort, the same relationship that started in rapture and then slipped into boredom, blow-outs, betrayal, devastating heartbreak can now be the catalyst for Awakening/growing-up. We can use it—by applying the 4 life tools—to move us to the powerful second stage, ***Being Love***, and then to the third stage of manifesting ***universal love***.

Few life circumstances or influences have this same potential to move us directly, effectively, and mercilessly at times to decrease our identification with our driven ego-centred self as this path. However, as we lessen our identification with our insecure, self-centred, comfort-seeking PFP self, we can more completely enjoy *hormego heaven* and equanimously use our experiences of *groundlessness* to evolve (escape) into *Being Love*. In fact, you will find that *Being Love* includes many aspects of *hormego heaven* love—just without the attachments, clinging, fears and risks.

Many couples at the time of *groundlessness* move in the opposite direction, away from the path of Awakening. Instead, they first fall deeper into their ego, anxiety, and drivenness. Seeking bigger, better, and more *hormego* pleasures, conditions, and compensation to sustain the relationship, they protect their little girl/boy ego from leaving elementary school. There are stages on this path too, including mindless blaming, blow-outs, and betrayals. Sadly, the last stage on this downward path is a hurtful break-up or just settling for this mindless state. At this last stage as noted, some people just move back to *hormego heaven* to start the process all over with another ‘boy or girl’.

Hormego Heaven

Let’s stop for a moment and really examine what *hormego heaven* looks and feels like.

The upside of *hormego heaven* could look like a pretty good relationship for many couples and many close friendships. That’s why many couples stay in this stage. Here are some of the positive qualities.

Special, but incomplete:

- meeting each other’s human needs for close human contact;
- co-operatively sharing and supporting each other around the quality of life issues such as health, home, financial security, work, education;
- being fulfilled through cooperative parenting;
- encouraging each other to pursue personal (non-threatening to us) interests and relationships;

- making personal sacrifices, even to the extent of compromising some of our own needs and wants;
- experiencing pleasure, security and happiness from satisfying each other's mutual interests, hormone needs and views and
- mothering or fathering the partner who demonstrate that they are still a needy and vulnerable child.

As you can see, this list looks like a pretty good relationship. Even the last bullet about parenting a partner could be just fine if it works for both people. Without a shared desire to be more conscious however, this relationship remains incomplete and may take on more negative, ego-centred qualities. It will also be at risk of creating much more suffering.

At this stage, we reinforce each other's sense of PFP emotionally dependent, incomplete, insecure, ego-centred self. We unconsciously fall into feelings and behaviours which are all aimed at keeping the peace in order to stay emotionally secure. We may offer one sided sacrificing and compromising, which often leads to resentment on one hand, and co-dependency on the other.

We often end up manipulating each other with sins of omission and half-truths, with little authenticity, instead of communications being useful, truthful, kind and timely. Real trust is replaced by the demand to "trust me," often abused as a means of control to ensure one's ego's security. Not surprisingly, this false trust can lead to jealousy and other unhelpful feelings of fear.

Happiness becomes dependent upon not rocking the boat.

Another positive aspect of *hormego heaven* is that couples often enjoy happy, health-enhancing sex. This is mainly hormone hype to experience self-centered and also partner-centered sexual pleasure and gratification. This wonderful, emotional and physical intimacy develops, and is a natural expression of **relative** feelings of closeness. Sounds pretty good, right? But be careful:

Our society loves the idea of 'falling hard' for someone - that mix of lusting, fantasizing, and sexual activities that grows and stimulates our health and pleasure producing hormones and neurotransmitters. 'Falling' for someone is nature's drug of choice to activate the process of togetherness, reproduction and short-term support for offspring. It happens throughout all of nature – but 'it ain't *Being Love*'.

Great sex is still only just great sex

Unfortunately, one of the most powerful and potentially destructive barriers to growing beyond our PFP ego is the feeling state that is fueled by these hormones. Our unconscious PFP packages this as *true love* and our mind and body respond accordingly. This romantic love

demands to drive the unsuspecting PFP ego into an ‘incomplete’ union—and generally, it is unquestionably obeyed. Most often, this leads the couple into mindless sexual activity. This can be a wonderful part of the relationship and helpful at this stage in the couple’s development provided it does not become the tail wagging the dog. The danger lies in it becoming one of the most important parts of a couple’s relationship.

Our first challenge is to fully understand what is, and is not happening, based on hormones and chemistry, and our need for social and psychological security. As we evolve more to *Being Love*, we can then have this experience more skillfully and consciously. This means even more significant sexual gratification, but now it does not unconsciously drive and distort feelings and behaviours.

We strongly recommend Dr. Theresa Crenshaw’s book *The Alchemy of Love and Lust* if you want to fully understand this energetic and chemical system.

Groundlessness:

As noted above, most couples reach the stage of *groundlessness*. When we reach the state of *groundlessness*, we sense the wheels are coming off the relationship. As hard as it may be to think that this could be a good thing—or at least okay—it is important to remember that at one level this being forced out of control can be both necessary and useful to Awaken/grow-up.

Many conditions that increase the likelihood that a couple will slip into *groundlessness* are beyond our control. Having a challenging, disabled or ill child is one example. One person in the couple developing a mental health disorder, a physical illness or disability, or dementia are others. Other contributing causes could be things like loss of employment or a financial crisis and of course the unawareness of the drivenness of PFP mind in most relationships. If any of these things are present, there is much more strain on a relationship. However, too often the threat to the relationship during stages of *groundlessness* is not the change in conditions, but the lack of *mindful emotional self-regulation* of one or both people in the relationship. To repeat, here are some signs of groundless experiences in relationships:

- loneliness
- insecurity
- boredom
- jealousy
- constant compromising
- lack of trust
- irritation and anger
- resentment
- loss of “lov’n feeling”
- strong attraction to others
- betrayal
- depression/anxiety
- guilt
- substance abuse

What does this actually look like? Well, as a result of changing conditions it often starts with one person beginning to make demands and assert needs that never came up before. This could be presented as arguing or blaming, or it could take the opposite form of passively

“sucking it up”. As the couple starts to wonder if this is all there is, they may start to explore the idea (or the reality) of an affair with someone else just to meet their mindless hormone needs.

Since both partners are being driven by their PFP-ego, the feelings of anxiety just deepen. This path usually ends in either a mindless break-up or, just as difficult, staying together in a relationship buried deep in mutual resentments.

Awakening Consciousness

Here's the good news. *Groundlessness* is predicable, but the typical steps of coming apart/settling as a result of these conditions are optional. You can, with the 4 life tools learn to have the choice to turn instead to the path of Awakening Consciousness. That is, you can use your relationship, no matter how 'bad or good' it is at the moment, as your vehicle for meaningful personal and growth in consciousness that leads to fulfillment and happiness. As we mentioned briefly above, we see three clear stages on this path. They are Conscious Connecting, *Being Love*, and Universal Love.

Stage 1 - Conscious Connecting:

This stage is really about mindfully, intentionally taking the first steps to save or deepen your relationship by applying the tools we have set out in Chapters One to Thirteen—the tools designed to enable you to steal happiness.

Here are some of the changes you will see as you move into this first stage of conscious connecting. You will:

- Start to see that **you** must grow to be more complete in order to experience your fuller potential beyond only fun-filled do'n, get'n, hav'n.
- Start to see your relationship as having the potential to help you grow away from old, incomplete notions of good guys and bad guys.
- Start to take responsibility for your own development and fulfillment. Search for coaches and insights to start to Awaken to your fuller potential (both as individuals and as partners).
- Start to struggle to be more complete and honest, both individually and as partners, instead of just struggling to live out your PFP directives (e.g. need to be right, need to be in control and need for approval). Initiate conversations that explore how we are doing, e.g. giving and receiving, continue stop and start suggestions.
- Start to see the potential to Awaken, and be more present and unconditional in the relationship—even if the other is not yet choosing to Awaken with the process.

- Start to adopt uncompromising communications that are useful, ethical, kind, and timely.
- Start a passionate commitment to exploring this inward journey to consciousness (with your life partner if possible).
- Start a near daily *U,B-FIT mindfulness* practices, or some other form of meditation. Practice together when possible. The stress rehearsal exercise is especially relevant here.

This is the start. The 4 life tools you learned throughout this book—*mindful emotional self-regulation, self-understanding, self-management, and self-expression*—are the tools you need here to bring your relationship into the fuller potential of *Being Love*.

While in many cases it does simultaneously work to ‘save’ the relationship, sometimes it doesn’t. There are some matches that are just not workable for many reasons, and you may need to choose to leave the relationship, both physically and emotionally. If so, these tools will help you to do it with an open heart. No good guy. No bad guy.

Stage 2 - *Being Love*:

By the time you enter this second stage together of *Being Love*, you have already done much good work. You have created commitment and intentionality, and we already know the importance of each. You are ready to go a little deeper—in fact, quite a bit deeper.

Be careful at this stage. You may really believe that you are achieving the things we list below, but if you aren’t monitoring yourself and checking in with the 4 tools, you may be going through the motions with very little consciousness. In that case, you’re just tricking yourself with cheap hormone imposters.

From our own experience and committed study, this is what ***Being Love*** can look and feel like:

- Experiencing complete intimacy with your life partner—even when at times you don’t typically feel it. There will be times when you are distracted by something else or just feeling disengaged. Even in those times, you will find yourself able to move into focused and complete intimacy, Here, Now.
- Helping each other grow with and through your limited personal identities and egos of adolescent insecurities, filters and primitive hormonal survival fears. This will mean risking conscious compassionate conflict (reference below).

- Giving unconditional physical and emotional support to your partner, to complement each person's life and growth potential. This is not to promote destructive dependence for either of you.
- Encouraging and teaching your partner as they explore and test (often making serious mistakes) new interests, careers, and relationships as part of their conscious searching for the deepest truths of loving, living and letting go (of *hormego* self).
- Embracing the inevitable personal sacrifices and compromises you make for your partner as asceticism—marriage as a vocation, not a balance sheet of IOUs. The heart of asceticism is giving up something for a higher purpose. **Here, your union becomes the vessel to provide a special place for both of you to grow up/wake up.** This sometimes requires accepting your beloved's preference for something that is not yours but mostly it's about you being *ahh-llowing*/equanimous with it.
- Nurturing each other's personal growth and Awakened consciousness beyond ego.

Being Love: Moving Beyond Typical Feelings

Regarding relationship with significant others, possibly one of the saddest examples of our natural human predicament is found in how we as a culture have generally reinforced an incomplete understanding and expression of loving each other. Mindlessly driven by primitive brain architecture and hormones (PFP), we bundle physical attraction, feeling secure, closeness, in-control, ownership, pride, intellectual stimulation, excitement, sexual pleasure, and acceptance, and call the whole thing *love*.

Possibly even more harmful than any of nature's other tricks and shortcomings is this misunderstanding of love that seems to encourage us to think and feel that *hormego heaven* is all there is. As noted above, we would suggest that what most people probably "fall out of" is not love, but security, excitement, control, pleasure, comfort, great sex, stimulation, etc. *Being Love* looks and feels quite different.

What would all those experiences be like if, even just a few times a day, *U,B-FIT* mindful awareness, *ahh-llowing* and the other life tools were added to the mix. The average untrained, unaware person regrettably has no emotional frame of reference for this experience. They don't know what it could be. **We suggest that you can learn through the life-tools training to significantly experience more *Being Love*, Being joy, Being excitement, Being happiness, Being the activity of great sex, and Being peace instead of just feeling it as sensory stimulation and logical temporary psychological rewards.**

So what is the experience of *Being Love* compared to our normal subjective experience that we all more or less relate to when we say that we feel love, or just feel kind or happy? If we don't necessarily have to feel it to be it, then what is the experience of being it?

Our Personal Knowing

For Joanne and me, the experience (so far) of *Being Love* has three distinct qualities.

One quality of *Being Love* feels similar to what we typically call intimacy, joy, closeness or fulfillment. However it has a much greater intensity, a more complete experience in the same real time.

To understand this statement, try this exercise. Recall or explore for the first time taking one minute to eat a single raisin or any other single bite of food. Become aware of the texture, different tastes, feelings, and thoughts of anticipatory excitement as you more fully experience the first mindful bite. Perhaps you could list ten qualities from the one-minute experience, e.g. the texture of the raisin against your teeth and tongue, the sweetness, the moisture it brings to your mouth, etc.

With development of awareness through the skill and regular practise of *U,B-FIT mindfulness*, you could now experience those same ten qualities within half a minute of eating, compared to one minute. This in part is because your brain through the *U,B-FIT* training is increasing its capacity of focus and attention. This is presumably what master wine tasters do. Sadly, however, they only learn to apply this skill to tasting. **We are suggesting that experiencing (in less time) more from just average sensory stimulation can be part of how *Being Love* evolves.**

In addition, a truly mindful moment of tasting or loving is much more complete in that we don't crave or become attached to the pleasure (unlike we suspect many wine tasters do). We just experience more completely what is. In these joyous moments we can feel more qualities that the Body, Mind, and Heart experience in non-attached fulfillment.

This more complete sensory processing is one of the three qualities of *Being Love* which also becomes how we experience all of life. For example, when we offer kindness to others, we experience many more subtle B-FIT sensations involved, beyond just feeling good about it.

Our second quality of *Being Love* is a heightened perception of the reality that less is more. Deeper intimacy, joy, closeness and fulfillment can be experienced with much less physical, intellectual, and emotional stimulation. The simplest of kindnesses from the other can produce a deep sense of closeness and gratitude. The simplest of kindnesses offered consciously even to strangers brings similar results.

Being Love enriches the process of typically felt loving and kindness because less really does become more. Typical mindless love asks what new and wonderful thing are you doing for me today or right now? I need bigger, better, more!

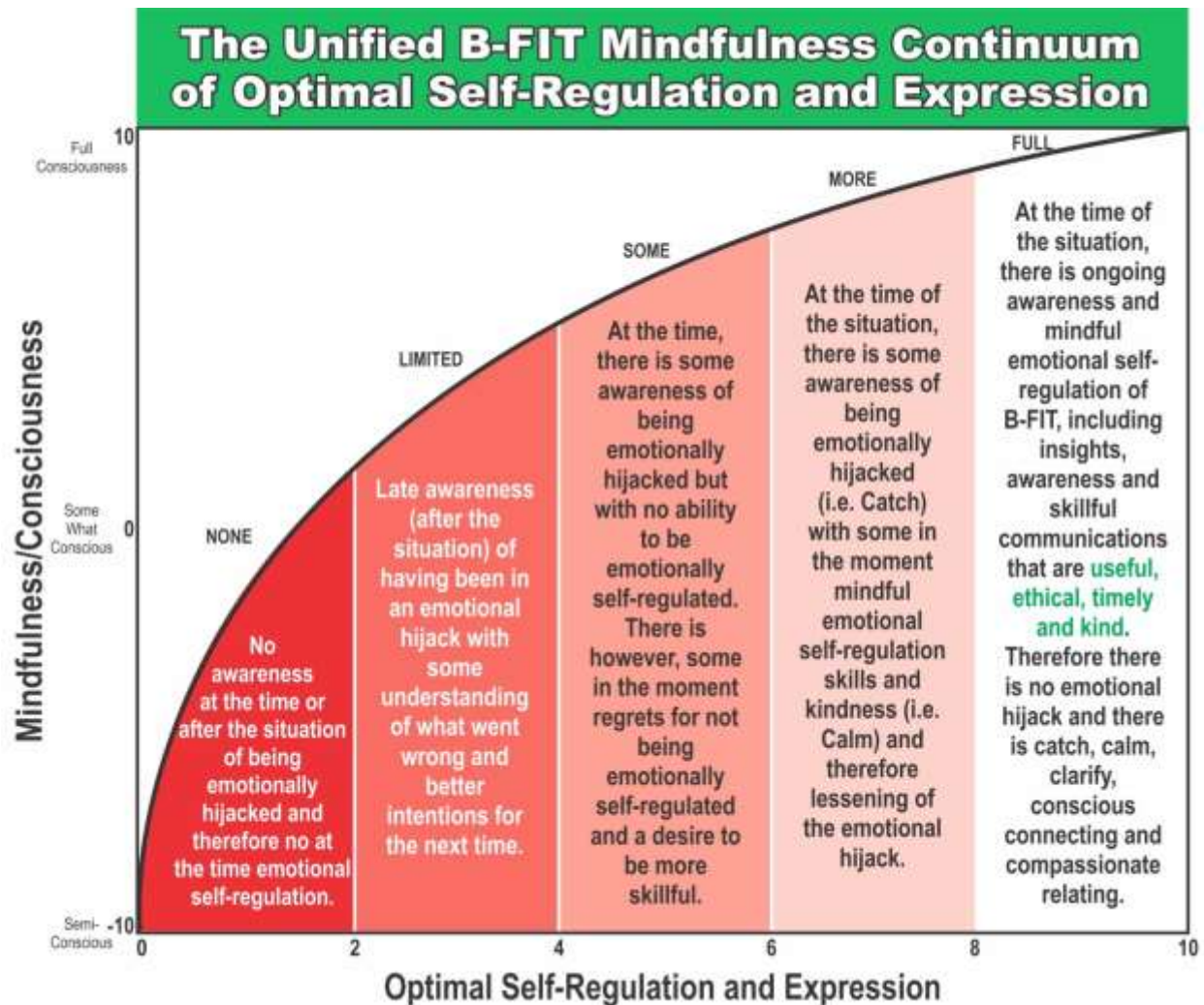
Being Love, with its focus on *U,B-FIT* mindful depth instead of the mindless breadth of more and more, transforms your relationship with awareness of the many subtle (but significant) movements in the moments of *Being Love*. For example, when *Being Love* you make love instead of having great sex: we experience significantly more sensory experiences of “what’s here now” versus “what’s coming” – and that us-ness connection is radically enhanced when we are present (i.e. conscious).

The third quality that we are experiencing is the more effortless and selfless sharing, caring and kindness that just naturally flows out to our beloved and to others in our social and service circles. This *Being Love* is grounded in and fosters Awakening consciousness. This, in turn, seems to temper or soften thoughts normally driven by the vulnerable PFP ego constantly asking, “What’s in it for me and mine?” This mindful softening allows an authentic conscious connecting that is beyond typical feelings or thoughts. One way to describe this quality of “being” is that it opens us to being more unconditionally all-inclusive and subjectively accepting of what is happening.

As an example, we seem to be able—in the moment—to put the qualities of others that are irritating and frustrating, fearful or anger-producing into better perspective: “This is about their PFP, not even them, not me”. These are very different internal responses than the typical power struggles and feelings of irritation and resentment that are usually pursued. At these times, because our upper brain stays online (not emotionally hijacked), we now more optimally change that which should and can be changed – and rest with the rest.

This quality of unconditional inclusivity also starts to happen with others like family, friends, work colleagues and even ‘enemies’. As we more clearly uncover, see, and experience first-hand the universal human predicament of suffering because of unconscious greed and resistance, we just develop a deep, authentic compassion for ourself and all others who struggle under nature’s ways and weights. Further, as we consciously and with allowing/equanimity, experience typical feelings of irritation, jealousy, self-centredness, resentment and obsessing, we become more optimistic and hopeful and just naturally relate to all others more kindly.

Below we have repeated the five stages of the *U,B-FIT mindfulness* continuum illustration to remind you of the Awakening process regarding *mindful emotional self-regulation* and *self-expression* that can be radically accelerated using relationships as classrooms. Please take a moment to recall an exchange between you and your partner (or anyone else). Decide where you started on this continuum, and then explore where you could have gone!



Stage 3 - *Universal Love*:

The real difference between this stage of *Universal Love*, and *Being Love* is that many qualities of *Being Love* move our love beyond only our primary relationship. Separately and together, you have moved into a state of consciousness that encompasses everyone with loving kindness, not just your inner circle/in-group. This potential for Awakening Consciousness at this stage is available to us whether we stay or go. What does this stage look like?

- Unconditionally sharing this *Being Love* in service to **all** others regardless of who they think they are. It doesn't matter if they think they are "less than," you extend the same love to them.
- Just naturally increasingly experience the Sacred Mystery in all others and relate accordingly. With your gift of conscious connection you really can love your 'enemy'

(reference Chapter Four – Difficult People). Since others are no longer separate objects to meet your needs, you can hold all their faults and flaws unconditionally – even as you work to change them as appropriate.

- Passionately committing to find ways to relieve suffering for all others including all forms of life (plants and animals) – not as any big deal – just as the way it is naturally intended to be. For example, Joanne and I have committed to only eating food that has been ethically grown and harvested and only eating what we really need to stay healthy.
- Simultaneously deeply committing to also bring home to your partner and family the love, energy, life force that is experienced and developed while in service and relating to others.

Conscious Couples Compassionate Conflict Resolution

The growth process from *hormego* heaven to groundlessness to Awakening Consciousness, Being Love and Universal Love will for sure require skillful compassionate conflict resolutions. Please review and complete the following exercise on conscious compassionate conflict.

Even if you are not in need right now of learning how to transform conflict into an opportunity to Awaken and grow a bit more, this tool will have numerous other applications in most of your ‘non-primary’ relationships.

This process is one of our most essential skills for Stealing Happiness as we transition in our primary relationship.

The need for conscious conflict resolution is one of the primary indicators that more insights and skills may be required, that have up until now been avoided because of living in a *hormego heaven* with its conflict aversion and other distractions. As part of this transitioning process to effectively manage disconnecting, it is essential that each person become clear about their needs and if it is you or your life partner (or both) who should work to better meet those needs and how it will be done.

To start, we encourage both of you to make four lists.

List A: three ways in which your partner is annoying, frustrating or hurtful to you.

List B: three gifts or blessings that your partner brings to your life.

List C: three reasons you fell in love with your life partner.

List D: three needs that you have that can be, and should be fulfilled by living with this partner. (We put needs in three categories: 1) must have met; 2) nice to have met; 3) not helpful to have met by your partner because it may continue your emotional

dependence and thereby compromise your chance to live to your fullest mind, body, and consciousness potential).

Life partnering is tricky business. Many couples get to the point where *It's Too Good to Leave but Too Bad to Stay*. This is a title of an excellent book that we recommend as a must read for folks who have started to have competition for that loving feeling. Here we hope to offer you insights, perspectives and skills to start a fundamental course correction. The following are several ways to navigate this part of your journey.

1. Become clear why you are with this partner.
2. After reading this chapter and book, explore the options to leave and stay. If you decide to stay, passionately commit to give it, say, twelve months to work on an effective course correction.
3. Make a plan for both options. This statement of course is much easier said than done. Be somewhat practical in your planning, but do not limit your plans too soon with too many how-tos like “oh, I could never do that”.
4. If you still aren't sure, continue to work with the life tools in the first chapters of this book. Possibly recruit a coach or counsellor.
5. List D is very important. Clarity of need is critical. To gain this clarity ask yourself:
 - Why are you still in a primary relationship with this person?
 - How has the deal changed since you and they bought in?
 - Does your partner really know what you need and expect from the relationship?
 - Do you really know what you need and expect from the relationship?
 - Are these needs of yours really possible for anyone to meet?
 - Should meeting some of these needs be your own work instead of passing the buck to your partner?
6. Now return to your lists A and C and look closely. You may see that some of the reasons as to why you fell in love (i.e. how your partner filled the need) are now the same areas that are annoying, frustrating or hurting you.

What to do?

First look closer, and you may see that you now have some buyer's remorse (regret) because your partner is not working hard enough to fix parts of you that you should be doing for yourself.

Early in Joanne's and my relationship I was extremely jealous. One reason I fell in love with her was because she shored up my frightened insecure little boy as my wonderful mother did. When Joanne started talking about her enjoyment in having interesting conversations with men at the office, I tried for several years to stop her. We almost came apart over it. Then one of my coaches asked, "Could it be that you are expecting her to do your work for you"?

I spent the next year in a very challenging classroom learning how to move beyond jealousy. Oh, such freedom and joy to finally celebrate hearing and seeing my beloved's excitement as she shared her exploration of many new and interesting perspectives, and experiences with many men and women.

7. Now check out list A (annoying, frustration, hurtful) and list B (gifts and blessings). Given the clarity that you are now discovering through this exercise, and further given the insights that you now have as a result of practising the 4 life tools, **NOW** you can ask the following:

Am I in a relationship that overall returns a reasonable to good outcome (or at least has the real potential to do so) in spite of the cost of my investments?

Now make an exhaustive list of the cost of this investment—all the annoyances, frustrations, hurts, compromises, shortfalls. Then, make an equally exhaustive list of all the returns you get on this investment—the companionship, the fun, the support, the security, and the teachings and motivations to grow to be a better person.

After comparing these two lists ask:

- Is this a reasonable return on investment?
- Am I expecting them to do my work for me?
- Does this relationship have the potential for greater return? If so, why do I feel that?
- Are my expectations, given my investments, reasonable? One powerfully important qualifying statement regarding your level of satisfaction about anything and anyone is to add "this is unsatisfactory relative to what/who".

8. This next step asks you to reconsider what you have just listed and examined. Consider the following. Every right brings with it a responsibility. Every benefit has a cost. In life and in relationships we must be a happy taxpayer. Translated into couple's language, this means that we must do three essential things to be successful.

First, determine what needs you expect to be filled by your beloved. Then ask, which of these needs may best be or can only really be filled by your own development? Be honest.

Second, like the song says, two out of three ain't bad. Face the fact that every person in any long-term relationship who is living "happily ever after" has unconditionally surrendered to not getting everything they desire, and even often deserve and should get from their life partner.

Third, clarify your needs and theirs and who does what, when. Then surrender to letting go of non-essential desires and deserves.

9. If you make a clear decision to leave, your work is to leave with an 'open' heart. All 4 tools will be essential here, especially tools 1 and 2.
10. Now if you decide to stay, make a commitment to yourself and to your partner to work at this relationship because you still feel that this person has the potential to complement having the needs met that you listed in List D.

Ponder your options for a while but, avoid opting for fence sitting, walking the middle of the road, half baked, luke warm, let's wait and see, it's not that bad. For all of life's biggest decisions you will be best motivated by inspiration or desperation.

This is how you can experience your relationship as a path to Awakened consciousness and experience your fullest mind, body, and meaningful potential. Remember, it all starts with the 4 life tools: *conscious self-regulation*, (U,B-FIT self-awareness and ahh-llowing), *self-understanding* (PFP), *self-management* (catch, calm, clarify and choose) and *mindful self-expression* (speech that is useful, ethical, timely and kind).

Before reading on, review this Chapter's Attachment 1 which is a repeat from Chapter Three – Express Conflict effectively, feelings to feelings and reasons to reasons. To make all of this a little more concrete, we have included a 'flow-by flow' description of how Joanne and I manage typical conflicts. As you read it, try to put it into the context of all we have said about conscious couples 'living' the 4 essential tools.

We see conscious compassionate conflict as the life raft that over hundreds of journeys gets us from hormone heaven to *Being Love*.

