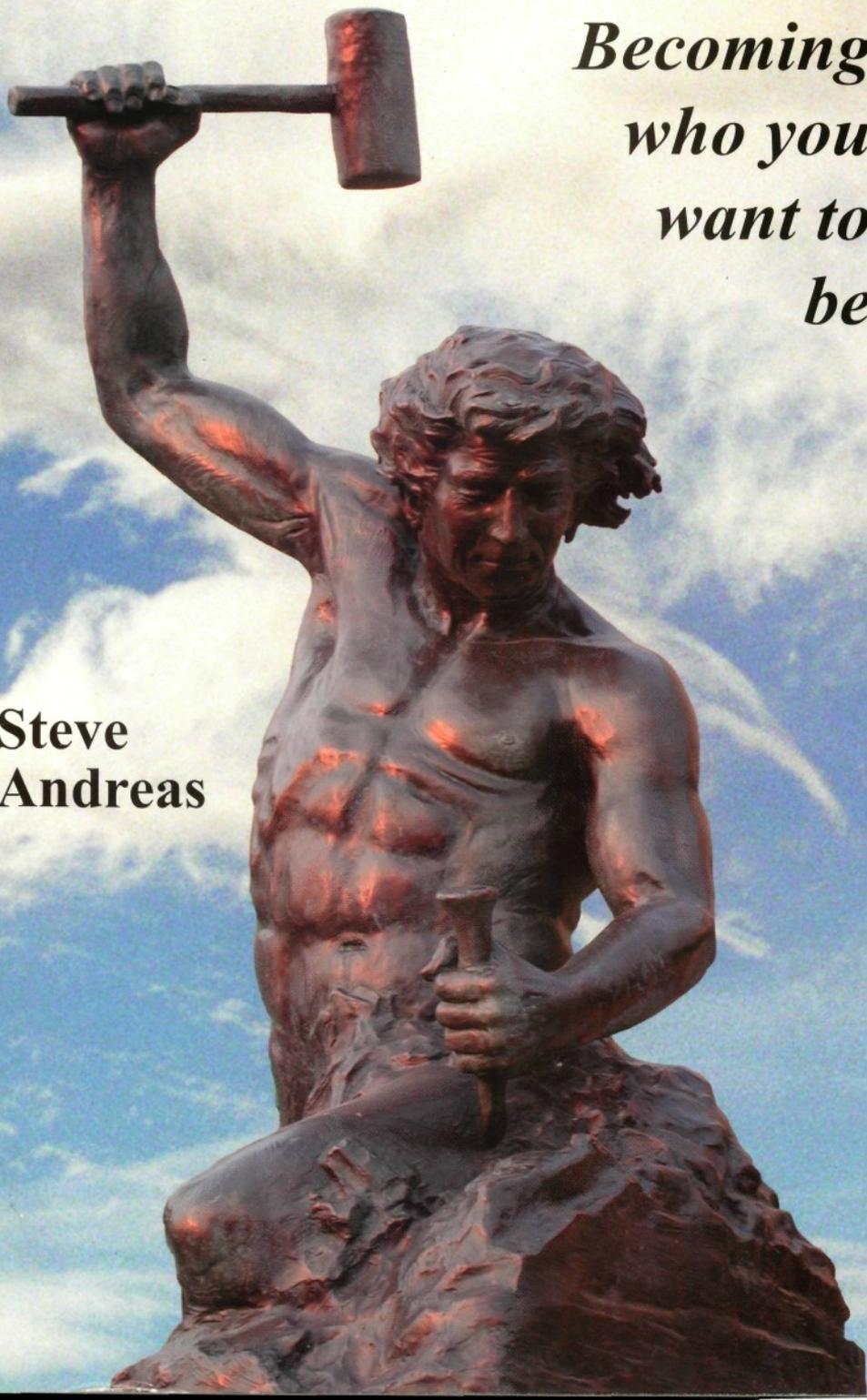


Transforming YOUR **Self**

*Becoming
who you
want to
be*

**Steve
Andreas**





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About this book:

I use the simple, yet transformative, processes in this book regularly in my practice with astounding results—ten times the progress in one quarter the time.

Lonnie Barbach, Ph.D., Psychologist, author of *For Yourself and The Pause*.

If you read only one book this year, make it this one. While the world of psychotherapy is dizzy trying to learn techniques, here is one of the very few books that provides enduring value!

Stephen Lankton, MSW, DAHB, author of 15 books, including *The Answer Within*, *Practical Magic*, and *Tales of Enchantment*.

With specific instruction, real-life examples, and an all-important sense of humor, Steve Andreas unpacks this vitally important process clearly and succinctly, going 'under the hood' to show you how to rebuild, fine tune, and change your self-concept and self-esteem.

Bill O'Hanlon, MFT, author/coauthor of 20 books, including *Do One Thing Different* and *In Search of Solutions*.

If someone told you that you could quickly and radically transform your life and increase your feelings of self worth—without having to undergo elaborate psychotherapy, a long-term major personality overhaul, or take anti-depressants—would you want to know how? Read this book now! You'll find powerful processes for creating self-acceptance and self-love.

Michele Weiner-Davis, MSW, author, *Divorce Busting* and *The Divorce Remedy*.

In this beautiful and often brilliant book, Steve Andreas addresses the core distinction of personal identity. The examples are lucid, the methods are practical and eminently useful, and the writing is exceptionally clear. I highly recommend it!

Stephen Gilligan, Ph.D., author of *Therapeutic Trances* and *The Courage to Love*.

You expect to have your eyes opened about self-concept by reading this book, and they are. Then it turns out to be much more: an exploration of many of the ins and outs and mysteries of being human, too. Steve's astonishing directness and inviting confidence make it all easy to hear and take in.

David Gordon, MFT, author of *Therapeutic Metaphor*.

Many have traveled to the misty land of identity and self-concept, but until now, none have returned with a comprehensive framework of understanding. This remarkable book is elegant, understandable, and above all, eminently practical.

Glen Johnson, M.D., psychiatrist.

In this innovative and engaging book, Steve Andreas provides a clear lens for better seeing the core of who we are. He shatters some popular myths about self-concept and self-esteem, replacing them with useful concepts and practical strategies for enhancing our selves.

Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, author of *Breaking the Patterns of Depression*.

Transforming Your Self fulfills its promise. When you read it and take time to do the simple, practical, "how to" exercises, you will come away with a deeper understanding of yourself, like yourself better, and live your life more consciously.

Tim and Kris Hallbom, NLP trainers

This work is the best and most thorough example of NLP modeling excellence. The organization, sequencing, breadth of thinking, and rigor in distinguishing between structure/process and content shines throughout. I love the teaching style: clear distinctions, examples, humor, demonstration, and gems of practical wisdom in every chapter. I have used many of these methods in my own life, and my clients are also using them to get immediate results.

Kirk VandenBerghe, NLP Trainer, Author, Speaker, and Coach.

This practical, how-to book is a "must read" for those in the helping professions, as well as those who want to change troublesome aspects of their own self concept.

Suzi Smith, co-author of *Beliefs: pathways to health and well-being*, and other NLP videotapes and audiotapes.

Transforming Your Self

Becoming who you want to be

by
Steve Andreas



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The name Real People Press indicates our purpose: to publish ideas and ways that someone can use independently or with others to become more *real*—to further their own growth as a human being and to develop relationships and communication with others.

to my wife
Connirae
full partner
at home
and at work
for so many years

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Acknowledgement

When I have thought of whom to acknowledge for their help in developing what is presented in this book, and for creating the book itself, I have always gotten stuck between my first thought, "Where should I start?" and the next, "Where should I end?"

So many people have contributed to this work, and the life that it arises out of, that it would take another book to list them all!

Over a period of more than two-thirds of a century, many have contributed to my life and work: from parents, teachers, friends, family members, mentors, children, workshop participants, and the beauty of art and science and nature... to chance encounters with strangers, stray comments, books and newspapers, TV shows, and so many other events that have had a part in shaping my life.

Who could say which were more important in weaving that intersection of circumstance that I call "myself—who to include and who to leave out?"

What a privilege to live here at this nexus of events—like a small wave that briefly emerges from the ocean, and then as quickly rejoins it! Tears of gratitude at the thought.

So I have decided to keep it simple. Most of you know who you are; I thank you all. You have all been part of this brief journey, and you have all become a part of who I am. Again, many thanks.

(Earlier versions of chapters 9, 11, and the Appendix were previously published in the NLP journal *Anchor Point magazine*.)

Introduction

Do you ever say, or think to yourself, "I'm disappointed with myself; I thought I could do that, but I really blew it," "I wish I felt better about myself," or "I'm so mad at myself; I fall apart at the slightest criticism." How about, "I'm so frustrated with myself," "I'm my own worst enemy; I keep sabotaging myself," or "I wish I could get myself to *do* that" (or *stop* doing that)?

