

Heart to Heart, Hand in Hand

How to Trade
Holistic Peer Counseling

Amara Karuna

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Published by



KARUNA PUBLISHING

PO BOX 1071, PAHOA HI 96778

See also <https://amarakaruna.com/>

Publication: September 2023 by Karuna Publishing

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Cover design by Amara Karuna

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For information address Karuna Publishing.

First Karuna Publishing Paperback Printing: September 5th, 2023

ISBN: 0-9842274-7-4

ISBN-13: 978-0-9842274-7-1

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PRINCIPLES OF HPC

Peer Network - we are all equals, even if we have different skills, resources, educations and bodies

Co-creation- we trade counseling time equally, each taking the role of client and counselor alternately

Radical Self Empowerment- We have the power to heal from our wounds, with help from others.

Holistic- we use effective healing techniques from many sources, including psychology, bodywork, breath work, energy healing and mediation.

Societal Programming- Many of our mental and emotional habits are installed from cultural norms, and can be examined and dissolved

Emotion Positive- Emotions are natural, healthy waves of energy that give life and vitality

Trust in our Human Inner Goodness

Trusting the Natural Process- When emotions are intentionally honored and given attention and space to be, they naturally heal and transform

Emotional Mastery and Rationality- emotions can be felt fully in a safe container, without having to act on them, and this leads to clearer thinking and decisions.

Process Principles:

Client centered- the sessions are directed by the client with help from the counselor

Consensual- all activities are co-created and verbally agreed on by the people sharing time

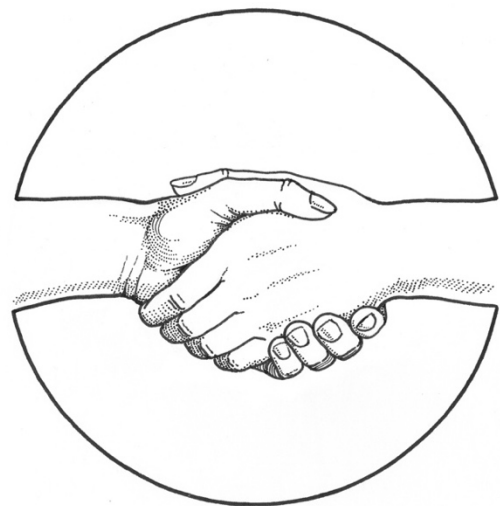
Radical and skillful honesty and transparency - Revealing feelings and thinking that have been hidden or suppressed is inherently healing, when done intentionally in session

Emotional Responsibility- We take responsibility for healing the traumas and hurts that we have accumulated, and can learn to have choice about when we are triggered

Getting to the Root Injury- Finding the root memories of old trauma and allowing conscious awareness and acceptance brings healing

Affinity groups- When people with similar experiences meet together, they can be very effective in healing.

- By Henry India Holden





1 HUMANS AND EMOTIONS

Why does life seem so unsatisfying at times?

Why do emotions just suddenly arise?

What happens when we decide to be partners and build family with someone, and after a few months or years the rosy glow of our idealism wears off and it seems to become so much more difficult than we imagined?

Why do we find ourselves arguing, feeling jealous, greedy, and uncooperative?

It seems if the other person would just do it our way, and stop being so unreasonable, things would work out great!

How do we communicate what we want without being controlling?

How do we stay connected when our needs seem to be conflicting with others?

Why do we keep trying to stop drinking, smoking or eating too much, and find it such an ongoing struggle?

Emotional problems between people are the primary reason for breaking up relationships, businesses and communities.

Because our Western culture is so emotionally repressed, most people have no models for how to handle their own emotions in a responsible and healthy way. We go through life hoping for peace and pleasure, and if we get triggered or have our "buttons pushed," we tend to blow up out of control, and then try to get out of the unpleasant emotions as fast as possible, without really understanding where they came from or why they are so intense. Emotions are messy, physical things that involve lots of movement, sounds, inner chemistry, and body fluids.