Conscious Couple's Compassionate Conflict – Flow by Flow

As I write this, my mind is full of feelings, images, and self-talk thoughts that speak to my deep sadness and vulnerability concerning the world-wide suffering from Covid-19. Any hour of any day, for weeks, I could start to cry and often have. While Joanne and our family are all healthy with enough resources for a couple of years, the vast majority of people around the world are not. My grief and fears are made much more tangible because I am out of control to do anything on the scale that is required, and that I want to do to relieve this universal suffering.

Surrounded by this reality, Joanne and I are attempting to meaningfully support a family member whose spouse died recently and another family member who has life threatening medical problems. After just completing one of our most stressful years in our life due to family deaths and sickness and overwhelming professional responsibilities, not being able to even support our family members as we would like, continues to accelerate my little-boy PFP feelings of emotional instability.

Joanne and I have just had a significant disagreement on an important decision. I am feeling more sad, alone, and vulnerable than I have for a long time. I'm about to share my subjective experience of awareness and equanimity from over the last ten to twelve hours during and following our disagreement.

1. My frightened PFP has poured all of its resources into *U,B-FIT* anger, I become aware of:
 - tight chest on left side with even a slight bit of pain – ahh-llow
 - “All I have done, and this is my thanks”. (talk) “She never...” (talk). “She always...” (talk).
2. This subjective *U,B-FIT* experience of emotional pain is prevented from cascading into suffering by **catching** PFP reacting. Catching is my predominant subjective experience at this moment. With this catching comes simultaneous **calm** and **clarifying**: “Ahh, chest. Left side, tight:
 - There is anger”.
 - “There is anger trying to crowd sadness, aloneness and fear out of my brain’s bandwidth”.
 - “There is Jo’s PFP—not Jo—ahh-llow”.
 - “There is, ‘ I’m tired’”.
 - I will now say, “Yes and what else?”
 - “There is overwhelm”.
 - “Why can’t she just...?” (talk)
 - “It’s time to be silent”. (talk)
 - “But she needs to be told...” (talk)
 - “I intend her well-being. Ahh-llow”.

To each of these hits of self-talk, I am aware and I label “talk” and “ahh-llow”.

At this time, I continue to catch myself . I break my silence and say, “Let’s talk tomorrow. I am tired and I would like to go to bed”. Joanne agrees.

I leave and continue my *U,B-FIT* process. As I prepare to fall asleep, I am very aware of my sadness and concern for how we are both suffering from this disconnect.

I awake five hours later, and Jo is lying beside me. “I hope she is okay” (Catch, talk). I gently place my hand on her shoulder and fall back to sleep.

I awake two hours later to find my hand in hers (she is obviously saddened and concerned for our suffering as well).

We get up and have breakfast together.

We continue our talk and concerns for each other’s well-being.

I reflect with gratitude for my feelings and behaviour, as compared to the radically different way this kind of a situation, not too many years ago, would have resulted in feelings of anger, resentment and withdrawal, only to be repeated again and again.

Conscious Couples: Catching, Calming and Clarifying

We have had many more “catch, calm, and clarify” experiences under more physically and emotionally threatening times. However, the one we just shared is typical of most couples’ everyday potential hijacked situations. It is the stuff of our lives.

This episode occurred during the unprecedented time of global suffering and personal unrest caused by COVID-19. It reveals several important *self-understanding* insights for Joanne and me about conscious coupling.

- After fifty years of dedicated growth and development using all the tools we could find and develop, anger is just a mindless breath away.
- “Catch, calm and clarify,” spontaneously activated, can positively influence 90% of our subjective and objective response.
- Communication that is useful, ethical, kind, and timely is still possible at the time of overwhelm as a result of the catch, calm, and clarify capacity that we have been developing with almost daily mindfulness practice and the other life tools.
- As we integrate “catch, calm, and clarify” with mindfulness practice exercise, optimal responses appear to naturally pop into consciousness on a scale that is directly proportionate to the intensity of the stressful life situations, (e.g. sadness, fear, anger).

It is worth noting that at this stage (*Being Love*), and the next one (universal love), you are not trying to do anything other than continuing to work with the life tools. You move into these

stages. At the *Being Love* stage you will often have to consciously activate *self-management* and optimal *mindful emotional self-regulation* and expression.

This evolution is like the chrysalis finding its wings to *Being Love*. Just one of the miraculous qualities of *Being Love* is the development of faith in the just-rightness of this transformative process of either rebuilding the relationship, or facilitating the process of consciously dissolving the relationship with an open Heart. Now, we experience *Being Love* where before we only could experience incomplete love.

Once *Being Love* is continuously and routinely manifested as “no big deal,” the couple or transforming individual is compelled by a deep experience of Universal Love to be in service with all others. The “no big deal” part is important. Think of how you automatically reach out to sooth a crying baby or to rescue a wounded puppy. You will find that you have that same, automatic response to all people, all life.

Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself (PFP) that you have built against it.

A Course in Miracles

Conclusion

Jo and I addressed this chapter directly to couples because we have seen too much needless suffering in our own, and in the relationships of other couples we have coached. However to repeat, much of what we say and suggest in this chapter, applies equally to any other relationship. Treasured friendships end, families become estranged, workplaces become toxic for all of the same reasons! Please use these tools in the same way in these equally challenging relationships—you will find they put you on the same path to Awakening to steal more happiness from life.

Chapter Thirteen

Loving Loved Ones When Their Lovability Looks and Feels Different

Life on the Farm



I came out of my bedroom in the middle of the night to find my mother-in-law curled up in the fetal position on our kitchen floor. She was dressed in her winter coat, clutching her purse. This 92-year-old pioneer woman, mother of seven daughters, was once a most compassionate, intelligent and hard-working nurse, farm wife, and devoted mother. She now lived in the special world we call “dementia.”

My mind started to race to figure out what to do. In an instant I caught myself being ‘here’ and immediately knew that this moment did not need ‘me’ to do anything. So I lay down beside her on the floor and gently said, “Hi Laura, how are you?” She replied “I’m late.” I said “Oh dear tell me more”. She replied, “I need to go home to help milk the cows”.

I said, “I can see why you are dressed and ready to leave”. I reassured her that Cal (her husband) would take care of the milking today (that had stopped twenty years ago). We talked about life on the farm. She told me a couple of stories that I had heard many times before. I listened as intently as if these stories were extremely important and this was the first time that I had heard them.

This kind of listening is like when we listen to our favourite music, i.e. we are delighted to hear the same song over and over again.

With that comfort she agreed to go back to bed to get some sleep so she could be ready to prepare the meal and bake the pies on her woodstove for the ten men who (in her world) would be coming as they always had for the harvesting the next day. Some months later in our home, we held her hand and mindfully helped her take her last breath on her way ‘home’.

Love in Transition

One of the most challenging of all life situations is to understand, support and love a parent, sibling, child or life partner who has, due to compromised brain functioning, so to speak 'lost their mind'. This could be as a result of dementia, aging, alzheimers, acquired brain injury, stroke, a developmental disability or mental health disorder, an addiction, etc.

An elderying man hurried to his 8:00am doctor's appointment, he wanted to finish quickly so he could get to another appointment. The doctor asked what his next appointment was to which he said "I'm going to visit my wife and have breakfast together. She is in the hospital". The doctor asked what her condition was and the man replied that for 5 years she has had alzheimers and hasn't known who he is. The doctor asked why he continues to visit her if she has no idea who he is. Then the old man replied "because I still know who she is".

Anonymous

Even though Joanne and I experienced both of her parents go through this stage of dementia and have also coached others, we feel somewhat inadequate to share our thoughts on this level of 'conscious connecting'. For all of our other offerings in this resource we lived and applied the tools in some relatively challenging experiences. This reinforced our confidence to pass on to you what we have learned. This lovability application of the tools has yet to be required in one of our most fearfully anticipated experiences of supporting each other when for either Joanne or I, our love 'looks and feels different'. It is with this hesitancy and uncertainty that we offer the following.

At these times in relationships, the 'universe' truly attempts to grow us to possibly our fullest potential to consciously and unconditionally love. This loving is far beyond ego attachments, emotional security and partial truths about loving. There is just no way to prepare oneself to be thrown into the deep end of this deepest of life's lakes. While we feel that the 4 life tools we offer are the best prerequisite preparation for us to walk this journey, this application with our loved ones presents a most formidable opponent to manifest authentic love.

At one time, this person was our loving parent who did the best they could with the tools they had to love us and give us our start in life. Or, this could be a life partner who at one time in their life shared our every dream and hope and supported us and loved us so much that we had the courage to work to live to our fullest mind, body and Spiritual potential. Or, this could be our child who in their innocence at one time reminded us of the deepest meaning for our life as we gave them the love and security that they needed to start their life.

The list of how it was, can be near endless. But now for all these people in our life, let's imagine or recall the actual situation that they are not only who they were for us, but now they may

constantly complain about us, criticize us, repeat themselves over and over, not know us and even attempt to harm us. They for all intent and purpose 'left us' and with that their meaning in our life is in radical transition to the unknown.

Our intentions for this chapter are to:

- Offer practical suggestions about what you can do when you become a supporter and caregiver of a loved one when their lovability looks and feels different.
- Explore the significant emotional challenges that you will face and how you can not only adapt, but evolve ways of being with this person to help both of you live your life to your fullest potential with these significantly changed living conditions.
- We conclude with reflections on how your support and caregiving for your loved one at this time in their life can make a significant positive contribution to your consciousness Awakening process and Universal Love for others including loving the unlovable and forgiving the unforgivable.

So, where to begin this new relationship. How can it be in any way meaningful? Below we suggest 2 somewhat definable markers for successful application of the 4 life tools when we find our self in one of these potentially transformative relationships.

The first stage in our transition and an indicator of one's authentic love for this person who must be supported emotionally, socially and maybe physically is that we are still 'here' as a part of their support team. We encourage softening judgement of ourself at the times when we do not want to be with them but we do it anyway. Just in showing up and doing our best puts us in a special minority regardless of our resistance. These feelings of I don't want to be here, fear, boredom, guilt and anger etc. are all quite normal ways that the mind has of coping with (covering over) our overwhelming sadness and despair.

We mindfully manage these moments as best we can by continuing to catch ourself (*reference the self-managing process, Tool #3*) having these thoughts and feelings and reminding ourself over and over that our thoughts and feelings are not us as taught in Tool #1 – *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart*. This process alone can bring significant relief from that part of our self-judging, fearful prison.

As we become mindful in each moment, we more often notice what their needs are and say and do everything we can to encourage and teach them how to manage their life as independently and as satisfactorily as possible. This could include mindfully offering our practical supports like:

- helping them stay on schedule with medications;
- supporting their physical needs for food, personal hygiene, etc.;

- facilitating optimal social interactions with others that complement their needs and preferences;
- protecting them from unnecessary emotional pain and suffering.

The second equally essential stage of this transitioning process is to mindfully catch our natural and normal, but mostly not helpful tendency, to ‘correct’ this person’s mistaken perceptions of ‘reality’, their memory, and confusion. At these times, while some redirecting can be helpful, they primarily need our empathy and validation, not our need to get ‘it’ right.

At many of these moments, never miss a good opportunity to remain silent.

To review, our general rule for right speech and action as described in our self-management tool is to, as best we can, keep all communications useful, truthful, kind, and timely. This may now be the heaviest of all lifts as we transition into our new relationship with them.

For example, what is **useful**? Let’s first discuss what it isn’t. It isn’t applying the previous standard of dialogue, whereby at times, offering a correction was intended to be a helpful teaching for the recipient. Now, more often than not, useful is defined as helping the other person to feel secure, less fearful, respected and loved.

Similarly, it has been our experience that the other three criteria of right speech also changes significantly. Even **truthful** takes on a new meaning. Now some omissions and partial truths will more often be required to reduce fears and confusion to be useful.

Kindness also changes from then to now. As always, whatever we say to anyone must be said with an open, unarmoured heart. This however becomes much more challenging as we are it appears, not listened to, often criticized, and even at times shouted at or belittled.

Timing also holds new unprecedented demands as we search for the right time to share a thought or feeling that takes into account their and our readiness, fatigue levels, emotional sensitivity, physical needs, etc.

Our catch, calm, clarify and conscious connecting self-management model will be essential to adjust to these new essential modified elements of our relationship including right speech. Let’s complete this review of the self-management basics by reminding ourselves of the critical insight that we offered in Chapter Four – re. Difficult People – How to Depart or Restart with an Open Heart.

As we catch ourselves being frustrated and even angry at times with our care recipient, (until we more fully awaken) remember our essential teaching regarding anger. The teaching is discussed in Chapter Three under the heading ‘thank you anger my dear friend’. Given that our whole world is now upside down, we would not be normal if we didn’t have feelings of fear, abandonment, overwhelm, etc. At these times our friend anger often comes to our rescue to protect us from these more painful feelings. Anger appears from the subconscious to rescue us

by tying up/using up most of those 50 bits per second of the brain's data processing capacity so that there is low to no energy left for us to experience the more painful feelings. In so doing, this prevents us being plunged into the darkness of fear, aloneness, and confusion.

Conscious Connecting

To avoid this totally useless exchange of frustration and anger to distract us from these more hurtful feelings, conscious connecting can be a highly effective alternative. To "consciously connect" is to be unconditionally present, peaceful, respectful, kind, caring and supportive. It is 20% action (what we say and what we do differently) and 80% mindful intentional energy, attitude and compassion, regardless of who is being connected with, what their needs are and how we are feeling about them at the time.

Conscious Connecting enables us to transcend our resistances in our new roles and responsibilities that up until now have been covering over much of our fear. This is the radical idea of fully experiencing true intimacy with our parent, child, sibling or beloved at the exact same moment when we work passionately to help relieve their deep human suffering as we assist them to feel secure, comfortable and loved. As it mindfully becomes more about them and less about how we are doing, with for example our deep grief from our loss, we can start to lose a little more of our primordial driven PFP resistance. This transition starts to Awaken us to more conscious connecting with them.

When we respond to meet the support needs of our loved one with this level of conscious connecting, it guides us to give an even deeper level of authentic compassionate and skilled responses. Its transformative energy nurtures growth to our higher conscious self. It reinforces an unconditionally caring relationship, regardless of how we feel about how the person is now. It allows us to respond mindfully in most situations, from the most mundane task to the most urgent critical response.

When we consciously connect like this we start to more often find ourselves saying "I listen to my loved one as s/he who has dementia share their most important story with me for the fifth time this morning. I listen and respond as excitedly as I did the first time they shared it with me. I know that my words in this moment are almost insignificant compared to my intention to just be present, Here-Now, for them."

Joanne and I have difficulty in describing this Conscious Connecting. It seems easier to describe what it is not. It is not the numbed-out feeling resulting from one of the many forms of denial and distraction that we can, without being mindful, get so attached to in our new role. It also is not some form of indifferent rationalization. As we experience this Conscious Connecting, we start to know, really know beyond cognition, that we are more than a reactive, feeling piece of

biology. This insight teaches us that we do not even necessarily have to feel close and loving to be authentically connected.

This level of Conscious Connecting with a loved one whose lovability looks and feels different, starts to have less and less to do with our cognitive self-talk, will power, self-discipline, or even learned best practices. Just as the musician's riff or an elite athlete's stroke becomes automatic through practise, so too does Conscious Connecting. Over time this starts to develop into the habit of being more and more present with a calm and caring heart and head in the midst of this life changing chaos.

Precious Gifts from a Loved One

There is a very special part of this conscious connecting and waking-up process that must be shared. What happens for most folks who have been a part of supporting a loved one who has 'lost their mind' (but not their true self) can go like this.

As we meet our loved one's new needs:

- to be listened to as they most often do not make sense and repeat themselves;
- as we manage their unreasonable and unfair demands;
- as we clean up from the 'accidents';
- and further yet, as we, during thousands of hours and even years increasingly feel more alone and fearful of the future, it appears to us that there are two distinct directions we could take at this intersection on our journey home.

One of the directions is all too well known as the '**outs**', i.e. tune-out, freak-out, burn-out and finally bail-out (emotionally and/or physically). Given the lack of commitment that the average person has throughout their life to grow and develop in mindful emotional self-regulation, self-understanding, management and expression, this 'outs' direction is highly probable. This Highly probable outcome can happen even in truly authentic life-long loving relationships. To both the well intentioned but mindless caregiver and care recipient, we offer our deepest compassion and equanimity.

Our experience with our parents when we were their primary care givers and also others who we have supported in this way, leads us to believe in the real possibility of an other direction. It appears that growth and development work on ourself to lessen our little boys and girls PFP mindless drivenness, now applied over thousands of hours and years to this most merciless and also miraculous classroom, can birth a more Awakened/Grown-Up us. It seems that the combination of our formal mindfulness work to dissolve our childhood ego based PFP model of who we 'think we are', together with equanimity, meeting this wall that we cannot go around, over or through, births this deep truth. This truth is birthed as our heart responds with

compassion and love even as our mind simultaneously searches frantically for ways to escape from this prison.

The Dual Path of Awakening Through Conscious Connecting

To the extent that we grow in mindful emotional self-regulation, and consciousness, we can better support our loved one and meet their needs in this more complete way. It means working on ourselves to transform to our deepest potential. The elegance of this development and support process is that when we put being a loved one and supporter in this context, the very act of supporting is the curriculum that we use to grow ourselves.

As we fully participate in this process, we slowly start to Awaken beyond our illusion of our separateness. We continue to experience our loved one in their distressing disguise with our mind's typical preferences and resistances. By staying conscious however, we also start to get connected beyond ideas, to what is still common between us and them. This awareness brings a sense of unity to our roles and relationships beyond supported and supporter, beloved and lover.

As this shift in consciousness grows our awareness of our shared unity, our love seems to open our heart to start to weaken our resistances to differences, dislikes and disabilities.

We experience growing unity where before we experienced mainly separateness caused by resentments from the injustice and unfairness of this groundlessness crisis, fear or, even worse, negativity. Each time we consciously support through catching, calming, clarifying, and consciously connecting, we simultaneously offer optimal support while that Awakens a bit more of our deeper potential. This dual path of serving both of us is essential because it liberates our heart of compassion that has been imprisoned by our mindless ego, filters and other roots of vulnerability.

Although important, it is much more than the time we spend, or the words we say, or even what we do for our loved one. It is in great part, the simple, ordinary acts done with mindful awareness of our togetherness/usness that we have birthed as we transcended into *Being Love* (reference Chapter Fourteen). As we Awaken to this place beyond our separateness and just “be” there, our care and support naturally manifests this *Being Love*. This is true regardless of how we are feeling about the person, their needs and even how they respond to what we do for them.

It is simple, ordinary acts done with mindful awareness of *Being Love*.

The truth is that almost every act of support in this relationship will either help us Awaken or put us further to sleep. Mindless personal care and rushed communications are examples of the toxins that ensure continued isolation and separateness—for both of us.

However, in a relatively short time these same support moments experienced as conscious connections (especially when these communications are beyond words) without being driven by resistance, attachments or “doing it just to get it done,” plant the seeds of authentic care and Awakening consciousness.

This realization is a deeply profound truth – a door opener/game changer. How so?

We gradually transcend the mind’s model of fear and resentment that has been one of the final threads in the veil keeping us stuck in the illusion of separateness and loss of our loved one. This is not relief **only** from the illusion of separateness from our loved one but relief from The Separateness. Here we mean the primordial curse from our primate ancestors that we inherited from their ‘different is dangerous’/ in-groups and out-groups gene pool. **Just this simple yet profound realization that the true essence of our loved one is still here when we are here/present continues to nurture our Being Love for them.** This can also develop in us a form of less conditional love and forgiveness for others.

Now we experience our loved one in new found intimate ways beyond our PFP fearful reactions. This could also help us experience others (especially those who we may find difficult), also as victims of a ‘disability’. For many, this disability that is as consequential as a stroke or dementia is their PFP primitive mind that they got stuck with and have never learned to transcend.

Beyond feelings and thoughts we now ‘know’ what it means to love unconditionally as promised by all of the wisdom traditions. This truth, experienced with our loved one can start to open our heart to others in our life, i.e. family, friends, and ‘enemies’ (difficult people). Such a gift from our loved one who appears so helpless but who may have better than anyone else in our life helped us transform to our deepest potential to love, serve and relate to all others unconditionally.

Reality Check

Do not however count on the mind with its judgments and resistances to fully co-operate with this way of the ‘heart’ Awakening process. In our experience, the mind (with a mind of its own) still brings dozens of thoughts each day of judgements, criticisms of self and others and out of control feelings of overwhelm and fear. At some of these challenging moments that often come very close to exceeding our capacity for equanimity, we intentionally activate the tools of Awareness and Ahh-llowing (A & A). In spite of your A & A skills proficiency however, do not expect a fully unconditional get out of PFP mind prison card to always appear.

Let's now summarize what we feel mindful awakening can and cannot do as we relate to our loved one during these challenging moments. The following is our best possible objective reality check, regarding the range of subjective emotional experiences that one can expect as we relate to a loved one whose lovability looks and feels different.

Everything you have just read in this Chapter, is our most accurate and honest account of what we feel can be one's 'trend line'. The trend line means not our best or worst emotional reactions, but more or less the average. Let's assume that while we hope ones behaviour will trend to be more or less impeccable, we sense that our work on ourself to mindfully experience logical and emotional empathy for our loved one, will be on a continuum of strong to mild resentments, to neutral to unconditional compassion.

This range of experience will probably be directly proportionate to:

1. Their behaviour – positive to negative, e.g. from appreciation and co-operation to their fears, anger, and negativity towards us.
2. The effectiveness of our development of mindful emotional self-regulation as a result of U,B-FIT awareness and ahh-llowing capacity building.

Our personal experience to date when our loved one is perceived by us to be for example, unreasonable, critical, hurtful, 'unlovable', etc. suggests that we will still emotionally react with some resistance manifested as hurt feelings etc., however that it will be somewhat tempered to neutral and even to degrees of compassion.

In addition, the range of our emotional responses to folks who are 'different' other than our loved one, it seems to us will be significantly improved as a result of our personal classroom with our love one.

We suggest that our best possible universal love (reference Chapter Fourteen) emotional outcome to love the unlovable and forgive the unforgiveable will be that our emotional suffering will be significantly less frequent, be less intense and our recovery time much faster than the average asleep, semi-conscious supporter of a loved one would be. This will therefore help to ensure optimal behaviour for each person we meet be they loved one or not.

Because the 4 tools that we are offering are very helpful to Awaken us from many of the sleep patterns directed by PFP nature and nurture, we can often experience these challenging moments with sufficient lightness so that the heart stays relatively more open. As this capacity grows, it helps us to more and more consciously connect to all others as our beloved.

See if the following poem helps to Awaken you just a little more to the potential that lives in us, depending on how mindfully we relate to our loved one at this most Sacred time in their life, as they take on such a distressing disguise.

A Gift from Me to You

*I know some days you wonder,
Why I have chosen you.
The answers they will come,
The anger and fears undo.
But not before the truth you find,
Hidden in the gifts I give.
Your path to purpose and potential
Will come as I change the way you live.*

*Most see me as disabled,
Your life all but shattered.
From this beginning we will cherish,
All that really mattered.
You'll stop caring 'what they think'
As you clean every mess.
From tiring days emerges
Your less ego-ness.*

*And that need to be so perfect,
Such a worn tight shoe,
Drives so many into hell,
But less and less you.
Together we sing joyous
That it's 'good enough'.
This wisdom teaching carries
Us through much of life's rough.*

*At first glance to mindless them,
Who just will never know.
As our world grows smaller,
A special seed we start to grow.
While friends feel sad,
Judging our life forsaken,
We have our sacred secret
That I'm helping you awaken.*

*Even you don't know just yet,
What does this really mean.
For this gift that you are growing
Is seldom clearly seen
By those who find their happy
Through bigger, better, more.
Driven by desires' wants,
Such a seductive whore.*

*And one way that I teach,
Tears ego–self apart.
Brings it to silent presence,
Opens wide the loving heart.
Some days not a pretty sight,
Anxiety, Anger, Aggressions.
The more I help you lose control
Kills unconscious self's obsessions.*

*When you are found often down,
Hurting every mile,
My innocent touch to you will bring
Your soul to laugh and smile.
In gratitude you'll weep
Bringing you to still.
Then from sacred reflection comes
I'm grist for your love's mill.*

*For as I continue to demand
So much of your time.
Your mind will cry for mercy
Then sing an ancient rhyme.
A crack in heart's armour
Will gradually appear.
Now for all who suffer,
You will share compassion's tear.*

*And what seeps through this crack,
Is love beyond your feelings.
So with each 'ahh-llowing' lift
Comes your consciousness healing.
As the frustrations that I give
Comes to mindful reflect,
Crucifying the mindless self
To create our Conscious Connect.*

*So now with less driven 'self',
Comes no me and no you.
Just 'us-ness' never separate,
Known only by a few.
Your 'I' that is 'we',
Through this labour has its birth.
Your life now lived
With such precious loving worth.*

*So now a different looking me,
Has come into your life
To help you learn 'be love',
Through joy and also strife.
It seems that to be fully whole,
'Self' must yield then breaks.
From Awareness and Ahh-llowing,
'Usness' our heart, now creates.*

*And though I'll never my old race win,
Or have any more deep thoughts,
This love that we have nurtured,
No cognition could have bought.
My vulnerability has given,
A conscious you and me.
Because of your selfless love,
We are whole, we are free.*

P & J

When we become mindfully still, like in the moments of “ahh”—the birth of a child, the dying process of a loved one, being in a special place in nature, experiencing someone’s unconditional thoughtfulness toward us—we know that there is something more to life, something bigger than ourselves. Getting and staying in touch with this ‘more’ in support situations with our loved one is being consciously connected.

When we fully and consciously connect to our loved one as previously described, we move beyond what our senses tell us to this place of stillness and wisdom. This guides our every action, not against anything but in harmony with it. From this place of balance and no/low resistance, it is our belief that we can positively facilitate, mainly because of our conscious presence, what can be done to help them find peace, feel safe and know how much they are loved.

Chapter Fourteen

End of Life Conscious and Compassionate, Competent Care

How Much Would You Sell Your Death For?

In the late 1980's, Joanne and I completed a seven-day retreat with Stephen and Andrea Lavigne. Approximately 175 people dying of HIV Aids, cancers and other terminal illnesses along with about 25 death and dying "midwives" like us attended.

We opened with a beautiful dance. In silence we floated around the room, gently touching each other's hands and deeply connecting with mindful presence. Knowing that the person behind most eyes we met would not be alive in a year's time gifted us deep intimacy with total strangers as if we had loved them all our life.

One of the unforgettable teachings came when Stephen asked us all to put a price on what we would sell our death for. In other words, we started to explore the possibility of never being able to die. For most of us, in an instant, the condition we had most resisted (our death) became something that we did not want to sell for any price. The thought of out living generation after generation or living forever with emotional or physical pain, etc. felt like a potentially horrifying experience.