Have you ever wondered how you got into this unpleasant struggle between "I" and "myself," or how *you can get out of it*. You know that this struggle isn't necessary, because you *also* have times when you are very pleased with yourself, satisfied with your decisions and actions. Both your failures and successes often result from the beliefs that you have about yourself, what is often called identity or self-concept. The book that you have in your hands is a practical manual that can teach you how to strengthen the qualities in yourself that you like, and change the qualities that you don't like, so that *you can have a much better and more satisfying life*.

Describing vs. Doing

About ten years ago I was invited to teach at a weekend drug and alcohol conference for therapists and social workers. I was one of about two dozen presenters, including several "big names" in the field. Although I was scheduled for the last session, I attended the entire conference to see what I could learn. I heard many different presenters talk about the importance of self-concept and self-esteem in getting people to stop using drugs.

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But in all their words there was virtually nothing about what self-concept or self-esteem actually was, or how to help someone get some of it.

Finally on Sunday afternoon I had my group, my little opportunity. I began by saying to them, "I have been hearing from many presenters, for a day and a half now, that a good self-concept and self-esteem are really important in getting people to stop using drugs. Do you all agree with that?" "Oh, yeah," they all nodded their heads. I said, "Good. I have two questions for you. The first question is, 'What is it that you've been talking about that is so important?' And my second question is, 'How would you go about helping someone get some of it?'" When I asked those questions the room got *very* quiet. Then I said, "Let's pretend that I'm someone who is hooked on drugs. Help me improve my self-concept, or give me some self-esteem. Help me out."

Someone said, "Well, you could use operant conditioning."

I said "Great! Condition me, *now*. Show me what you can do." The room got very quiet again. Then someone said something about healing past traumas, and I said, "OK, let's imagine that I was sexually abused as a child. Show me how to heal that." The room got very quiet again.

I kept that up for about half an hour before demonstrating a few quick ways to work with self-concept, because I wanted them to realize very clearly that I *was presenting something that was very different from what they already knew*. I also wanted to make a very clear distinction between being able to *describe* self-concept, and being able to actually *change* it. They had been speaking theoretically, but there really wasn't much that they could *do*.

As I was walking down the hall after my presentation, a man walked along beside me, looking very thoughtful. Then he said to me, "You know, I have been teaching about self-concept and self-esteem for years, and I have even written a book about it. But when you asked those questions, I had *nothing* to say."

Problems vs. Solutions

There are many thousands of "self-help" books on the shelves of bookstores and libraries everywhere. When I searched on Amazon books for "self-concept," I found 177 titles; "identity" turned up 6,593 titles, and "self" turned up 32,000! Unfortunately, nearly all of them are focused on *problems*, rather than *solutions*. Those books are full of *descriptions* of problems—theories, examples, stories, and case histories—but very little about how to *solve* them. The last book I read about self-concept had 184 pages describing problems of self-concept, but only 7 pages at the end discussed possible solutions, in vague and theoretical terms.

Psychiatry's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM IV-R* has 873 pages of descriptions of how people can be mentally ill, but not a single page about how they could be helped! Imagine what it would be like if a medical doctor were in this position—she has an 873 page manual describing how someone can be ill, but not a single word about how to treat illness! Sadly, that is the position of most psychology and psychotherapy today—and most psychiatry, with its bias toward drug solutions, is even worse.

When books do set forth worthwhile goals or solutions, they very rarely tell you what you can actually *do* to achieve them. If a medical text were like that, it might tell you that the solution to a certain illness is to remove the diseased tissue, but without telling *how to do* that—all the details of the surgical procedure, use of scalpels, clamps, sutures, antiseptics, anesthetics, etc., that you could use to accomplish that useful goal.

Preaching vs. Teaching and Training

The difference between *preaching* and *teaching* is not widely recognized, particularly in the area of education and personal change. *Preaching* can set forth worthwhile goals, and that can be a useful first step that orients you toward a solution. However, *teaching* is what you can use to actually achieve those worthwhile goals. A further distinction can be made between teaching and *training*. Training includes the "hands on" practice that transforms good teaching into practical skills.

Some 2,000 years ago Christ preached the importance and value of reaching forgiveness with someone who has harmed you. Although he demonstrated forgiveness amply, he apparently wasn't able to teach or train others *how to actually reach forgiveness*.

It is only recently that we know how to *teach* someone to reach the compassionate understanding that we call forgiveness. About ten years ago, my wife, Connirae, and I developed a method to rapidly teach someone how to reach a congruent, full-body experience of forgiveness. This process usually takes less than an hour, and we have trained thousands of people how to teach others to do this. (4,7) A few years earlier we developed a similar effective method for teaching someone to resolve their grief, and transform it into an experience of gratitude for having known the lost person. (1,2, Ch. 11) This book has similarly rapid processes that you can use *to become the kind of person you want to be*.

Self and Society

In most traditional societies there isn't much interest in self-concept, because society *defines* who you are right from birth, and the culture offers

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no alternatives to that definition. Every traditional culture has its beliefs about humanity, and its place in relation to their gods and the rest of the universe, so almost no one questions it. As Tevye says in *Fiddler on the Roof*, "Because of our traditions, every one of us knows who he is, and what God expects him to do." In a traditional culture, individual identity is simply a small and unquestioned part of the shared identity of the larger society.

It has often been said that "A culture is the accumulated wisdom of a group of people." But culture also contains the accumulated *stupidity* of a group of people, and our own culture is no exception. It is a little easier for us to examine our own mistakes, because of the immense variety of cultural models that we are exposed to.

About thirty years ago, I lived in Moab, a small town in southeastern Utah with 13 different churches serving a population of about 5,000. About 55 miles south, another small town had only *one* church for nearly as many people. Moab, with its religious diversity, had *many* more people interested in self-exploration and questioning, trying to figure out what it meant to be a man or a woman, and what a healthy human being really is.

If you have only one world-view, it's very difficult to even think about asking those kinds of question. And if you do manage to think about asking them, it's even harder to find someone else willing to think about them and discuss them with you!

Modern society tolerates a great many different religions, world views, and lifestyles, so either we have to pick and choose between them, or invent our own. Many of us are in the process of trying to *discover* what a human life is, while in most traditional cultures that decision has already been made. You might disagree with a culture in which men own and control everything, and women are the property of their fathers or husbands (just as it was in the US a scant hundred years ago), but people within the culture simply accept it, and the unhappiness that it creates, because they don't even consider alternatives to it.

The scientific world view also plays a part in the recent upsurge of interest in the self, since science is a way to question and *discover* how things work through experimentation, rather than just accepting a description provided by a prophet or ancient scripture. Although science started by questioning nature, the same process can also be directed toward asking questions about the questioner, and about the society or culture in which s/he lives.

Beliefs About World and Self

For a long time, people have realized that our beliefs about others and our surroundings are often self-fulfilling. Someone who believes that the

world is a dangerous and threatening place finds a world filled with fear, unhappiness, and disappointment. Someone who believes that the world is filled with vast opportunities and wonders to be experienced finds the very same world filled with endless variety, richness, and satisfaction.

Even more important than these beliefs are the beliefs that you have about *yourself*, because *your self-concept goes with you everywhere, and affects everything that you experience*. If you believe that others are mean and stupid, you can retreat to the solitude of nature and be nourished. But if you believe that you *yourself* are mean and stupid, there is no escape—except the temporary ones of overwhelming stimulation, mind-numbing drugs, or sleep. On the other hand, if you believe in your own kindness and intelligence, these beliefs can sustain and support you, even when events and people around you are very difficult.

The Haphazard Development of Self-concept

Our identities were formed through a fairly random process of trial and error, somehow putting together the various experiences, good or bad, that we have had, along with what parents and others have told us and taught us. Despite the best intentions of parents and teachers to shape our self-concept in useful ways, this process is pretty haphazard and accidental. Some of us got lucky and developed a self-concept that works reasonably well, while others weren't so lucky.

As a result, many people are operating with a self-concept that works very poorly, one that lets them down when they need it most. Yet even the luckiest among us has a self-concept that can be greatly improved. I have worked with some exceptionally capable and successful people, but every one of them was able to learn how to improve their self-concept substantially. I have not yet found anyone whose self-concept was more than about 2/3 as effective as it could be. The people whom I have worked with over the years taught me a wide range of useful skills that I had never thought of, and this book presents them all, organized so that you can check through them, and add the skills that you don't already have.

What This Book is NOT About

This book is *not* about "the problem of consciousness," which philosophers have been struggling with for hundreds of years in ivory towers, nor about logical, cognitive or mathematical theories of self-concept.

This book is *not* about the neurology, biology, chemistry, etc. that underlie the capacity for consciousness and self-concept, nor about the various physical and biochemical pathologies that can affect or destroy someone's self-concept.

This book is *not* about the history of different philosophical and religious thinking about self-concept, nor about the role of religion, morality, politics, culture, society, and family on the development of self-concept.

Too many of those books have already been written. And while some of them are interesting, and some are even useful for other purposes, they are mostly completely irrelevant to what this book *is* about.