The shadow is any part of the psyche that is unpopular and judged as undesirable. Shadows exist because of an accumulation of past hurtful experiences. We can see our own shadows in the places where we find ourselves compulsively doing things that we have already decided we do not want to do, such as indulging in addictions. It is also seen

in chronic illnesses that we can't seem to heal. Or where we feel blocked in moving forward toward the things we want to create in our lives.

Shadows, or patterns, live in our unconscious, so by their nature they are hard to see. It is far easier to notice something you do not like about another person, thus projecting your shadow on to them.

The problem with shadows is that no matter what attempts are made to control or ignore them, they keep popping their ugly little heads up in the most inopportune and embarrassing moments.

This is because they want healing, and they want to be honored and acknowledged. The longer they are pushed away and repressed, the more energy they build up, until they really seem like monsters lurking somewhere under the thin veneer of our "nice" conscious personalities.

The good news is that shadows and old emotional distresses can be cleared and permanently resolved, with loving help from others.

This book is intended as a resource for people who would like to help themselves, their friends and their families to feel more deeply satisfied with life and relationships.

We can use this on different levels

Some people have sessions occasionally just to blow off steam in stressful times.

Some set up regular sessions which provide a deep long term therapy, systematically removing the blocks that keep them from realizing their dreams.

What is peer counseling, and why do it?

Peer counseling is aimed at teaching lay people how to be effective in helping themselves and others with emotional issues, and in regaining our innate goodness and intelligence.

It is based on observation of what really works in practice, not on theories of what ought to work. Re-Evaluation Counseling evolved from the experiences of thousands of people over years.

Re-evaluation Counseling is a world wide network of non-professional counselors, who trade sessions for the purpose of clearing emotions, dissolving rigid patterns of behavior and recovering the ability to be present and think clearly and rationally. It is a people's liberation movement that started in the 60's and has spread all over the world.

RC has spawned many permutations and offshoots, such as Co-Counseling International, the National Coalition Building Institute, and Holistic Peer Counseling.

This spreading of information was encouraged by Harvey Jackins, the founder of RC, because of his generous attitude that the more people who know and practice their own healing, the faster the world situation will improve. You can see the original organization at www.rc.org, where you will find many resources for learning the skills.

This chapter and the next give a summary of some of the basic ideas from Re-evaluation Co-counseling (RC), because it is a really useful groundwork on which to base our work in Holistic Peer Counseling, which also includes energy awareness and psychic skills.

If you have not yet been trained as a co-counselor, these chapters are important. (They were previously printed in the *Heartbeat Nurturing Therapy* book by the same author. Heartbeat therapy specifically addresses the inner child and the distress we acquire in infancy).

Human nature and intelligence

What are human beings really like? Underneath all the programs, conditioning, expectations and hurts that we get, what is our true basic nature? Our assumptions about this make a huge difference in how we approach healing.

What would you be like if you were really free to be your true self? What are young children like before they are socialized?

For this work, we see that healthy human beings are naturally intelligent, energetic, loving, communicative and cooperative. We are emotional and also rational. We love to be close with each other,

and we love to share. We love to create things. Our inherent nature has a vast capacity for flexible intelligence. Each of us is whole and complete, unique, and with limitless potential. Nothing can permanently damage our real nature, but many things can cover it up.

When our thinking process is working well, when we are relaxed and feeling normal, information from our environment comes in mostly on a subconscious level.

Most of what is happening at any time does not need our conscious attention, such as sounds sights, smells, temperature of the air, etc. It gets evaluated, processed and sorted, and then filed in our memory to be recalled at will later.

When we are healthy, we can respond to each new situation with an appropriate, new and creative response.

How we get hurt

Why don't people always act according to our true inner nature? If we are so cooperative and loving, why are we killing each other and the planet?

Through the natural process of living, we get hurt. We get hurt physically, mentally and emotionally on all levels, and frequently. This is a normal part of life, and we are naturally equipped to deal with it, if we were allowed to.

Trauma, or wounding, can be described as an experience that was too intense for our nervous systems, our emotional development or level of understanding. It was an experience we could not integrate or stay present with.

