



Imaginal Cells

practice prompts emailed daily



March 2021

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Groups IV: The Sinkhole of Self-Censorship

A pivotal factor that can determine whether a group functions optimally, achieving collective goals while supporting individual growth, is if members feel free to be their authentic selves. All too often this doesn't occur because: **1)** many people are so out of touch with their genuine selves that they bring the persona-masks with which they've unwittingly identified into the room, and/or, **2)** the group culture gives rise to and abides self-censorship.

Self-censorship occurs when we're inordinately careful about what we express, hold back, and deliberately limit our contribution in a conversation. This type of behavior prevents us from being all that we could be, and deprives others of our input and insight. Without overt pressure from any specific source of authority, we limit ourselves in an attempt to be less visible and perhaps more comfortable in wallflower mode.

Superficial interaction in groups where people self-censor is directly reflected in a quality of group work that lacks depth. Trust that frees up the flow of a group's collective genius is key to peak performance, and it's exceedingly difficult to build a culture of trust when people self-censor.

So, it behooves us, beyond merely encouraging people to freely self-express, to put in place a mutually agreed upon group social technology that builds in universal contribution, and explicitly dissuades self-censorship.

Do You Self-Censor in Groups?

Willingness to Self-Censor Scale

Instructions: Answering with your first impression, please indicate on a scale from 1-5 whether you:

1. strongly disagree with the statement,
2. disagree with the statement,
3. neither agree nor disagree with the statement,
4. agree with the statement, or
5. strongly agree with the statement.

___ It is difficult for me to express my opinion if I think others won't agree with what I say.

___ There have been many times when I have thought others around me were wrong but I didn't let them know.

___ When I disagree with others, I'd rather go along with them than argue about it.

___ It is easy for me to express my opinion around others who I think will disagree with me.

___ I'd feel uncomfortable if someone asked my opinion and I knew that he or she wouldn't agree with me.

- ___ I tend to speak my opinion only around friends or other people I trust.
- ___ It is safer to keep quiet than publicly speak an opinion that you know most others don't share.
- ___ If I disagree with others, I have no problem letting them know it.

Add up your score.

People who have higher scores tend to be less assertive, more shy and self-conscious, have lower self-esteem, feel positive emotions less frequently, and tend to self-censor.

Hayes, A. F., Glynn, C. J., & Shanahan, J. (2005a). Willingness to self-censor: A construct and measurement tool for public opinion research. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 17, 299-323.

Notes

March 2, 2021

There Are No Waves. There Is No Storm.

Fate whispered to the warrior,
“Beware of the storm.”
The warrior whispered back to fate,
“I am the storm.”
They whispered to her,
“You’re not strong enough to withstand the storm.”
She whispered back,
“I am the storm.”
We generated the storm.
We make waves to create learning opportunities.
We ultimately take responsibility for the storm.
We ARE the storm.
We do not resist the storm.
We are the eye of the storm.
We welcome and embrace the storm.
The storm electrifies, cleanses, and purifies the atmosphere.
The storm is a test.
The storm is essentially empty of storminess.
The storm is an illusion.

Notes

March 3, 2021

Lexicon Updates and Additions

Memory

Additions:

Autobiographical: Personal narrative, memories that weave a personal sense of self

Declarative: Factual information, data

Procedural: Muscle memory

Semantic: Definition, makes meaning, concepts

Experience of reality frames, bandwidths, or frequencies beyond the third and fourth dimension

Additions:

Core being, core self

Enlightened mind

Essential being

Ever-present field of awareness

Formlessness

Purified consciousness as wisdom

Realization of emptiness

Transcendent mind

Storehouse consciousness

Previously Listed:

Absolute

Divine

God

Larger Consciousness frame

Light

Ocean of consciousness Ocean

Pure consciousness

Quantum field

Quantum reality

Source

State of Non-duality

The universal
Ultimate reality
Undifferentiated, undifferentiated field
Unified field

Reality Frame in Which We Live on Earth

Additions:

Collective delusion
Collective dream
Controlled hallucination
Dualistic seeing
Primary dream

Previously Listed:

Consensus reality
Conventional Reality
Dukka
Dualistic projected reality
Hologram
Known universe
Learning lab
Material realm
Matter universe
Maya
Matrix
Projection of consciousness
Samsara
Temporal mundane reality
Time-space reality
Third dimension (and lower fourth)
Video game-like projection

March 4, 2021

Trust

The Cultivation of Intuition and Inner Guidance

The Mind-Brain: To Trust or Not to Trust – Most Don't Ask the Question

Cultivation of intuition requires trust. Yet our society teaches us not to trust ourselves.

And frankly, it really isn't wise to trust ourselves if "trust" for us is synonymous with believing and acting upon what our minds and intellect perceive as reality. That limited perception is indeed untrustworthy.

The mind-brain is evolutionarily constructed to subjectively filter out most of reality and focus our attention primarily on what's required for survival and comfort within the very narrow bandwidth of the material dream-of-life. We are systematically enculturated to not see the big picture and defensively disparage pathways leading toward apprehension of the larger reality. This is the very definition of a severely constricted life, devoid of depth and often experienced as a hollowness.