What This Book IS About

This book is about your own personal experience of your own self-concept, and how you can learn how it works, strengthen it, and change it when you want to, so that you can live a more successful and satisfying life. It is a very *practical* guide that teaches you the skills to rapidly make your self-concept stronger, more resilient, and more aligned with your values and goals. Learning these skills avoids the unpleasant pitfalls and consequences of a poor self-concept, and they enable you to continually improve your life as you respond to unfolding events.

The Workshop Training Format

Most of this book has been edited directly from transcripts of 3-day trainings in which participants explored different qualities of their self-concept in a sequence of guided exercises, followed by opportunities for asking questions and clarifying discussion. After discovering exactly how their self-concepts functioned, they learned how to strengthen and change them in a variety of ways.

I have retained a workshop training format in this book for a number of very important reasons. To make learning easy, the workshop is carefully planned to introduce only a few understandings or distinctions at a time, along with exercises designed to transform teaching into *training*. Then we gradually assemble these understandings and skills into larger wholes of meaning. Since I organize my thinking and training in this way for easy learning, it is easiest for me to present the material in the same way. If you pause in your reading to do the exercises, you can have much the same training experience as if you were in the seminar.

But much more important, this training format provides you with a window into what I actually *do*, and how you can actually *learn*. I can't tell you how many times I have watched demonstration sessions that bore almost no resemblance to the author's written descriptions of what they thought they did. A transcript presents what I actually say when I'm talking with real individuals in order to teach them how to learn and change. Participants' comments show the wide variety of what they discover as they explore different aspects of their self-concept, and their questions raise

important issues that clarify how you can use the information and processes in this book.

Reading this book invites you to embark on this same journey of exploration and experimentation, using what you learn for your own personal change and development. Those who work as psychologists, therapists and counselors will also learn how to teach others to improve and change their self-concepts to make them more functional and satisfying.

Background Foundation

I began discovering how people think about themselves over twelve years ago, using understandings and methods from the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), a field originally developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder in the early 1970s. This field continues to grow and develop, as these methods are used to discover even more about how our minds function, and how to use these discoveries to help people change. I have done my best to write this book in a way that anyone can understand, even without any NLP background. However, since this book is an outgrowth of NLP, I occasionally refer to terms, methods, and understandings that are beyond the scope of this book. When I do that, I provide specific references, which you can use if you are interested in gaining a broader understanding of these topics. There is also an online encyclopedia of NLP (14) which you can consult.

Learning about self-concept has been a challenging journey in which I learned many processes that I did not expect. What I discovered often worked much better than what I had expected to find, and that was a good sign that I was discovering what was actually there, not just "rediscovering" my own assumptions and preconceptions.

An Overview

This book is sequenced very carefully, beginning by briefly offering you some general understandings about self-concept, values, and self-esteem. Then I discuss some of the reasons for the extraordinary power of self-concept, and some important criteria for how a healthy self-concept that is aligned with your values can function to create the kind of person you want to be. (Chapters 1, 2, 3)

Then come structured discovery exercises in which you can personally experience different aspects of your self-concept, and learn how you can make the positive qualities of your self-concept stronger by making small but sometimes profound and far-reaching changes in how you think of yourself. (Chapters 4, 5, 6)

Next is discovering how you can use the times when you made mistakes

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to make your self-concept even stronger and more effective, and then learning how to *transform* these mistakes, so that the next time life presents you with a similar challenge you can spontaneously respond the way you want to. (Chapters 7, 8)

Then you will learn how to build an entirely new quality in yourself—choosing a quality that you want to have, and making it into part of who you *are*. (Chapter 9)

Next we will take a quality in yourself that you are uncertain about—sometimes you think you are, and sometimes you think you aren't—and change that unpleasant ambiguity into a calm certainty, a quiet knowing that fits your values. (Chapter 10)

Then we will investigate the dangers in comparing yourself with others, and thinking of yourself in terms of what you are *not*, and how to avoid the serious problems that this causes. (Chapter 11)

Next you will learn how to transform a quality in yourself that you don't like into one that you do like, one that expresses what you really want in life. (Chapter 12)

Then there is a shift in focus as we explore the *boundaries* of your self-concept, and how to change your responses to events by having boundaries that flexibly protect you from the opinions, beliefs, and intrusions of others. (Chapter 13)

Next we explore how to adjust the boundaries of your self-concept to make it easier to connect with others in shared intimacy, while maintaining a secure sense of yourself. (Chapter 14)

Finally, I present some closing comments summarizing how you can use all that you have learned.

If You Like to Browse

Because I want you to learn how to put the information in this book into *practice*, the sequence of chapters in this book has been very carefully planned for easy learning. Each chapter presupposes and builds on understandings and skills that have been taught in previous chapters. Without these previous understandings, parts of later chapters will be confusing. Because of this, I highly recommend that you *read the chapters in sequence*. But if you would like to start with some shorter pieces for samples of what this book offers you, I have some suggestions:

Chapter 9 presents a verbatim transcript of a session which demonstrates teaching a man how to think of himself as lovable, including follow-up interviews with him and his wife that describe the widespread impact that this had on his marriage and his life.

Chapter 13 presents another very direct application, how to change

your boundaries in order to protect yourself from the opinions, influences and intrusions of others.

Chapter 4 begins the process of exploring the structure of your self-concept, and how to strengthen it and change it.

The Appendix is another place to experience rapid changes through simple processes called "Perspective Patterns." The ability to view an experience "in perspective" is a widely useful ability, and it is also one of the fundamental processes underlying your self-concept.

Yet another way to browse is to look at the summary at the end of each chapter.

After you have sampled one or more of these, I hope that you will go back to the beginning and read the book in sequence, to maximize your understanding and personal benefit. I invite you to join me and the training participants on this journey, to learn how you think of yourself, and how to rapidly change that so that *you can become the kind of person you would like to be.*

Some Questions

Before we begin this exploration into your self-concept, I want you to consider some very basic and important questions that this book will answer in detail:

What is a self-concept?

What is it for?

What is it made of?

How does it work?

What makes it so powerful?

How can you change it?

What is the difference between self-concept and self-esteem?

What is the relationship between individual self-concept and religious or mystical experience?

If you would like to know the practical answers to even a few of these questions, *read on.*

1

Self-concept, Values, and Self-esteem

I want to begin by laying some groundwork, some basic understandings about your self-concept, before exploring exactly how it functions. You have some way of thinking about yourself, what is often called your "self," "self-image" or "identity." "Self-image" is a bit misleading and restrictive, since your self-concept includes auditory words and sounds, and kinesthetic feelings (and sometimes even smells and tastes) as well as visual images. "Identity" is a very old term, with a very broad range of possible meanings, some of which I'd rather not have to deal with. "Self" is not quite as broad as "identity," but it still has a fairly wide variety of meanings. "Self-concept" is apparently a fairly recent term, since it is not in my old 1966 edition of Webster's unabridged dictionary. This word has exactly the meaning that I want to explore, namely the concept or idea that you have of your self. It really should be *self-concepts*, since you have many, many ideas about yourself, but I will use the term "self-concept" to indicate any and all of the ideas that you have about yourself.

"Self-concept" sounds like it ought to be a thing, but you can't see it, or touch it, or put it in a jar. So it is really "self-concepting," a set of processes that we use to think about ourselves, and this is what we will be exploring. How well your self-concept functions lies only partly in the content—*what* you think about yourself, and much more in *how* you think about it. That may seem a bit mysterious at this point, but it will become clear.

Your self-concept is mostly based on all the personal experiences that you have stored in your memory. You have an immense wealth of memory experience about yourself. Some people think that you recall everything

that ever happened to you, but we don't really know. In any case, you have years and years of memories. However, it is not just the memories you have, but *how you organize and think about* those memories that provides the basis for your self-concept. Given a blank canvas, and a certain set of colors and brushes, an artist can paint a very wide range of paintings, and the same is true of the self that you construct out of your personal history.

When you think about yourself, the first thing that you do is *select* from your immense range of experience. You can't possibly think of it all, so you have to select, and as you select some aspects, you inevitably have to ignore others. If you think of yourself as intelligent, you think of times when you demonstrated that, and ignore the times when you misunderstood, or made a mistake. Someone who thinks of himself as stupid will do the reverse. Everyone has had experiences of being intelligent, as well as experiences of being stupid, so the self-concept that you have now is only one of many possible ones that you could create from your wealth of experience, and that means that you can change it whenever it doesn't serve you well.

Your self-concept is a sort of map of who you are. Like any other map, it is always a very simplified version of the territory that it describes, and this simplicity is *exactly* what makes a map useful. A small piece of paper with a few lines on it may be a poor representation of a large city, but it can be *very* useful in helping you get around in unfamiliar territory and find the things that interest you. No matter how good a map is, it always leaves out things, events, and information that you can find in the territory. The only way to have a complete map would be to reproduce the territory completely, particle by particle, atom by atom. Since this reproduced territory would be as big and unwieldy as the original, it would defeat the very purpose of having a map.