It might have been too much sensation or stimulation, or happening too fast, or happening too soon for us to be ready. Or it might have been that there was not enough of something, like not enough understanding or support or safety. In those situations where we are not able to stop the experience, our conscious awareness changes.

When we are being hurt, our normal thinking process shuts down, or seems to work very differently. People do not usually think well while

hurting or in trauma. The forebrain, which holds the more evolved part of our brain and the capacity for rational thought, becomes less dominant. The more primitive reptilian brain area takes over, inducing feelings of fight, freeze, faint or flight.

Did you ever try to think or make decisions with a headache or while you are very upset?

During a painful experience, the input of information from the environment is still pouring in, but it's not getting processed or evaluated as usual, and a kind of mis-storage occurs. All the sights, sounds, smells, etc., emotions, as well as the experience of being unable to think clearly get stuck together in one big recording/ memory.

This distress recording is like a videotape of the incident, which is stored for later processing, perhaps at a safer time. A stored hurt creates a rigid, inflexible spot in our mind. The recording seems to take up space; to use up some of our capacity for intelligence. All the information seems to be stored in one big lump, like a recorded movie. Separate bits can't be remembered individually as they can when it is stored normally. It becomes a place where we can't think well, and that we avoid remembering.

Why? What happens right now when you think about something that was really a hurtful event?

Most people re-experience the hurt. It's all still right there, and so we try to avoid remembering it.

Practice: Scan your Triggers

Take a moment and think of times when you have acted like that. Maybe write them down for further reflection. This behavior indicates a place here you have been hurt, and still carry the scars of that hurt.

The recordings wait in our subconscious storage vault, like a booby trap. When anything later happens which is similar enough to the original hurts, we experience that unpleasant phenomenon known as being triggered. The new situation may not even be a hurtful event. It may just be similar in any way to the old event.

We call this being "re-stimulated" or "triggered." It's also commonly known as getting your buttons pushed, or overreacting. When the old recording starts to play, it feels like a replaying of the old incident. We feel the same feelings, find ourselves saying the same words or compulsively doing the same actions. It takes us out of the present and into the past. Our nervous system goes into high arousal, and activating chemicals are released by the brain.

A person acting out of an old distress recording will do things that don't work, say things that are not pertinent, and fail to cope effectively and gracefully with the present situation. They will feel old uncomfortable feelings that may have nothing or very little to do with the present situation.

We can tell we've come across this emotional residue in someone because they're acting frozen, nonsensical or rigid. They become irrational and "not themselves." They may get memory flashes of the old situation. "Temporary insanity" is a classic description of being triggered.

Whenever someone is triggered, and they have failed to cope effectively with the new situation, so that moment also becomes a new hurtful experience. It gets recorded on top of the first one with all its new feelings, sensations and thoughts. Thus new situations are added on to the old ones, and the distress recording gets bigger, adding more layers.

This means the booby trap has more triggers. It takes up more of our free thinking space, and there are less areas of experience in life that are not upsetting to us. The person becomes more disposed to be upset by more situations, and more deeply upset, and for longer times.

We get hurt early in life and often. We get hurt by accident when we are babies; we get bumps, or get cold, hungry, frustrated or scared. We might be abused or neglected.

But by far the greatest cause of our hurts is from contagion from irrational adults, who are unaware and acting from their own distress. For example, when a child runs outside naked, and the parent (having been punished by their own parents for

exactly the same thing) gets upset and yells at the child, telling them how bad and embarrassing they have been acting. Then the child carries guilt, shame and fear about their body as a distress.

Types of Distress Patterns

When there has been enough re-stimulation, and when the same hurts happen over and over, they form patterns, which become incorporated into our personalities and even reflected in our body structure. They color our beliefs and effect every part of our lives.

Latent Patterns: Most emotional patterns are latent, and so you do not feel the distress all the time, but it lies inside waiting to be pulled out by a similar event. We see these as our "problems." We know that we get triggered by certain things. "Oh, I always get mad when someone is late for anything." "I hate to talk in front of a group."