From that point on through a week of mindful meditations and heartfelt sharing from people who were going to die within months, we deeply explored "who" really dies. We encourage reading Stephen and Andrea's book, *Who Dies?*

From this retreat and our continued experiences in helping numerous people 'cross over', we have been taught many essential 'how-tos' to give mental, emotional and physical end of life compassionate and competent care.

Some of the essential take-aways from that week, and our ongoing experiences, came from our own personal exploring and helping others to explore the following questions and considerations:

2. What is really required to help others (strangers and loved ones) to not suffer as they experience the natural pain of letting go?
3. How to help others eliminate the suffering that is caused by holding onto how things might have been, should have been, could have been.

4. If there is a simple definition of finding peace at this time of life (e.g. healing), it is to enter with mercy and awareness those pains - mental, emotional and physical to which we are resistant.
5. If we were going to die sometime this week, who would we make our last phone call to? Why are we waiting?

We encourage you to spend a little time with each of these reflections. For us, each one continues to be incredibly rich and rewarding.

Being Fully Present with Another at the End of Their Life (as we know it)

Many people find it difficult to spend time with someone who is sick or dying. It's not that they don't want to help, it's that they don't know what to do and say. We want to share with you some suggestions for being with another through their life-threatening condition. We thank our teachers, including those who shared their last days with us. Any wisdom you find in what we share has come from their sacred teachings.

There are many excellent books written on this topic and we encourage you to read one or two of them. The following are examples of our most important suggestions.

How and When to Talk

The following are suggestions on how to consciously communicate and care for another during their end of life process. These are not strategies or tactics. They are manifestations of deep sincerity and authentic conscious compassion.

Also, as soon as possible, ideally before the start of the palliative care process, help the person to program a communications device with 20 to 25 of their most used statements/questions, e.g. "I need/I would like/I feel" phrases to help with their communication in case they do become non-verbal (Go talk 9+ made by Attainment meets this need).

At this time, many people will not be able to communicate their needs verbally. As a supporter or visitor, our role is to help the person have their needs met. This includes a broad continuum from their need to socialize (or not), to help them meet their need for emotional and pain management. For the mindful listener you will hear and read their preferences. If the person is non-verbal, you can still help them with the tough emotions if appropriate. Wait for their sign, and respond accordingly.

Check out the person's preferences to talk, listen or have silence. Ask a yes or no question like, "Would you like . . .?" If they are verbal you can sincerely and authentically ask neutral open questions like "How's it going?" or "How can I help?"

If the time appears right and they indicate a willingness to talk more deeply you could ask, “How are you doing with ‘all of this’?” When the person appears to be experiencing difficult feelings, reassure the person that anger, regret, fear, etc. are all normal and yes, sometimes painful.

So now, assuming the person is non-verbal, the following is a series of questions that could be asked with the answer being received by you with them giving you a yes or no by even just nodding their head. If you notice them for example agitated, you could ask “Is your pain right now worse, better or the same?” Wait for a yes/no for each rating. Or you could ask “Do you have any negative feelings today?” If they answer no, move your conversation to something of interest to them. If yes you could continue asking “Are you mostly angry?” – and wait for a response. “Are you scared?” – and wait for a response. “Are you confused?” – etc. Then respond as helpful.

The person may wish to have more information about their condition but not know how to ask. They may be non-verbal or unable to ask their family or friends. Be open and follow-up on clues. Ask, “How are you feeling about . . . ?” However, never force a conversation. If they are non-verbal you could ask “Would you like more information about your condition?”

The Four Questions

As appropriate the following four questions may be very helpful:

1. “What are you most worried about?”
If they are non-verbal ask the closed question “Are you worried about anything?”
2. “What are you most afraid of?”
3. “What could make you feel better?”
4. “Do you want more information about your condition?”

Review Tool #4 *self-expression* to be reminded how to keep your words useful, ethical, kind and timely.

Be a mindful attentive listener. Don’t interrupt a dying person who is telling their story unless it is necessary for their care. This includes listening to the same story they have told many times before. If they are non-verbal, share one of their stories with them. “Remember when . . . ?”

Don’t take the person’s anger, ‘advances’, or hostility personally.

Silence, which is often preferred at certain times, is the most difficult form of communication and possibly the most intimate. Being with another in silence does not mean just not talking. Our mind should also be fully present in this moment with this person – not planning what we are going to do after work or mentally replaying some story from yesterday.

Be gentle with other supporters, e.g. family members and friends whom you feel may not be communicating as you would like them to. As appropriate, mindfully address their problematic behaviour with your suggestions that are useful, ethical, kind, and timely.

Honour the person's needs for any and all spiritual practices. Ask how you can help.

Cultivate a deep appreciation for being able to be with the dying person. Anyone who brings compassion forth from someone else is the giver of one of the ultimate gifts. Dying people give us much. Remind them, "You are giving me so much by allowing me to be with you at this special, sacred time, thank you".

When to Visit

At this stage in their life each person has different needs for social contact at various times in their day. If possible, ask, "Would you like some company?" "Would you like to chat? Many people will have times when they prefer company, but not talking or other distractions. Being mindfully present will help you to know what your optimal role should be.

Touch

Be yourself, do what you feel okay with, but always **intend goodness**.

Be like a good Mom in attending to the person's physical and emotional needs. Offer things like hand massages. Physical touch, massage, holding and cuddling should of course be checked out with the person first: "Would you like. . .?" "Would it be okay if ...?" Start with a simple hand or foot massage, and check it out.

Find ways to increase their comfort level through fresh flowers, favourite music, foods, smells, ice chips, changing positions, moisturizing cream – and oh yes, lots of pillows to support every part of their body.

Sometime after the passing of Joanne's mother who was in bed for the last year of her life and who was cared for in our home by her whole family, her medical doctor commented to us that she rarely sees someone in bed for that long a time without one bed sore.

Pain Management

Managing emotional and physical pain and discomfort seems to be an inevitable part of the living and dying process. It is our deep moral responsibility to help others be as comfortable as possible, especially when they have lost their own ability to do so. Although prescribed

medications appear to be the backbone of this level of care, we also have a critical responsibility to ensure that all other means are offered.

We have stressed the important requirement to skillfully manage our feelings, along with theirs, in order to **remove any of our subjective resistance** to the feeling. In this way, difficult feelings are not given an artificial power or unnecessary energy. This truth also applies to the prevention and management of physical pain and discomfort.

Remember our U,B-FIT/UM formula to describe the relationship between pain and suffering.

$$\text{Suffering} = \text{Pain} \times \text{Resistance}$$

The profound message here is that often we cannot remove the person's emotional or physical pain. It is often a part of the dying process. However, we can learn to help them lessen some of the resistance that they bring to the process. This, in turn, will relieve the suffering. This may be the single most effective intervention you can offer to help minimize the dying person's suffering from painful feelings and physical discomfort.

Here are some simple suggestions on how to offer this compassionate pain management support:

- Always ensure that everything possible is being done from a physical/personal care perspective, e.g. pain medication as appropriate.
- When someone is showing a sign of distress or discomfort, remind them to:
 - Breathe and be mindful of breathing. Breathe into the pain.
 - On our out breath - soften around the discomfort, e.g. teach them how to bring awareness to the location of the discomfort and intend a release as if they were releasing their hand that has been holding something too tight.
- Help them feel more secure, more in control, more connected and loved. This minimizes the feelings of fear which always intensifies the suffering.
- Ensure that your own feelings are being processed skillfully. Your feelings directly impact the person's feelings which directly impact their pain. Commit to your own regular personal and transpersonal growth and development activities. The more conscious you are, the more you can offer to another.
- Intention is most critical in this process. Frequently say to yourself, "May this person be more at peace". "May this person be pain free".
- Lead the person in mindfulness-based pain-management exercises, if they agree. (*Reference Appendix II, Exercise #5*)
- If you are able, keep asking the doctor these three critical questions:

- Right now, in simple terms, what's going on here?
- What do you think is best to do from here?
- What would be the next level of pain control and what would be the cost?
e.g. lucidity, energy.

Coming Home

There is far too much talk in death and dying circles in this country about psychological and emotional problems, and far too little about making the patient comfortable. Any group concerned with service to the dying should be talking about smoothing sheets, rubbing bottoms, relieving constipation, and sitting up at night. Counseling a person who is lying in a wet bed is ineffective If people are cared for with common sense and basic professional skills, with detailed attention to self-evident problems and physical needs, the patients and families themselves cope with many of their emotional crises. Without pain, well nursed, with bowels controlled, mouth clean, and a caring friend available, the psychological problems fall into manageable perspective.

Dr. Sylvia A. Lack

Staying Present

Many people at the end of their life, can it seems read minds and sense moods. If you are fearful, bored or disrespectful, get refreshed. Our cellular intentions are much more important than our words. Get support elsewhere. Leave if necessary and possible. As you feel comfortable, cultivate your own peace by regular visits with your mentors, ritual, prayer, meditation etc. Share it, show it!

During silent periods, practise loving kindness intentions and thoughts (we can never give too much). Do the following *Being Present Breath Practice* to give positive intentions and remain focused with them (research proves that positive intentions are essential for optimal support).

Synchronize your breathing with the person's breathing.

And say to **yourself**: **Breathing in "May you be peaceful".**

Breathing out "May you receive my love and caring".

Or if a person is sick or in pain:

Breathing in "May you be peaceful".

Breathing out "May you be free of pain".

Expect to feel vulnerable, helpless to relieve suffering and confused. Practising *U,B-FIT Stress Rehearsal* will help. (*Appendix II*).

Self-Righteous Judging

Be open to your mind (not you) as it judges this person or their life. Remember the care-giver's addictions we talked about earlier: the need to be thanked, the need to be reassured and the need to be respected. You are caring for a person who may not meet any of these perceived needs. When your mind becomes judging or self-righteous—"Why can't they..."—be merciful with yourself. Go back to the *Stress Rehearsal*.

If your loving kindness is conditional, this is an opportunity to work to heal yourself (through ritual, prayer and mindfulness etc.) Always stay aware that one of the most significant things that is happening when you are with a dying person is your own healing. This is their gift to you.

Leave Taking

There is no real model of the best way to be with the dying. In fact, having too many 'maps' can just get in the way of your compassionate presence. Be authentic. Practise feeling loving kindness. Practice the 4 life tools and the right way will just happen.

At the moment of death, be as present, aware and allowing as possible. Intend freedom for the Spirit (or soul, consciousness, energy, life force or whatever you like to call it). Use your interaction and soft words to encourage the spirit to be free, without holding on. "May you be free".

Don't be in a hurry to call the funeral home to prepare the body. Follow through on the person's requests for this time in their journey. For example, ensure that all interested people have time to say good-bye, consciously connect, etc.

Being with Self and Others who are Grieving a pre-mature Death?



***"Consciously Connecting with
Seasons of the Heart"***

***(Brandon, our 7th grandchild
who at this time, weighing in
at less than 2 lbs at birth may
not survive)***

There is of course absolutely no way to try to make sense of anyone's death, let alone a violent or premature death of someone who has not yet lived to their life's potential.

As you awaken to your fuller consciousness, and therefore potential, you may be able to experience your grief during these times in ways that add meaning to this tragic part of the sacred mystery. For us, our process to fully experience our grief involves intentional acts that help us lean towards finding meaning in the seemingly meaningless.

First, we address our empathic impulse to help others who are grieving by wishing that we could somehow take away their pain. To this well-intentioned thought, we remind ourselves that even if we could take their pain away, it would be a less than optimal way to be with them. At one level the pain that they are experiencing is a precious manifestation of the love they had/have for this person. As they now walk on the groundless ground of loneliness, regrets, fear, anger, and sadness beyond belief, they can birth an even deeper, lasting reminder of how special their relationship together was. These difficult feelings, when experienced skillfully, can one day be the seed of gratitude for their being touched so completely by this person. This contemplation, no matter when it comes, can help with the reconciliation of Nature's seemingly senseless act.

Next our reflection can flow into the awareness that the sacrifice of this life has (if only temporarily) lifted the veil of our semiconscious mindless relating with others. See how you are **now** relating in, a never before experienced more conscious connecting way that is so very meaningful. We start to see the truth that the experience of the 'non-separate *us-ness*' is/has always been present even if it often has up until now remained unnoticed.

For many (not all), you might also notice how your grievances toward others in your life who are 'difficult' and grieving like you, have been replaced by a collective-conscious connection beyond the ego. Mindfully experiencing these new connections can have the power to recalibrate into a new and close relationship with difficult others. This human sacrifice, more often than not, exposes our potential to both love and care for and about others in deeper and more meaningful ways. Annoyances, dislikes and even prejudices seem to soften and for many disappear. We are never the same again because of what we have collectively experienced in our grief together.

Sometimes, however, the heart remains armoured with anger until it can be ready to love again. That's okay. When the time is right the healing power of pain will work to withdraw the semiconscious mind's addiction to suffering.

Pain, (although not enough by itself) can, when experienced mindfully, be the motivator to grow us beyond PFP resistance that perpetuates the suffering (remember $S = P \times R$)

Last Time

Another 'gift' from this tragedy that will last the longest will be awakening us to the stark reminder that each and every action and moment of relating to another could be the last time.

Can we even imagine, if we held this truth in awareness throughout our days, how much more complete and fulfilling our routine, mundane happenings would be? I encourage you to spend one day where you will stay somewhat aware of events as if you truly believe this will be the last time. These moments could be as simple as eating a snack, greeting someone at work, bathing our child, or in some small way relieving someone's loneliness and pain. Such a potentially lasting gift from this human tragedy.

So then, let the human tragedies of premature death bring you to your greater potential to consciously connect, and help you remember day after day that each moment could be the last. In so doing, be more conscious of what is really meaningful and fulfilling, be it the most mundane or mystical.

The Sacred Mystery

The mystery of living and dying is so sacred that it is of course impossible to make sense of/reconcile. Over time (the right time which, might be a long time) the following reflection can minimize our suffering which in turn awakens us to our next level of the heart's journey home.

Even that which is held in the illusion of linear time and space most often really remains unknown. **This said however, we offer one life changing thought which is that we know far too little to judge when another's work on this plane of consciousness is finished.** As best we can therefore, because of our faith in and mindful awareness of the mysterious order of all things, we gently lean into the pain, grieve fully with less resistance and trust in another manifestation of the Sacred Mystery.

We are truly blessed to have been touched in life and death by this brother or sister.

A Very Dark Night – That Found Some Light

One day I was shocked by a tragedy that required application of all of the 4 essential life tools that you have been learning. This was not to just to get through it, but to stay sufficiently conscious and allowing to avoid passing on my fears and pain and increasing the suffering for others.

I entered the Hospital for Sick Children with a stuffed animal for a surprise visit with seven-week-old baby Charlotte, who had been admitted for some routine tests. I was met by her mother sobbing in disbelief that Charlotte was soon to be removed from life supports. Grief, fear, despair, hopelessness—no words can describe the heartache of a father and mother saying goodbye to their precious, innocent baby. Although I thought I was ready to meet these situations, I now found there was no way I could be adequately prepared to support these dear friends through their terrible dark-night transformative process, except to stay mindfully present, moment after painful moment.

As we said good-bye to Charlotte, her grandmother took a little, well-worn wooden crucifix from her purse, poured some water into a Styrofoam cup and blessed it, and with an unlit candle baptized Charlotte's frail little body. With the love created by this three-generation family, with monitors beeping, alarms going off and loud intercoms paging nurses and doctors to another world, this acute care room was transformed into a grand cathedral as great I'm sure as any found throughout Europe.

Our experience with Charlotte started a purifying process for her parents and me; I continue to help them be with their ever-present pain, and help them (and me) to recognize it as a vehicle of our own awakening/growth.

Recommended Reading:

Coming Home, A Guide to Dying at Home with Dignity – Deborah Duda

Chapter Fifteen

The Power of Intentions

Intentionality is defined by the Institute of Noetic Sciences as, “projecting awareness with purpose and meaning toward some positive outcome”.

Unless you formally develop intentions and a plan of action, the likelihood of you developing and applying the 4 life tools to improve your potential for happiness will be limited. This means that this time next year there is a good chance that you will more or less be as vulnerable to not living to your fullest mind, body, spirit happiness potential as you are today – even without the *groundlessness* crisis that awaits you.

INTENTIONS FOR OTHERS

Today I choose to have positive intentions for others.
But how shall I impart to them the gift of peace and love
if my own heart is still unloving and I have no peace of mind myself?

So I start with my heart:
I reflect upon each feeling of resentment, anger and bitterness
that may still be lurking there, intending that it yields to love someday
if not right now.

Then I seek peace:
I list the worries that disturb my peace of mind
and just watch these thoughts come and go
in the hope that this will bring me respite from anxiety
at least for now.

Then I seek the depth that silence brings:
For intentions that spring from silence are powerful and effective.

So I listen to the sounds around me
or become aware of the feelings and sensations in my body
or my breathing in and out.

First I offer good Intentions for people I love.
For each of them I say a blessing: “May you be safe from harm,”
Imagining that my words create
a protective shield of grace around them.

Then I move on to people I dislike and people who dislike me.
For each of them I offer this intention:
“May you and I be friendly some day,”
Imagining some future scene where this comes to pass.

I think of anxious people whom I know, people who are depressed.
To each of them I say: "May you find peace and joy,"
Imagining that my wish for them becomes reality.

I think of someone that I support who has a disability and say,
"May you find strength and courage,"
Imagining that my words unleash resources within each of them.

I think of lonely people: people lacking love
or separated from their loved ones, and to each of them I say,
"May you feel love and know that you are enough".

I think of older people who with the passing of each day,
must face the reality of approaching death,
and to each of them I say:
"May you find the grace to joyfully let go of life".

I think of the young and recite this intention:
"May the promise of your youth be met and your life be fruitful".

Finally I say to each of the people I live with:
"May my contact with you be a grace for both of us".

I come back to my heart now to rest awhile
in the silence that I find there
and in the loving feeling that has come alive in me
as a consequence of my positive intentions for others

Adapted from Anthony De Mello – Wellsprings

We have all experienced times when we have reached into some inner resource to do something we didn't think we could do. This skill teaches you to draw on these resources that transcend our normal understanding and awareness of what is available, to help us steal happiness from for example, finding more meaning and purpose in our roles and relationships. It's no surprise then that intentional skills can help you steal happiness at times for example when there seems to be no particular reason to be happy/feel OK!

In developing this skill, including intuitive insights, we access a capacity that is based on something deeper than just being motivated and driven by good or bad feelings, or simple logic. Some formal research studies have shown that there appears to be an ordering system (quite possibly associated with **emergence** which we will explore later) available to us at all times. This unknown and often unused system can also significantly enhance our fulfillment in what we do.

Science has long recognized the deeper ordering principles that intentional belief based actions helps to mobilize (e.g. the placebo effect). For the last fifty years, standard research protocols always require *double blind* procedures in which neither the technician administering the experiment nor the subject being experimented, knows what is being tested. Researchers know that the thought of expectations/intentions of the administering technician and their subconscious intentions may actually alter the research findings.

*You are what your daily vision and purpose is.
As your vision and purpose are, so is your will.
As your will is, so is your deed.
As your deed is, so is your destiny.*

Upanishad IV.4.5

Mindful Intentions Have the Power to Build or Destroy!

We call the following skills *non-doing skills* because to everyone else it will appear as if you are, not doing anything specific. However, you are practising the well-researched and proven skills of mindfulness, intuition, and intentionality through:

- intuitive relating,
- non-verbal intentionality,
- visualization and focusing, and
- mindful empathy and kindness practice.

Intentional and Intuitive Relating and Emotional Contagion:

Emotional contagion is the natural phenomenon whereby one person's emotional and physical state—for example, fear or calm—so powerfully dominates the interaction that it influences others' emotional states and behaviours.

Emotional contagion is in part the result of mindful intentions, activating mirror neurons from the sender to the receiver. This happens without verbal or obvious body communication. It could be happening in all relationships all of the time! It is considered to be part of our survival programming that creates instinctive bonding in the herd/tribe.

Conscious intentionality is a non-doing way to strengthen the contagion process. Calm and focused intention has been proven to be highly effective: calm people are most successful at sending mental influence (intentions) to calm down highly nervous (anxious) people, and focused people are the best at intentionally helping distracted people focus.

Mindful intending can be highly effective without experiencing the feelings which arise in response to the personality of another individual. For example, you silently say to yourself or imagine—mindfully intend—that your actions will be helpful, healing, and skillful regardless of how you are feeling (at the time) about the person you are with: “May Jim be calm and relaxed”.

*May I and all beings be filled with loving kindness.
May I and all beings be safe from inner and outer dangers.
May I and all beings be well in body and mind.
May I and all beings be happy and free.*

Jack Kornfield

Intentions-Based Research:

Any act of service offered without awareness and intention is incomplete. That’s why there are so many examples of less than optimal connection between generally good and kind caregivers and the people they support. It’s not that they don’t care; it’s just that they are acting mindlessly and without conscious intention. On the other hand, we know from solid research that mindfulness actually increases the activation of the parts of the brain (e.g. medial prefrontal cortex) responsible for kindness, caring, and connection.

Your positive impact on the quality of experience (and life) that others can have is significant. It is enhanced by your conscious intentions and expectations of well-being, respect and kindness in the moments of interacting. This has been proven to be a significant factor in the positive relationship that is vital for finding happiness through meaning and purpose.

What is the impact of emotional contagion on your relationships?

Whether you intend it or not, your feelings and attitudes—hope, enthusiasm, indifference, boredom or resistance—as you interact with others will draw others into your experience of the moment, shaped by your intentions and expectations.

The implications of emotional contagion for people we relate to are profound. As an example, when someone’s agitation increases feelings of anger or fear in you, your elevated emotional state reinforces the emotional escalation in them. A vicious cycle results making a positive outcome almost impossible. However, when you intend to remain consciously calm, the likelihood of de-escalation is significantly improved. Start to pay attention—really pay mindful attention—when you find yourself in the presence of a calm or positive person. Notice how you start to feel relatively more positive, even without any direct verbal communication. Also

observe being in the presence of a negative person and how, even with no verbal exchange directed toward you, they can bring you down.

Since positive emotional contagion, reinforced by intending positive outcomes for the other person can transform encounters between you and someone else, it is easy to see how essential it is to Stealing Happiness.

How to develop intentionality as part of meaningful and purposeful conscious connecting

- Create a natural, uncluttered space to use for this purpose.
- Start with a strong focus with *U,B-FIT* mindful awareness.
- Focus on compassion and make a meaningful connection with the subject of your intention: use image and self-talk to recall “who” they are (see Compassion Practice).
- State your intention. Make it as specific as if it had already been achieved. For example, “He/I am completely calm”.
- Mentally rehearse every moment of it with all your senses, as elite athletes do! Create a simple but unique body sensation (like touching the thumb and index finger together on your dominate hand) as you are saying and imagining. Repeat the intention throughout the day, using the unique physical body sensation as a trigger/reminder for your nervous system to activate the positive B-FIT responses that you have been training B-FIT to be/do.
- Start with language that implies a partner, for example, “May Sheila be calm”. End with language and images giving vivid positive details about your intention as an established fact. How will Sheila look? What will she be doing once the intention is realized? For example, “Sheila will look relaxed...”
- Believe it has happened.
- Move aside—surrender to the power of the universe/emergence/the source-whatever and let go of the outcome. Belief in the power of intention is critical. You can’t fool the universe. Keeping a journal of your own successful intentional experiences and also precognitions will help you deepen your belief.

Action Plan

Now you are ready to implement each days plan for action which should include something like the following:

Today's Action Steps	Expected and Intended Outcomes	Challenges to Implement this Step	Strategies to Overcome this Challenge	Indications of Successful Completion
1.				
2.				
3.				

COMMITMENT

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffective. Concerning all acts of initiative, there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then "hidden hands" help with the "heavy lifting," all sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise occur. A whole stream of events comes from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no one could have dreamt would have come this way.

*Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.
Getting started has genius, power and magic in it.*

W.H. Murray

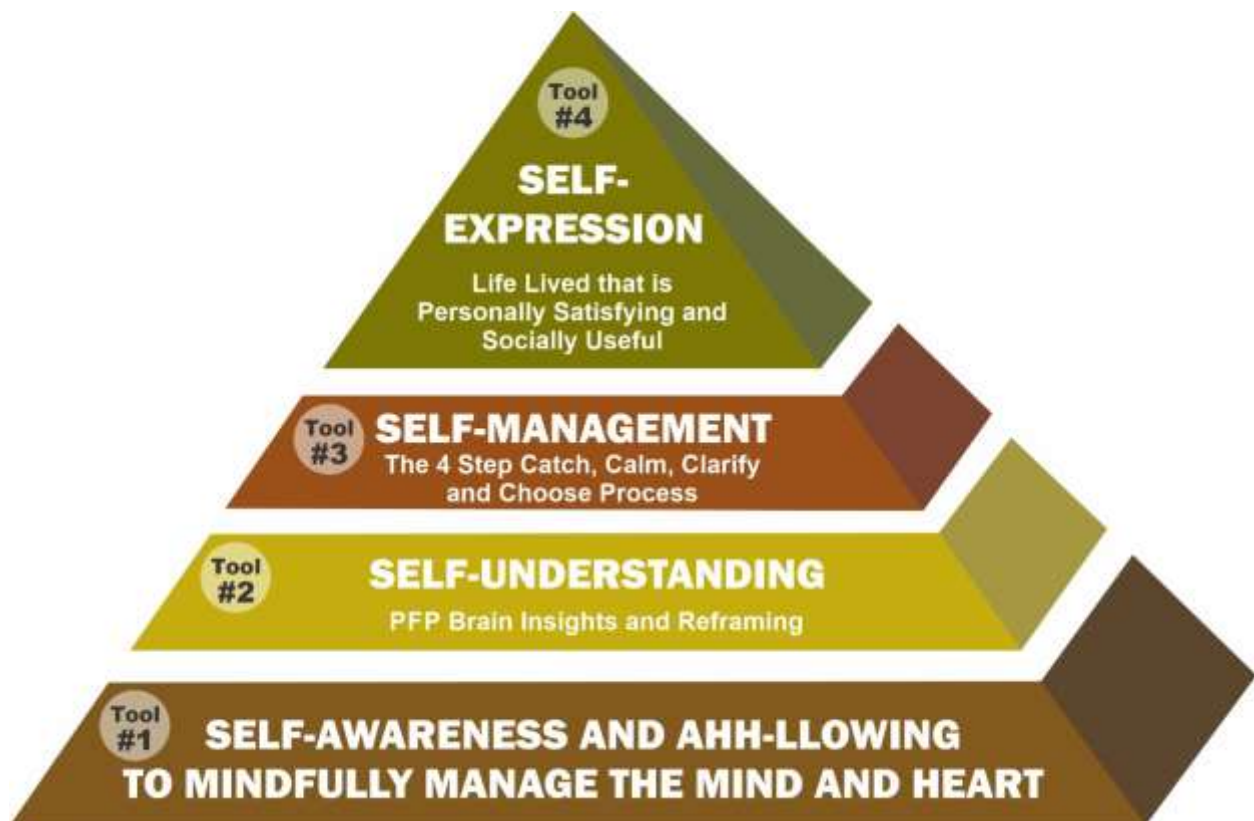
U,B-FIT Mindfulness develops the capability and capacity to offer positive intentions and expectations.