The brain and intellect, allied in subjective symbiosis with the ego, constantly lie to us. They bar our perception of the larger reality of which we are part to ensure that we focus on the physical body and procreation for the continuation of the species. Driven by the need to feel like we're in control of what is definitively uncontrollable, the brain, mind, and intellect are awash in cognitive distortions, cultural biases and static belief systems which truncate and skew perception. These mind games, in the very literal sense of the word, give us the false sense of being in control.

Experts, Teachers, and Gurus

If we can't really trust our own intellectual analysis of reality nor our ingrained belief systems, who or what do we trust? When we *do* heed the gnawing sense that there's so much more to know beyond our own habitual and/or intellectual perception, the easiest fix is often to look to the outside world for validation, information, and wisdom. It's the path of least resistance requiring the least effort on our parts. We subscribe to one dogma or another. We let someone else figure it out for us.

In fact our culture and our economy *depend* on our deference to the specialized "experts" who know what's best for us. Many of us spend a lifetime abdicating our power to the all-knowing doctors, teachers, professors, researchers, priests, rabbis, scientists, and all manner of authorities. Rather than trust ourselves, we look outside. The challenge here is that we tend to wholly surrender to what we perceive as the external source of greater wisdom and expertise. When we haven't fully recognized and activated our own wisdom and power, we tend to project that onto teachers or leaders. And right on cue, our environment colludes to encourage us to give up our power.

Experts, teachers, the learned, and the sages can be helpful wayshowers. However, an authentic teacher simply points us toward our internal landscape and offers tools that facilitate our heeding our own internal guidance. Such a person makes it clear

that they merely hold up a mirror so that we can more fully see ourselves.

So we come full circle to learning how to trust ourselves. The degree to which we are able to trust our own heart centered intuition is the degree to which we are in the domain of that which is trustworthy. Once we gain some momentum on cultivating a relationship with our inner guidance we can rest assured that we're in touch with a trustworthy source of wisdom.

Awareness of the ocean of source wisdom with which we can align is achievable whenever we are in a relaxed, alpha brain wave state, a frequency at which intuitive guidance is always present.

Daydream Streaming – An Inner Guidance Shortcut

A life well lived is one that's consciously and constantly informed by inner guidance and information from our most expansive selves. Interior guidance is clearest and strongest when we are silent, tranquil, and listening deeply. Information may be forthcoming in meditation, contemplation, dreamscapes, and a variety of relaxed states that bypass the analytical mind.

However, some of us don't have consistent meditative practices or retrieve much useful guidance from dreams. There may be long stretches of time when life is moving so fast and schedules are so full that we instantly fall deeply asleep, as soon our heads hit the pillow, bypassing the REM (*Rapid Eye Movement*) data harvest. Periods for pure relaxation when the ticker tape of discursive thought isn't bombarding us are few and far between.

How might we access inner guidance when life is moving at top speed and schedules are full to the brim? Daydream streaming is one way to deliberately retrieve data and/or continue to cultivate an unbroken stream of guidance when life is at its most hectic.

We daydream about every ninety minutes throughout the course of our day. We actually spend between 30-50% of our waking hours daydreaming. So why not intentionally put some of this time to good use in order to cultivate our intuition?

Daydreaming is a dream-like stream of imagery we experience while semi-awake in a trance-like state. It's a multi-sensorial expression that manifests in the language used by the subconscious to communicate with the conscious mind. Daydreaming is also referred to as mind-wandering, reverie, fantasizing, and mental rehearsal.

Daydreaming occurs when brain regions known as the default mode network (DMN) are activated. Our brainwaves are in a relaxed alpha state of 8-13 cycles. This DMN is active when the brain is focused inward, relaxed, and musing. One part of the default network in the medial temporal lobes, spontaneously generates new thoughts, ideas and memories. The DMN and a neighbouring network, the frontoparietal control network (FPCN) are sources of our subconscious stream of consciousness.

Most of our daydreams are the spontaneous, unintended products of the subconscious mind, often triggered by memories. They are between a few seconds to a couple of minutes.

We can choose to intentionally use daydreams to retrieve useful information from our subconscious mind as well as from Akasha during purposeful daydream streaming.

Daydream Streaming Process

In the course of the day:

- Kick back, relax, and recline in your chair wherever you're seated; a quiet place.
- Place a writing utensil and something to write upon next to you and close your eyes.
- Set the intention to remember and record useful information: for your growth and expanded self-awareness, to resolve a problem, for breakthrough creative ideas, to explore your subconscious mind, and/or to understand non-material reality frames.
- Set the intention to receive information which will be most easily understood, e.g: symbols, scenes, visual or spoken words, sounds, scenes etc.
- We typically drift in and out of the daydreaming state. Each time this happens, immediately write down the emergent imagery, words, sounds, impressions etc. that linger as you come closer to the waking state.
- As you continue to do this (*especially immediately writing down what emerges*) you'll gain momentum and receive more information. You'll also get a sense of the pace and rhythm in which you comfortably drift in and out of trance and receive information.