Chronic patterns: These are created when we are hurt so frequently over a long time, that the feelings become pervasive, and we think "that's just the way I am." These are seen as idiosyncrasies of personality, or as your viewpoint on reality.

Practice: Scan Your Beliefs

What kinds of chronic patterns have you seen in yourself and others? Take a moment and write down the basic ideas about life and this world that you base your actions on. What do you believe about yourself? About the world?

Chronic patterns are constantly triggered; they play all the time. They are like colored glasses through which we see the world. They can be identified in a person's posture, speech, emotional attitudes (like pessimism), and ritual rigid behaviors (like compulsions and addictions). See Chapter 17.

Control Patterns: These are inhibition patterns that form from our training not to release emotions. They block our ability to express feeling.

Inhibitions are learned early. We are told "don't cry," and get lots of patting, rocking, threats, or humiliation: "Big boys don't cry." Or "I'll give you something to cry about." Soon the inhibitions become internalized as control patterns, and we stop ourselves without having to be told. See Chapter 14.

The natural healing process

Emotions are natural waves of energy that arise in response to a stimulus, and if they are allowed to flow and are not repressed, they naturally resolve themselves. It is natural for a child to get angry if another child steals a toy, or if they are denied a food that they really want. The emotion can be validated and allowed space to be felt, and yet not be the deciding factor in how the situation is resolved.

Hurtful things happen to us as a natural part of life, and our emotional responses to them are our natural way of healing the hurts. A child who is sad about not having another cookie can be allowed to cry, and have the feeling acknowledged in a respectful way. They can be given empathy, and allowed time to finish expressing their feelings (but not another cookie), and soon the tears will wash through and the child will feel happy again.

In our lives, in this culture, we experience many disappointments and moments of neglect, abuse and not having our needs met. If we are not given loving empathetic attention around the emotions stirred by these hurts, they tend to get stored in our subconscious shadows. In an ideal situation, as soon as the hurtful event is over, the person would be able to release the hurt and heal.

The process of storing old hurts can be reversed. Our abilities to think clearly and respond

freely can be recovered, and repaired. A natural healing process is built in, and we are all born with it. If it could operate, it would allow distress to be moved through immediately at that moment. It can also be used retroactively to clear recorded distress. This emotional release process can be called "discharge" (in the sense of discharging or draining a battery), or "catharsis."

Hurts always naturally seek release. However the safe space, time, and attention from a caring person that encourages the healing are not usually available to most of us, so the emotions and information tends to stay stuck. They will stay stuck an entire lifetime unless they are processed.

Emotional release is a natural, inherent process. Every young child does it spontaneously. It is a physical, chemical process that happens in our bodies involving complex chemicals and nerves.



Image by Robert Gluckson

When sad, we naturally cry and sob. When afraid, we laugh, tremble and have cold sweat. When angry we rage with loud sounds and large movements, and have hot sweat. When we have physical discomfort we relieve it by yawning and stretching. When we want to communicate an experience we do so with animated, non-repetitive talking. All of these are avenues of release for the emotional energy, and have a healing effect if done

consciously within a safe and loving situation, with someone who wants to listen.

If the process of catharsis is allowed to finish, the stuck information in the distress recording is released, evaluated and stored correctly. The area of our thinking around the old painful moment is restored to flexible awareness. Our locked up energy becomes free.

This is called "Re-evaluation" in RC, and is an automatic response after emotion has been discharged. It is the "Aha" feeling of resolution and understanding that comes after releasing. It can also be called integration. The purpose of counseling is to allow the catharsis process so that we can reclaim all the areas of our flexible thinking that have been blocked.

Blocks to the healing process

What keeps the natural healing process from happening? Originally it is the lack of an attentive, loving person at the moment of the hurtful experience. In painful moments, we are often alone or the others around are also involved somehow in their own pain. There is often a big shortage of people who know how to truly pay attention to someone else when they are hurting. The lack of this outer resource is important.

Do you feel like you got enough calm, loving attention while growing up?