Chapter Sixteen

How will I Know if I am Really Stealing Happiness from Life?

Happiness is a highly subjective experience. There are probably hundreds of ways suggested on how to get and stay happy. This may be true, but we think the following list of 20 personal questions regarding skills and capacities should be considered essential for one's happiness, especially for happiness that doesn't totally depend on life's conditions.

While the tools should not be driven or forced goals, we do believe that tracking the by-products of your progress is critical. We designed this little tool to help you track where you are and where you may want to grow as you work to steal happiness from life. You are also encouraged to add your own markers of progress. To start, we suggest that you select 1 to 2 priorities from the following menu. Remember one of our most important self-management skills – think big but start small and do small everyday.



Personal Development Progress Report – Self-Expression Tool #4

Statements Reflecting My 4 Tools Development Progress	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Somewhat Agree 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1	Totals
• I relate to others authentically and kindly without trying to impress, control, manipulate, belittle, etc.						
• I positively contribute to social justice and human rights' issues in my agency, local and global community, e.g. I volunteer to help						
• My speech and actions are generally useful, ethical, kind and timely						
• At least monthly, I ask team members or a friend for suggestions on how I can improve						
• I am an effective and positive problem solver						
Totals						=

Instruction

Add up the values of all columns and then add the total of the columns. To get an approximate percentage indicator of your current 4 tools personal development level, add totals for all 4 tools. Consider asking a friend/friends to give their ratings of your progress.

Personal Development Progress Report – Self-Management Tool #3

Statements Reflecting My 4 Tools Development Progress	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Somewhat Agree 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1	Totals
• I have a daily ‘workout’ commitment of mind, body, spiritual and consciousness development, e.g. daily I do’s 3 development activities						
• I skillfully experience and process difficult feelings, e.g. anger, fear, sadness, etc.						
• I do not need to do, get and have bigger, better or more material possessions to be satisfied						
• I experience ‘difficult’ people with kindness and skillful interpersonal relating						
• Each hour I catch myself at least once being <u>Here Now</u> I, i.e. catch, calm, clarify the needs of the moment and consciously connect						
Totals						=

Instruction

Add up the values of all columns and then add the total of the columns. To get an approximate percentage indicator of your current 4 tools personal development level, add totals for all 4 tools. Consider asking a friend/friends to give their ratings of your progress.

Personal Development Progress Report – Self-Understanding Tool #2

Statements Reflecting My 4 Tools Development Progress	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Somewhat Agree 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1	Totals
• When I feel stressed, when applicable, I understand how my filters, cognitive bias, inattentional blindness, brain priming, neuro - transmitters and hormones are causing the stress – even more than the situation						
• I understand what I must do to prevent stress and the 4 outs						
• As soon as I start to become emotionally hijacked, I understand what is happening						
• I understand why some circumstances make me stressed but do not stress others						
• In general I understand why some people are difficult and what I must do to not be stressed by them						
Totals						=

Instruction

Add up the values of all columns and then add the total of the columns. To get an approximate percentage indicator of your current 4 tools personal development level, add totals for all 4 tools. Consider asking a friend/friends to give their ratings of your progress.

Personal Development Progress Report – Self-Awareness and AHH-llowing to Mindfully Manage the Mind and Heart Tool #1

Statements Reflecting My 4 Tools Development Progress	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Somewhat Agree 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1	Totals
• When talking to someone, I am often aware that I am talking with them						
• I am aware of having emotions (positive or negative) when I am having them						
• I formally practice being aware and ahh-llowing for approximately 15 minutes, 5 times a week or more						
• I pay attention to what I am doing when I am doing it						
• When I am starting to become emotionally hijacked, within minutes I become aware and compassionate						
Totals						=

Instruction

Add up the values of all columns and then add the total of the columns. To get an approximate percentage indicator of your current 4 tools personal development level, add totals for all 4 tools. Consider asking a friend/friends to give their ratings of your progress.

Work/Life Improvement Plan

State the Problem/Describe what you intend to improve

Improvement Outcomes Statement

Tools	To Improve, I Will Do What	How I will Do It	Why I would Do It	Completion Date
Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing (e.g. Mindfulness and Self Compassion Work)				
Self-Understanding (e.g. Filters Reframe/Perspective)				
Self-Management (e.g. Four C's)				
Self-Expression (e.g. Changed Behaviours)				

Chapter Seventeen

Final Thoughts

In The End

In the end, only four things really matter: how much you loved, how gently you lived, how gracefully you let go of things not meant for you and how well you helped others to love, live gently and let go.

(Adapted from Buddha)

Our Stealing Happiness offering would not be complete without a quote from Leonard Cohen. At public talks I will occasionally add to my bio that one of my claims to fame (the only one actually) is that I sang backup to Leonard Cohen on several occasions. This usually warms up the audience with a few cheers and chants.

While it is a bit of a stretch, there is some truth in it (kinda). As Leonard and I had a close mutual friend and mindfulness mentor, Shinzen Young, we attended meditation retreat days together. We followed traditional schedules, which meant starting each day at 3:00 am and chanting for one hour. Leonard with his 'golden voice' chanted in the front row and I was relegated to the back – singing backup so to speak.

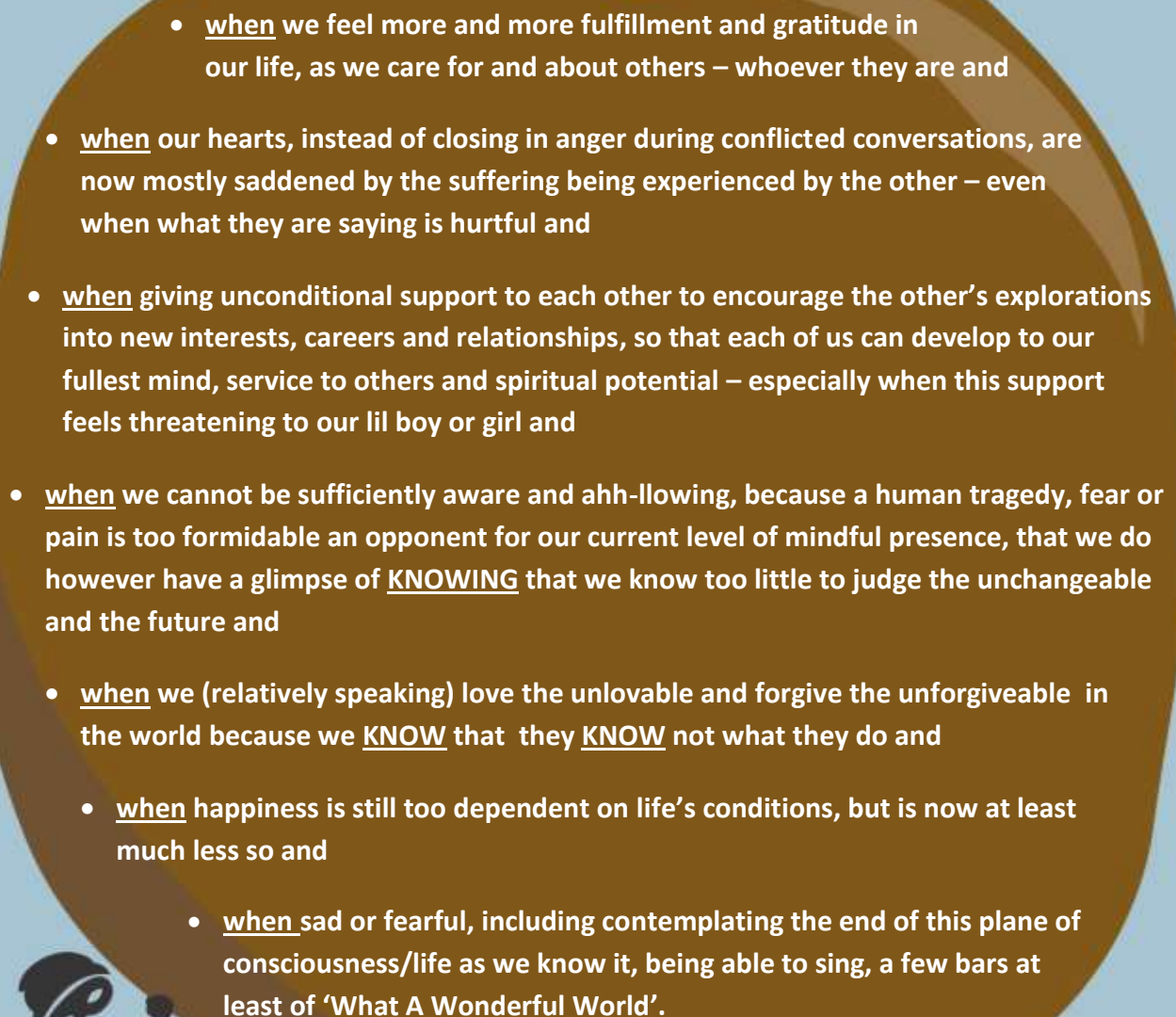
OK, so it's a stretch, but the following advice from Leonard is not. As you consider strongly committing to learn and put the 4 tools into action, listen to his words of wisdom.

*Ring the bell that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
This is how the light gets in*

So...

- 'Think big but start small, and do small everyday' - even if it is not yet perfect!
- 'We cannot drift to the top of a mountain,' we must work to get there.

We treasure the happiness that we have been able to steal from life, using the 4 tools, especially...

- 
- when we feel more and more fulfillment and gratitude in our life, as we care for and about others – whoever they are and
 - when our hearts, instead of closing in anger during conflicted conversations, are now mostly saddened by the suffering being experienced by the other – even when what they are saying is hurtful and
 - when giving unconditional support to each other to encourage the other's explorations into new interests, careers and relationships, so that each of us can develop to our fullest mind, service to others and spiritual potential – especially when this support feels threatening to our lil boy or girl and
 - when we cannot be sufficiently aware and allowing, because a human tragedy, fear or pain is too formidable an opponent for our current level of mindful presence, that we do however have a glimpse of KNOWING that we know too little to judge the unchangeable and the future and
 - when we (relatively speaking) love the unlovable and forgive the unforgiveable in the world because we KNOW that they KNOW not what they do and
 - when happiness is still too dependent on life's conditions, but is now at least much less so and
 - when sad or fearful, including contemplating the end of this plane of consciousness/life as we know it, being able to sing, a few bars at least of 'What A Wonderful World'.

Please visit us on our website www.centreforconsciouscare.ca (Stealing Happiness) for talks, podcasts, videos, and guided mindfulness exercises given at conferences and retreats in Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

Blessings to you on your journey home, Joanne and Peter

Acknowledgements and Thank Yous

What a remarkable team of folks who have contributed to this resource. Master Teachers such as Ern & Mer, Cal & Laura and our siblings moulded our most essential belief needed to successfully make our way 'home'. From them we learned that we are loveable.

The insights, best practices and full spectrum of personal growing experiences offered here have been developed in great part as a result of our 50 years association with thousands of mindfulness students, people who have developmental disabilities and/or mental health disorders, whom we have supported and their educators and caregivers.

Throughout the writing of the book we have been mentored by Cecelia Coulas and Margaret Tamblyn. Their loving and compassionate spirits will therefore be experienced in the hearts and hands of each reader and ultimately manifested in your improved quality of well-being and happiness.

Our dear friend Lucinda Thompson has been our most skillful and encouraging, 'keep it relative and real' guide and coach.

Alyssa Marks one of our granddaughters has been extremely helpful as our writing advisor and editor. Sophia Rouleau, our youngest granddaughter has kept our message meaningful for our younger readers.

We are grateful to Charles Tysoe, for his listening ear, as we talked our way through some important rules of writing.

Kim Osbourne of KBO Designs has taken our ideas and created the illustrations to reinforce learning. For visual learners, these illustrations are proving to be invaluable.

Thanks to the passion and commitment of Michele Chaban and Dekyi-Lee Oldershaw, Co-directors of the Applied Mindfulness Meditation Program at the University of Toronto, Factor-Inwentash School of Social Work, I became part of the University of Toronto's instructors' team. In teaching the Conscious Care and Support four tools to adult students such as medical doctors, nurses, and developmental services workers, we have been able to refine tools' applications and research their effectiveness outcomes.

Thank you also to Kristine Collins, Assistant Dean, Academic Programs, University of Toronto for significantly expanding these teaching opportunities. Kristine's ongoing support has significantly contributed to enabling A Centre for Conscious Care to enrich the lives of many thousands of people in Ontario with autism and other developmental disabilities and to improve provincial policy in the developmental services' sector of MCCSS.

The precision and passion of Shinzen Young's teachings and coaching, together with his uncompromising personal commitment and modeling has inspired and guided us for three

decades in how to apply Unified Mindfulness (UM) to relieve not only our own but others' suffering as well.

Teachings from and personal conscious connections with Ram Dass, Jack Kornfield, Daniel Goleman, Roshi Joan Halifax, Steven and Ondrea Levine, Dr. K. Adler (son of Dr. Alfred Adler) and Thich Nhat Hanh in "The Way of the Heart" have given us many teachings on how to keep our hearts open and present in all our life roles and relationships – especially when we don't feel like it.

Podcasts by Sam Harris, Dan Harris and Jeff Warren have been outstanding resources to strengthen our path's process.

Mohawk, Ojibwa and Tlingit Elders, Healers, Chiefs and Pipe Carriers from indigenous communities, such as Dawn Madahbee Leach, Jackie Labonte, John Agonie, Mary Lou Fox, Chief Earl Commanda, Levi Southwind, Joseph Corbiere, Clayton Shawana and Keinna Jones, both as my students and teachers provided much of the vision and energy to bring these elements together, as for fifteen years, I lived, volunteered and worked in 25 indigenous peoples' communities in the Yukon and Northern Ontario.

Dawn Madahbee Leach (2020 recipient of the National Indspire Award) significantly facilitated my community development efforts by acknowledging my authentic commitment. Her trust and acceptance of me opened the door to numerous rich and rewarding relationships that were vital for successful completion of our vision to be a part of helping to build the capacity in each Indigenous community to be self-reliant and self-determining. This led to my being presented with an eagle feather in 1987 from over 200 Chiefs, Band Council and community members. To this day this is one of the most honoured and valued moments in my career.

Generous and insightful special friends, Brian Skerrett, Joe and Mary Glaab, Bob Williams, Lucinda Thomson, Brian McCristall, Greg Gary, Marion Paul and Larry Hershfield, have for many years selflessly passed on to Joanne and I what they have developed and found on their transformational personal growth journeys and service to others. They have also been extremely helpful in reminding us what we didn't know but thought we did.

We hope that this resource from this outstanding circle of contributors has provided you with inspiration to help you continue your personal development and consciousness explorations that are so essential to steal happiness from life and to help others to do the same.

***Blessings and Love,
Peter and Joanne
Mom and Dad
Grammy and Papa
Friend and Mentor
Consciousness Explorers***



Appendix I

U,B-FIT Mindfulness – Tech Talk

Take a moment to try the following exercise:

1. Write your signature.
2. Now write it again with your non-dominant hand and stay aware of feelings of frustration and/or maybe a body sensation associated with frustration or maybe an image or talk thought etc. as you do it.
3. Write your signature again with your non-dominant hand and be aware that you are doing it. Say to yourself, “here, writing.”

The first step is generally how most people go through life. You just autopilot your signature like you do most things you know how to do. Think of how many tasks and routines there are in your daily work, and think of how easy it is to fall into mindless auto-pilot. I’m sure you sometimes do them without giving it any more thought than you gave to writing your signature the first time—and that is exactly what we need to avoid doing. Be mindful of these times to experience them more fully.

The second step was a forced mindfulness experience because your lack of competence with your non-dominant hand and the newness of the situation forced you to be aware of what you are doing. If you observed any feelings or thoughts of frustration, then you were somewhat *U,B-FIT* Mindful.

In the third step, if you were able to hold a similar awareness of “HERE,” along with paying attention to what you were doing and also being aware of some *U,B-FIT* reactions, and you allowed those reactions to “flow and go,” congratulations—you just experienced all four skills in action.

In the following pages you will learn the skill of *U,B-FIT mindfulness* to soften your resistance and therefore the “suffering” of less preferred life events and experience preferred life events more completely. This helps with perspective so that most of the life problems that you have (while important to be solved) won’t overwhelm and emotionally hijack you as they tend to do now.

Tech Talk Summary

Note: The following lists the specific strategies of how to experience the mindfulness exercises in Appendix II. If you prefer audio instruction, we advise referring once again to www.centreforconsciouscare.ca - Resources – Guided Mindfulness.

Sample *U,B-FIT* Active and Rest Experiences and Labels

By now I'm sure you understand that this entire approach to mindfulness depends on your awareness of the PFP influenced/driven senses that arise constantly in response to your life situations. The sample exercises below are intended to sensitize you to a *U,B-FIT* experience. They will be particularly important if you have not had any previous mindfulness experience to make you aware of how much is happening in your body and your mind, even when you believe you are still and calm. Once you have completed these sample experiences you will be ready to use the other exercises that follow to bring *U,B-FIT mindfulness* to naturally occurring situations.

A Note about Labelling

To *label* is to give a word to what one becomes aware of or notices. Labels are very helpful to keep you focused during mindfulness practice exercises. Be on guard, however, not to start just saying the words and forgetting to notice the B-FIT experiences.

Labelling Laws:

- Labelling is: -naming what you are experiencing/noting with *U,B-FIT*
- Labelling's purpose: -to stabilize focus and concentration
- Labelling can be: -out loud, when alone, to increase power, or
-silent, when you are relatively focused
- Labelling timing: -can be on time or late
- Labelling accuracy: -can be accurate or a guess
- Labelling duration: -is replaced by just awareness, i.e. no internal or external spoken words when you are relatively focused

Examples of Primary Labels:

	Definition	Label
(B)	all Body sensations other than those associated with emotion	- location, shape, intensity – stronger, weaker, same
(F)	all body sensations associated with an emotion	- feel – name emotion feel – name location and repeat as in (B)
(I)	picture or mind movie way of Thinking e.g. a person, object or place	- "Image"
(T)	words, phrases way of Thinking	- "Talk"

U,B-FIT Sample Experiences

U,B-FIT SENSORY INPUT	SAMPLE EXPERIENCE	LABEL
BODY Could be located anywhere in your body, inside or outside, where pressure or exertion is felt.	Pick up any five pound object and then raise that arm straight in front of you. Hold that for a minute, paying attention to the muscle fatigue.	(active) name the location and sensation: "arm weak."
No discernable body sensation.	Bring your arm to a rest position. Pay attention to the lack of sensation.	"none"
FEELING An emotion, such as happy or sad, and any body sensations associated with that feeling, not caused by pressure or exertion.	Deliberately recall something that makes you feel happy, sad or anxious (or any other emotion); pay close attention to the feeling.	(active) name the feeling: for example, "happy"
No discernable feeling.	Create a space where no active feeling is present and you feel neutral.	"none"
IMAGE THINKING For example, a mental image, a picture, a mind movie or any other internal or external visual experience.	Deliberately recall an image of a person, object or place e.g. a sunset. Pay attention to this image as if it was projected onto an internal screen and you are watching like TV.	(active) "image"
An undeveloped partial image; pre or post-cognitive shimmering.	When an image is coming or fading away.	"some" (as in something is happening)
No discernable image.	A moment when no internal image	"none"
TALK THINKING For example, internally talking to yourself with words and phrases or any other internal or external	Deliberately say words or sentences in your head about a person, object or place, such as "Why did I do that?" Pay attention to yourself saying those words.	(active) "talk"
Undeveloped partial talk – pre or post-cognitive rumble.	When talk thinking is coming or fading away.	"some" (as in something is happening)
No discernable talk	Notice when no internal talk is happening.	"none"

A Note on the Importance of Noticing

As you have already seen, the importance of noticing *U,B-FIT* sensations is part of every mindfulness practice. Whenever you stop and deliberately notice a sensation or an experience, a non-attached, non-judgmental observing (the wave-like qualities of the nervous system's sensory experience) process begins, that leads to wisdom and authentic kindness.

Somehow it seems that as we skillfully observe and allow B-FIT, the PFP survival drive lessens in volume and intensity. Similarly image and talk thought content, feeling and body sensations spontaneously arise that reflect our more ideal self (e.g. wisdom thoughts replaced ego thoughts).

This all happens to us with the same predictability as when B-FIT became emotionally hijacked.

As discussed above, it is not unlike when we become aware of being totally absorbed in the melodrama of a movie and then catch ourselves. In an instant all of B-FIT spontaneously changes.

Looking for “Image”

While there is no need or hurry for you to discover thinking in images, the following sensitizing exercise could be (internally) eye-opening.

There is an old story of a person who lost his valuable ring one night and was looking frantically for it under a street lamp. A person passing by volunteered to help in the search. After looking for the ring for a long time the stranger asked where exactly the owner was when he lost it. The owner replied, “Over there in the alleyway”. Extremely frustrated, the stranger asked, “Then why are we looking for it under this street lamp so far away from where it was lost?” Without hesitation, the man answered that the light was better under the street lamp.

A significant problem with many new practitioners in trying to find image thought is looking for it in all the wrong places.

Try the following exercise.

First let's define *image* as a visual representation of people, objects or places that could be part of

- a memory, e.g. a childhood scene;
- planning, e.g. a sheet of paper;
- fantasy, e.g. a scene in nature;
- current environment, e.g. a friend;
- one's own body, e.g. a hand.

Read the following instructions and then implement.

- Close your eyes and imagine yourself walking through a park.
- Start to label out-loud when you “see” any of the following five forms:
 - a. people
 - b. objects
 - c. places
 - d. partial (e.g. an abstract or unformed idea),
 - e. none—all other thought experiences such as talk or colours etc.
- Continue this labelling for five minutes or so.

If you had any kind of visual representative (even vague) when you labelled person, object or place you mindfully observed what is meant by the experience of “image”.

To repeat, as an important option during practice sessions, speaking labels out-loud will stabilize your focus. Once your focus has momentum, you can drop the labels and just note *U,B-FIT* experiences.

As you progress through this resource you will learn six *U,B-FIT* mindfulness exercises that use all skills and more complete labelling terms. The exercises are:

Exercise #1 - Concentrating and Focusing - The Mindful Labyrinth

Exercise #2 - Awareness and Ahh-llowing of the Four Main Senses (*U,B-FIT*)

Exercise #3 - Full Field Focus (focus out - look and listen)

Exercise #4 - Opening Your Heart Under Stress – Stress Rehearsal

Exercise #5 - Preventing and Managing Physical and Emotional Suffering

Exercise #6 - *U,B-FIT* Healing, Compassion Practice

(Reference Appendix II for exercises 2 - 9)

Once you learn these exercises, you can do any exercise at any time, in any sequence. However, while you are learning the exercises it will be most helpful to do them in the sequence in which they are presented here. Remember to review the Settling In instructions as often as necessary. As you move through these exercises (*reference Appendix II*), it will also be helpful to listen to the guided instruction on our website to fully understand this text.

Settling In and General Instructions:

The following practices are incremental; they build on each other and strengthen each other as you grow more adept. In order to gain this incremental benefit, create this practice as a daily ritual: same time and same special place in your home if possible. The instructions below will help you avoid some of the common pitfalls in this practice. All the techniques mentioned are described more fully within the actual 9 exercises. **Come back to this list often to refresh your practice.**

1. **Decide** what skills and process you will apply in the session and for how long, and stick to it.
2. **Posture**—assume a relaxed but alert posture. Avoid lying down (unless necessary) as this makes it very difficult to stay highly alert. Alertness of the mind is essential.
3. **Manage mindfulness menaces – doz’n, froz’n, and poz’n**

doz’n (pre-sleep) - If you find yourself nearly falling asleep during an exercise, open your eyes for a minute and only focus on the extreme peripheral vision in both eyes. Standing up is also very helpful. Continue with the mindful process. If doz’n persists, do a mindful walking exercise.

froz’n (in a day-dream) - **label**, label out-loud or scroll (as you do with your computer) (see Exercise #1)

poz’n (acting as if you are committed, when you really are not) - mindfully commit to your best effort.

4. **Label your experiences** - say to yourself or out-loud a word that describes what you are experiencing: for example, “talk” (*reference all labelling options, described above*).
5. **Initially scroll** across your body in order to deliberately inventory your experiences: scroll your attention from left arm to right leg to left leg to right arm. This minimizes the risk of spacing out (froz’n). Use one breath cycle to prompt moving on to the next area in your scroll. A breath cycle is inhaling to the count of four and exhaling to the count of eight. This is a focusing exercise that can gently tug the mind to focus. Repeat three or four times to gain focusing momentum.
6. **Commit to time** periods for practice that are challenging but not overwhelming. For beginners, a ten-to-twenty-minute session is typical. We encourage initially setting aside twenty minutes. If you lose your focus, just sit quietly and stay aware of “doing nothing” for the balance of the time. Label “Here!” as in Being Here Now.
7. **Practise ahh-llowing** throughout each session. Give your inner self over to whatever is being experienced: be subjectively ahh-llowing, yield to it, surrender to it, let it be. In the

rush and busyness of your everyday life, while working passionately to change what should be changed, Do your Best, and Rest with the Rest. Be equanimous.

8. Complete every practice session with the following intentions:

- Mindfully intend well-being for others,
- Recite a sincere statement of gratitude and
- Mindfully review your day and state positive expectations and intentions for yourself and all others.

9. Every couple of minutes, become aware of “being here”: label “here.” Commit to “being here” and label “here” at least once each hour of each day. Reading a highway sign, whether you realize it or not, a talk thought is activated. See if you can catch it. Label “Talk – Here.”

With time, attention, clarity and ahh-llowing, *U,B-FIT* starts to self-organize into flowing, emerging wisdom and *us-ness*—authentic kindness.

Remember to internally ahh-llow all of *U,B-FIT* experiences:

“Life is easy for those who have no preferences”. Ram Dass

U,B-FIT Mindfulness Exercise #1 - The Mindfulness Labyrinth

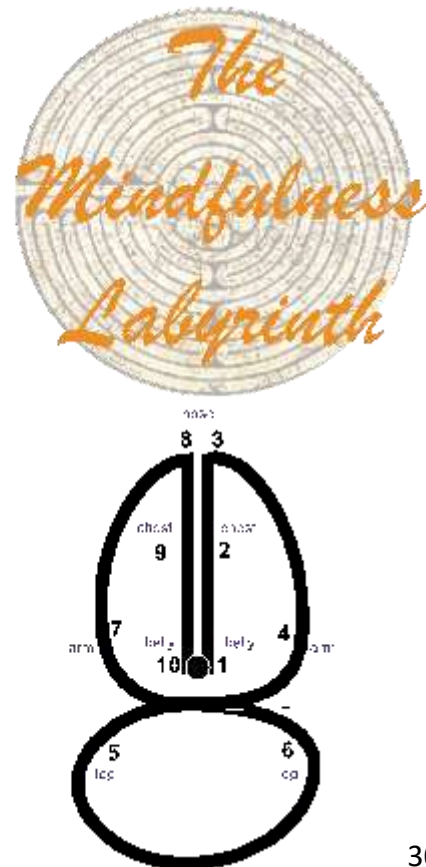
One of the earliest and most familiar labyrinths is the one from Greek mythology, designed to hold the minotaur inside it. In order to conquer the minotaur, Theseus had to go to the centre of the labyrinth that held it and then come safely out again. Since then, the labyrinth has been a metaphor for the journey to the centre of our deepest self and back out into the world. This journey broadens our understanding of who we really are and develops in us a stronger commitment to the well-being of all others.