Observe daydreaming patterns and themes over time. Note what time of day and day dreaming circumstances yield the most useful information.

Notes

March 6, 2021

Grow Plants – Grow Self

Most of us learn in grade school about how important plants are to life on Earth. They supply the planet with oxygen as they purify our air of the carbon dioxide which we humans discharge, processing it through photosynthesis. Plants also transform the vital light energy of the sun into chemical energy and store it. When we eat plants we use this stored chemical light energy as fuel.

Whereas we tend to take this primordial process for granted, profound gratitude to the plant realm is in order. Without plants, the true origin of proteins, carbohydrates and other complex molecules needed for human and animal survival, Earth would be a lifeless spinning orb. We'd be wise to occasionally take stock in gratitude, of how intricately plant and human life are intertwined and consciously honor that state of interbeing.

Soil, Bugs, and Health

Cognitive and Immune Function

Growing plants elevates our spirits, heals us, reconnects us to the Earth, centers and grounds us. It doesn't get much better than that. Putting our hands in soil lifts our mood and very literally makes us smarter. Research indicates that bacteria in the soil (*mycobacterium vaccae*) relieves anxiety, improves focus and cognitive function. So much so, that gardening has been shown to stave off dementia.

Humanity evolved alongside these microscopic bacterial critters. Collectively divorcing ourselves from the work with soil and these bacteria compromises our immune systems which results in all manner of inflammation. The estrangement fosters and/or exacerbates cardiovascular disease, depression, and diabetes.

Exercise

Digging, tilling, planting, composting, weeding and raking is excellent exercise. These repetitive, routine garden activities are great low impact ways of stretching and using muscles that we don't usually use. However, unlike many other types of repetitive exercise, we can immediately see the result of weeding a bed or tilling a plot. When we return to the garden and witness our co-creation with nature sprouting, blooming, and bearing fruit, the sore muscles are well worth the effort. A day of gardening also promotes sound, refreshing sleep.

Stress Relief

The smells, sights, and textures involved in gardening release endorphins and can generate a state of relaxation that lower cortisol levels and relieves stress. Gardening can also be a destressing community-building activity that strengthens bonds with children, family, and neighbors. Cultivating plants also reconnects us with the cycles and rhythms of the earth of which we are part. Children get especially excited when they know that they grew the fresh food on their dinner plate.

Meal Gratitude Exercise

Focusing Exercises

Centering our attention on a single object, like a meal set before us, for a sustained period of time cultivates the capacity to still the mind through focusing. When we fill the screen of our minds with one-pointed focus we eclipse and eventually eliminate other distractions, including chattering thoughts. The object of our attention may be the breath, a mantra, visualization, sensation in a part of the body, a repetitive activity, an external object, etc.

Over time it becomes easier to keep the flow of attention on the chosen object. Distractions become fewer and more short-lived. Depth and steadiness of attention develop. Our mind becomes more peaceful. We are able to generate, and fully experience gratitude. We enjoy a sense of wellbeing.

Exercise Goals

- Anchor, associate into, fully experience, and prolong moments of heightened self-awareness, gratitude, and wellbeing.
- Intentionally enhance self-mastery.

Objectives

- Slow thought,
- Observe thought,
- Generate gratitude and wellbeing,
- Intentionally direct thought and behavior patterns,
- Appreciate food with heightened sensory awareness from a metacognitive perspective.

Meditation

Set aside a quiet time to eat alone in a pleasant space with minimal distractions. Ideally this would be an eating experience without time constraints. However, feel free to do this even for a short time with one food item (a snack). This exercise works best with whatever food you think and feel is good for your body. Working with processed foods could prove problematic.

1. Please refrain from multitasking in *any* way.
2. Choose to be 100% present and focus only on the enjoyment of eating, and gratitude for your food.
3. Place the food items before you, fully take in and observe the presentation, color, contour, and aroma of the food.
4. Generate gratitude for having access to enough nutritious food to eat.
5. Close your eyes and visualize how each food item was grown and produced. See it growing in the soil.
6. Consider:
 - The soil quality, sun, and rain,
 - The fields, gardens, pastures.
7. Visualize:

- Those who planted, weeded, harvested, and transported the food (e.g., gardeners, farm workers, truckers). Witness them at their task in your mind's eye.
 - Those who received and displayed/shelved the food in the place where you found and purchased it (e.g. farmers market, supermarket, co-op, CSA)
8. How was your meal prepared? Slowly and appreciatively visualize each step of the process.
 9. How far did your food travel from where it was grown to its arrival on your plate? Process of the food's preparation in your mind's eye. Was it prepared for you?
 10. Allow gratitude to well up within you for the Earth that provided all of the elements in the food and those who worked to produce the food you are about to eat.
 11. Linger with and fully feel gratitude for a while, imagining your heart center opening like a blooming rose radiating gratitude through your whole being and out to the world.
 12. Imagine how the first bite of food will taste when you put it into your mouth. Observe how your taste buds and salivary glands respond to your imagination of the food's taste.
 13. Acknowledge the beginning of the meal cycle by stating: *"Good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end,"* before you take the first bite.
 14. Feel the movement of the muscles in your arm, hand and fingers as you pick up your eating utensil and put the first bit of food into your mouth.
 15. Fully enjoy the first contact between the food and your tongue.
 16. Focus on the texture, mouth feel, and taste of the food as it is shredded and dissolves in your mouth.
 17. Feel your taste buds respond to the food in real time.
 18. Feel the activation of your salivary glands and the saliva in your mouth.
 19. Be aware of how the food feels between your teeth as you chew.
 20. Chew very slowly, fully enjoying every mouthful.
 21. As you chew, count how many "chews" it takes until each mouthful of food is pureed and pulverized before swallowing it.
 22. Each time you swallow a mouthful of food, become aware that it is being gradually broken down by peristalsis and the enzymes in your digestive system into smaller and smaller particles.
 23. Imagine the small molecules of your food passing through the cell membranes in your body, into your bloodstream nourishing, regenerating and rejuvenating your entire body.
 24. Feel your lifeforce strengthened.
 25. Amplify and deepen gratitude with each bite.

26. Allow yourself to feel waves of wellbeing emanating from the food as its nourishment moves throughout your body. Imagine it carrying light and healing energy throughout your entire being.
27. End the meal in gratitude with the aspiration for your own wellbeing and that of others.

Notes

March 9, 2021

Contemplating Power in Groups: Baselines

Like electricity, power is everywhere.

May we learn how to be intentional and skillful conductors of power.

Like water, power untended will find its own path.

May we be transparent conduits for the broad and life-giving distribution of power.

Power, the ability to produce an effect, to control, to influence, and the agency to exercise authority is not an inherently good thing or bad thing.

Like water and electricity, power is neutral.

It can be used, misused, or abused.

Power can save and destroy lives, serve us, or enslave us.

Power can be concentrated to entitle a few, or distributed to facilitate universal agency.

Most of us are deeply conflicted about the word “power” itself, let alone its use!

Fear of Power — Fear of Losing Power

We all carry our personal experience of power with us. Some broad brush strokes are:

- Intergenerational and/or personal experience with misuse and abuse of power at interpersonal, professional, societal levels.
- Fear of the vastness of our own power, beyond the container of conventional reality, waiting to be tapped more fully,... induces overwhelm,
- Enculturation to powerlessness and the perpetual struggle to overcome it is tantamount to living in a maze of blind subjectivity. Those who have had less access to power may carry internalized powerlessness.
- Enculturation to wielding power and the perpetual struggle to preserve it is tantamount to living in a maze of blind subjectivity. Those who have had longstanding access to power may carry internalized privilege.

As a culture, we are often wary of, and uncomfortable with power. What most of us are actually uncomfortable with is other people having power over us. Conversely, those who wield inordinate position and/or resourced-based power at any given point in time are perpetually embroiled and embattled in their own struggle to hold on to dominance.

The dysfunction inherent in these relationships to power is a function of identification with the illusion of the conventional waking-dream of form.

Yet the fact remains that we all have ideas and beliefs about power and its use which we bring directly into the personal, professional, avocational, or community groups in which we participate. The more we know about power and how it works, the more

we can channel and conduct it intentionally to affirm, support, and nurture each other as we get important work done.

Power in Groups: Baselines

Assigned power: is a function of specific roles that have been assigned which ensure the group's cohesion and effectiveness. Assigned power is bestowed and withdrawn by group policy.

Expertise power: refers to those who have specialized knowledge in an area related to the work of the group.

Factional power: arises when several people within a group act together in an organized way to influence, undermine, or dominate group process or decision making. Factions emerge most often out of the combination of enculturated individualism and a victim mindset. The power of a faction is contingent upon the number of participants, the roles they play and other types of influence they may have.

Position power: People with position power in hierarchical structures usually have more influence in a group than others. They are listened to carefully and their opinions are given weight. Position power is bestowed outside of the group by virtue of the organization's structure and hierarchy and is recognized within the group. Power imbalance is inherent in affording some positions more weight than others and may include the authority to override group decisions.

Personal power is operative when a person is looked to as a guide or leader due to character, qualities, skills, wisdom, vision or charisma related to their life experience. Such a person may or may not have any position or the assigned power of a role in a group.

Notes

March 11, 2021

Hear the Pain of the World

Extend Compassion

- Make a short list of people who you love. As you do this, bring to your mind's eye someone or some people who you love with all of your heart and being. See their faces and feel the love and compassion well up within you as you write down their names. Let the profound gratitude for their presence in your life wash over you.
- Make a short list of friends who you are fond of, with whom you like to spend time, and who would make a good team if you'd like to get a job done. Feel the joy, fun and upliftment of their presence.
- Feel the energetic presence around you of those who you love, cherish and appreciate.