We often grow up with a chronic feeling of never having enough loving personal attention. Or we might have been smothered with attention from someone who was trying to control us. This is due to similar hurts instilled in the adults we depend on, and also to the isolating structure of our modern society, which makes it very hard for parents to get the help they need.

Confusing healing with the hurt

Our culture also confuses the healing process with the hurt itself. We think if someone is crying, we need to get them to stop, and then they will be all better. We do not realize that the crying itself was what would make the hurt dissolve.

No form of catharsis is more important than the others. If they are encouraged and persisted with, the stuck hurt will be released in just the right way for the client. Often you will have many different feelings about one hurtful event.

Unconsciously asking for attention

Everyone keeps trying to get attention, although not with awareness. We talk out our problems, or cry on a shoulder with friends. If you listen, much of everyday conversation is people trying to client about their problems. But it is hard to be thorough and deep with this unaware "clienting," because our conditioning not to have feelings takes over whenever the discharge gets deep. Also friends are often unskilled at listening and will often offer advice, give criticism, or just take the attention back to themselves by interrupting and talking about their own feelings.

In peer counseling we structure our time together so that we create a safe time for us each to have a turn being listened to, when the listener has been trained to listen well. In this way deep and true healing can take place. If the discharge process is allowed to operate, people can return to natural state of freedom and healthy living.

Resistance to change

Another thing that blocks the healing is lack of inner resources, or free attention. Our nervous systems need to be ready to handle the work of processing the old wounds. Sometimes cathartic emotional release work is not appropriate for some individuals with deep trauma, who could be helped better with other styles of healing.

When we really get into areas of ourselves that are old and habitual, it's common to feel an urge to avoid them, and stop doing healing work. The patterns of energy have their own inertia, and changing can feel uncomfortable. In addition, the areas of pain are not pleasant to explore, and it takes energy to face them. That's why we help each other. We can notice when we hit a block and ask for support. This chapter includes a summary of *The Human Side of Human Beings*, by Harvey Jackins.¹



2 GROUNDING, CONSCIOUS RELAXATION, VISUALIZATION

GROUNDING

What does grounding mean? Making the ourselves more present in the moment, putting our attention on the physical body, and strengthening the energy connection between our bodies and the earth.

Matter and energy

All matter is energy. There are different levels of vibration, in gradations like a spectrum; some finer and faster, some dense and slow.

We have many different levels of being; the dense physical form, the less dense (but still weighty) emotions, the finer level of thoughts, and still finer essence of our souls or spirits, our pure consciousness.

We have many "bodies," one for each level, which can be seen psychically as overlapping layers of an energy field or aura. They get lighter and lighter out farther from the physical body.

The physical is the most solid. But even matter, on the atomic level, has more space in it

than substance. The fast movement of the atoms gives the illusion of solidity, like the turning blades of an electric fan seem to become a solid wheel.

We are consciousness

Our attention or consciousness is not limited to our physical bodies. We often "leave" or become unaware of our physical bodies, as in sleeping.

Wherever your attention is, that is where you **are** as a being. You are your attention point, or in other words, your essence as a being is a pure point or field of awareness.

When you are paying attention to what you will do next week, or what you did in the past, part of your energy or being goes there.

If your energy is always centered on the mental levels or planning for the future, you are not present in the physical present time reality. It draws you out of what is happening here and now, which after all, is really where the action is.

When we experience hurtful events which are then unhealed and unresolved, part of our psychic energy gets "stuck" there in the past, until healing occurs. This is what soul retrieval is about.

The relationship between the being and the body

Most people are "out" of their physical body a lot; thinking of faraway places, being centered in their head only (thinking), spiritually asleep, or believing the body is ugly or bad, or avoiding physical pain or boredom.

The physical body has its own consciousness. In fact, every cell of the body has its own kind of awareness. A physical body is like a huge city, with trillions of little beings, (cells, bacteria, mitochondria, etc.), making it work, doing their different jobs. In fact over half of our body is not our own human cells, but our symbiotic microbiome.