For our practice, we have developed an inner labyrinth to help travelers stay focused and present as we practise *U,B-FIT mindfulness* (see below). This inner labyrinth is meant to help keep the mind from wandering.

At this time if you have not had *U,B-FIT* mindfulness experiences, we encourage you to stop reading and go to www.centreforconsciouscare.ca resources-mindfulness and listen to our eleven minute basic mindfulness exercise. The balance of this appendix describes in writing what you will experience in the audio resource

The diagrams below will show you the path we use to scroll through the body, checking in on our sensations. We've included two versions: choose whichever diagram works for you—the path is the same. Once the mind is relatively stable you can stop scrolling.

1. Settle into a relaxed but alert posture on a chair or the floor. Be aware of and label "Here Now"
2. Intend that this process will in some way enrich the well-being of self and others: for example, "May Peter be well, happy and peaceful".
3. Mindfully scroll up and down the three body locations—belly, chest, nostrils—using one complete in-out breath cycle to prompt moving on. Give your complete attention to each body sensation.
 - Label each location by saying its name to yourself: "belly," "chest," "nostrils". You may also label the sensation in that location: "rise, fall" or "in, out."
 - Select one location—belly, chest or nostril—that calls to you the loudest. We call this *breath home base*. Focus here for a period of time.
 - To help get started, pause for three or four seconds after each exhalation before inhaling. Note the subtle discomfort, then inhale and continue to the next breath cycle. Repeat as useful.
4. Add more locations: left arm, right leg, left leg and right arm (refer back to the diagram). To help with focusing for the first few complete "walks" around the labyrinth, touch each



body location with your hand and experience both the internal sensation of breathing and the outer pressure from your hand.

5. Infuse your focused attention with ahh-llowing what you sense. Just let it be.
6. If you notice that your mind's eye is actually seeing a body location, label this thought as "image" and gently but firmly return to the body sensation.
7. If you forget where to go next, just stay put until you remember. If this forgetting brings you feelings of confusion, label those feelings and return to the location. Skipping a location, "standing" in place and back-tracking are perfect mindfulness practices so long as you stay aware of what you are doing. Awareness is the key—getting it right absolutely doesn't matter.
8. Once focusing is relatively stable, you may leave the labyrinth process and deliberately explore the following *U,B-FIT* exercise. Please also look in Appendix II for other exercises to extend your practice.

A Step by Step Instruction Guide – Exercise #1

Steps	Instruction	Label		Time
		In Breath	Outbreath	
A	1. Take a posture that for you is alert but relaxed 2. Become aware that you are here/present	Here	Now	3 reps
B	3. Move awareness to your stomach 4. Move awareness to your chest 5. Move awareness to your nostrils 6. Move awareness to your chest 7. Move awareness to your stomach Time for Step B	Raise Raise In Raise Raise	Fall Fall Out Fall fall	1 Breath Cycle (BC) 1 BC 1 BC 1 BC 1 BC 3 reps
C	8. Move awareness to body and label whatever location your awareness randomly selects. This could be a sensation from a feeling, pressure or force. 9. Move awareness to feel	Body Feel	Location Shoulder– Ahh-llow Name Feeling e.g. irritation/Neutral – Ahh-llow	1 BC 1 BC

	10. Move awareness to image	Image	Clear, Some or None – Ahh-Illow	1 BC
	11. Move awareness to talk	talk	Clear, Some or None – Ahh-Illow	1 BC
	Total time for step C			10, 20 or 30 Minutes
D	12. Close session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a statement of gratitude • Make a statement of intention for yourself • Make a statement of intention for others • Make a statement of commitment to practice • Re-enter the world and continue informal mindfulness practice until the next formal session 	“I am deeply grateful for” “today I intend to...” “Today I intend to help others by...” “Tomorrow I will...”		
E	Optional stress rehearsal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before session close deliberately introduce a mindless talk and image representation of a stressful person or situation (past or present) • Repeat step C, however, in addition to location add in more complete body sensation awareness 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shape – Bigger, Smaller or same • Intensity – Stronger, Weaker or Same • Optionally expand to simultaneous awareness of two or more locations 	
	Total time for step E			10, 20 or 30 minutes
F	More optional exercises (<i>reference wisdom and authentic kindness from U,B-FIT sensory clarity and ahh-Illowing table below</i>).			

Note. For readers who prefer audio instruction and guidance instead of or in combination with written, we encourage you to visit our www.centreforconsciouscare.ca - Resources – Guided Mindfulness for numerous guided practice sessions.

Marketplace Mindfulness

Introduction

The following are average day common occurrences where you can deliberately trigger your awareness in the moment, i.e. Catching, Calming, Clarifying and Connecting.

The benefits of these practices are similar to the benefits of formal sitting practices, e.g.

- Catching, calming, clarifying and connecting
- Authentic kindness in the moment regardless of a negative feeling
- Emotional self-regulation
- Loving the unlovable
- Intuitive problem solving

Trigger Practice – Mindful Moments

- Waiting in traffic/stop lights
- Standing in line at a bank or grocery check-out
- Walking across a room or parking lot
- Watching a movie
- Exercising
- Eating
- Falling asleep
- Reading a highly attractive sign or billboard
- Showering/bathing
- Mindful conflict – anxiety, anger with family or peers
- Conscious couples compassionate conflict
- Loving loved ones when their lovability looks and feels different
- In service to others – how can i help with mindfulness

Summary of The Most Important U,B-FIT Experiences

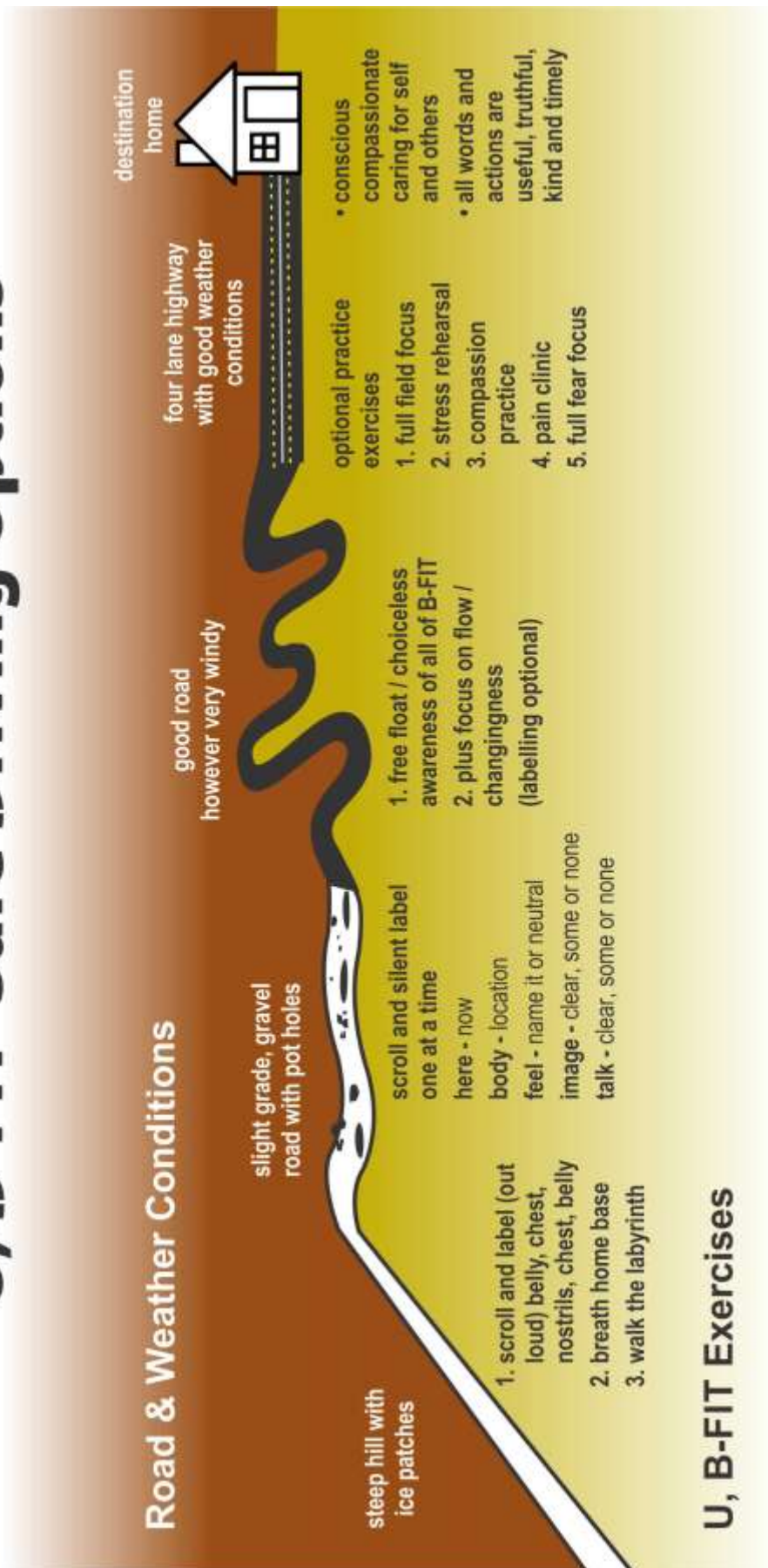
<i>U,B-FIT Elements (examples)</i>		<i>Noting Labels</i>				
		<i>“Name It” (the experience)</i>	<i>“None”</i>	<i>“Flow”</i>	<i>“Here”</i>	<i>“Ahh-llow”</i>
Body	External	Touch Sensations of Clothing, Hot, Cold etc.	No/Low Sensations	Touch gets - Stronger/Weaker, Bigger/Smaller	Aware of Being Aware That • ‘I’ Am Aware or • ‘I’ Am Doing or • ‘I’ Am Getting or • ‘I’ Am Having Feelings or • ‘I’ Am Thinking	Ongoing
	Internal	Physical Sensations of Pleasure, Pain, Neutral	Physically Relaxed	Pulsating, Vibrating, Aching, Undulating, Stronger/Weaker, Bigger/Stronger, Faster/Slower		
Feel	Emotions	Anger, Joy, Fear, Sadness, Excitement	Neutral Feel	Intensity – Stronger/Weaker, Faster/Slower		Non-Driven
	Feel Body Sensations	Physical Sensations of Feeling (name location)	Calm/Peace	Pulsating, Vibrating, Aching, Stronger/Weaker, Bigger/Smaller, Faster/Slower		
Image	See (external)	External Sights	Full Field Focus	Cycles of Stronger/Weaker Visual Experience		to
	Image (internal)	Internal Mental Images	Blank Mental ‘Screen’	Cycles of Pre or Post Cognitive Ripples/Wavy, Pixels, Fading In and Out, Moving Distortions		
Talk	Hear (external)	External Sounds	External Silence	Cycles of Stronger, Weaker Sound e.g. bell		<i>U,B-FIT</i> Internal and External Experiences
	Talk (internal)	Mental Talk	Mental Quiet	Cycles of Pre or Post Cognitive Rumble/‘Echoes’		

How Might U,B-FIT Mindfulness be Upgrading our PFP Brain's Live Drive and Software to Version 2.0

Self-centered, self-righteous ('in-group') prejudices, anxiety, 'hates' and other negative feelings and thoughts (NF & T) may be reducing and at times eliminated as a result of mindful reconditioning and reprogramming such as:

Negative Feelings and Thoughts Subjective Experiences	Possibly because of -
1. come less often	Just like with formal mindfulness practice, in life situations, there appears to be an increase in the space/nothing between NF & T arisings.
2. are less intense	Just like with formal mindfulness practice, 'Being here now' appears to keep NF & T less intense due in part to spontaneous lessening of unconscious resistance.
3. recovering happens sooner	The formal mindfulness experience of 'gone', (i.e. sudden sensation of a subjective experience) appears to carry over into day to day living.
4. appear to not fully develop as often and as complete	The formal practice of feelings and thoughts being experienced as precognitive rumbles and ripples (i.e. impermanence) may be happening below conscious awareness in day to day living as well.
5. are less resisted and therefore the subjective experience is less suffering	Suffering = Pain x Resistance ($S = P \times R$) Resistance is significantly reduced as a result of in the moment catching, calming, and clarifying. (e.g. there is anger versus I am angry)
6. Less 'I' more 'Thy' Less 'me' more 'we'	Self-centered PFP is replaced by conscious compassionate connecting as the sense of a solid separate self decreases and transforms to 'usness'.
7. Positive F & T happen more often, are more fulfilling and independent of conditions	The trained mindful PFP auto-pilot gives more positive subjective experiences of awareness per second which makes 'less seem like more'.

U, B-FIT Safe Driving Options



Appendix II

U,B-FIT Mindfulness Exercises 2 - 9

U,B-FIT Mindfulness Exercise #2 - Awareness and Ahh-llowing of The Four U,B-FIT Senses

(reference www.centreforconsciouscare.ca - audio resource)

Body Sensations—Feelings—Image Way of Thinking—Talk Way of Thinking.

This should be the exercise you turn to most frequently in your practice. You need not do all steps every time. Any step on its own will give you an excellent practice.

Body Sensations:

1. Sit with a posture that for you is alert but relaxed i.e. close your eyes, straighten up and settle in.
2. Start to inhale to the count of four and exhale to the count of eight i.e. one breath cycle. Experience the Body's expanding and contracting in your belly, then chest, then nostrils. For this part of the exercise, any thought or feeling that appears, 'Catch' it, (i.e. become aware) label it "Thought" and/or "Feeling", and gently but firmly return to your body focus.
3. After one or more up and down, belly, chest and nostril cycles (breathe cycles) move your awareness to your left arm and shoulder. On your next inhalation, intentionally and progressively tighten your left arm and shoulder to the count of four and slowly release to the count of eight while paying close attention to the body sensations. Label the release "ahh-llow" (*ahh-llow* is the label for all internal release, acceptance, let it be).
4. After another breath cycle, move your awareness to your right leg and repeat #3 above.
5. After another breath cycle, move your awareness to your left leg and repeat #3 above.
6. After another breath cycle, move your awareness to your right arm and shoulder and repeat #3 above.
7. Optionally complete more body awareness cycles.

Thought (Image and Talk) Mindfulness:

Now leave body sensations in the background and become aware/observe thought forms or parts thereof. While the content of thoughts number in the tens of thousands each day, thoughts happen to everyone in only one or two main forms or parts thereof.

“Image” Thought Forms:

Intentionally bring to your mind’s eye a sunset. Become aware that you are observing a picture or image of a sunset. Label “image.” The content is the sun over a lake or forest. The form is an image. When this form happens spontaneously, we label this **Image**. Not everyone will initially experience image thoughts, and this is not a problem. Repeat the person-object-place exercise to increase your sensitivity to see image. Some individuals will mainly initially experience image as just colours and patterns. As the mind settles, these colours will start to manifest as images. This will happen in its own time. For now stay aware of patterns, observe the flow and primarily be aware of talk thinking.

“Talk” Thought Forms:

Intentionally say some words to yourself (e.g. my name is _____). Be aware that you are saying the words. Once again, you have content and form. The content is the meaning of the words. The form is internal Talking. When this form happens spontaneously, we label this **Talk**.

Now, let your mind start to observe the form of any thought that arises spontaneously. Let your observer mind be like a cat sitting at a mouse hole, waiting for a mouse to appear. When a thought appears, “notice” if it is an Image or Talk form and label accordingly. Some forms will last for a fraction of a second, others for up to approximately five seconds or longer. Let the form last as long or as short a time as it wants to. “You,” the observer, are just observing what forms (not content) are arising.

Intentionally keep a nonjudgmental “ahh-llowing” attitude for all forms that appear. For now content and meaning are totally irrelevant. Do not attempt to encourage or shut down any image or talk. Just become the “ahh-llowing” observer, witness or noticer and label the form that you see. There is no preference for image or talk forms. Some of you may only have either talk or image, and some of you will have both.

You may or may not start to notice that there is the experience of something that is not a discernible thought. This is what we call a precognitive rumble i.e. the seed of Talk or precognitive shimmering – the seed of an Image (something like a “beam me up Scotty” moment in an old Star Trek show) that is a preformed, partially formed image or talk. You can label and ahh-llow all of this experience as “**some**” as in something is happening.

You may also notice a fourth experience where there is none of the above, label this “**none**”. You now have four balls in the air so to speak: image, talk, some and none.

“Feel”:

1. Now leave Image and Talk forms in the background and start to observe what you are **feeling**. Once again just start to observe what is happening with your Feel and ahh-llow it to happen.
2. If you are experiencing relative calm or peace, label this “Calm” and notice what is happening in your body—one location or even your whole body. Label the feeling and location and ahh-llow calm.
3. If you are experiencing frustration, impatience or whatever, once again label the feeling and intend ahh-llow. We have no preference for what Feeling is spontaneously arising. We just notice (the feeling and body sensation), label and ahh-llow the body sensation to be as intense as it wants and label “stronger,” “weaker” or “the same.” We just label the form and the form’s changingness; if it is changing, note and label with an intention of ahh-llowing.
4. Optionally, after some proficiency with the above **exclusive** focus of one component of *U,B-FIT*, consider designating two or more experiences as your focus. This is called inclusive focusing.

Close Session:

Close the session with a couple of statements:

- gratitude: “I am so deeply grateful for being gifted one more day.”
- affirmation: “May I fully participate in this day, mindfully, joyfully, wisely and compassionately.”
- intention: “With everyone I meet today, I intend to help them be their best self.”

Mindful Music Making (an optional awareness and ahh-llowing #2 exercise)

1. Select 5 tracks of your favourite music and download them on to your device.
2. Designate free floating as your technique and all of your *U,B-FIT* as your field of focus.
3. Go to your place of formal mindfulness practice or walk in nature or exercise.
4. Turn on the device and as you listen to the lyrics in each song, become aware of and label body, feelings, image, and or talk as the words and feelings prompt your spontaneous awareness.
5. For periods of no obvious *U,B-FIT*, label none.

U,B-FIT Mindfulness Exercise #3 - Full Field Focus

The following *U,B-FIT mindfulness* exercise will help you to develop your capacity for calm. This calming training exercise will also help you to develop the capacity to implement Awareness Based Calming and De-escalation strategies mindfully and compassionately.

1. Stop for a moment and look at a scene in nature with nothing moving. Notice how you automatically focus on a tree or some other thing. You may even say to yourself, “I see that maple tree”.
2. Keep your eyes straight ahead.
3. Now bring your attention only to your extreme peripheral vision with both eyes. Notice how you have to work to discern or lock onto an object in this peripheral vision. I call this soft focus. It is difficult to label “I see a tree”.
4. Now notice this same “soft” focus to include the whole scene in front of you. Add in awareness of the depth of the field of vision in front of you. Look softly and intentionally. Spread your focus over everything at once. Do not focus or lock on to any one object: nothing should really grab or hold your vision. Just **look** at everything but **see** nothing in particular. I call this way of looking Full Field Focus. Return to peripheral vision to stabilize as necessary.
5. Notice now that the awareness that “I am seeing something” is relatively absent. Do this for one to two minutes. Notice the relative calm that seems to just happen with this experience. Label this experience “just looking”.

Stop reading and do this exercise now – then complete reading from #6 to #8 below.

6. Just look for a couple of minutes, and then quickly move your head to the left and back again. You probably will observe how you cannot hold Full Field Focus; you seem to be uncontrollably pulled to focus on something: “I see a flower.” Label this “lock.”
7. Return to Full Field Focus again by starting with peripheral vision. Practise by slowly sweeping across the field of vision. When you unintentionally lock on to an object, stop moving: deliberately go back to the Full Field Focus, hold it for a minute and continue turning. (With practice you will be able to use Full Field Focus in your everyday world without any visual “locking on.”)
8. Continue with Full Field Focus for the rest of the session.
9. Now do a complete practise session.
10. Practise this for several minutes every day.

Reflection on Full Field Focus

This is the state of your external visual sense experiencing relative non-attachment because the “I” is not “seeing” anything. There is relative freedom from subjective attachments (wanting) and resistance (not wanting). This is an example of your at-rest state or non-attachment way of being with the visual sense. All six senses—looking, listening, thinking (Image, Talk) Body sensations, smell, and taste—have a similar at-rest state.

This rest state, however, is not readily experienced. What happens naturally is that we become unknowingly “locked on” to active mind states like attachments and resistances to our objective experiences.

Notice how when the mind locks onto specific objects the “I” is instantly born: “I” see a tree or “I” see leaves moving. Even though you may only say to yourself “tree,” what is really happening is “I see a tree” vs. the just-looking visual sense being active. When we do Full Field Focus, there doesn’t seem to be enough capacity (bits of conscious energy) to create the perception of “I” or “me” that comes with lots of baggage: for example, I am this, I like this, I don’t like that, and they are that. When we are not intentionally using Full Field Focus, this locking-on is how “I” sees and creates the world every moment.

This visual locking-on that creates me vs. you is happening all of the time to everyone, in great part when we are not mindful. The problem (our human predicament), however, is much more serious than this. All of the *B-FIT* senses are also simultaneously locking-on in the same way that the visual sense is, and this seriously compounds the problem of creating the idea of a separate solid self.

“Divide and Conquer” brings Calm, Peace, Fulfillment and Unconditional Compassion

The Full Field Focus experience demonstrates how the “divide and conquer” principle of *U,B-FIT* automatically brings the experience of subjective non-attachment to each moment of experience. When experiencing Full Field Focus with just the visual sense, we notice the absence of attachments and resistance. This brings peace, calm and fulfillment that is not even intended or worked for. It just happens with Full Field Focus as our sense of self is almost eliminated.

Similarly, when we bring a Full Field Focus-type process to the other *U,B-FIT* senses, our conditioned “I” is displaced. It is therefore no longer available to drive and distort the other *U,B-FIT* experiences either: we are much less likely to have an emotional hijack.

In experiencing the “I am” self instead of the Full Field Focus no/low self, there is an artificial perception that separates me from you. This separate self then depends on basic feelings in order to take action: good feelings based on some form of reward make us move closer; bad feelings move us apart. Therefore, when we are “locked-on,” good feelings are necessary for us to act with conditional compassion. When we are not locked-on, i.e. ahh-llowing of *U,B-FIT*, our innate compassion and kindness just naturally manifests – regardless of what *U,B-FIT* is signaling: Ahh-some!

Prove this fact for yourself the next time you have an emotional hijack. As soon as possible during the hijack, become aware of how totally mindless you are of any of the *U,B-FIT* senses. Deliberately activate a full field focus and notice how your emotional self-regulation somewhat returns not from willpower, but from mindfulness.

Mindfully Opening The Heart

When a Full Field Focus mindfulness strategy is applied to initiate (if only for fifteen seconds) each awareness-based calming intervention, we experience others not as separate and not as opposite. We are not loaded with moralistic judgments of good/bad, right/wrong. Automatically, without even trying, we will become unconditionally, authentically kind and calm.

***U,B-FIT* Mindfulness Exercise #4 - Stress Rehearsal**

Always, always tune in to your own reactive feelings (PFP-programming) that are activated in a moment of crisis. Once you have identified them, activate this *U,B-FIT mindfulness* and non-attachment skills exercise.

The key to success in this exercise is your capacity to identify and address your own emotions in a given situation. The exercise below will build on your “here now” and “calming” capacity.

- STEP 1: Begin a *U,B-FIT mindfulness* session.
- STEP 2: After settling in and becoming calm, deliberately recall a situation that causes you stress. Observe your talk thoughts and image thoughts (as applicable) about this situation. After one minute, drop this deliberate recalling and resume the ahh-llowing practice, with strong intentional ahh-llowing of each *U,B-FIT* experience.
- STEP 3: Observe your *U,B-FIT* and ahh-llow your resistance to decrease.
- Whenever you become aware of a body sensation related to a feeling—for example, weakness in your arms which you know is associated with anger—

bring your intentions of non-attachment to that sensation, fully experience it and then return to your *U,B-FIT* focus.

- At each step, as often as possible, intentionally bring a subjective ahh-llowing, surrendering, and matter-of-fact attitude to everything that is being observed. This is being non-attached.
- Conclude all practice sessions with intentions for loving kindness and gratitude and review intentions.

As an alternative, you could deliberately add in Talk and Images of a positive intention instead of a stressful situation. Follow the same steps as described above.

– Preventing and Managing Pain to Reduce and Relieve Suffering

Understanding Resistance

So...resistant body sensations, be they from physical injury or an emotional feeling upset, are virtually identical and both respond effectively when resistance is skillfully processed.

Then to effectively manage pain, from a physical or emotional source, we must start by more deeply understanding resistance. Not too surprisingly, all of the components of *U,B-FIT* (**B**ody sensations, **F**eelings, **I**mage thoughts and **T**alk thoughts) are the energy sources of resistance and therefore also potentially the source of relief from suffering.

Body Sensations:

Through hundreds of thousands of years our bodies have evolved in ways to prevent injury because not too long ago, before the age of modern medicine, a serious injury meant certain death. The nervous system therefore provides layers upon layers of resistance to offer protection against further injury. However, with the *mindful emotional self-regulation* mindfulness microscope of *U,B-FIT*, we can clearly observe and release this tension in the tissue at the centre of the physical or emotional pain.

Another strategy to reduce the level of suffering from the pain is to focus on what we call the “cringe” reactions surrounding the most painful location where much of the resistance is held. This is like observing the ripples on a pond after the stone makes the splash. Specifically, if awareness and an intention of ahh-llowing are brought to the following body sensations around the pain centre, the resistance—and therefore the suffering—will be significantly reduced:

Shape and Size: All body sensations have a spatial form, and the form is always changing. The shape can be round, long, jagged or virtually anything including three dimensional. Resistance reduces when you skillfully observe the changing shape and label the changes “bigger,” “smaller,” or “same”.

Movement: As noted, the spatial form of this resisting area is always moving. It may change slowly like an amoeba or jerkily like a throbbing toothache or a pounding headache. Observe the changes in movement and label them “fast,” “slow,” “jerky,” or “same”.

Intensity: The final change is in the intensity of the pain. For a while it can be strong, then it may become quite weak. Observe the changes in intensity and label them “stronger,” “weaker” or “same”.

Just this three-fold exploration of the sensations and infusing of the sensations with ahh-llowingness can significantly lower the level of suffering.