External Listening

- Sit comfortably. Stop moving. Be still.
- Listen to the sounds in your environment: What do you hear, very locally in your own ears, ..buzzing? ringing? Pulsing sensation?
- What do you hear, in the room where you're seated?
- What do you hear, in the house or building? outside of the window? out in the yard or down the street?
- What do you hear?

Internal Listening

We'll attune to hearing sounds in our inner landscape.

- Imagine that you hear birds chirping
- Church bells ringing
- Wind rustling the leaves of a grove of trees
- Ocean waves crashing against the shore
- Rhythmic drumming
- Wind chimes rustling in the breeze

Meditation: Hear the Pain — Extend Compassion

Imagine that you are seated in a big "listening circle" in a large comfortable room with people who you love and appreciate.

You are all assembled, seated in soft reclining armchairs, there to listen deeply together and to serve humanity.

The people who you love dearly are interspersed in the circle with friends who you're fond of. All are present as teammates.

With your innervision, look around, taking in everyone seated there, and appreciate the presence of the group assembled. The bond of love, compassion, and companionship emanates from the group, surrounding and enveloping the entire circle.

Also note that you as consciousness, a second iteration of yourself at a higher frequency, is also standing immediately behind your own chair, as is the higher self of everyone else present. You are at once seated AND you are simultaneously, lovingly there for yourself, standing behind your own armchair. So there is an outer ring of participants at a higher bandwidth who are standing, and an inner ring of avatar participants who are seated.

Everyone is completely at ease and ready for the task at hand.

On a slim rectangular table next to the right arm of everyone's chair are three helpful "perception" tools for our use.

- There is a pair of sound-blocking headphones that tune out absolutely all noise.
- There is a pair of virtual reality goggles, and,
- A lightweight vest that has a band which crosses the chest. In the center of the horizontal band that crosses the chest is a beautiful, smooth round disk that when the vest is worn rests gently yet snugly right on the center of the chest.
- The goggles and the headphones are each connected to a separate small console with multiple settings.

Be aware that the goggles amplify the power of innervision that is fueled by pure-hearted compassion into a healing ray with the intensity of a laser beam.

Be aware that the vest when worn amplifies the communication between you seated in the armchair and you standing behind the armchair. There is always an unbroken stream of communication between the two of you. However, most of the time this communication is imperceptible to the person seated. The vest amplifies the communication signal between the two of you.

On the other arm of each chair is a monitor that picks up the energy (*love, concern, stress, fear*) of anyone sitting in the chair and displays it on the individual screen for the seated person to see. So you can constantly monitor what's going on internally with your emotional response.

Be very still and silent in listening mode.

Allow the bond of trust and solidarity that unites everyone assembled to permeate your being. Become aware that there is a beautiful, powerful, palpable, pulsating band of energy that is collective love radiating out in concentric rings from the circle.

Recline and relax.

Now, you and everyone present pick up your headphones and put them on. All sound is blotted out and there is utter silence.

Experience the group's collective bond of love and compassion in total silence.

Be aware of how the monitor on your left looks at the outset of this exercise.

The Healing Scene

Look at the small console connected to the headphones on the right arm of the chair and turn the dial to the words....The United States of America.

There is an immediate rush of sound.

Everyone seated in the circle is hearing the same thing in their headphones simultaneously.

You're all hearing the din of newscasts and talk shows overlapping each other as if tuning into radio station after radio station.....The cacophony of shows are all loudly and excitedly talking about the soaring coronavirus infection rate, the death toll, hospital overload, the makeshift field hospitals in convention centers, portable morgues and what is or isn't being done about the situation.

- Stabilize your energy as you hear and acknowledge the information.
- Observe your state of being as you are seated there immersed in this experience,
- Look at the monitor and note how you're doing.

Tune into, and hear the voices and conversations of American families seated around their dinner tables who have loved ones who are sick, loved ones who are dying, or who have died of the Coronavirus and who are deeply missed.

Hear the soft weeping and then the sobbing.

Hear the confusion, anger and grief in the baffled voices.

- Inhale. Breathe deeply from your source of compassion,
- Hold compassionate spaciousness for the pain of Americans,
- Exhale compassion with all of your heart into their energy field.
- With your innervision, check the monitor and notice how you're doing,
- Sense the steadfast presence of your higher self behind you and take courage.

As you listen to the sound of deep American pain, bring to your mind's eye a map of the United States and imagine that the group circle in which you're seated is situated right in the middle of the country.

Feel your energy gently lifted up into the aggregate group intention which generates an electromagnetic pulse of healing compassion that is transmitted out in ring after ring from the circle as epicenter, bathing the entire map of the United States from its center where the group is situated. Watch ring after ring, wave after wave of healing compassion spread out over the United States, soothing and cradling Americans in love.

Your love saturates and lightens the atmosphere. Rings of group compassion, your warm loving compassion spread out over the map. It falls like a gentle rain seeping deep into the soil of Oregon, California, Massachusetts, and Washington State, Washington DC, Ohio, New York, Vermont, Illinois, New Mexico, Connecticut, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Texas. It washes over the entire country.

Listen. Inhale deeply. Extend compassion. Exhale deeply.