Your self-concept, the "map" you have of yourself, has the same purpose as a map of a city—to keep you oriented in the world and help you find your way, particularly when events are challenging or difficult. Your self-concept is a bit like a travel agent; it helps you get where you want to go, and have the experiences that you want to have. Since our maps of ourselves are always very simplified, they can never fully describe who we are. We can never know ourselves completely, and if we did, it would be so complex and cumbersome that it would be useless to us.

Many books have been written about discovering your "true self" or your "real self," and I think that this mostly comes from the recognition that many people have a *false* self, an unreal image that they project. Often this is in response to the demands of others, or the demands of some idealistic belief about how someone "should" be, rather than how they actually *are*. Some people become so good at presenting their false self that

they even lose touch with their own values and beliefs, so that much of their true identity is hidden from them, what has often been called an unknown "shadow" self.

At the same time, trying to find your "real" self is a little like trying to decide whether a topographic map, a vegetation map, or a road map is the "true" map of an area. They are *all* true insofar as they provide information that is useful to you. What is useful for any given person is what serves *them* in pursuit of their *values*—what is important to them: what they find enjoyable, interesting, pleasing, etc. This points out one sense in which thinking about searching for your "true self is very useful—*developing a self-concept that is true to what is important to you and that effectively supports you in your goals in life.*

Self-esteem

Before we start exploring self-concept, I want to clarify a very important distinction between self-concept and self-esteem. It is really quite simple, but many people use the terms interchangeably, when they are actually very different. Let's say you think of yourself as a kind person. "Kindness" is a generalization about an aspect or quality of your behavior, part of your *self-concept*. Then when you apply your values, "Do I like this or not?" you can have positive *self-esteem* if the answer is "Yes." Self-esteem is the result of your *evaluation* of your self-concept. If you act in a kind way, and you value kindness, then you can feel good about it, and we would say that you have high self-esteem. If you noticed yourself behaving in a cruel way, you would feel bad about it, and have low self-esteem.

However, if someone had grown up in an intensely dangerous and competitive environment, perhaps during a brutal war, their survival might have depended on being unfeeling and cruel. A self-perception of being cruel would be valued, and lead to high self-esteem, while being sensitive and kind would feel disturbing and dangerous, and lead to low self-esteem. When your self-concept is not aligned with your values, you will experience low self-esteem. *When your self-concept is aligned with your values, you can enjoy high self-esteem.*

For those who find it interesting to think in terms of logical levels of thinking, self-concept is a generalization *about* experience, so it is at a larger, more general, logical level than the set of experiences that it describes. Self-esteem is a generalization *about* self-concept, so it is at a still larger logical level than your self-concept. A larger generalization is more encompassing, pointing out what a set of experiences has in common, while ignoring the differences in what it describes, so it has both advantages and disadvantages.

There are several other common misunderstandings about self-esteem that I would like to clarify. Some people think that people who are troublesome to society (our particular society) are people with low self-esteem, and sometimes that is true. When people feel badly about themselves, out of their unhappiness and frustration they often make poor choices, and may lash out at others or society in destructive ways

But sometimes socially troublesome people have the *same* values as society; they simply have *different ways* to express those values. For instance, a youth who sprays graffiti in public places may be demonstrating courage, artistic talent, group membership, etc. and feel *very* good about it. Most of us would agree that those qualities are worthwhile—yet prefer that he express them in other ways.

Other people may have a very different set of values, often derived from a different culture or subculture. If they behave in accordance with those values, they can feel very good about themselves, while doing things that our society as a whole disagrees with. Many years ago I heard a radio interview with a Mafia "hit man," who had killed 19 people. He thought that he was doing righteous work, and felt *very* good about it. He was upholding the values of his particular society. He wasn't just a murderer for hire, because he told in great detail about a guy who called him up once and offered him a hundred thousand dollars to kill his pregnant mistress, because she was making trouble for him. The hit man talked to him for a while, and gathered some information, including the mistress' name and address, and the guy's name and address. Then he said to him, "Listen, you give that lady that hundred thousand dollars within two weeks, or I'll hit *you*." You might disagree with his values, or the way he applied his values, but he was very consistent about them. He thought of himself as an exterminator, getting rid of "vermin" and "cockroaches," and he had *very* high self-esteem about his work.

A hundred years ago, when most women in this country were homemakers, they typically based much of their self-esteem on that set of abilities, because it was culturally valued. Now, with expanded views of what women are capable of, being a homemaker is often not valued as greatly, and a housewife may have quite low self-esteem, while a business woman can feel very good about her work even if she is not a skilled homemaker. Those are just a few examples. I hope you can think of lots of others.

Now, given that self-esteem is the result of an *evaluation* of the self-concept, what do you think will happen if you don't deal with self-concept but you just try to help people feel good about themselves directly?

In one of my favorite "Calvin and Hobbes" cartoons, Hobbes says to Calvin, "Aren't you supposed to be doing your homework?"

Calvin: "I quit doing homework. Homework is bad for my self-esteem."

Hobbes: "It is?"

Calvin: "Sure. It sends a message that I don't know enough. All that emphasis on right answers makes me feel bad when I get them wrong. So instead of trying to learn, I'm just concentrating on liking myself the way I am."

Hobbes: "Your self-esteem is enhanced by remaining an ignoramus?"

Calvin: "Please. Let's call it 'informationally impaired.'"

Many well-meaning parents try to help their kids feel good by saying, "Oh, you are a great kid," providing "*other-esteem*" in the hope that it will result in *self-esteem*. But if they don't provide any data, any foundation of experience, it doesn't do any lasting good, because the child doesn't know what it is about, or what s/he did to deserve it. That's like telling someone about a "great" restaurant, without saying anything about the kind of food that they serve, or how it tastes. You may be talking about a place that serves great "five alarm" chili, while the person you're talking to can only eat very mild food, and doesn't like beans!

If unspecified praise is overdone, that can even backfire and get the opposite result, if the child starts thinking about the larger implications. "Why is my dad making such a big deal? Does he think I'm doing so badly that he's worried and thinks I need praise?"

Many people make the same kind of mistake when they seek "happiness." You can't get happiness directly, any more than you can get self-esteem directly. You have to find out what *experiences* make *you* happy and seek those out—and the *result* is happiness. Just as happiness results automatically from experiencing the things that make you happy, self-esteem is a natural and automatic *result* of a self-concept that is aligned with your values.

When you link the evaluation to behavior, the child knows what behaviors the parent values. "Remember yesterday when your brother fell off his bike and hurt himself, and you helped him up and get a bandage for his scrape? I'm really glad you did that; I'm really pleased that you are such a kind person." Now the child has the *data* for the evaluation or praise. That teaches both the behavior *and* the values, and *links* the two together, making it possible for the child to have positive self-esteem.

If you look at some of the methods that people have used to raise self-esteem, you will find that the more useful ones actually build *self-concept*. Minority kids understandably have difficulty identifying with successful figures in the white majority. When minority kids are asked to cut out photos of sports and movie stars, singers and musicians, politicians and scien-

tists of their own racial or ethnic group, and then assemble them to create a collage, that gives them something that they can identify with, building a self-concept that is connected with the possibility of success. Their positive self-esteem is an automatic result of this.

Since low self-esteem results from a self-concept that isn't aligned with values, it can be useful to think about some of the signs of low self-esteem, because that tells us when it's useful to work with self-concept. Low self-esteem is often indicated by low confidence, or what is often called "underachieving." People who don't think well of themselves usually don't attempt very much, and if they don't attempt much, they won't accomplish much.

Low self-esteem is often a result of people comparing themselves to others, and deciding that they fall short of whatever social values or ideals they have accepted as being important. Nearly everyone does at least some of this, and it indicates a great untapped resource, because when people think better about themselves, they are much more successful—both in the conventional sense of that word, and also in the sense of being more successful in developing each individual's own unique qualities.

Another sign of a poor self-concept is when people frequently try to escape from themselves through abuse of drugs, food, TV, or other distractions. Although people say they use drugs to get "high," most experts in the field of addictions agree that it is much more accurate to say that they use drugs to feel *normal*, to escape from a wide variety of bad feelings, such as frustration, guilt, shame, regret, anger, etc. Someone who feels self-conscious and anxious in social situations, but feels comfortable after a few drinks is certainly a common example. Many years ago at a college party, I remember a somewhat drunk friend coming up to me with a curious and puzzled look. He put his face very close to mine, and said, "I don't understand; you haven't had anything to drink, and you're having more fun than I am."

The escape from oneself is only temporary of course, and when they return from it, their lives are usually a bit worse, rather than better, because of the consequences of what they did during the escape, or the opportunities they missed. Other repetitive self-destructive behavior might only be a sign of low intelligence or ignorance, but it is often a pretty good indication that some self-concept work would be useful.

Another sign of low self-esteem is when someone is overbearing or arrogant and self-important. In another favorite cartoon of mine, Sally Forth says to her husband Ted, "Do you realize that we spend billions of dollars every year on programs designed to raise people's self-esteem?"

Ted: "Is that bad?"

Sally: "Maybe not. But what about people who are a major pain in the rear because they have *too much* self-esteem? Why aren't we spending money on programs to *lower* theirs? I work with a lot of people who could use that kind of help."