Your body is an expression of, and a reflection of, your state of consciousness and your spiritual being. A body is very wise. It knows exactly what it needs for healing at all times. It will keep working- breathing, heart pumping, etc. even when the being is not paying much attention to it.

But if the connection gets too remote, illness and death result. When you are not in your body much, the body doesn't feel very safe, kind of like an abandoned child. The energy field around it becomes weak and flat. It needs love and attention from your spirit, because the spirit is the source of life energy for the body. When the spirit departs, the body dies.

The connection or bridge between the spirit and the body is the breath.

Life energy is brought to the body mainly via the breath. The body can only live a few

minutes without breath. Learning to breathe properly can change your entire mental and emotional state.

Make the body safe and loved

When doing meditation and healing, if the body isn't happy and safe, it won't allow you to be aware of subtle energies. The emotions or physical pains will clamor too loudly and drown out the quieter inner voices. This is why it is hard to know what your guidance is, what is the right thing to do, when you are upset or in pain.

In our culture, we are taught to identify with our body as being the most real part of ourselves. This belief leads to our fear of death; because although our physical body must die, consider the possibility that our being does not. A being who believes it is only the body may feel trapped and afraid.

At the same time, our culture discounts the physical body as being bad, gross, something with passions that need to be controlled. We hide it with clothes, and hide its natural functions as shameful.

What effects does this have? Although being out of your body reduces pain, it makes you feel unstable, with your energy diffused. We feel vulnerable to attack, awkward, off-balance, unaware, ineffective. anytime you feel scared, you are probably not well grounded.

We need to reclaim our love for our bodies, learn what is needed to be healthy, and care for them as a best friend or a child. one thing bodies need is to be grounded.

Learn to be in your body

We want to learn to bring the vibrations of our consciousness into the body, and to re-tune the body's energy systems to be accustomed to higher energies. Our bodies are very flexible, and able to adapt to a wide range of vibration.

In doing meditation, we are actually raising our vibrational level. If you raise the vibration to be fast enough, disease organisms can't live. The slower vibrations of unhelpful microbes can't exist in a strong high energy field.

People who have a lot of life force running through their bodies are more resistant to disease.

Other things that raise the vibration are exercise, oxygen, occasional fasting, avoiding excessive animal and low quality foods, and healing old emotional blocks.

When we bring our consciousness into the body, we are able to focus our energies to move the world around us, and create our own lives. This body, here and now, is the point in the universe that you have to work with, that is all your own.

Why would this be important while giving someone attention in a session? The more you are in your body, the more you have real power in this world available to you. You can also separate your own energy and problems from other people's since you are better aware of your own physical boundaries. It is a good idea to ground before and after a session.

The first step is grounding-

Psychic energy follows the same laws of physical energy. Energy flows along the path of least resistance. In electricity, outlets are grounded with a wire to allow any surges of power to flow off harmlessly into the earth.

We experience surges of psychic energy also; as in shocks, someone getting upset with us or attacking, or loud noises that set off our "fight or flight" adrenal responses.

When energy gets stuck in us, it hurts. If it has somewhere to flow out to, a large surge is not uncomfortable.

Grounding Visualization:

Close your eyes, take a deep breath; your brain needs oxygen or it shuts down. It takes no effort to visualize; thoughts are so light, just relax. Put your hands on your hips and imagine a cylindrical tube attached to your pelvis, going down into the ground. It can be a pipeline, a hose, a tube, a root or a tree trunk.

On an exhale, imagine it sinking, falling easily, getting longer and longer, falling through all the layers of the earth, rocks, water, lava, all the way down to the very center of the earth. Imagine it very solid.

As it winds around the center of the earth, getting firmly attached. You can imagine a heavy ball or rock dropping down, and that may make it easier.



Now on an exhale, imagine draining out any energy that you don't need right now- you

don't have to see it or know what it is; just suggest to yourself that whatever is not needed now, you are letting go of, letting fall.