March, 15, 2021

We Are Called to Be Free

I am illusion
You are illusion
He, she, it is illusion
We are illusion
You all are illusion
They are an illusion.

Awareness that a lifetime is a dream that we conjure for learning is a gift. It is freedom. Resting in this blissful awareness frees us from internalizing rudeness, cruelty, humiliation, patriarchal sexism and misogyny, racism, classism, facism, ethnocentrism, tyranny of the majority, the de facto suffocating societal neck-throttle of a tiny minority viewed from one vantage point, and the splatter of the thrashing powerlessness of the minority viewed from another vantage point.

We are free.

We are only completely free to effectively and impactfully deal with all or any of it when we sustain awareness that it is all an illusion.

It all begs the best response we can bring to it in the moment for our learning.

Awareness of the illusory dream that we've dreamed up affords us the opportunity to bring our "A" game to tests that arises in each moment rather than being pulled into subjective identification with the dream. Awareness of the illusion empowers us to live truly lucid lives. Sustained awareness of ourselves as consciousness experiencing a dream for the purpose of growth gives us permission to:

- Wade into the most challenging situations with confidence that there can be no loss, only learning irrespective of what happens,
- Not be unseated by our own egoic responses that may rear their heads when people take pot shots at us,
- Extend compassion to those who are blinded by subjective egoic identification with the illusion; especially when they lash out at us in their own pain and confusion,
- Remain grounded and stand firm in alignment with true-self when the powerful illusion works its intense seduction by either stroking or threatening the ego.

I am illusion
You are illusion
He, she, it is illusion
We are illusion
You all are illusion
They are illusion.
We are called to stay awake.
We are invited to be free.

March 19, 2021

Renunciation is...

Peeling off everything that's superfluous.

Freedom from distraction.

Simplicity.

Cleansing.

Buoyant, boundless lightness of fasting from anything that clogs with heaviness on all fronts.

Clean, uncluttered, and clear.

The capacity to hear the slightest whisper and deafening cacophony of life in high-resolution surround sound.

The grace of minimalism.

Transparency.

Clarifying obscurations.

Removing any blockage to alignment and unity with the rhythmic, simple-complexity of the Earth's natural cycles.

Acceptance of what IS without struggle which yields clarity about the most impactful way forward.

Getting everything including the personality structure of self out of the way.

Progressively and incessantly shedding skins, baggage, encumbrances.

Freedom from all manner of societal toxins which yields ever-renewing, ever-refreshing, even keeled, balanced, comprehensive health.

Unfettered with ease.

Healthy self-regard, free from the need to defensively plaster over with multiple layers.

Lovingly, skillfully revealing and freeing true-essence from layers of accumulated sediment.

Seeing in sharp relief.

Occam's razor.

Open, aerated, expansive and spacious.

Allowing a nurturing self-discipline to emerge organically of its own accord from the depth of being.

Refraining from adding more.

Sustaining the ecstatic joy of empty nothingness.

The essence of perpetually being on retreat while in the world.

Bliss.

March 20, 2021

The Kumbaya Hideout – Spiritual Bypass

A goal on the path of living into true-self is the cessation of exclusive identification with the world of the projected, material world of form. That does not connote disconnection with the reality frame of the five senses. We are in embodiment to learn and evolve.

We need to be aware of the need for balance between being present to our Earthly learning lab and navigating higher frequencies. The pendulum can swing all of the way over into pseudo-spiritual, woo woo comfort zones. Spiritual bypass is a slippery slope where we don't fully engage or commit to spiritual self-transmutation but use rituals and techniques to escape from what we view as a painful and/or overwhelming world of form.

A spiritual bypass, or spiritual bypassing is the tendency to use spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep or avoid facing unresolved emotional issues, psychological wounds and unfinished developmental tasks.

— John Wellwood

Being a spiritual person isn't about faking perfection. It's about having the humility to admit your flaws and search for freedom.

— Luna & Sol

The reality is that not everything in life is "love and light" as is the slogan for many spiritual seekers. Pursuing the light and living enlightened, raw, and deeply interconnected existences is also about setting yourself on fire. It is about creating an inferno of your false beliefs, illusions and separating desires, ideals and prejudices.

—Alethia Luna

Spiritual bypassing is the act of using spiritual beliefs to avoid facing or healing one's painful feelings, unresolved wounds and unmet needs. It is a state of avoidance. Because it is a state of avoidance, it is a state of resistance, I personally, consider spiritual bypassing to be the shadow side of spirituality.

—Teal Swan

Spiritual bypassing is the practice of denying and suppressing the darkness within you and plastering it over with a feel good bandaid.

—Lonerwolf

To many people, spirituality becomes a sort of crutch used as a way of standing back up again in the face of life's turmoil – and sometimes this is necessary. But the problem comes when spirituality is used as a drug on which we become dependent in order to avoid the darker elements of our lives.