Feelings:

The feelings or emotions that we experience act as a catalyst to increase or reduce resistance and therefore suffering. Stressful feelings like fear, anger, impatience, irritation or guilt always intensify suffering. One reason for this is that a stressful body is naturally tense and tight because all feelings originate in the body. This is, in part, the body’s way of signaling to the brain to stop what it is doing. To the extent that stressful feelings can be minimized, this catalyst can be managed or even eliminated. As *U,B-FIT mindfulness* softens and calms stressful feelings, it is acting to give the body a relaxing internal massage.

Image and Talk Thinking:

Similarly, thoughts can either diminish or increase the body/brain resistance mechanisms. Science has now proven that thoughts create much of our reality. “Seeing is believing, cause if I hadn’t believed it, I wouldn’t have seen it”.

Negative, worrying, hopeless, or overwhelming image or talk thoughts clearly make resistance increase. They prepare the body for freeze, flight or fight action. As counter-intuitive as it may sound, the more we can make friends with the pain, the less it will hurt us. We have fifty thousand thoughts per day. To the extent that we are unaware of having a thought—it has us.

When the body is in pain from an emotional or physical source, the thinking mind automatically sympathizes with the condition and becomes a co-conspirator in the push to intensify the pain: “This is awful!” “When will it ever stop?” “I can’t stand it!” Simple awareness of and intentional ahh-llowing of Image and Talk thoughts are an effective way of reducing the increased suffering from pain caused by negative internal thinking. As always, the best way to ahh-llow these thoughts is to label them without attachment, “Ahh, there is distress”. Awareness and ahh-llowing appear to be the source of release.

Gently and mindfully is the only way to effectively carry pain without creating suffering.

Do this experiment. Carefully, with gloves and eye protection, break a glass jar. Pick up a 2” piece of the glass, put it in the palm of your hand (no glove) and mindfully walk around your

home with it for three to five minutes. Imagine it to be a baby. Do not drop it! Do the experiment before reading further!

Did you close your hand and hold the jagged piece of glass tightly to prevent it from falling, or did you hold it gently and rely on mindfulness for it not to fall?

U,B-FIT Mindfulness Exercise #5 - Preventing and Managing Pain to Reduce or Relieve Suffering

1. Maintain an alert body posture and commit to no voluntary muscle movement except swallowing.
2. Practise “Concentrating and Focusing” exercise for five to ten minutes.
3. Once concentration is relatively stable, the body is relatively relaxed, feelings are relatively calm and you are relatively more aware of image and talk thoughts, select (or create if necessary) a body discomfort or pain or an emotional stressor to be your field of focus.
4. Explore the pain’s location, shape, intensity and changingness (rate of change).
Conduct each exploration for two or three minutes using the following spoken labels (either to self or out loud if alone):

Location	-	knee, elbow, head etc.
Shape	-	bigger, smaller, same
Intensity	-	stronger, weaker, same
Changefulness	-	fast, slow, jerky, same

Infuse each awareness with an intention to soften, relax, open to, and be ahh-llowing with all sensations.

Label at the end of each in-out breath cycle. Once stable you can drop the labelling.

5. Now leave location, shape, intensity and changingness in the background and select Feelings, Image thinking and Talk thinking as your field of focus. Regardless of thought content, just focus on the form. Label “image” or “talk”, or “none” or “some” and the feeling flavour: for example, “irritability”.
6. Now look for and select a “cringe” body sensation associated with the pain sensation or a secondary location and repeat steps 3 and 4, exploring the pain.
7. If available select more locations of physical discomfort or pain. Select either the epicentre or cringe location. Repeat steps 3 and 4 with this new focus.

General Helpful Hints:

- Initially let your awareness be called to one location and stay with it for the first applications of steps 3 and 4. Keep other sensations in the background for now. Eventually, keeping more than one sensation in your focus will be useful and possible.

- Continuously apply an attitude of “It’s all good”. Welcome it like greeting an old friend; label “Ahh-llow”.
- Pay special attention to the flavour of body sensations associated with fear.
- No white-knuckling: this will always make the suffering worse.
- Observe how at the moment of overwhelm, your strategy starts to collapse.
- Every emotional or physical pain can only overwhelm if it is not accompanied by *U,B-FIT* Mindfulness. Said more positively, if the strategies in Steps 1 to 6 are maintained, it is not possible to be overwhelmed by emotional or physical pain.

For audio guidance of this process please refer to www.centreforconsciouscare.ca -painclinic

Let us end this Chapter with one final marketplace mindfulness strategy for preventing suffering.

The Mindful “Startle” Calming Process

1. Designate every startle throughout daytime activities as a mindfulness field of focus.
2. When a startle happens, immediately observe Body sensations and Feeling reactions:
 - Body
 - become continuously aware of tightness – label locations;
 - become continuously aware of release – label locations.
 - Feel
 - become continuously aware of tightness – label emotion e.g. fear;
 - become continuously aware of release – label emotion e.g. calm.
3. Infuse **Body** and **Feeling** with ahh-llowing equanimity.
4. Experience a continuous *flow and go* to **Body** release and **Feel** calm.
5. Experience the afterglow of calm.

U,B-FIT Mindfulness Exercise #6 – Conscious Connecting

This is most effective when activated as part of the four skills of *U,B-FIT mindfulness*. It manifests as an intended conscious connection with anyone. It is an integration of the skills of *U,B-FIT mindfulness*, intentionality, visualization and innate compassion.

Steps:

1. Complete ten minutes of awareness and ahh-llowing *U,B-FIT* – Exercise #2.
2. Deliberately recall through image thinking, the image of a person with whom a more complete conscious connection is desired .
3. See yourself, sitting in a chair across from the person and intending being connected, close, forgiving and understanding with them.

4. Intend with talk thinking that this connection with the other person is happening. Label “May we be better connected” (or whatever is relevant).
5. Complete the ‘free floating’ through your body process; labeling and ahh-llowing at each location (1-2 minutes).
6. Consider bringing in other people from your life: for example, a person who needs physical or emotional healing, a person whom you are emotionally disconnected from, a global community group of suffering people, or yourself as a little girl or boy.
7. Now do free-floating awareness throughout all of your *U,B-FIT* senses for five minutes.
8. Conclude with gratitude for being a part of this conscious connecting process.

Opening the Heart – Capacity Building

It seems that as we skillfully **notice** the qualities of physical pain and ahh-llow them to spread and contract, change shape, and intensify and weaken, we simultaneously also evolve our innate equanimity that now can manifest as capacity for healing, tolerance, forgiveness and unconditional connecting with all others.

Note: reference www.centreforconsciouscare.ca - resources for guided audio support to practise *U,B-FIT mindfulness* Exercises #1 - #6.

U,B-FIT Mindfulness Exercise #7 U,B-FIT Mindful Walking

1. Select a room or place in nature where you can walk safely and not be disturbed.
2. Standing still, initiate full field focus for approximately two minutes.
3. Start to walk in a circle and label “here now walking”.
4. Start to synchronize your breath cycles to lifting and placing your left foot.
 - On an inhalation focus on and label “lifting”.
 - On the exhalation focus on and label “placing”.
 - Continue for five minutes.
5. Now let this be your backgrounding focus that can be held as a secondary focus as you:
 - Focus on and label “look and listen” (external visual and audio awareness). Do this for approximately five minutes.
 - Focus on and label “image and talk” (internal visual and audio awareness). Do this for approximately five minutes.

- Optionally focus on and label “look, listen, image and talk”. Do this for approximately five minutes.
6. As helpful return to step 4 to build and retain focus.
 7. Close the exercise with gratitude and intentions for self and others.

***U,B-FIT* Mindfulness Exercise #8 – Full Fear Focus**

1. After settling in with *U,B-FIT* Exercise #2, intentionally recall your most overwhelming experience, worry or fear of the day. Use the situation that is on your mind 24/7 and just will not leave.
2. Deliberately use feel, image and talk of this situation as your focus by applying your standard feel, image and talk practices. As the feel, image and talk of this situation lessens or even dissolves, intentionally bring it back as your focus.
3. When ready, drop the intentional focus on fear, worry and complete this practice session by returning to exercise #2.

Note: You may be pleasantly surprised to see how difficult it is for you to intentionally maintain focus on that which grips you 24/7 when you are **mindless**.

Do what you can to correct the situation and each day practice this exercise to experience how decreasing resistance gives relief from suffering within the pain.

***U,B-FIT* Mindfulness Exercise #9 – *U,B-FIT* to Music**

Learn how to experience your favorite tunes consciously.

1. Cue up a piece of your favorite music that has lyrics.
2. Begin with approximately 10 minute of *U,B-FIT* basics.
3. Turn on your tune.
4. Each time a lyric activates any of your B-FIT senses, label it and experience *U,B-FIT* free floating, choice-less awareness.
5. When the song is over, experience the after-glow by noting Feelings, Images and Talk as the song echoes on.
6. Start to activate this process whenever you listen to music.

Appendix III

U,B-FIT Mindfulness – A Deeper Dive

As discussed in Chapter Three, the skills and capacity for *Self-Awareness and Ahh-llowing* are developed by learning *U,B-FIT mindfulness*.

Before proceeding to learn more about how to practise *U,B-FIT* and apply it to everyday situations, let's define what we hope to achieve through being more mindful.

Many traditions and teachers describe this “Way” of healing, maturing and transforming as *waking up*. Jack Kornfield, an insightful contemporary teacher, puts it this way; “the overall aim of life is to **awaken** to a joyful freedom, a benevolent and compassionate heart, **in spite of everything**”.

The term *mindfulness* means different things to different people. When I was a child, my Dad would often say to me, “mind what you are doing now, son.” After four decades of approximately 20,000 hours of practice, for me, mindfulness at still means, “mind what you are doing now.” Mind, pay attention, or be mindful is, a relative term. When you think about the word “looking”, there is a great difference between looking at something with the naked eye, or looking at something with a 10, 100, or 1000-power microscope. It's all looking at the same thing, but what is seen and experienced is radically different. Mindfulness is the same. Looking through the mindfulness microscope creates a more complete and accurate understanding of the experiences of one's senses, perceptions and misperceptions. Neurodevelopment through mindfulness practice is like being in life looking through a 10x or more microscope.

To return to our example of asleep and awake, at night you sleep and most often dream (even if you don't remember dreaming). Compared to right now, you become **unconscious**, so to speak. That is, you lack any perspective on reality and your role in it.

Your dreams seem, in many ways, to be as real as life events. In your dreams you do things, plan, worry, and feel the full range of activities, thoughts, and feelings. Even your heart rate and body respond as if you were awake. Pleasure brings feelings of excitement and bliss. A nightmare or bad dream is painful, and you are happy when you awaken.

Most people would truly value having the skill to be able to choose to awaken from their bad dreams whenever they want. Imagine being in a bad dream and being able to awaken whenever you choose – “Oh, I am only dreaming – what a relief!”

After every night of sleep and dreaming, you eventually wake up and start your day, which is filled with similar content to when you dream at night. Daytime experiences are more orderly, of course, with fewer weird events, but basically they are the same stuff. For example, in a night dream or a daytime experience when you experience pleasure, time seems to fly and you

want more. When you experience emotional pain, a.k.a. the bad stuff, from boredom, anger, fear, sadness or guilt, time drags and you want less. Fulfillment and suffering seem to be mostly a result of conditions and situations in both night-time and day-time experiences.

The most significant similarity between your daytime experiences and your night dreams is the realness of both experiences. The clear exception is that with night dreams you always eventually wake up to be able to say and feel “Oh, I was just dreaming,” which breaks the spell of realness. In daytime experiences, for most people, it usually takes a change in the situation to feel better.

But what if I told you that you could learn to awaken from your daytime experiences or “dreams” whenever you choose? That is, you could learn the skill of being aware that you are in a daytime dream situation (like when you awaken from a night dream), and have that feeling of noticeable relief almost at will. With this skill and the capacity, your pleasurable experiences become more intense, last longer and happen a lot more frequently. Also, when you become aware during your daytime dreams/reality, your negative feelings from situations become much less frequent, are less intense and your recovery time to feeling good again is significantly accelerated. Equally as important, you are in a much better calming, caring and cognitive place from which to best respond.

Life’s Like A Movie

To revisit our life as a movie analogy, although a distressing situation may continue if you can’t change it, you will be able to gain a clearer perspective of the thoughts and feelings within each event, and you will not be as gripped and emotionally driven by them. Remember, it would be like when you are watching a movie and are a hundred percent engaged in the events on the screen that have you terribly frightened, but then suddenly you realize, “Oh, this is just a scary movie, what a relief!” Take a moment to recall a time like this. As soon as you can, watch a challenging movie like *Schindler’s List* and intentionally stay aware that you are watching it. Notice how you feel less gripped by the bad stuff. Your heart stays open as you renew your commitment to stop injustice and prejudice.

You can learn to be in life in this same skillful way so that you can frequently experience the good stuff with more fulfillment and the bad stuff with much less suffering. This skill is called *U,B-FIT mindfulness* or *Unified Mindfulness* when it is applied to daytime life experiences. It could be called *lucid dreaming* when you are asleep in a dream and know it.

As soon as people learn this skill of *U,B-FIT mindfulness* and apply it for a period of time, a deep, new, insightful perspective starts to emerge. You learn that when you awoke this morning, it was only being relatively awake compared to being quite **unconscious** like when you slept. This morning when you awoke, you just entered a lighter kind of sleep/dream level where you were

more conscious but still not nearly fully conscious of life events and your role in those events. As noted above, we call this state being semi-conscious compared to the normal night dream state of being unconscious.

While semi-conscious (as you probably are now), you are still typically driven by the same laws of the mindless mind as when you dream at night. For example, when only semi-conscious you are only partially awake and aware of life events and in control of your role, thoughts, feelings and behaviours in them. As in night dreaming, when you are in this daytime partially awake, semi-conscious state throughout your typical days, you become fully consumed by the movie/dream we call “life”. Here you spend all day unknowingly being controlled by your mindless PFP mind as you try to get and hold on to more of the good stuff and less of the bad stuff, just like in night dreaming. **This illusion that you will finally be happy from getting lots of good stuff that will last, drives most people’s suffering throughout their entire life.**

This section of our book will teach you how to be more **fully conscious** and less driven in daytime experiences, and therefore not semi-conscious in almost everything you do. This increase in awareness results in ongoing increased meaning, fulfillment, happiness and compassion, regardless of conditions related to “do’n, get’n and hav’n.”

We call this state of mind being more **fully conscious** because consciousness is really on a scale from zero to ten. Even though your whole life you have thought that your awareness or consciousness is only on (awake) or off (asleep). While being fully conscious (a level ten) through *U,B-FIT mindfulness*, you awaken much more from your daytime semi-conscious experiences.

As an example of becoming more mindful and therefore more fully conscious, right now become aware that you are reading this sentence. So, you are paying attention to the content and meaning of my words, and you are also at more or less the same time aware that you are doing it. This is a learned skill, but see if you can do it a bit for even a couple of seconds. So stop reading now and just become aware that you are experiencing this moment: you have just significantly increased your being conscious of a life event and your role in it. For as long as you can hold that awareness, you will find that you are much less controlled by the content of your reactive thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This is just like becoming aware in the scary movie (“Ahh, I am just experiencing a moment in life, interesting”). At these times of being mindful, your outside, objective reality may still need to be changed, and you therefore work passionately and skillfully to do that. At the exact same time, however, being mindful brings calm and peace to you on the inside: your subjective experience no longer drives you into an emotional hijack or less than optimal responses.

The Unnecessary Tragedy of Exclusion Resulting from Mindlessness

There is compelling evidence that mindfulness is a foundation for positive human interaction. It is equally clear that its opposite, mindlessness, is associated with the tragedy of exclusion. We have set-up artificial barriers that exclude many people who have a developmental disability, mental health disorder or dementia from participating fully in society. Because they are excluded they cannot realize their full potential to have personally fulfilling and socially useful lives. The causes for exclusion are multi-faceted, but without a doubt the foundational cause is the impact of the mindless PFP Programming.

Generally, I don't believe that exclusion and prejudice comes from bad people. It's mainly that people who have not freed themselves from this mindless PFP delusion of separateness, instantly experience those who are different as objects of fear. The fear arises from a deeply-driven brain-architecture survival need to distance one's self from threat. The mindless mind's neural pathways have evolved over thousands of years to prompt the person to **fear the threat of someone perceived as different**. Unless the person (who may be good and caring under most circumstances) becomes mindfully aware of this subconscious PFP Programming drivenness, the prejudice continues. Only by becoming mindful does this person kill the prejudice, realize that a sense of separateness is not inevitable, and replace it with normal acceptance. The research on this is near unanimous. It says that when normal and good people perceive a threat, whether real or not, they "circle the wagons" with their own inner group.

"It is the mind and the mind alone that determines the quality of our life." Siddhartha

A Two Storey Mansion

If you start looking, you will see more clues of being aware of being in this moment. You will also notice that your potential to be more awake/aware of what is happening is much more complete than your typical daytime semi-conscious experiences of being awake.

Let's summarize this with another metaphor. Think of your mind as a two-story mansion. You could say the basement is night dreaming, or being unconscious. The first story is how you typically live each day: thinking about the past or future (being semi-conscious) but seldom aware of "being here, now." Being mindful is the second story, or being more fully conscious. This means being more awake and aware to what is happening (as it is happening) in outside reality and at the same time also being aware of inside subjective reality, (your five senses and thoughts and feelings).

Because you likely have already forgotten that you are reading, try that little mind shift again. Become aware right now that you are reading this sentence. Even say to yourself, "I am aware of reading". This is a taste of what living in the top story is like: unlike when you are dreaming,

you are now aware of Being Here, Now, and therefore you have perspective and enhanced potential to make clearer choices. As you practise this skill, you start to Be Here Now more and more. Without intentionally doing it, you “become it,” just like when you spontaneously awoke this morning—you were automatically transformed from being unconscious to being semi-conscious without doing anything to make it happen. **So, too, can you learn to spontaneously go from being semi-conscious to being more fully conscious—and therefore more fulfilled and happy, and suffer less in most of your daytime experiences, if they are ‘painful’.**

This *aware consciousness* is being so fully awake that your mindless PFP mind—that typically drives you to need to do, get and have, bigger, better, more to be happy—stops owning you. You become aware not only that you are Here, Now, but also that you are thinking, feeling and having body sensations. You now experience these feelings and thoughts much like other sense messages, like the sense of smell: “I am aware right now of the smell of smoke”. Now you experience, “I am aware, more fully conscious of there is anger”. Unlike when you unconsciously night dream, or semi-consciously dream your way through your day and don’t realize it, when you awaken to being more fully conscious, you become aware and can therefore subjectively allow these experiences to come and go. This new perspective also makes the conscious you unconditionally compassionate and a more skilled problem solver.

Authentic compassion (not mere feelings) develops in direct proportion to the degree that one is aware and allowing of *B-FIT* reactions, instead of being driven by/locked on/lost in them.

Experiencing More - Inside and Out

U,B-FIT mindfulness, then, can be seen as an ability to be more aware of what is happening as it is happening—an ability to be *present*. For example, how often have you had the experience of driving down the same road you have travelled for years and then one day noticing a large building that you have obviously looked at many times but have never seen? Most people have also had the experience of not seeing many cars of a particular make, model and color until they are thinking of buying one. Then suddenly blue Honda Accords are everywhere! Similarly, we often don’t feel any pain from a minor cut or bruise we get while we are working until we are in the shower or in bed that night. Then, we can’t even remember how it happened. Scientists call this normal problem of missing much of what we experience *inattentional blindness*. To the degree that we miss important things happening around us, we lack presence.

We have said that mindfulness is the foundation for living a more complete life. As we develop our mindfulness microscope we start to see many more “buildings” that we had previously overlooked in our personal roles and relationships. We will see ourselves consciously connecting with others in new and better ways. Furthermore, as we experience others mindfully we are less judgmental. In turn, they are free to respond to us in non-defensive ways

because of the well-being and openness that we bring to our relating. Just think how this way of being together could transform any relationship!

Someone with pneumonia cannot simply will himself to stop coughing. Neither can people will themselves into mindfulness. Mindfulness must be learned and earned through the dedicated program of mindfulness practice exercises that are the focus of this part of the book (*reference Appendix II*). Stick with us and you will learn how you can help others manifest their natural human goodness just by you being mindful: that is, by being positive, open and fully aware.

Transcending the Driven EGO

If mindfulness is of such great benefit to humans, it would be comforting to think that we can naturally develop a mindful presence. After all, we have evolved with some exceptional gifts, like the potential to develop a values' system that treats others with respect and fairness. This gift and many more help us make the best possible choices to enable ourselves and others to live useful, moral and fulfilling lives. Yet many of our positive gifts, including the ability to be truly mindful, do not just happen as a result of wanting them. This is due in great part to the driven **EGO** that is the usual manifestation of the PFP brain and body programming when we are only semi-conscious.

As we said earlier, for us **EGO** is an acronym: **E**nslavement to greedy **G**ratification and **O**bsessive self-centredness. This is not the *ego* commonly understood as simple vanity or arrogance, as in "s/he's got such a big ego!" Later we will spend more time understanding this powerful force, but it is worth brief mention here to demonstrate that the **EGO** is a formidable opponent to the development of the 4 tools and their rich by-products like compassion. This then means that to learn this skill we must invest consistent effort. **EGO**, as we understand it here, is a complex mental state powerfully fueled by feelings, by body sensations and by thoughts of which we are often unaware or freely choose. Feelings can be constructive motivators, but the feelings that support **EGO** are barriers to unconditional kindness and *mindful emotional self-regulation*.

When our actions are dominated by **EGO**, we are no longer influenced by what draws us together. Rather we are dominated by resistant feelings that move us away from one another. Anger, for instance (as noted above), is sometimes used by our nervous system without our being aware that what we are really doing is protecting ourselves from experiencing deeper suffering like fear or grief. This process often creates even deeper suffering. A major outcome in becoming mindful is increasing our awareness of the full experience of our feelings (e.g. body sensations, shape of the body sensations, and changing intensity of the sensation as either for example stronger or weaker), thereby lessening our **EGO** driven dependencies and the personal suffering these dependencies create.

There is a story told by Jack Kornfield of a military officer who was studying mindfulness in a class for PTSD. After one class he went to a crowded supermarket with long lines. The woman carrying a child in front of him had just one item but would not get into the express line. The officer was impatient and began to get annoyed with her. It got worse when she got to the checkout stand: she and the clerk starting cooing over the baby, and the woman then handed the child to the clerk. The officer began to tense up, his anger building at the thought of how selfish she was. But because he had just come from his mindfulness class, he noticed what he was doing to himself and began to breath more softly and relaxed. He even noticed the thought that this was a cute baby. By the time he got to the clerk he had let go enough to say, "That was a cute little boy." "Oh, thank you," she said. "That was my baby. You see, my husband was in the air force, and he died last year in a plane crash. Now my mother takes care of my boy and brings him in once a day so I can see him".

Jack Kornfield's comments, "We judge each other so quickly, yet know so little about what another carries in his or her heart. To truly awaken and be present, we must offer to all the same respect we would give a great teacher". The angry, inconvenient, hurried, difficult folks around us can teach us ahh-llowing and compassion.

We all must learn that we are grist for each other's EGO 'grinding' mill.

The focusing power of your mind is the single most important tool that you have in this life.

Shinzen Young

U,B-FIT mindfulness is a simple mindfulness practice built on the Unified Mindfulness System which has been researched by scientists at Harvard Medical School and Carnegie Mellon University. This section further defines *U,B-FIT mindfulness*, teaches how to practise it and shows how to apply it as a fundamental skill to enrich our personal and work life.

U,B-FIT as a Spectator Sport

Unaware *U,B-FIT* comprises the main internal components and senses that all humans use to perceive and experience people and situations (e.g. PFP). For now, it is most important to know that the process of *U,B-FIT mindfulness* does not mean using our thinking mind at a given time to understand, reject, fix, or challenge irrational, extreme or negative thoughts and feelings about a situation or person. Instead, when mindful, our goal is simply to be aware of *U,B-FIT* experiences in the moment and subjectively or internally clarify their form and flow, and **ahh-llow** them to stay or go. Remember one vital part of the *U,B-FIT mindfulness* process is merely recognizing that you are having Body Sensations, Feelings, Image or Talk Thoughts, but not focusing on being identified by the content or meaning of what the experience is about. Once your internal/subjective experience is calm you can then (and only then) work passionately and effectively to change outside/objective reality.

The first and possibly most long-lasting insight that will result from just an initial twenty-minute practice session of *U,B-FIT mindfulness* is a new awareness that our concept of “who I think I am” is quite incomplete. Most folks would say, “I am a doer, relater, thinker and feeler”. But doing, relating, thinking and feeling without mindfulness also creates subconscious identifications that tend to drive and distort our actions and perceptions. For example, if I am semi-consciously mindlessly driven by an identity of being a good helper, then I unintentionally may define you as being a vulnerable helpee—not as an “unbroken” individual just needing some assistance (as we all do). This incomplete and harmful identity is developed and reinforced by mindless *U,B-FIT* messages. As another example, if I am mindlessly identified with fear of being criticized, I may relate to you primarily as a threat—my judge and jury—not as a friend just trying to help me change a bad habit.

When mindful, we realize that much more is actually going on. *U,B-FIT mindfulness* radically changes the way we relate to body sensations, feelings, image or talk thought messages that arise moment by moment in response to life experiences. When we just watch them as if we

are watching a sporting event and observe—“there is” a worry feeling, or “there is” angry self-talk—these reactions have less gripping power over us because we don’t make the mistake of saying they are us; they’re just happening to us. This process of “there is” vs. “I am” reprograms our sense of self in that we start to realize that the feeling is not me—just a sense message.

When we relate as *U,B-FIT* observers, reactions are still present, but we experience them just like any other message from our other senses. For example, when smelling, we say, “there is the smell of smoke” not “I am smoke.” Similarly, when mindfully relating to (that is, watching) our Body Sensations, Feeling and Image and Talk messages, we perceive and believe, “There is anger” not “I am angry.” By identifying these reactions as “there is” instead of “I am” we are free to choose whether to respond or not to these body, feeling and thinking messages! The activity becomes more like a spectator sport than actually playing the game of EGO (Enslavement to greedy Gratification and Obsessive self-centredness.) As a result, we are significantly less attached to or driven by the meanings of the negative messages we give ourselves.

In order to understand *U,B-FIT mindfulness*, it is essential to be able to clearly observe these four *U,B-FIT* “sense doors” (Body sensations, Feelings, Image thought messages and Talk thought messages). Deepening this awareness enables us to observe accurately what is happening internally; it helps us not to lock onto or be gripped by the content of image and talk thoughts or feelings, or be driven by body reactions of which we are unaware. Like a spectator, we watch them coming and going without getting affected by them. During this *U,B-FIT* Mindful process we see and experience first-hand how our unaware, and therefore reactive, mind and body often unnecessarily create unsatisfying and even painful emotions such as indifference, anger or fear.