Where is there tension or pain in your body? Relax and drain out that excess energy. Breathing at the same time will help a lot - gather the energy into a ball or blob on the inhale, then let it drop on the exhale.

Practice for a few minutes.

Breathe, stretch, drop over so your arms dangle to the floor, let your head be loose, and let any energy that may have been stuck in your head drain out the top,

Stand up, and practice grounding while walking. Walk around. Keep your attention on your grounding cord. How does it feel different than usual?



Practice: Grounding in Pairs

With permission, one partner (person #1) physically pushes on the shoulder of second partner (#2) before either of them have tried grounding. How hard do you need to push to make them move their feet?

Then have person #2 try the grounding exercise and have person #1 physically push on person #2. Do you notice any difference between the grounded and ungrounded interactions? Then trade roles.

Try variations of this with person #2 sitting on the ground or in a chair. How does this variation change the energy levels? Try picking the person up physically before and after grounding. Switch positions and repeat the exercise.

The body accumulates excess energy during the day unless it is grounded. Try taking a grounding break a few times a day when you are tired. Sitting on a toilet for a few minutes is a good time; or while driving.

It is important to get your body used to this new feeling, so practice grounding every day for a few minutes. Especially ground before a hard demanding task, or stress.

Try grounding your car, your house, your bedroom. Just imagine a grounding cord as wide as the object you are grounding. There are no limits in the thought realm.

Energy shifts

When you are changing something, like a set of old beliefs, or diet, or surroundings, it means an energy shift. This can be uncomfortable as your body is learning to handle the new vibrations.

The body and psyche tends to resist new changes, because of the inertia of the physical plane. Emotionally, everything may seem new and different, or overwhelming. You may become crabby or off balance. If it is extreme enough, it can cause physical illness. This can be called a growth period or healing crisis.

The body needs things like good food, sleep, sex, playful fun and exercise to get

through growth periods easily. These things help run more life force through it and give it what it needs to be happy and safe. if you feel odd after meditation or a class, go for a walk or eat something.

Also be aware that we have all been emotionally open before when we were young. But often we have gotten too hurt and overwhelmed, and since we had no grounding or protection or support, we chose to shut down and get our attention out of body. We all have hurts stored about not being able to be as aware, honest, and free as we really are, and having to hide our true selves.

It is good to take some time processing on an emotional level, by exploring the memories with a caring listener or in a journal.

Do you remember a time when you were aware of something energetic or emotional and got discounted or gaslighted for it? Did you get support at any time for your awareness?



Deep relaxation

Practice grounding before going to sleep. You may find that you sleep less and remember

your dreams more often, because your energy is flowing more in connection to your body.

Learning to relax deeply anytime you want is an invaluable skill. Deep relaxation can replace some sleep time, reduce stress, and heal illness.

Practice: Deep Relaxation

Lying down, get comfortable. Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Do this five times. Imagine the grounding cord is as wide as your body, and cradling your body, going all the way to the center of the earth. Breathe.

If you slip away, bring yourself back into your body by breathing or touching your head. Stay present so you can hear and be aware.

Now on the inhale, tense up your feet and ankles, as tight as you can. Hold for a moment, and then exhale and completely let go. Imagine any excess, unneeded energy is draining into the earth. Imagine your body becoming softer and melting.

Do the same process with your calves, your thighs, your buttocks, your stomach, your chest, your back, your arms and hands, your shoulders, your head and face. Feel yourself become lighter and more empty and open with each breath.

If you want, you can think a message to your body: "I'm here" or "I love you" or "Be healthy." Let yourself be completely limp, open and receptive.

If you are going on to another activity, begin to wiggle your fingers and toes, and then stretch. Slowly sit up when you are ready, staying grounded.

Practice Your Visualization Skills:

Remember: this takes no effort! We are working with thought forms. There is no time or space on the thought level. All you have to do is intend, wish it to be, and the energy moves at your will. We get used to the denseness of the physical world, where we think we have to push and pull and use effort to move things. The usual limits of matter do not apply here, in thoughts. If you have trouble controlling your thoughts and visualizations, it is because you haven't practiced focusing your mind.