—Alethia Luna

March 25, 2021

Firearms and Existential Fear

Although gun ownership is associated with positive feelings about firearms within “gun culture” (Pierre, [2015](#); Kalesan et al., [2016](#); Metzl, [2019](#)), most research comparing gun owners to non-gun owners suggests that ownership is rooted in fear. While long guns have historically been owned primarily for hunting and other recreational purposes, US surveys dating back to the 1990s have revealed that the most frequent reason for gun ownership and more specifically handgun ownership is self-protection (Cook and Ludwig, [1997](#); Azrael et al., [2017](#); Pew Research Center, [2017](#)). Research has likewise shown that the decision to obtain a firearm is largely motivated by past victimization and/or fears of future victimization (Kleck et al., [2011](#); Hauser and Kleck, [2013](#)).

A few studies have reported that handgun ownership is associated with past victimization, perceived risk of crime, and perceived ineffectiveness of police protection within low-income communities where these concerns may be congruent with real risks (Vacha and McLaughlin, [2000](#), [2004](#)).

However, gun ownership tends to be lower in urban settings and in low-income families where there might be higher rates of violence and crime (Vacha and McLaughlin, [2000](#)). Instead, the largest demographic of gun owners in the US are white men living in rural communities who are earning more than \$100K/year (Azrael et al., [2017](#)).

Mencken and Froese ([2019](#)) likewise reported that gun owners tend to have higher incomes and greater ratings of life happiness than non-owners. These findings suggest a mismatch between subjective fear and objective reality.

Stroebe and colleagues ([2017](#)) reported that the specific perceived risk of victimization and more “diffuse” fears that the world is a dangerous place are both independent predictors of handgun ownership, with perceived risk of assault associated with having been or knowing a victim of violent crime and belief in a dangerous world associated with political conservatism. These findings suggest that a general fear of crime, independent of actual or even perceived individual risk, may be a powerful motivator for gun ownership for some that might track with race and political ideology.

Several authors have drawn a connection between gun ownership and racial tensions by examining the cultural symbolism and socio-political meaning of guns. Bhatia ([2019](#)) detailed how the NRA’s “disinformation campaign reliant on fearmongering” is constructed around a narrative of “fear and identity politics” that exploits current xenophobic sentiments related to immigrants.

Metzl ([2019](#)) argues, “mainstream society reflexively codes white men carrying weapons in public as patriots, while marking armed black men as threats or criminals.” In support of this view, a 2013 study found that having a gun in the home was significantly associated with racism against black people as measured by the Symbolic Racism Scale.

Hypothesizing that guns are a symbol of hegemonic masculinity that serves to “shore up white male privilege in society,” Stroud (2012) interviewed a non-random sample of 20 predominantly white men in Texas who had licenses for concealed handgun carry. The men described how guns help to fulfill their identities as protectors of their families, while characterizing imagined dangers with rhetoric suggesting specific fears about black criminals. These findings suggest that gun ownership among white men may be related to a collective identity as “good guys” protecting themselves against “bad guys” who are people of color.

The bottom line is that when gun owners believe that owning a gun will make them feel safer, little else may matter. Curiously however, there is conflicting evidence that gun ownership actually decreases fears of victimization (Hauser and Kleck, 2013; Dowd-Arrow et al., 2019). That gun ownership may not mitigate such fears could help to account for why some individuals go on to acquire multiple guns beyond their initial purchase with US gun owners possessing an average of 5 firearms and 8% of owners having 10 or more (Azrael et al., 2017).

Notes

March 26, 2021

Feedback Basics

Think about the last time you offered feedback to someone, or your own performance was evaluated, either formally or informally.

How do you give and respond to feedback?

Do you take feedback from friends, family, employers, and authorities, with openness, grace, and gratitude for the opportunity to learn?

Have you cultivated the skill of offering feedback in a way that is easily received and utilized by the receiver?

Feedback offered skillfully is communication that can help us think about how we might productively alter our behavior in order to achieve our goals. It offers information about how we're affecting others and our environment.

We are continually receiving and giving feedback to friends, family, and colleagues. We communicate our evaluation of others' behavior explicitly through oral or written language, or implicitly in body language, gestures, and tone of voice.

Healthy feedback is an integral component of robust, dynamic, and successful organizations.

Thoughtful feedback also helps us grow personally and professionally. Accurate professional feedback integrated with equanimity can be determinative in our long term career path.

Delivered with care it can be a gift that people who care about our personal and professional success can provide for us. But, they'll only provide us with feedback if we are approachable and allow them to feel comfortable doing so.

Helpful feedback can:

1. reinforce and validate existing strengths,
2. keep helpful behaviour on track,
3. clarify the effects of our behaviour on others,
4. expedite the achievement of tasks at hand and,
5. enhance recipients' abilities to recognize and correct errors on their own,
6. allow for explicit articulation of concerns so that in sharing our observations we can avoid making assumptions about the behavior of others.

Actionable feedback:

1. describes behavior, not the individual, as dispassionately as possible and offers the opportunity for us to self-assess,
2. is specific, offering observations that are relevant only to the situation at hand,
3. is owned by the giver who takes responsibility for the direct expression of

their observations and feelings,

4. takes into account the needs of both the receiver and the giver,
5. is directed toward behavior that the receiver can do something about,
6. is facilitated when there is an existing group or interpersonal agreement about cultivating ongoing feedback loops,
7. requests that the receiver of feedback reflect back and articulate what has been shared in their own words. it's wise that this not be requested with a tone that could be interpreted as being condescending or patronizing.