The "too much self-esteem" that Sally Forth talks about is actually a sign of a very shaky self-concept, someone who feels very *unsure* of himself, and tries to cover it up with *overconfidence*—self-importance, arrogance, bragging, etc. Someone who really feels securely good about herself has no need to even mention it to others, much less brag about it.

Too much or too little self-esteem are good indications for changing self-concept, and we will use appropriate self-esteem as a good indication that your self-concept is aligned with your values. Other than that, we will not be focusing on self-esteem, but rather on how to develop the kind of self-concept that automatically results in self-esteem. We will be working to *align your self-concept with your values*, because then high self-esteem is automatic.

Values

Although I will not be working with your values, I want to say a few things about them, since they are the basis for how well your self-concept functions to give you the kind of satisfying behavior that leads to self-esteem. Your values are basically generalizations about what kind of experiences are important to you. You value experiences that feel good, and negatively value the ones that feel bad. Since many things and events are important to you, and in many very different ways, you have many different values. A single event may be valuable to you in several different ways, and many different experiences may be valuable to you in the same way.

However, sometimes you find that your values are in conflict with each other. Even in a fairly simple situation like choosing a meal at a restaurant, different values come into play, and you need to sort out which values are most important to you. You may be hungry, so you'd like a big meal, but you plan to exercise later, so a smaller meal will be better for that. That dessert may look very tempting, but you also want to lose weight. Perhaps it's an expensive restaurant, so you decide to buy a simpler meal in order to save money, even though you are quite hungry. What is operating here is a common kind of difficult choice, between something you value at the present moment, and something that you value at another time.

When buying a car, you need to sort out which qualities are *more* important to you, and ignore other less important ones. You may value safety, fuel efficiency, style, color, space, comfort, newness, acceleration, and low cost. But fuel efficiency is likely to reduce the acceleration, com-

fort may be at the cost of safety, a particular style may reduce the space, and all of these may increase the cost of the car.

Many important life decisions are *far* more complex than selecting a meal or buying a car. In order to make these difficult decisions about what is *most* important, it is useful to *prioritize* your values in some kind of *hierarchy* of importance. When someone doesn't prioritize their values, they may not even think about other values when making a decision. They may see the tasty dessert or the pretty red car, and buy it without even thinking about what else they could use that money for at some other time or place—all the other possible choices that might satisfy other values that might be much more important.

These values conflicts are something that all of us face, even if all our values are based solidly in our own experiencing. However, we also acquire many of our values from our parents, or others, without having a personal experiential base for them. The advantage of this is that a child can learn the value of being careful while crossing a street so s/he doesn't get run over by a truck without having to have that experience personally. Yet even when society's values are useful to us, we may experience a conflict. I might really like to have lunch without paying for it, but it works better if I resist my desire to do that.

However, we may acquire values simply because they are a generally accepted part of our learned culture, even though they *aren't* appropriate for us. Since different cultures have widely divergent values, the kindest thing that can be said is that they often disagree, and that some of them are not a good fit for *any* human being. When someone accepts a social value that doesn't fit for them, they have to inhibit their own natural responses when they are in conflict. They may even deny or ignore these responses, shutting them out of their awareness and self-concept altogether.

In addition, every culture also has values that directly conflict with each other. One of the ten commandments says, "Thou shalt not kill," without any exceptions, and our society has numerous laws against murder. Yet other laws say that killing in self-defense is OK, that executing a convicted murderer is good, that killing in war is a duty to protect the homeland, etc. If you accept all these values, and take them seriously, deciding what to do sometimes presents a very difficult problem.

Because of all these factors, we often have conflicting values in a particular situation, and no matter what we decide to do, we will have to violate one or more of our values. Back in the 1950s Abraham Maslow made a list of values, and then tried to put them in a hierarchical order of importance, with survival being most important, and individual "self-actualization" being least important, emerging only after survival and other needs

have been satisfied. In a military hierarchy any rank always commands those lower in the hierarchy, and is always obedient to orders from higher ranks. So a hierarchy of values means that a higher value would always be more important than a lower one. But then Maslow found so many exceptions that he had to give up his idea of a hierarchy. People will often risk their lives in order to actualize themselves, and some will even give up their lives so that someone else can actualize themselves.

In actual experience, the importance of your values changes over time and in different contexts. You can experience one thing as more important to you than another at a particular time or in a particular context, but in another time and place, the hierarchy may be quite different. To take a trivial example, right now I hope that reading this book is important to you. But a little later, you may get tired of reading, and if the phone rings, or you start to notice your hunger, that may become more important to you than reading.

There is another, much more accurate way of describing how values function, that was pointed out by W.S. McCulloch, who was one of the first to describe neural nets in mathematical terms. One of the structures he examined was the reticular activating system in the brainstem. Since this system determines what someone pays attention to, it is at the very root of values and choosing. He found that this structure could best be described as a "heterarchy," rather than a hierarchy.

A heterarchy functions something like a committee, but one in which everyone can talk and listen to each other simultaneously. The various elements of this system all communicate with each other, contributing to a consensus about which perceptions and activities are most relevant at a particular moment. In a heterarchical system all the different elements mutually interact, and one of them temporarily gains control in cooperation with the others. This system is very ancient, and it determines attention not only in human beings, but in all vertebrates, and it has been doing this for several hundred million years, an indication of how useful it is.

Of necessity, the system must enjoy a redundancy of potential command in which the possession of the necessary urgent information constitutes authority in that part possessing the information.

That it has worked so well throughout evolution, without itself evolving, points to its structure as the natural solution of the organization of appropriate behavior. (16, p. 397)

A heterarchy describes how our values actually work. At any moment this system appears to be a hierarchy, with some elements taking prece-

dence over others. But when observed over time, attention and control is actually passed from one element to another, satisfying one need, and then another.

A traditional authoritarian family is an example of a rigid hierarchy. The parents may know more than the kids about most things, especially when the kids are quite young. But as the kids grow older and more capable, they become more insistent on participating in decisions, and the pressure grows to function like a more natural heterarchy.

Our conscious minds tend to think in terms of hierarchies, while our unconscious needs are heterarchical. Studies of creativity have repeatedly found that some kind of interruption is often very useful in problem-solving. Taking a break, or "sleeping" on the problem, lets go of whatever conscious approach was not working to solve the problem, and gives the heterarchy a chance to reassert itself and come up with a solution.

Another example is horse racing. To simplify, let's say that three horses run races against each other, and that A wins against B, B wins against C, and C wins against A. If you think in hierarchies, this doesn't make any sense at all. However, if you could create a stable hierarchy among horses, that would be the end of horse racing! What is missing in the above information are all the different factors that contribute to winning a race. Perhaps horse A does best on a hot sunny day and a dry track, while B is a better "mudder," and C runs best in cold weather. And there are all the other variable factors like the health and condition of the horse and rider that could influence the winning of a race. That kind of complexity is why you can't create a hierarchy, except in a general way, and why people still bet on horses.

The Israeli military, one of the most effective fighting forces in the world, has taken steps to move in the direction of heterarchy. Whenever possible, soldiers are kept in the same small units, so that each one has intimate knowledge of each others' particular abilities, skills, strengths, and weaknesses. Although one of them is the designated commander, command is actually handed to the one who is most capable in any given situation.

A values hierarchy is always an artificial imposition on the natural heterarchical process which has been a basis for animal survival for hundreds of millions of years. A hierarchy can be very useful as a general guide to what is usually more important to you. But if it becomes too rigid or too specific, it can be very damaging. Bulimia and Anorexia are examples of a rigid hierarchy, in which the social need to be thin completely overwhelms urgent and basic needs for food and health.

Some people try to figure out their values objectively, or try to deduce them logically from a set of hierarchical rules, principles or scriptures, but

those usually don't hold up very well in actual experience. Logical systems try to be objective and absolute, but they can only do this at the cost of ignoring a lot of important details, and they would work fairly well only if both we and the world were very simple and never changed. No matter how useful a set of principles may be as a general guide, none can accurately respond to the immense complexity of a human being in an even more complex physical and social world, all of which are continually changing.

Some people speak of objective values, but the word "objective" is always a lie, because there is always an observer hidden somewhere, even in the most carefully and rigorously tested scientific knowledge. It is always, "So and so, using the following assumptions, studying this and that, with the following methods and instruments, under the following conditions, has found that—" Heinz von Foerster has stated the fallacy of "objective" knowledge very powerfully: (18)

It is syntactically and semantically correct to say that subjective statements are made by subjects. Thus, correspondingly, we may say that objective statements are made by objects. It is only too bad that these damned things don't make any statements.

We share some basic values with all other human beings, because of our common physiology and development. Yet even a basic need like hunger can be satisfied in an infinite variety of ways, and the cooking of one culture may not appeal at all to someone brought up in another. Values are notoriously subjective experiences; different people value wildly different things and activities. Think of all the differences between your own and someone else's values. When I examine the things and activities that others value, many of them make no sense at all to me! Someone would have to pay me a lot of money to do things that others voluntarily and eagerly spend time and money to do. Of course many of the things that I value also make no sense to others.