One belief that is distracting is that "this is not real." Many people think that only physical plane energy is real, what they can see and touch with the body. If you have doubts, fears or any strong emotions, it will interfere with the easy control of thoughts and visualizations.

Right now, just imagine grounding from the base of your head and tell all those feelings and patterns to step aside for a while. You can always let them come back later. Let yourself use this time, working in this way, as an experiment. We want to learn to create and erase pictures or thought images.

When you dissolve a picture, imagine that the energy gets recycled into neutral, cosmic energy, back into the huge pool of energy that we are all made out of. See which way of destroying the pictures feels best. Throw a bomb at them, or melt them, or turn them into mist.

Practice: Creating and Erasing Pictures

Imagine the space in front of you as a blank, dark screen.

Try seeing colors on that screen. First, see red. Remember what red looks like, a bright ruby red. Now yellow, blue, purple.

Half blue and half green. A rainbow. Wipe the screen blank. Breathe. No effort.

See an apple floating on your screen. A big red juicy apple. Look at it, make it three dimensional. Solid. Now imagine it dissolves into nothing. See another apple, a green one. Now blow it up into a million pieces. See two apples, and watch them vanish into a puff of smoke. See five apples. Throw them all away into outer space.

See a rose- make it any color. How does it smell? Are the petals soft? Make it as real as you can. See the thorns on the stem. Now take an eraser and erase it. Breathe. Make another rose, another color, and dissolve it. Make twenty roses. Make a hundred roses. There are no limits to what you can create on your mental screen. Wipe them all away.

Now imagine a rotten apple, all mushy and wormy. Notice if you have any emotional or physical reaction to it. It is just another thought image which you created. Now see it change into a fish, swimming along. Blow it up into a cloud of light. Now see a smelly can of garbage, in the sun. Erase it.

Imagine a creek, running clear in the woods. Smells, sounds? Is it easier for you to imagine the sights, smells or sounds? See a bunch of happy people, dancing together on a hill. Wipe. See a couple of people fighting hard, hating each other. Erase it.

Notice your emotional reactions, if any. An image that brings up your emotions will seem more real. Come back to the center of your head and check your grounding. Breathe.

The point is to notice the pictures that are always flowing through your mind, and see how you react to them. We are usually controlled by the movies running through on our mental screen. Some of the thought pictures we see are our own past, our ideas for the future, and some are just thoughts we are picking up from other people that have nothing to do with us. Learning to create the images you want and to destroy those you don't want gives you awareness and control over your own mind. No matter how real and dense the images are, they are still thoughts. They are not solid in any way. They only have the power over you that you let them have, when you believe they are real. How does this feel? Is it hard or easy? Are some images harder than others? Practice creating and destroying pictures, beginning with simple, non-emotional ones and then trying some that are charged.

Emotional memory pictures

Old pictures are memories of painful events that still have emotional energy stuck in them. A picture may appear to be stuck in a chakra and distort or block the flow. Physical as well as emotional and mental problems result from such blocks. When you are reminded of the old painful experience, it appears psychically to have "lit up." This is useful in healing, since it helps you identify what the old

pain is. Pictures can be removed using visualization as well as using emotional release therapy.

Practice: Clearing old pictures

See your blank screen in front of you. Now remember an image of something that hurt you or bothered you. See the event in front of you as though you are looking at a movie screen image, or like a photograph. Hold it far enough away that you feel some safety and neutrality. Notice all the details and colors and feelings. Now imagine erasing all the color and feeling out of the picture. Try throwing a light bomb at it, or seeing all the color melt away, or sending a beam of light at it. Let the stuck energy disperse and turn back into neutral energy.

It may take repeated attempts to drain all the energy. If one way of erasing it doesn't work, just try another. All that will be left is a bare, empty sketch of the scene. This is just a record of the event in your memory, which will not have the power to control you emotionally any more. You can do this at any moment; you don't have to be meditating.

Sources: The *Psychic Healing Book* and teachings from the Berkeley Psychic Institute.