Unhelpful feedback:

1. reminds people of a shortcoming over which they have no control,
2. serves only the needs of the giver, failing to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end,
3. uses judgmental or accusing language,
4. is imposed without adequate context and sensitivity.

Aspiration

May we clearly and dispassionately see how we habitually give and receive feedback.

Notes

March 27, 2021

Capacity to Accept and Integrate Feedback

Inner Child and Egoic Construct Antecedents

Successful integration of information-feedback can determine the longevity of relationships and make or break organizations. Feedback loops are fundamentally key to balance, growth, and long term sustainability of life.

Systems of information-feedback control are fundamental to all life and human endeavour, from the slow pace of biological evolution to the launching of the latest space satellite...Everything we do as individuals, as an industry, or as a society is done in the context of information-feedback systems.

—Jay W. Forrester

Our capacity to accept and constructively use feedback long predates the fateful conversation during which it's offered. Feedback on our behavior, work, and performance can activate a host of lurking existential fears; specifically fears and perceived threats to the egoic constructs that form our personality structure.

Early childhood developmental “dropped stitches”* that set the stage for, and exacerbate existential fears often underlie our ability to gracefully give and receive feedback. These are in turn baked into the opaque egoic constructs* which wreck havoc on our relationships, ability to function effectively in groups and our quality of life.

Harbingers of Feedback Receptivity...or Not

Oppositional Defiance of Authority

A challenging egoic construct which is pivotal to our receptivity to feedback is that of “self around authority figures.” If this is one of our opaque egoic constructs, whoever offers us corrective suggestions may be cast in the role of oppressive “authority figure” by virtue of their prompting us to behave differently. Their feedback may be viewed as “telling us what to do,” invasive, and/or as a constricting imposition, irrespective of the way in which it is offered.

We're not referring here to instances in which: 1) authority is indeed overbearing or abusive, 2) or being “the rebel” in a dysfunctional group constellation is one of the more appropriate coping mechanisms in play. We're alluding to instances where feedback is appropriate and warranted and our submersion in an opaque relationship to any authority figure blocks receptivity.

Conflicted behavior around authority figures harks back to our 3-6 year old inner child whose developmental task was to learn how to respect the positive and negative in ourselves and others. At this age, assisted by our caregivers we were to have mastered the developmental task of balancing and metabolizing criticism; self-criticism and that of others. Having unresolved material from this age can manifest in

all or nothing thinking, perpetually feeling overly responsible, and/or experiencing shame and unworthiness in our adult lives.

What Does this Look Like in Childhood and Adolescence?

Reflexive, oppositional defiance of authority is childhood behavior defined by a persistent pattern of hostile, defiant behavior toward authority figures. Children who manifest this pattern are irritable, argumentative, and disobedient.

In children we witness:

- frequent temper tantrums or angry outbursts,
- refusal to comply with adult requests,
- excessive arguing with adults and authority figures,
- reflexive questioning or actively disregarding rules,
- the intent to upset, annoy, or anger authority figures,
- blaming others for their own mistakes or misbehaviors.

What Does this Look Like in Adulthood?

Adults:

- feel perpetually angry at the world,
- feel misunderstood or disliked,
- resent and villainize authority, including supervisors and anyone who is in a position to offer corrective suggestions,
- identify as a rebel,
- defend themselves vehemently and are not open to feedback,
- blame others for their own mistakes.

Reflexive oppositional defiance of authority can originate when children are toddlers as they struggle to become independent from parental or authority figures. It can be exacerbated by children's behavioral responses to parents and caregivers who use negative reinforcement methods to address what they perceive as disobedience or rebellion.

This is especially true if the child learns to use bad behavior to get attention. In other cases, children may adopt negative behaviors *from mirroring* a parent. Toddler-like behavior resurfaces most prevalently in roughly twelve year cycles, first during adolescence and again in adulthood when it moves from a behavior pattern to a personality trait as it is deeply encoded in our neurobiology.

*Developmental Dropped Stitches: There are specific developmental tasks that emerge for mastery at successive stages of our lives as children, adolescents, and beyond. We liken the successful fulfillment and mastery of those tasks to knitting the fabric of healthy lives and wellbeing. When emergent developmental tasks are *not*

met the result is tantamount a hole in the knitting. We therefore call the childhood antecedents of challenges we face in our adult lives, “dropped stitches.”

*Opaque Egoic Constructs: Egoic constructs are the elements that form the individual personality structure also known as personas or roles that we play. An opaque egoic construct is a role we play in which the light of our true, essential self is substantially obstructed, or blocked; this feels painful inasmuch as we feel cut off from expression of the deepest dimensions of ourselves.

Aspiration

*May we contact, sooth, and heal the inner child
who impedes assimilation of helpful feedback.*

Notes