I'm going to assume that you have a sense of your values; that you have some idea of the many different experiences that are important to you, and which you like and which you don't like. If you don't know what your values are, the best way to find out is to put yourself into a specific experience—either in reality or in imagination—and find out whether you feel good or you feel bad. It's important to do this both short-term and long-term, since some experiences may be unpleasant in the moment, yet feel good later, while for others the reverse is true.

When you do this, you can discover what your values are, and how well they actually work for you. Are these values important to you, or are

they values that you simply accepted from others or society at large, without checking to see if they fit for you or not?

If you think of the last time you did something that you were not satisfied with, or someone else complained about, what values were expressed in that event? What values were ignored, set aside, or not considered until later? For example, is that phone call that your wife forgot to tell you about that made you angry really more important than your loving relationship with her? If that situation were to happen again, do you want to get angry again, or would you rather do something different that would be a better expression of what is most important to you in that situation?

I will assume that you have values, and that you know at least something about what they are, and which are usually more important to you. My task will be to show you how you can become someone who has a self-concept that is congruent with your values, and that works well for you.

Summary

Your self-concept is a set of processes that create a sort of map of yourself. This map works a bit like a travel agent, helping you get where you want to go, and have the kind of experiences that you want to have. Your self-concept is made of experiences, which are *selected* from all the experiences you have had, and then *assembled* into a particular form. Since you can select and assemble your experiences in many different ways, you have immense freedom to transform your self-concept to make it more effective.

Ideally, your self-concept is aligned with your values, and when it is, you can feel good about that, what is usually called positive *self-esteem*. You value many different kinds of experiences, and for many different reasons, so it is helpful to be able to prioritize your values in a general *hierarchy* that indicates which values are usually more important to you. That way you can spend more time in experiences that are valuable to you, and not waste too much of your life on things that are not important.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that your values actually function as a *heterarchy*, shifting in importance with your changing internal state, the external situation, your knowledge, experience, goals, etc. Many problems are caused by imposing a rigid hierarchy of values on the natural flexible heterarchy that is a part of being a human being.

Next I want to explore some of the major elements of self-concept that make it so powerful, important, and useful in our lives.

2

The Power of Self-Concept

People have recognized the importance and power of self-concept for a very long time. But what makes it so important? There are several elements that make the self-concept powerful in affecting behavior. Although there is considerable overlap between the different elements listed below, it is useful to examine them one at a time. The self-concept is:

A very large generalization about the self.

A system that creates continuity across time and space.

A feed-forward system oriented toward the future.

A recursive system that refers to itself and acts on itself.

The Self-concept is a Large Generalization

When we think about ourselves, we usually talk in terms of qualities or attitudes, even though a particular quality is only part of my self-concept. If I think of myself as "persistent," I condense all my experiences having to do with persistence into one concept, one word, "persistence." It would take too long to think about all the enormous variety of experiences of being persistent that I have had, with so many different people, in so many different contexts, and regarding so many different topics, over so many years of living.

"Persistence" is a *very* large generalization, because when I say, "I am a persistent person," I think of it as applying to my entire life. Like all generalizations, this results in distortions. I am not *always* persistent; sometimes it makes good sense to give up on something quickly. I'm not really persistent when I'm asleep, which is about a third of my life, and there are

lots of other exceptions. However, thinking of myself as persistent can still serve me well as a guide to how I want to be, both now and in the future.

Since your self-concept is such a large generalization, changes in it will spread throughout your life, and will affect all relevant experiences. Sometimes these effects are far wider than you might imagine. For example, one man had always thought of himself as a "poor boy," and his wife had always complained about his risky driving. When he changed his idea of being a "poor boy," many of his behaviors changed spontaneously, and one of them was that his wife found that his driving no longer worried her.

The Self-concept Creates Continuity Across Time and Space

Your self-concept goes with you through all time and space. You are the same person, even as you change your behavior from one place to another, or from one year to the next. Even in your dreams you maintain your self-concept. Have you ever not known who you were? As an adolescent you may have been confused and uncertain about who you were, but you *knew* that you were someone who was confused and uncertain.

Your self-concept provides a stable internal context despite changes in external context, a fundamental internal frame for understanding your experience. Whatever thoughts, feelings and actions you have, they are *yours*, and they have some place in this fundamental frame of your self-concept.

When someone does something unusual, they will often say, "I wasn't myself." But who is saying this? Even as they say, "I wasn't myself," they continue to assert an "I," a self that continues in spite of unusual behavior. There is still some thread of continuity, even though they behaved in a way that was outside their usual range. They still say, "I wasn't myself," not "*S/he* wasn't myself."

Similarly, a person will say, "When I was three years old," not "When *s/he* was three years old." You were a *very* different person at three than you are now. Yet, despite all those differences, most people think of themselves as being the *same* person across quite a span of years and change. If you press them, they may say, "Well, of course I was much different then," but again they are presupposing that the "I" is the same, even as they talk about the differences.

A little contrast may help highlight the importance of this continuity. If someone changes a phobia, an unreasonable fear, the benefits usually occur in very small slices of time, in very few contexts. Occasionally someone has a phobia that fires off once or twice a day for a few minutes but usually it is once or twice a month or even less. Someone who is phobic usually learns to avoid the situations that would make them fearful, so they

might only experience it once or twice a year when they get careless. There are plenty of people who have not been in the phobic situation for many years, and may not actually know if they are still phobic, because it has been so long since they actually tested their response. So although having a phobia may be extremely unpleasant, usually it only affects the person in a few contexts, and for a very short time. When their phobia is gone, the benefits only occur in those few times and places.

Usually changing someone's phobia doesn't affect the person's self-concept very much, but that depends on how the person thinks of their phobia. If they think of it simply as a habit or problem that they have, they may not even remember it after it is gone. Connirae and I taught one woman in a weekend seminar how to eliminate her phobia of elevators, using a method developed by the original developers of NLP. (2, Ch. 7) We like to follow up on our work, so I called her a couple of weeks later and said, "How's your elevator phobia?"

She said, "What?"

I said, "Do you remember two weeks ago you came to our seminar and we worked on your elevator phobia?"

"Oh, yeah, that's right."

"Well, have you been in any elevators since then?"

She thought for a while, and said, "Oh, yeah. Gosh, last week there were a couple of times I rode in elevators." She had been going into elevators without even *noticing* it, and that is not uncommon. That is a tremendous compliment to the method, although it is bad for client referrals. And it certainly tells you that she has not made a change in her self-concept.

In contrast, your self-concept goes with you and affects you wherever you are. Because it generalizes so widely, change in your self-concept will radiate throughout your life, through all your experiences. There are only a few very rare exceptions to this—multiple personality, some drug states, or other uncommon dissociated or amnesic states, in which the normal continuity of self-concept is lost.

However, changing a specific behavior such as a phobia *can* sometimes result in a change in self-concept. Someone who loses their phobia could go into an elevator, notice the difference, and then conclude, "I'm a different person," or "I am a person who can change quickly," or any number of other possible beliefs about themselves.

If you want to create a change in self-concept, it can be useful to deliberately set up this kind of cause-effect relationship between the behavioral change and a self-concept change by talking to a client *before* helping them change their response. "You have suffered from this phobia for 22 years. And you have tried many approaches to change it, and they have all failed.

Now if we were able to eliminate your phobia in a very short time, by a simple visualization process, that would be positive proof that you are a person who is capable of making rapid and profound changes—you just haven't known how to do this before—and that would open the door to all the other changes you have wanted to make in yourself for so many years, would it not?"

If you can get someone to congruently agree with that cause-effect linkage, *then* when you change the phobia, it will change the way they think about themselves. That is a way of using a limited behavioral change to get a much greater resulting change in self-concept. Any simple change method can be used in this way if a cause-effect belief ("behavioral change means self change") has been established beforehand.

Although any change can affect self-concept in this way, there is one NLP method, the Swish Pattern, developed by Richard Bandler, that specifically and directly builds a piece of self-concept, although it is not usually described in this way. Reviewing this method can build a useful basis for beginning to understand some very fundamental things about how your self-concept functions.

In the Swish Pattern, you make a desirable image of "the you who you want to become, the you of the future who no longer has the problem." "See an image of yourself no longer having this problem." That is a very explicit instruction to create a new self-image. Then that image is linked to the contexts where the old undesired behavior used to occur. There are a number of other elements that are needed to make the swish pattern work well, and these are discussed in great detail elsewhere. (2, Ch. 17, 9, Ch. 3) Nevertheless, at the heart of the pattern is this self-image that powerfully draws you to become it. This image is of an evolved you of the future, a person who exhibits whatever personal qualities—sensitivity, understanding, congruence, etc.—that make the problem a thing of the past.

There is one other aspect of the swish pattern that deserves attention. When you make the image of yourself, you are asked very explicitly *not* to see yourself doing a specific behavior, and *not* to see yourself in any particular context. By eliminating specific behavior and context, the image becomes something that is true of *you*, *independent* of behavior and context, so that it becomes a part of your self-concept that transcends space and time, or any specific behavior.