This shift from being the player who unknowingly thinks s/he “is” the reactions, to being the objective, matter-of-fact spectator who observes each internal *U,B-FIT* movement and message significantly lessens the intensity of our semiconscious body sensations, feelings, and image and talk thoughts that normally have very strong power over us. As a result, we are less subjectively resistant to what happens around us or to us, and more likely to connect positively and to relate to others consciously, regardless of our thoughts or feelings about them. This less resistant and non-attached way of being brings relative peace and an open heart. It also puts us into optimal problem-solving and decision-making mode as it breaks down the illusion of ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups’ to allow for the experience of just ‘us’.

Deep and Lasting Happiness—Beyond Fixing Conditions and Chaos

All of us know that life is full of unexpected challenges and chaotic conditions that make it difficult to stay calm, focused, and happy. The *U,B-FIT mindfulness* approach is not dependent solely on fixing conditions; it is not based on developing new strategies to change or more

positive ways to think about things. Instead, the *U,B-FIT mindfulness* process develops the basic mindfulness tools of concentration, enhanced sensory clarity, subjective allowing (equanimity) and the final tool of “Here Now” (I, Peter, am aware that I am reading this sentence). These four tools allow us to get our EGO/PFP Programming out of the way so that our natural human goodness and connectedness can spontaneously show itself—even, and especially, during difficult conditions and chaos.

When you are mindful...life's evitable pain doesn't happen to you, rather it happens for you.

Anonymous

The following pithy quotes beautifully capture why becoming mindful through *U,B-FIT* practice is essential for our happiness.

In each of us there is another whom we do not know. Carl Jung

There is someone in my head and it ain't me. Pink Floyd

Appendix IV

The Path to Awakening

In the graphic below we have identified noticeable points on the path of waking up that over time and with practice will become clearer to you.

In a world of uncertainty and chaos, the following truth is emerging. Only to the extent that we wake up can we realize relative freedom from emotional and physical suffering and our full human potential.

This graphic description of waking up has a lot of information at different levels. It describes various degrees of wakefulness experienced as a result of mindfulness or any other non-ego-based awakening practice.

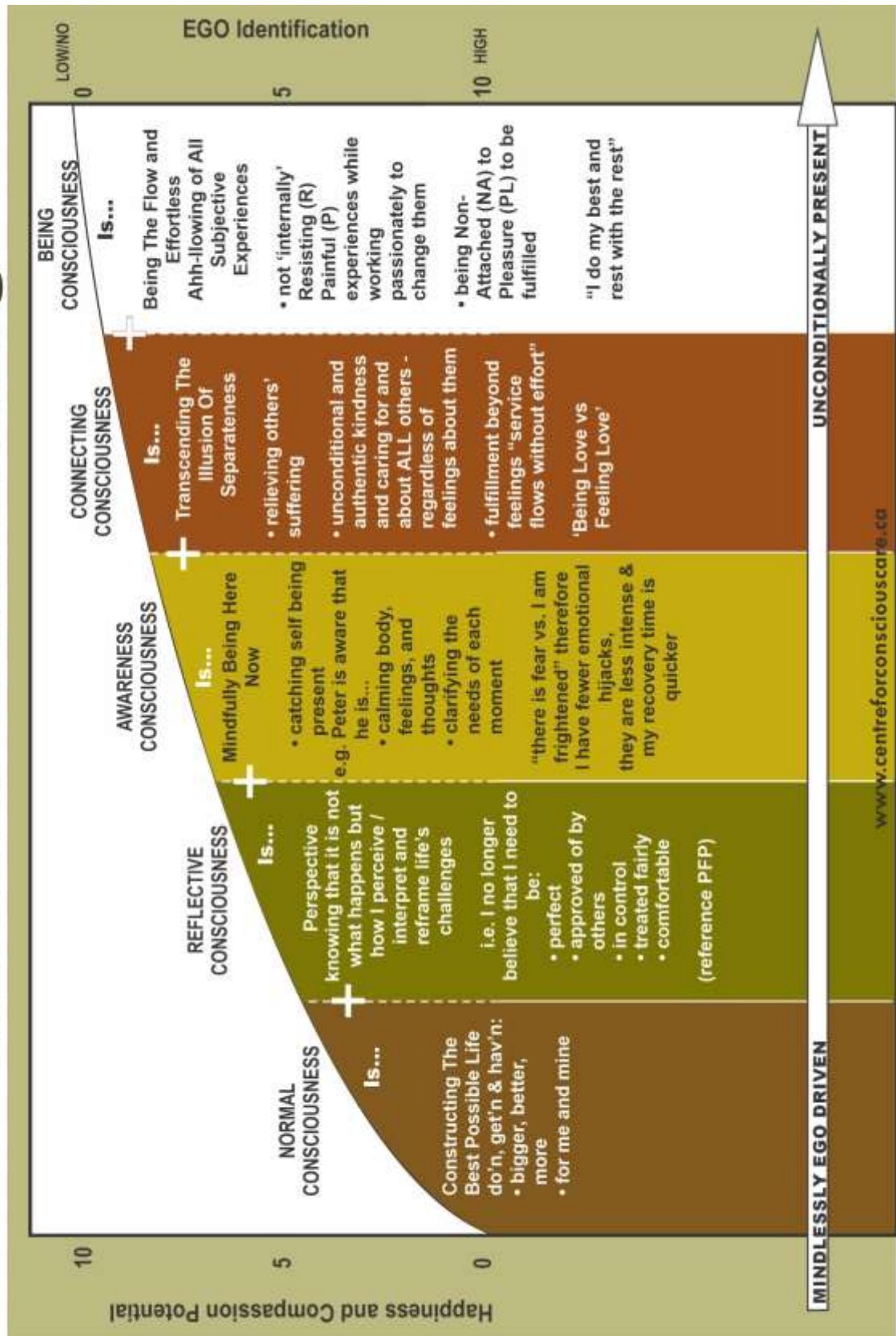
Let me review with a couple more examples of waking up. Last night you were asleep – to a very deep degree. Now you are awake to some degree or less asleep so to speak. Today when you daydream i.e. when you are someplace and your mind is someplace else (which is happening to most people, most of the time), you will be less awake than if you were focused on what you are doing, saying or feeling. The following graphic then describes progressively increasing examples of this awaking up.

The examples are not intended to be complete descriptions but are offered mainly to further describe the condition (predicament) related to our ‘natural’ sleeping patterns and some of their consequences and benefits. The descriptions suggest how much more complete our experiences of life can be as we learn the skills and insights to set our own internal alarm clocks.

We offer this because we feel that these descriptions of significant milestones will be useful reference points to give you a “heads up”. Hopefully it will be helpful in giving a little more clarity to the map leading to a more fulfilling, happy and compassionate life. Mindfully experiencing our predicament is a great and necessary first step to correct it. This graphic may help you see the incompleteness of some aspects of your journey so far.

For now just review each level’s title and description. Once you have studied this resource, we encourage you to spend some time with each description as each of the five levels are a very different and new experience. For any description that is not fully understood, just let it soak in. It’s more of an experience thing than a concept thing and you will experience all of these levels of consciousness as you complete the following practice sessions.

The Path To Awakening



Transforming to No/Low Sense of a Solid Separate Self

Let's take this idea of "there is" versus "I am" to another level to clarify this seemingly abstract idea. My main mindfulness coach and collaborator Shinzen Young, does a nice job helping us to understand this idea of 'I' in his excellent book, *The Science of Enlightenment*.

He uses a metaphor of braiding together two white threads with one red thread. If we look at this string from ten feet away, it looks pink. But this is just an illusion because really there are only white and red threads.

Similarly, we are constantly experiencing *U,B-FIT* senses (braided together) that seem to give us an identity of "I am". As with the pink string, "I am" is coloured with baggage like "I am not enough, I must be perfect, I must have the approval of others, I must be in control, I must be treated fairly otherwise I have a God-given right to feel awful etc."

If, however, when you have one of the many difficult feelings associated with "I am," you mindfully experience its *U,B-FIT* component parts—that is your body, feeling and thought responses to it—growing stronger and weaker and moving faster and slower, etc. the components are still present but not tightly braided together. The components are therefore not as strong, so they have significantly less negative influence over your subjective, illusory experience of "I am this or I am that."

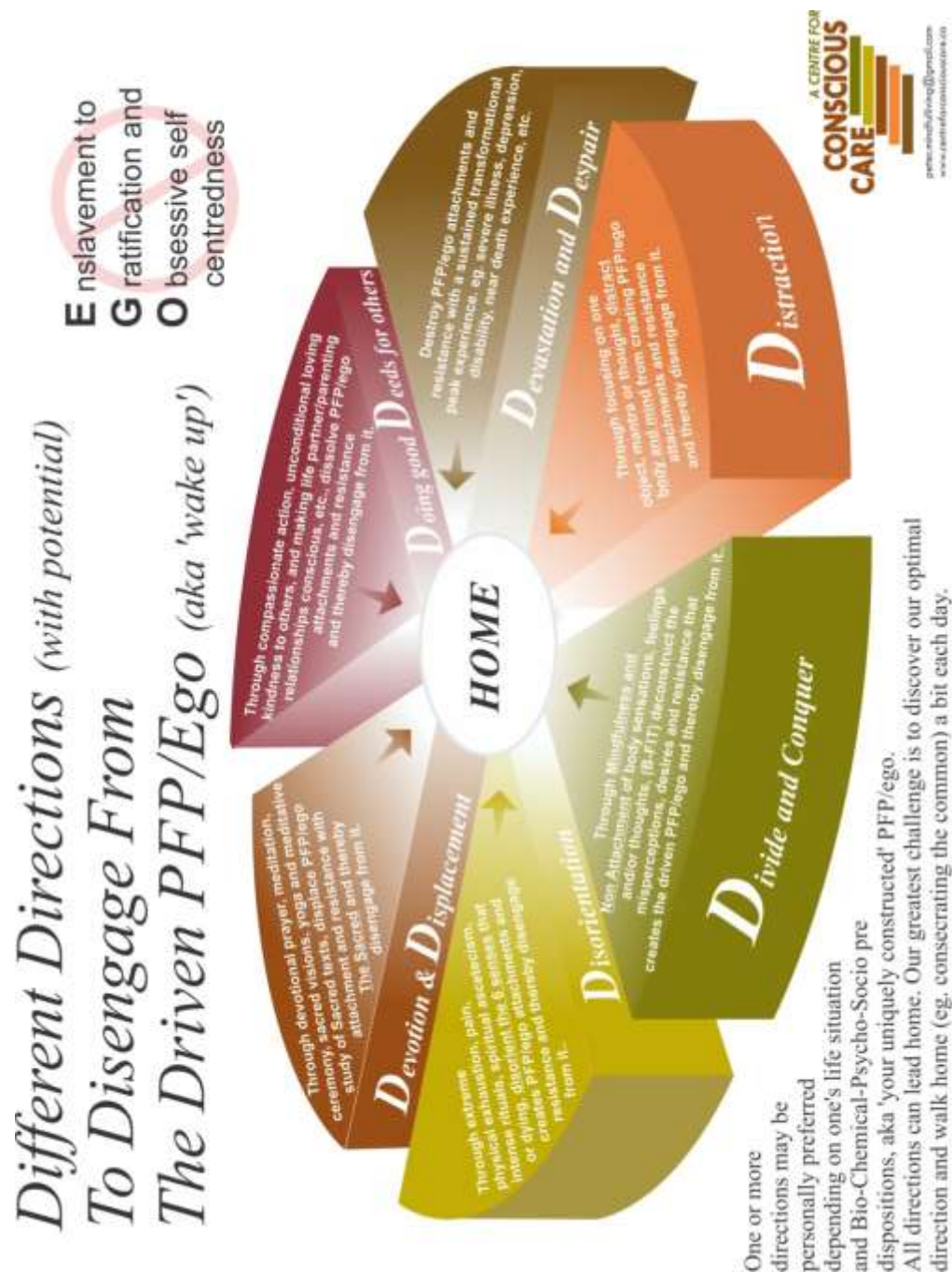
With mindfulness you can dissolve the illusion of the pink (unbraid the strings so to speak). So instead of feeling "I am anxious," you respond more from a calm, sense of "there is" the experience of anxiousness, e.g. a tight chest, headache, sweating, etc.: not from your typical survival-code, reactive feelings coming from a mindless "I must fight, flight or freeze."

I'm not saying that with mindfulness fear, for example, vanishes and is replaced by perfect calm and peace. Rather the subjective experience is a sort of neutral hybrid, not familiar to the evolved, vulnerable, human nervous system. After working with this process for maybe twenty to thirty times, you will notice a remarkable and helpful truth. **The truth is that as long as you can maintain your awareness and ahh-llowingness of *U,B-FIT* "there is" you can never be as overwhelmed.**

Also, your simple pleasures will now be experienced so completely that your craving for "bigger, better and more" will not constantly drive you into semi-conscious suffering. Now and only now will you be able to consciously bring your 'A-Game' of unconditional compassion to your roles as parent, partner, friend and supporter to help yourself and others to be all that you/they can be.

The Different Directions to Disengage from the Driven PFP/ego

As you have seen, the U,B-FIT mindfulness model is a secular approach to Stealing Happiness from a variety of life conditions and experiences. On the following page we have attempted a courageous undertaking which is to summarize and organize most of the world's spiritual and transpersonal traditions to take us 'home'. Many readers we expect will be able to complement one or more of these existing paths with our 4 tools, especially U,B-FIT mindfulness.



Appendix V

Emerging Happiness: How Does It Happen?

Note from P & J:

The following several pages are for optional reading only. Do not worry if you don't fully understand these thoughts on the 4 tools and "emergence". These reflections mostly describe our hunch of what could be happening as we work to grow to our fullest mind, body and spiritual potential. While these musings are highly relevant to happiness, it is not important that they be cognitively understood. In fact, it's probably better if you just allow yourself to sit with them. It is something like the fact that while incredibly sophisticated laws of physics and thermal dynamics are happening under the hood of your car to get you to work or shopping, all you need to do is learn to turn the key in the ignition and drive safely. Therefore, we invite you to proceed, just for fun. P & J

Numerous times throughout my years of teaching mindfulness and the other 3 tools, I have been asked "What do you mean I can be authentically, unconditionally happy, even for example when I am with a person who is uncooperative and unappreciative? (Even my partner, or my parent, or my kid?)" My usual incomplete answer is that we can be kind even if we don't feel kind because our feelings are just reactive messages. Your feelings and thoughts are just nervous system messages, like smelling. They are not you! Provided you stay mindful and intentional in all relationships, your connecting will be optimal and your actions impeccable. This answer is usually sufficient for most people. Here, we will try to go a step further and give you our best thinking to date, but we are sure that this is still quite incomplete.

Emergence

Fortunately, PFP brings one very special asset that will add significant momentum to your journey of awakening to become happier. This most unique quality of our Human Nature is a process called *emergence*. Simply put, emergence means that all physical and biological systems, 'things', and processes, can be not only more than the sum of their parts, but also significantly more ordered. At a certain scale and complexity, increased numbers of *parts* have an enhanced wisdom, coordination, and intensity. More parts are somehow radically better organized (than fewer parts) but not by any obvious external control. In other words, *more* is not only more, but also a special and unpredictable kind of *ordered different*.

Consider the example of bees, ants, and termites. While living in a small colony their intellectual capacity to build and maintain a home is, say, X. Once the colony reaches a certain number, however, their intelligence grows, or emerges, exponentially—X becomes X x Y x Z—just from the increase in number. Their engineering and intelligence become significantly more sophisticated, as do their seemingly undirected co-operative efforts.

Also consider the following examples that I sense could also be emergence:

- participating in a drumming circle when random drumming (after 5 to 10 minutes) all seems to spontaneously come together as an orchestrated symphony;
- the coordinated patterns of flocks of birds or schools of fish once they reach large enough numbers, e.g. large flocks of birds fly at 40mph within inches of each other as if joined by an invisible thread that prevents them from hitting each other;
- the significantly increased feelings of intensity and solidarity among larger numbers of:
 - patrons at live theatre/concerts,
 - fans at sporting events or
 - folks at political rallies;
- PFP neurons firing in the brain;
- cell tissue in the body reacting in fear;
- swarms of bees;
- elite athletes spontaneously falling into the “zone.”

Google any of the following terms to find fuller discussions: *emergence*, *swarm intelligence*, *more is different*, or *emotional contagion*. Begin by searching “amazing starlings murmuration” on YouTube. Watch this video before reading further. It will make everything clearer.

NOTE: For simplicity, we have made up a word: “de-emergence.” It simply means the reduction of the variables in an already emergent system so that emergence reduces or stops.

Emergence of Our “Seven” Senses

Typically, we mindlessly, and therefore incompletely, experience our seven senses (five senses plus our thoughts and feelings) as survival-based, fixed, solid, particle-like nervous system messages: e.g. pain or pleasure, on or off, strong or weak. Through the deep sensory clarity of *U,B-FIT mindfulness*, we can instead more completely and continuously experience our senses more as wave-like flow: expanding and contracting activities and patterns. As *U,B-FIT mindfulness* radically increases our awareness of the numbers, intensity, and identification with these wave-like qualities of our senses, we think the phenomenon of emergence is activated. This activation then leads to our transformation into a more unified compassionate sense of self as we emerge with others.

My hunch, then (from personal experience only), is that this *U,B-FIT* process manifests in our subjective experiences, and then activates as authentic unconditional compassion when the wave-like properties of our senses are continuously observed in adequate numbers and intensity and with sufficient equanimity and intentionality. This activation then seems to lead to our transformation into a more unified compassionate sense of self as we emerge with others.

We see this process as similar to how separate pieces of ice can melt into (flowing) water with sufficient thermal energy (heat) applied. To extend our metaphor, we could say that mindfulness and the other tools are the heart's thermal energy.

One of the by-products of this process of emergence is then—without believing anything or trying at all—to know at a deep level (far beyond cognition) that we (you and I) are not separate dualistic “particles” of good guys and bad guys, deserving or undeserving individuals. Rather, we are non-separate flowing activities of *us-ness*. To live this wave-like experience, we have two jobs to do.

Job #1: We must reverse feelings that close the heart.

Let's start by first exploring feelings that close the heart, such as anger, fear, or uncaring, tuning out, all of which compromise being happy for no particular reason. All of our feelings are combinations of *U,B-FIT* sensations that exhibit emergent properties. For example, when a person is difficult and we remain in a mindless state, a tight chest may combine with driven Image and Talk thoughts (neuron firings): (highly resistant *U,B-FIT* then seems to emerge exponentially to create the feelings of a closed heart).

Our first job is to mindfully deconstruct this bundle of *U,B-FIT* sensations back into their separate parts so that they lose their negative emerged gripping power over us: instead of a swarm of ants, they become more like a few ants calmly foraging back and forth. To achieve this, we practice and apply the following *U,B-FIT mindfulness* exercises (*Reference Appendix II*):

U,B-FIT mindfulness Exercise #4 - Stress Rehearsal

U,B-FIT mindfulness Exercise #5 - Preventing and Managing Physical & Emotional Suffering

U,B-FIT mindfulness Exercise #6 - Healing Compassion Practice

Typically, we are suggesting that without mindfulness, emergence naturally cascades *U,B-FIT* into a less than optimal closed-heart experience. Separating these component parts—a tight chest and uncaring image, talk thoughts and feelings—reduces the process to a few simpler variables, and therefore a *de-emerging* takes place as a result of this awareness and ahh-llowing. As a result of completing this job, there is relatively more of an authentic connection that is a prerequisite for Job #2.

Job #2: From particles to waves—emergence while consciously connecting

Further along the awakening continuum from Job #1, de-emergence, as we apply even more continuous awareness and ahh-llowing while trying to relate with someone, a radical shift in our level of caring and connecting can occur. This happens when our typical reactive survival-based sub-conscious experience of fearful and resistant thoughts and feelings, are replaced by caring and positive intentions, and experienced in *U,B-FIT* as continuously expanding and contracting flow or waves. At this point we, being more conscious, now experience *U,B-FIT* continuously getting stronger-weaker, bigger-smaller, faster-slower.

We think this could be the transition point along the caring continuum from de-emergence to the start of emergence. Once sufficient in-depth awareness and ahh-llowing of our normal positive, caring feelings are reached, a radical shift in connection to the other seems to just happen.

The Field

*Out beyond self-righteous judging, blaming and criticizing,
there is a **field** – I'll meet you there!
When the aware us lies down in that grass,
ideas of good guys and bad guys, deserving and undeserving,
and even the phrase "each other"
don't make any sense.*

Inspired by Rumi

It seems to go like this in a challenging situation between two or more people. As we saw with Job #1, initially PFP-brain reacts mindlessly with fearful and instinctual thoughts, feelings and body sensations. We catch and calm this reaction with "in the moment" directed awareness and ahh-llowing. In addition we are carried by our base line of calming capacity that has been cultivated through daily *U,B-FIT* practice. So we become aware of many, many individual hits of thoughts (image and talk), feelings, and body sensations. These experiences, it seems to us, are the PFP-brain creating reactions as it assesses objective reality: for example, sending a thought – "I am anxious" (even just these catching and calming steps bring more compassion and competence to this moment).

Now Job #2 begins. Activated with significantly more continuous awareness, the mind trained in deeper experiences of *U,B-FIT* awareness, becomes more simultaneously aware of "here, now", thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, and their qualities of flowing impermanence. First, we experience thoughts more at their pre-cognitive rumble stage, where our thought energy is not yet giving a discernible message, such as "I am anxious".

Secondly, we experience *U,B-FIT* at a deeper level of clarity: the tight chest, the clear thought, the anxious feeling in the gut, etc.

And thirdly, we observe the break-up or dissolution (*gone*) of this moment of the experience. As a result of being simultaneously identified with these three levels of active sensory experience, they continue (more and more) to be perceived as continuous waves, not unaware experiences of on/off fixated 'particles' of sense experiences.



Now (of course, what I am about to say is relative, but...), with this enhanced continuous pre-, present, and post- *U,B-FIT* awareness, a new and very different subjective experience spontaneously happens. Sometimes it builds, but for us mostly it usually just erupts into being. Each moment stops being experienced as events and just flows smoothly into each other in a gentle, slow-motion, wax and wane process.

The entire subjective experience also, in the moment now predisposes us to keep our A-game of optimal problem-solving and emotional self-regulation on line. We are “Here, Now”, with our partner or friend, truly one. Remember the ants and the swallows—not many but one. This is the stage of being able to clarify the needs of those difficult relationship situations.

‘Me and them’ stop being ‘*me and them*’— separate things! A kind of indescribable *us-ness* (there is no English word for it) emerges. We call this **conscious connecting**. It’s kind of like how intimacy with someone you deeply love is much, much more and different, than a feeling! It seems that as we begin identifying with the flowing wave qualities of continuous sensory awareness with equanimity, even in challenging moments, we can **emerge** to transcend unaware fears and indifference that our little boys and girls would otherwise have manifested. From this state of being we just naturally, unconditionally connect (beyond feelings) regardless of how our *U,B-FIT* is reacting. This we believe could be much of the process of Awakening to *Being Love* as discussed in Chapter Fourteen.

So, to more consistently bring our A-game to each moment, we can implement two distinct strategies related to de-emergence and emergence. We first start with de-emergence, which is to reduce the number of solidified *U,B-FIT* variables in the moment that are unknowingly causing emergence of our feelings and actions into the less than optimal manifestations of unhappiness (fear, impatience, self-righteous criticizing, etc.). In this first job, we slow down and stop the emerging of fear-producing, fixated body sensations, thoughts and feelings through just being ‘Here, Now’. As our reactive semi-conscious *U,B-FIT* experiences decrease in intensity, **de-emergence** happens and we experience calm, so the body and brain can open to emergent compassion and conscious connecting.

Then, in our second job, we appear to become significantly more aware of the continuous wave like qualities of *U,B-FIT* as we fully experience the bad stuff without resistance, and the good stuff without drivenness for bigger, better, more. This seems to increase positive *U,B-FIT* accelerators (who knows, maybe neuron firings) sufficiently to take us beyond normal feelings of good/bad or deserving/undeserving into **emergence** of authentic unconditional happiness and caring for the other—regardless of primordial emotions and feelings.

The Good News

You need know nothing of how the engine of happiness really works: few, including me, really know for sure. All we must do each day is to turn to our 4 life tools and take a twenty-minute drive with gratitude and intentionality—pass every “no”-thing you find on to others.

*(There is this) unseen order, and
our supreme good lies in
harmoniously adjusting
ourselves thereto.*

William James



Appendix VI

References and Recommended Reading

Bargh, J.	<i>Before You Know It</i>
Barkley, N.	<i>Taking Charge of Adult ADHD</i>
Benson, B.	<i>Cognitive Biases</i>
Blakeslee, M & S	<i>The Body Has A Mind of It's Own</i>
Carson, R.	<i>Taming Your Gremlins</i>
Doidge, N.	<i>The Brain's Way of Healing</i>
Eagleman, D.	<i>Incognito</i>
Eagleman, D.	<i>The Brain</i>
Fine, C.	<i>A Mind of Its Own</i>
Gazzaniga, M.S.	<i>Who's In Charge?</i>
Gladwell, M.	<i>Blink</i>
Goldstein, J.; Kornfield, J.	<i>Seeking the Heart of Wisdom</i>
Goleman, D.	<i>Emotional Intelligence</i>
Goleman, T.	<i>Emotional Alchemy</i>
Harari, Y. N.	<i>Homo Deus</i>
Hawkins, D.	<i>Power vs. Force</i>
Johnson, S.	<i>Mind Wide Open</i>
Marks, P. & G	<i>Conscious Care and Support</i>
Mlodinow, L.	<i>Subliminal</i>
Ratey, J.	<i>Driven to Distraction</i>
Van der Kolk, B.	<i>The Body Keeps the Score</i>
Young, S.	<i>The Science of Enlightenment</i>

Appendix VII

Bilateral/Bio-Meridian and Awareness-Based Calming and De-Escalation (BB-ABC) Tools To Prevent, Reduce and Eliminate Anxiety and Anger

The tools that make up our BB-ABC calming and de-escalation process integrate effective calming strategies from the following evidence-based protocols:

- *mindful, emotional self-regulation* – internal resonance and entrainment;
- bilateral stimulation procedures similar to those applied in tactile EMDR;
- acupressure (bio-meridian);
- calming through repetitive patterning;
- Emotional Freedom Therapy;
- “Soles of the Feet” *U,B-FIT mindfulness* technique.

The additional awareness-based calming and emotional self-regulation best practices provided below are most effective when they are integrated into your every-day, normal activities. If you practice these exercises when you are relatively calm, the practices will be normalized and be more likely to be used effectively during times of emotional hijacks.

BB-ABC Exercise # 1: Butterfly Hug

The butterfly hug can be readily learned for self-administration.

- Fold arms across your chest so that the left hand rests on the right bicep and the right hand rests on the left bicep.
- Raise one hand and apply pressure first on one bicep (thus activating the brain), and then on the other. Alternate at a rate of one activation per second. Label “Here” every minute or so to keep you mindful in each moment of activation.
- Mindfully intend calm.
- Practice for up to five minutes each day.

BB-ABC Exercise # 2: Collar Bone Activation

- Using the three middle fingers on each hand, alternating from left side to right side each second, press to activate the sensitive acupressure point of the collar bone region approximately one inch below the top of the collar bone.

BB-ABC Exercise # 3: Hand Bilateral/Bio-meridian Activation

- With your thumb from one hand and index finger from another press and activate the space between your thumb and index finger of your hands.
- Activate this region on each hand alternately each second.
- Label “here.” This teaches you mindfulness and activation of brain-calming circuits (e.g. the medial prefrontal cortex).

BB-ABC Exercise #4 – Breathing and Movement Based Calming

- Slightly bend your knees and become aware of what you are doing.
- On your next inhalation, start to slowly raise your arms to the count of 3; pay attention to how it feels (e.g. “heavy”). Once arms are parallel to the floor label— say “up”.
- On an exhalation, start to slowly lower your arms to the count of 6 and label “down”. Notice how that feels.
- Repeat the up and down movement five times.
- With arms in the down position, on the next inhalation tighten your hands and arms to the count of 3 and notice and label how it feels (e.g. “tight”).
- On the exhalation, release to the count of 6 and notice and label how it feels (e.g. “release”).
- Repeat the muscle tightening exercise at least five times.

BB-ABC Exercise #5 – Mindful Walking

- On an exhalation lift one of your feet (or just the heel if balancing is difficult) and label “lift.” Notice lifting. Place foot down and label “place.” Lift and place the other foot, notice. Do this mindful walking for five minutes.

Supplemental Awareness-Based Calming Exercises (ABC)

- | | | |
|-----------------|---|--|
| ABC Exercise #6 | - | high intensity interval training, e.g. rebounder (mindfully) |
| ABC Exercise #7 | - | fitness exercises – core, balance and strengths (mindfully) |

Emotional contagion is the phenomenon of having one person's emotions and related behaviours directly trigger similar emotions and behaviours in other people. One view is that this can be done through automatic mimicry and synchronization of one's expressions, vocalizations, postures and movements with those of another person. When people unconsciously mirror their companions' expressions of emotion, they come to feel reflections of those companions' emotions. Emotions can be shared across individuals in many different ways both implicitly or explicitly.... Emotional contagion is important to personal relationships because it fosters emotional synchrony between individuals.

Appendix VIII

Glossary - What's What - At A Glance

1. Stealing Happiness 4 Tools –



2. **Unified Mindfulness (UM)** – the basic mindfulness system designed by Shinzen Young.

3. **U,B-FIT mindfulness (U,B-FIT)** – UM as it is applied to Stealing Happiness

4. **B-FIT** is an acronym for the 4 main areas of focus in U,B-FIT exercises and life experiences mainly:

- Body Sensations or feel out (UM)
- Feeling Sensations or feel in (UM)
- Image way of Thinking or see in (UM)
- Talk way of Thinking or hear in (UM)

5. **The 4 Skills of U,B-FIT Mindfulness** are:

- Focused concentration
- Sensory Clarity – being aware that I am aware of ...
- Ahh-llowness/equanimity – being subjectively/internally non-resistant and non-driven by how B-FIT is reacting to life conditions
- Be Here Now – being aware that I am experiencing something right now

6. Levels of Consciousness:

Over each 24-hour period, you can be experiencing consciousness on a 1-10 continuum.

Unconscious: (1)

- like when you are asleep in your bed.

Semiconscious: (autopilot) (5)

- like how you typically drive your car, relate to people and do most doings, i.e. you are there but your mind is someplace else and you are unaware of what is happening in the present moment.

Fully Conscious: (self-aware) (10)

- like when you are paying attention – noticing **what** you are doing e.g. how you drive when a police car is following you;
- knowing **that** you are doing it when you are doing it and
- knowing **how** your **body's sensations, feelings and thoughts** are reacting to what is happening.

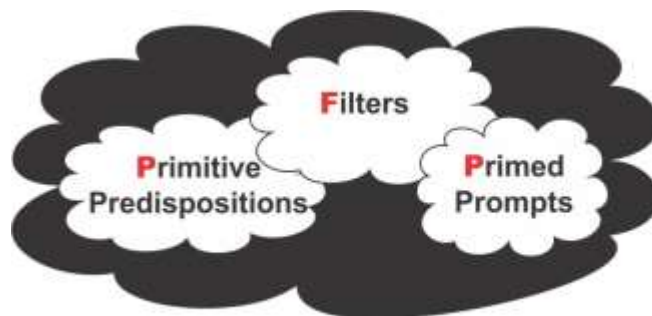
Subconscious:

- your data bank of files that you inherit and develop (a.k.a. your algorithm).

7. **En-lifen-ment** – being more consciously and compassionately connected to others and life experiences.

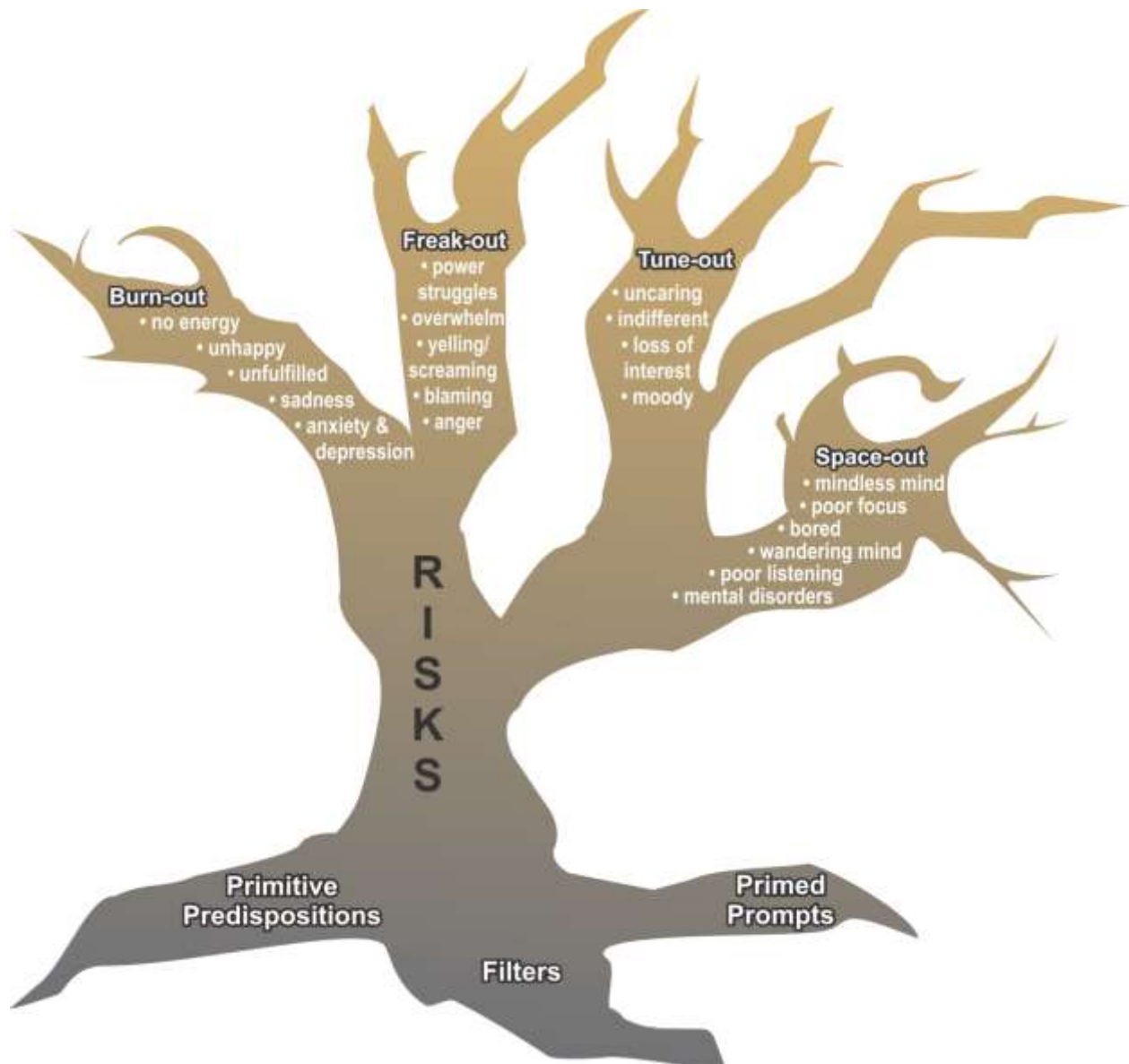
8. **Algorithm** – a way or formula

9. **PFP Brain** -



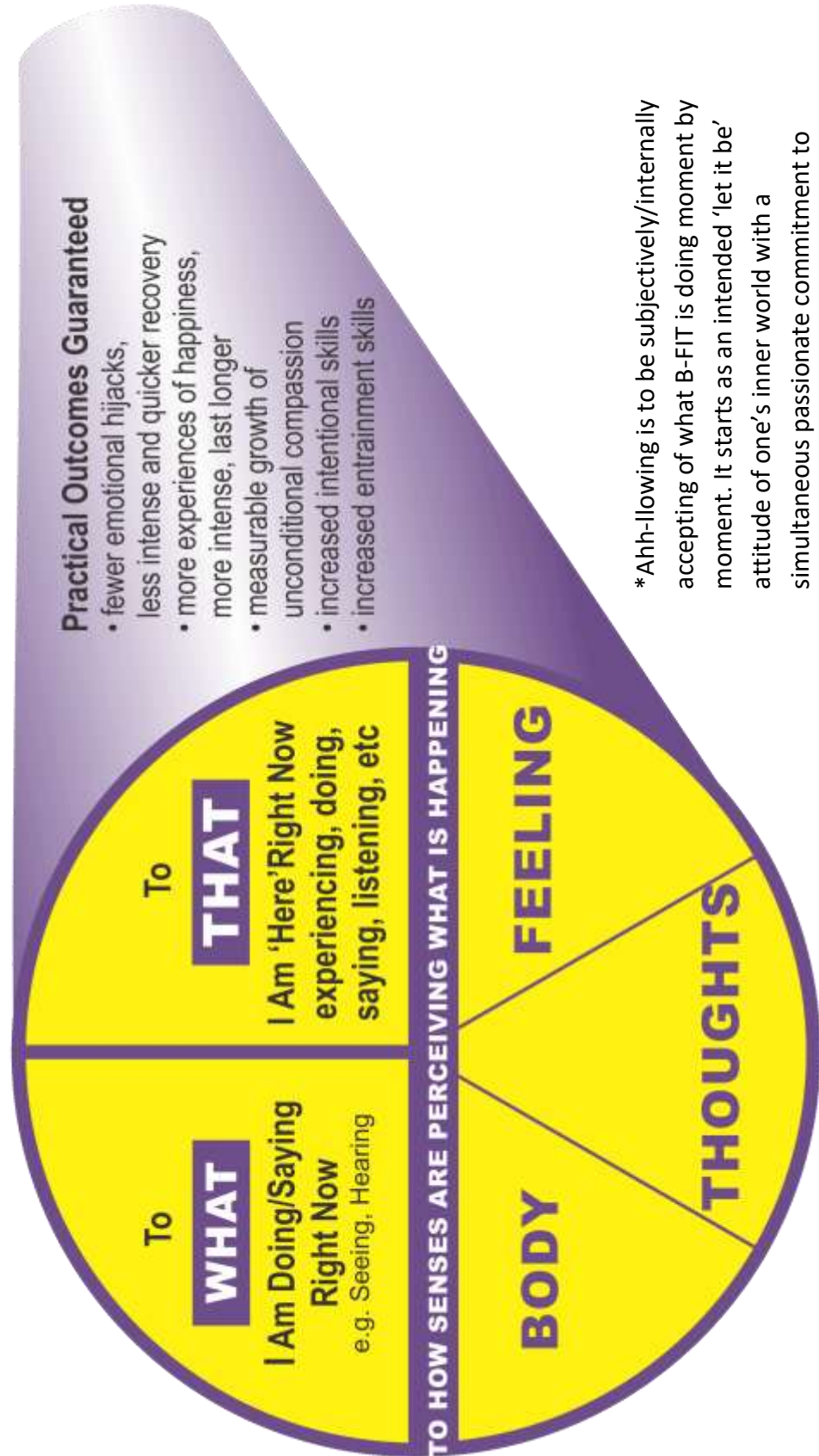
Primitive Predispositions	- Inherited genetic makeup re: survival and reproduction drives (i.e. 'Nature' You)
Filters	- Illogical beliefs / faulty filters from childhood conditioning e.g. "I need", "I am", "others are" (i.e. 'Nurture' You)
Primed Prompts	- Societal and cultural brain washing / stereotyping / branding / bigotry (i.e. 'Numbed' You)
Mindless Mind	- The 'You' who is reading this but doesn't know it (i.e. 'Normal' You)

The PFP Roots Causing The 4 Outs

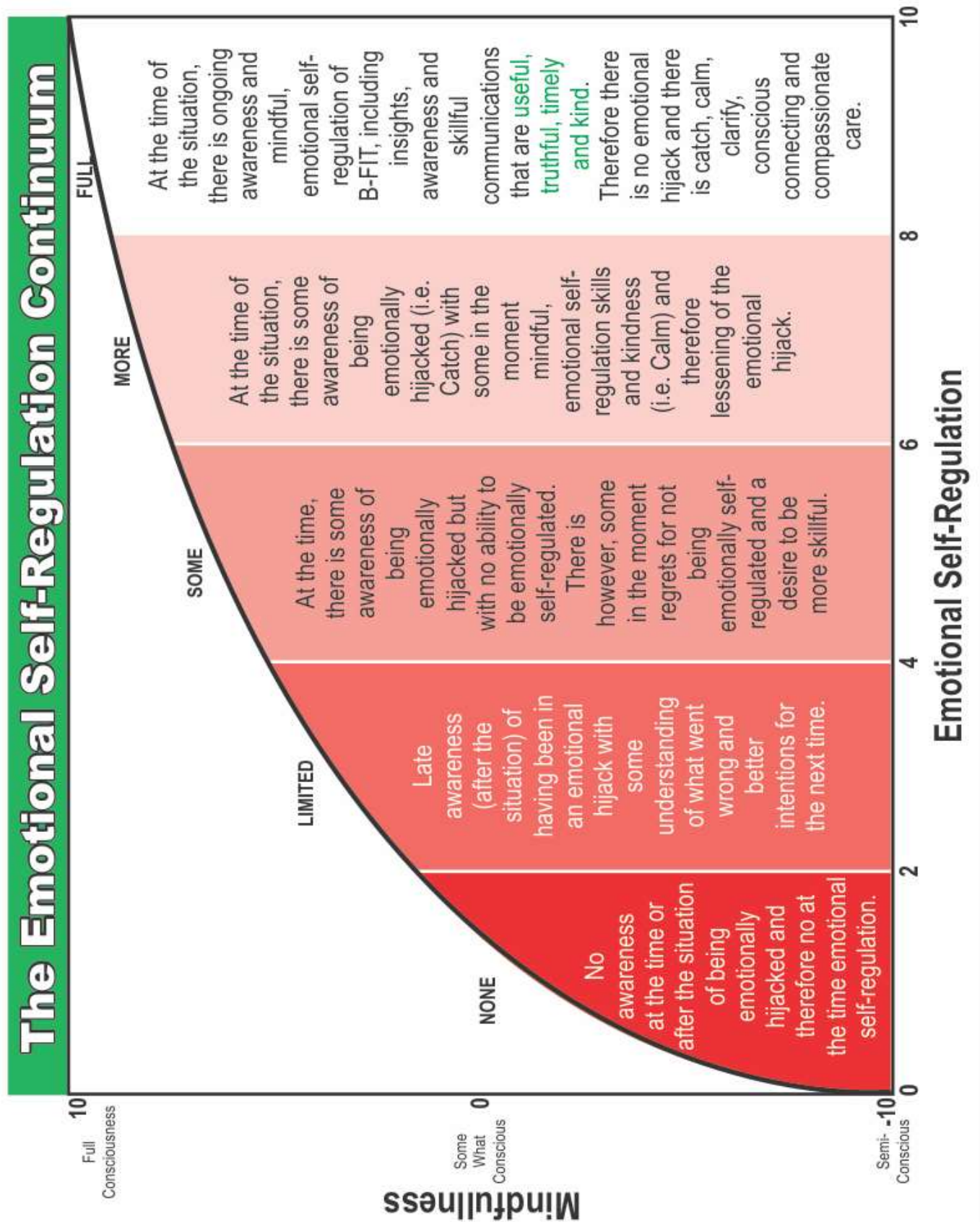


B-FIT MINDFULNESS IS...

Paying Non-judgemental Attention:



*Ahh-llowing is to be subjectively/internally accepting of what B-FIT is doing moment by moment. It starts as an intended 'let it be' attitude of one's inner world with a simultaneous passionate commitment to change objective/outside reality as useful.



13. Sample B-FIT Active and Rest Experiences and Labels

By now I'm sure you understand that this entire approach to mindfulness depends on your awareness of the B-FIT senses that arise constantly in response to your life situations. The sample exercises below are intended to sensitize you to a B-FIT experience. They will be particularly important if you have not had any previous mindfulness experience to make you aware of how much is happening in your body and your mind, even when you believe you are still and calm. Once you have completed these sample experiences you will be ready to use the six exercises that follow to bring B-FIT Mindfulness to naturally occurring situations.

A Note about Labelling

You will see in the following chart a column identified as "label." To *label* is to give a word to what one becomes aware of or notices. Labels are very helpful to stay focused during mindfulness practice exercises. Be on guard however not to start just saying the words and forgetting to notice.

Labelling Laws:

- Labelling is: • naming what you are experiencing/noting with B-FIT
- Labelling's purpose: • to stabilize focus and concentration
- Labelling can be: • out loud, when alone, to increase power
 • silent, when you are relatively focused
- Labelling timing: • can be on time or late
- Labelling accuracy: • can be accurate or a guess
- Labelling duration: • is replaced by just awareness, i.e. no internal or external spoken words when you are relatively focused

Examples of Primary Labels:

	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Label</i>
(B)	all Body sensations other than those associated with emotion	- location, shape, intensity – stronger, weaker, same
(F)	all body sensations associated with an emotion	- feel – name emotion - feel – name location and repeat as in (B)
(I)	picture or mind movie way of Thinking e.g. a person, object or place (POP)	- "Image"
(T)	words, phrases way of Thinking	- "Talk"

Examples of B-FIT Experiences

B-FIT SENSATION	SAMPLE EXPERIENCE	LABEL
BODY Could be located anywhere in your body, inside or outside, where pressure or exertion is felt.	Pick up any fairly heavy object and then raise that arm straight in front of you. Hold that pose for several minutes, paying attention to the muscle fatigue. Bring your arm to a rest position. Pay attention to that sensation.	<i>(active)</i> name the location and sensation: "arm weak." <i>(rest)</i> "none"
FEELING An emotion, such as happy or sad, and any body sensations associated with that feeling, not caused by pressure or exertion.	Deliberately recall something that makes you feel happy, sad or anxious (or any other emotion); pay close attention to the feeling. Create a space where no active feeling is present and you feel neutral.	<i>(active)</i> name the feeling: for example, "happy" <i>(rest)</i> "none"
IMAGE THINKING For example, a mental image, a picture, a mind movie. An undeveloped partial image; pre-cognitive shimmering	Deliberately recall an image of a person, object or place e.g. a sunset. Pay attention to this image as if it was projected onto an internal screen and you are watching like TV. Notice a moment when no internal image appears, or when an image leaves or fades away.	<i>(active)</i> "image" <i>(rest)</i> "none" "some"
TALK THINKING For example, internally talking to yourself with words and phrases Undeveloped partial talk – pre-cognitive rumble	Deliberately say words or sentences in your head about a person, object or place, such as "Why did I do that?" Pay attention to yourself saying those words. Notice when no internal talk is happening, or when it leaves or fades away	<i>(active)</i> "talk" <i>(rest)</i> "none" "some"
All of B-FIT	a sudden sensation of one or all of a B-FIT experience	"gone"

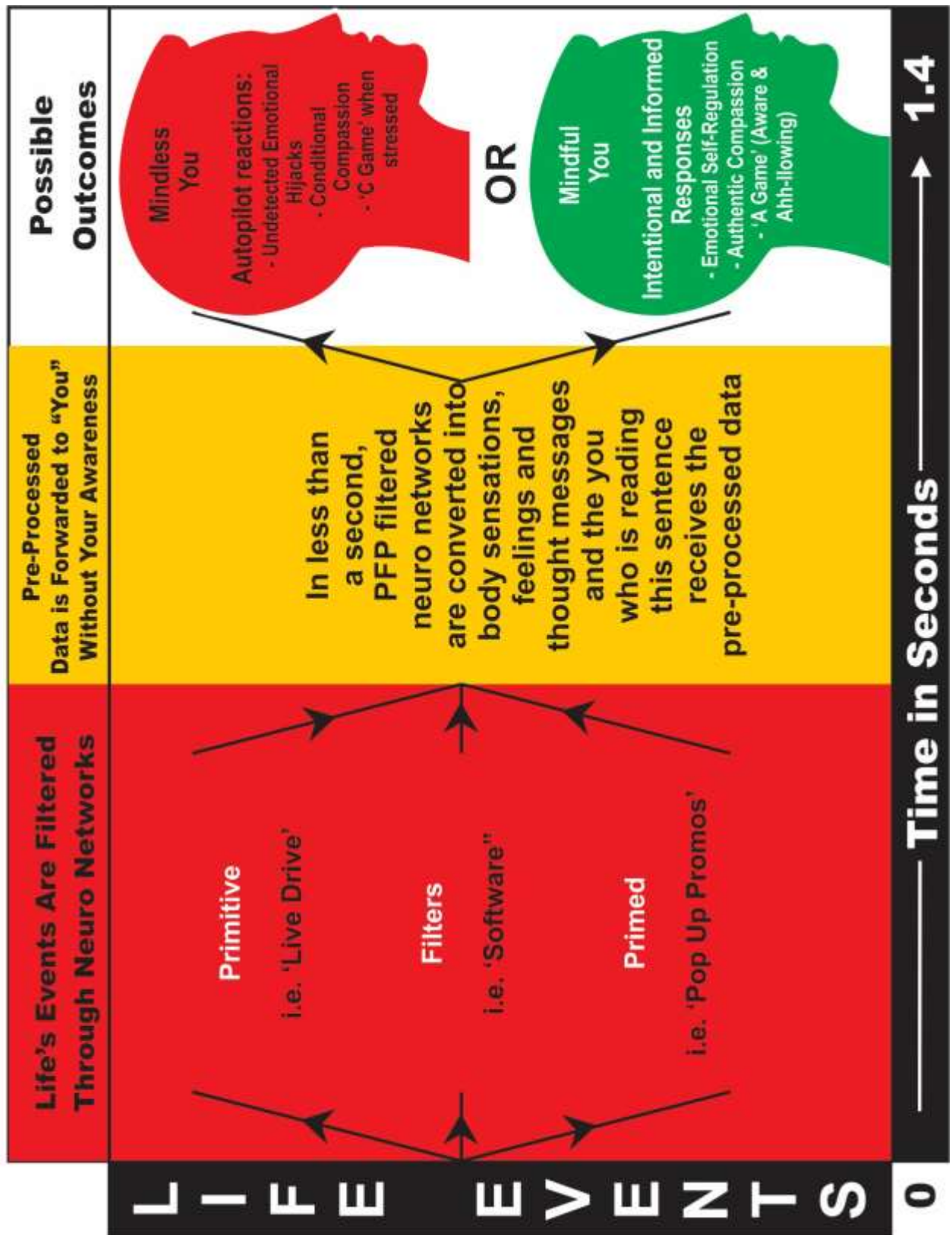
A Note on the Importance of Noticing

The importance of noticing B-FIT sensations is part of every mindfulness practice. Whenever you stop and deliberately notice a sensation or an experience, a non-attached, non-judgmental observing (the wave like qualities of the nervous system's sensory experience) process begins that leads to wisdom and authentic kindness.

14. Wisdom and Authentic Kindness from B-FIT Sensory Clarity and Ahh-llowing

B-FIT Elements (examples)		Noting Labels				
		“Clear”	“None”	“Flow”	“Here”	“Ahh-llow”
Body	External	Touch Sensations of Clothing, Hot, Cold etc.	No/Low Sensations	Touch gets - Stronger/Weaker, Bigger/Smaller	Aware of	Ongoing
	Internal	Physical Sensations of Pleasure, Pain, Neutral	Physically Relaxed	Pulsating, Vibrating, Aching, Undulating, Stronger/Weaker, Bigger/Stronger, Faster/Slower	Being Aware That • ‘I’ Am Aware	Subjective
Feel	Emotions	Anger, Joy, Fear, Sadness, Excitement	Neutral Feel	Intensity – Stronger/Weaker, Faster/Slower	or • ‘I’ Am Doing	Non-Driven
	Feel Body Sensations	Physical Sensations of Feeling (name location)	Calm/Peace	Pulsating, Vibrating, Aching, Stronger/Weaker, Bigger/Smaller, Faster/Slower	or • ‘I’ Am Getting or	Yielding
Image	Look (external seeing)	External Sights	Full Field Focus	Cycles of Stronger/Weaker Visual Experience	• ‘I’ Am Having Feelings	to
	Image (internal)	Internal Mental Images	Blank Mental ‘Screen’	Cycles of Pre or Post Cognitive Ripples/Wavy, Pixels, Fading In and Out, Moving Distortions	or • ‘I’ Am Thinking	B-FIT Internal and External Experiences
Talk	Listen (external hearing)	External Sounds	External Silence	Cycles of Stronger, Weaker Sound e.g. bell	Eventually there is no/low sense of an ‘I’ – just pure awareness.	
	Talk (internal)	Mental Talk	Mental Quiet	Cycles of Pre or Post Cognitive Rumble/‘Echoes’		

Our Human Predicament - Optional



Happiness

Our Predicament and Our Potential



PETER MARKS

- University of Toronto, Academic Programs Instructor.
- 4 decades of Unified B-FIT Mindfulness Practice and Applications.
- International Unified Mindfulness Facilitator in Canada, USA and Mexico since 1993. Trained over 10,000 people.
- Co-founder, Director and/or Consultant to 42 Autism and other Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health and Addiction Services' Systems throughout Ontario.
- 30 years Human Services Volunteer including 5 maximum security prisons.
- 15 years Indigenous Peoples' Community Services Development and Advocacy in Northern Ontario and the Yukon.
- Guest Lecturer and Keynote Speaker at Universities, Conferences and Human and Health Services' Organizations.

"The Heart of this wise resource is a set of brilliant strategies and insights to enhance living-and serving- more deeply."

Jeff Warren

Meditation Teacher, Author; Former Producer of CBC's -The Current and Ideas,
Co-Author with Dan Harris of Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics and Author, Head Trip

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