When you set up a swish appropriately, the transformation occurs extremely rapidly, often in a few minutes, and sometimes in a second or less! You can see this clearly in the first demonstration on a videotape that Connirae and I produced many years ago (10). The speed of change with this pattern is truly phenomenal. Even though I know how to create this

experience systematically and have witnessed it many times, I am still amazed that it can be so fast. There are two elements of self-concept that make this speed of change possible. The self-concept is a *feed-forward system* directed toward the future, and it *acts recursively on itself*.

The Self-concept is a Feed-forward System

A "feed-forward" system is quite different from the feedback systems that most people are more familiar with. In a feedback system, information about the present state is "fed back" into the system in order to maintain that state within a certain range. A thermostat that maintains the temperature of your home is a familiar example. The thermostat is inactive until your home gets cooler or hotter than the set range. Then it sends a signal to a heater or cooler that restores the temperature to the preset range. Every organism has many thousands of such feedback systems to regulate its food and water balance, temperature, blood chemistry, etc., in order to maintain the integrity of the whole system.

If we only had feedback systems, we would never become anything more than what we already are. We would only be rather complex thermostats. Fortunately, human beings also have feed-forward systems that propel us into becoming more of what we are capable of. I have a favorite joke that illustrates how a feed-forward system works:

A young soldier wakes up in his army barracks one morning and begins acting very strangely. He spends all his time searching, looking under, in, behind—everywhere—in an obsessive search for something. When his commanding officer asks what is going on, the soldier says, "Sir, I'm looking for a piece of paper." "Did you lose it?" "No, sir." "What is it?" "I don't know, sir." "Well, what does it look like?" "I don't know, sir." After a lot of fruitless questioning like this, the officer gives up. Meanwhile the soldier keeps searching everywhere.

Finally, after a few days of this incessant searching, the officer sends the soldier over to the psychiatrist who asks, "Well, what seems to be the problem?" Again the soldier says, "Well, I'm trying to find a piece of paper." As the psychiatrist asks him questions, the soldier goes through all the papers on the psychiatrist's desk, looks in the waste basket, on the shelves, under the rug, and so on. He continues to search everywhere for the paper, incessantly. Finally after several days of this, the psychiatrist gives up and says, "Well, son, I think the Army's been a little too rough on you. I think we had better give you a psychiatric discharge." He fills out the discharge form, and as he hands it over, the soldier says excitedly, "*There it is!*"

That's how a feed-forward system works. You set up a goal, and then

figure out what you have to do in order to get there. In business and industry this is sometimes called "strategic planning" or "backward planning." A particularly striking example is all the complex planning that was necessary to put a man on the moon, and get him back to Earth! It is called "backward planning" because you start at the final goal—in this case getting a man back to earth from the moon—and then plan *backward* in time to the present. Achieving goals in the real world often takes considerable time, because of all the practical things that you need to do to get there. However, when this same process is applied to your *ideas* about yourself, it is usually amazingly fast, because of another very important element, *recursion*.

The Self-concept is Self-referring, and Recursive

When I make an image of myself, I am both the maker of the image, and that which the image represents. I am both the subject and object in this process, in a closed loop that both refers to itself and acts on itself. This is an extremely powerful aspect of self-concept—for good or ill. An everyday example of recursion is what is called a "self-fulfilling prophecy." For instance, if someone feels confident about a task, they can begin doing it with all their personal resources, and as it goes well, they can feel even more confident, in a positive cycle.

But if someone worries about getting nervous before making a presentation, that worrying actually creates exactly what the person wanted to avoid. The feeling of anxiety makes them worry even more, in a vicious cycle. That results in their doing a poor job, and that will make them worry even more the next time they have to give a presentation. So recursion can be either positive or negative, depending on what kind of goal is imagined—and especially when the goal is negated—*not* wanting to get anxious.

If I have an idea about a rock, that may affect how *I* think and act toward the rock, but it doesn't change the qualities of the rock itself. But when I have an idea about myself, that *does* loop back and affect my attitudes and behaviors. If I think of myself as clumsy, this will predispose me to actually act more clumsily than I otherwise would. I will tend to notice the times when I stumble, or throw a ball awkwardly, and this noticing will tend to support and reinforce the belief. If I think of myself as graceful and skillful, I will tend to notice when I throw the ball well, supporting that belief. Your self-concept continually maintains and recreates itself in a circular loop.

A human being is a physical system, but it is also an information system, and your self-concept exists in your mind as part of the information system. Recursion in an information system is only as slow as the speed of

transmission of information. While the speed of transmission in human nerves is a good deal slower than in a computer, it is still very, very fast, on the order of a fraction of a second.

When someone makes an image of himself as someone who has the ability and determination to learn how to eat well and exercise, etc.—or whatever else is required for him to become slim—that change in his internal experience can be virtually instantaneous, because it exists in his mind. Of course that certainly won't make him slim in an instant! That is something that takes a certain amount of time to happen in the physical world, but *the change in understanding that makes it possible is almost instantaneous.*

We have been focusing on the beliefs that you have about yourself. However, you also have beliefs about your surroundings and other people, and it's important to realize that a troublesome belief could be about *yourself*, or your *world*—or both. World beliefs and self-beliefs are often reciprocal, depending on how you look at it. For instance, if I think that the *world* is overwhelming, that could be the same as saying that *I* think of myself as powerless. Many problems that initially appear to be problems with someone's world can be much more easily solved through a change in their self-concept.

Summary

The power of self-concept is based on a number of elements working together. Your self-concept is a *very large generalization* about yourself that creates a *continuity* that spans time and space, affecting nearly everything you do. It is also a *feed-forward system* that is oriented toward the future, and that *recursively* acts upon itself, creating and maintaining itself very rapidly.

As with all forms of power, the power of self-concept can be creative or destructive, depending on how it is directed. Each of us has some kind of self-concept, some idea of who we are. Clearly some people's self-concepts don't work very well, and this limits them to a small fraction of their potential. Other people's self-concepts are a solid foundation for a successful and satisfying life, even when confronting significant difficulties, physical handicaps, or environmental limitations.

The content of your self-concept is the result of selecting a small sample of events from the wealth of your experience, and identifying with it. "This is who I am." The recursion and feed-forward elements of the self-concept continue this selective process, so our self-beliefs tend to reinforce themselves through further selective perception, behavior, and memory. A limiting belief will tend to become more limiting, while an enabling belief will tend to become more enabling. A change in your self-concept rapidly

creates a reorganization that is very widespread and pervasive, affecting a great many aspects of your life. The details of exactly how this occurs, and how to change limiting self-beliefs into more empowering ones will be the focus of the rest of this book. But first let's look at the criteria that will ensure that your self-concept will be effective, and do its job well.

3

Elements of a Healthy Self-concept

When I first began exploring how self-concept works, I developed a set of criteria for what I wanted the self-concept to do. At that time I didn't know *how* it worked, but I had some very definite ideas about *what* I wanted it to accomplish.

This is very similar to what Connirae and I did about fifteen years ago, when we began to develop a process for teaching people who were grieving how to respond resourcefully to a major loss. We began with criteria about who we wanted to model, because we didn't want to model resignation, depression, denial, or any other unresourceful response to loss. If you develop an accurate model of something that doesn't work very well, the results of using that model also won't work very well. We wanted to model exceptionally capable people who actually felt joyful about having known the person who was dead or gone, and who were able to easily move on with their lives and establish satisfying new relationships. This made our work much simpler, since it allowed us to narrow our search, and focus only on people who were particularly successful at this task.

When you describe an object, you might talk about its color, its weight, its history, and what it can be used for, yet these are all different aspects of the same thing. In the same way, the following criteria for an effective self-concept are very interrelated, and can be thought of as different aspects of the same process. Because of the limitations of language and thinking, I have to artificially separate them, and discuss them one at a time. I wanted the self-concept to be:

- **Durable**, resilient, and lasting (there when you most need it).
- **Accurate** (a good predictor of your attitudes and behaviors).
- **Self-correcting and responsive to feedback.**
- **Unconscious** and automatic (as in "peak performance").
- **Connecting** with others, rather than separating.
- **Free of self-importance**, arrogance, and all the other signs of egotism.

Durability

Your identity is in many ways the foundation of your living, what your life is all about, a fundamental basis for meaning and understanding. Your self-concept needs to be *durable*, strong and resilient, reliable in the face of challenges. If something happens that contradicts your self-concept, you don't want it to collapse and disappear, because it's *very* unpleasant to have your ideas about who you are crumble into chaos.

Without the foundation that your self-concept provides, life is very confusing and unpleasant, and a person typically feels very lost, like an explorer in a jungle who has not only lost his map and his compass, but who has also lost his sense of who he is, why he is there, and what he is doing in the jungle! So creating a self-concept with *strength* or *durability* is of prime importance.

Accuracy

I also want the self-concept to be an *accurate* representation of your actual behavior, responses, attitudes, etc. I have seen far too many people who *thought* they were competent, intelligent, thoughtful, etc., but others vigorously disagreed with those self-perceptions.

In one of my favorite jokes a psychiatrist says to his client, "I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is that your self-concept is much improved; the bad news is that you're losing touch with reality."

If you are good at something, or not very good at something, I would like you to know that—especially if you are my doctor, or my banker, or someone else whose actions are vitally important to me. I want to examine the more extreme cases, very low or very high competence and confidence, even though most of us are usually somewhere in the intermediate range of these variables. There are four possibilities:

Low competence, Low confidence. If someone is not very competent and not very confident, at least they won't get into too much trouble. If they know that they are not good at something, they won't attempt very much, and won't try to get people to hire them for large amounts of money

to do dangerous things. Their self-concept may not be very good, but because it is accurate, they can make good decisions about what they are capable of. Accurately knowing what their capabilities are now is a good basis for deciding how they can learn and expand their capabilities, to become more capable and confident.

High competence, High confidence. If your competence is high, and your confidence is high, you are capable and you know it. You can achieve a lot because you know how much you are capable of, and you can keep your promises to others about what you can do. Having lots of competence and lots of confidence works fine. You can do something well, and you can feel confident about that. Confidence helps you to do it well, and doing it well builds more confidence. The two support each other in an upward spiral, so you get better and better at it. Again, your self-concept is accurate.

High competence, Low confidence. If your competence is high, and your confidence is low, you will underachieve, because your self-concept is inaccurate. You will do very well in what you attempt, because you have the ability, but you won't attempt very much, because you don't realize how much more you can do. Here's where straightforward confidence-building will work great, because you already have the ability.

Stage fright is a common example of this. You can easily verify that someone can speak. You know they can form logical sentences. You know they can breathe and stand. You know they have all the separate necessary behaviors for public speaking, but when they get up in front of a group they stumble and "choke up." This is the kind of situation in which all you have to do is elicit robust feelings of confidence, and integrate them with the task of being on stage. That confidence can allow them to demonstrate their competence in actual behavior.

Low competence, High confidence. When someone has very little competence and lots of confidence, this is especially troublesome. They think they can do all sorts of things that they can't actually do. When they confidently attempt to do many of these things, they often harm others or themselves, and cause a lot of damage and disappointment. Robert Fulgum has a wonderful quote: "Ignorance, power, and pride are a deadly mixture." That describes this situation. These are the people I worry about, because they cause a *lot* of trouble in the world, both for themselves and for others. When we work with self-concept, I want to be very careful that we don't build any more *overconfidence*.

Self-correction and Responsiveness to Feedback

Since you learn and change in response to changing events over a period of many years, if your self-concept is to *continue* to be accurate, it needs to

have an ongoing way of responding to corrective feedback. I have seen far too many people whose ideas about themselves might have been accurate at an earlier time in their lives, but they were now woefully out of date, and they acted as if they were blind to the quite obvious evidence all around them.

A self-concept without feedback is a lot like driving a car and ignoring the warning signals. The oil pressure warning light goes on when you're low on oil, so you put some masking tape over it so it doesn't bother you. And then when the oil is gone, you hear some knocking in the engine, so you put in ear plugs. That helps a lot because then you also don't hear the honking of other cars and any sirens or other sounds that might bother you. Eventually the engine blows up and the car stops, and you finally have to recognize that there is a problem.

If you pay attention to feedback, and respond to the oil pressure light right away by putting in some oil, that works a lot better than ignoring the warning signals. Feedback messages are always there, and if your self-concept is responsive to feedback, you can get the messages early, when you can easily respond to them. Every living system that lasts has rapid and effective feedback loops. And every system that doesn't have feedback loops eventually collapses.

When someone's self-concept isn't responsive to feedback information, it may become very inaccurate, very different from what other people observe. This has often been described as a "false self," and their unacknowledged behavior has been described as a "shadow self," because it is hidden in the shadow of the the false self. When someone else offers feedback about this discrepancy, s/he is usually very defensive, finding some other way to explain, invalidate, or deny what they have been told. The feedback is usually taken as evidence that the other person just doesn't understand the situation.

Then when they do finally notice the feedback, the disparity is so great that it's a huge and very unpleasant shock to realize that the way they have been thinking about themselves isn't true, and that they have been living a lie. At this point, their self-concept crumbles, and they feel very lost and confused.

This understanding is the basis for the AA twelve-step program and a lot of other approaches that believe that before someone can change their self-destructive behavior, they have to "hit the wall" or "reach bottom." That describes this situation in which experiences finally pile up until they go over a threshold. That may be necessary for someone who has spent a long time with a self-concept that was not responsive to feedback. But if we could start with little kids and teach them how to utilize feedback comfortably, they would never have to go through that kind of very unpleasant collapse.

When I first began to model self-concept, I was worried. I thought that

probably the elements that made it responsive to feedback would make it less durable, and that the elements that made it durable would make it less responsive to feedback. If this were true, then a self-concept that was both durable and responsive to feedback would require a delicate balance between the two—an increase in durability would have to be at the expense of responsiveness to feedback, and vice versa.

And I have wonderful news for you; *I was completely wrong. All the processes that make the self-concept durable also make it sensitive and responsive to feedback.* I can never tell you how happy I was to discover that. That was also a very good indication that I was discovering what was actually there, and not just "discovering" my opinions and preconceptions. One of our tasks will be to explore exactly how we can build this durability and sensitivity to feedback into your self-concept.

Unconscious

Everyone has experienced the discomfort that we feel when we are self-conscious, and most of us have also experienced how unpleasant it is to be around someone else who is self-conscious.

In contrast to this self-consciousness, I want you to think of a time when you were doing something very well, what has often been called "peak performance," or being in a "flow state." It doesn't matter what you called it, or what you were doing. You were doing something very smoothly and without effort, and doing it very well, and you weren't self-conscious. Can you think of an experience of that?

What happened to your performance if you noticed how well you were doing, and thought to yourself something like, "Wow, I'm doing great!?" Typically, that conscious evaluation takes you partially *out* of the state you're in, your level of performance goes down significantly, and you may even start making mistakes. The act of consciously thinking about yourself tends to interfere with your effectiveness. When you are *first* learning to do something, this conscious participation is useful and inevitable, but once you have learned to do something well, it works best if you do it automatically and unconsciously.

It can be fine to appreciate how well you did *later*, but in the midst of peak performance it is not a good idea. Similarly, in the midst of peak performance, if someone had said, "Excuse me, what's your name?" I assume that you could have told them easily. However, redirecting your attention to thinking of your name would also probably have interfered with your performance. Until then, your name was unconscious; you weren't thinking about it, because all your attention was completely focused on the task in the peak performance state.

If you focus your attention on mistakes, that is even more likely to take you out of a peak performance state. It is vitally important to review mistakes *later* so that you can improve on them in some way, but consciously noticing them *during* performance almost always results in even more mistakes.

Examining the Swish Pattern is helpful in exploring the problem of having a conscious self-concept. As I mentioned earlier, this pattern creates an aspect of self-concept, by asking the person to consciously make an image of themselves, and then go through a series of steps to link the problem stimulus to this self-image. Then they run the linkage faster and faster until it becomes unconscious. So we can *start* with a conscious process, as long as it quickly becomes unconscious and out of our ordinary awareness—until and unless someone asks us about it.

Just how unconscious the swish image becomes is nicely illustrated by something that happened in an extended training many years ago. During one weekend, Connirae demonstrated the Swish Pattern with a woman. At the next weekend training, she spoke to Connirae and said, "The strangest thing is happening. I keep seeing this flash of turquoise blue. It's not really getting in my way, but it's puzzling to me, and I'd like to understand it."

Connirae said, "Well, let's see. Last weekend I demonstrated the Swish Pattern with you. Did it work?"

"Oh, yes, it worked fine. The problem's gone. But every once in a while, I see this flash of blue."

Connirae thought for a while, and then asked, "When you made the image of yourself no longer having the problem, what were you wearing?"

"Oh! I was wearing a turquoise dress!"

In most cases this self-image becomes *completely* unconscious. But in her case, every time it was triggered, she became faintly aware of a flash of blue in her mind, although everything else about it was unconscious.

There are many spiritual traditions—especially the Buddhists, Sufis, and other mystics—that have said for thousands of years that you should *not* have a self-concept, because consciousness of self is a barrier to mystical or religious experience of union or communion. However, if you think you *shouldn't* have a self, that makes you even *more* self-conscious, *adding* to it rather than eliminating it!

"Don't have a self is a negative command, just like "Don't think of agile aardvarks," that makes you think of precisely what you're *not* supposed to think of! Rather than eliminating awareness of self, this actually makes you *doubly* conscious of your self. First you think about yourself, and then you think that you shouldn't be thinking about yourself! This divides your attention, and sets up conflict between the two. Then you need

a puzzling Zen Koan, or a whack on your back with the master's stick to get you out of your contradictory thinking and back into your experience in the moment. So that kind of instruction is not very useful.

So what did these spiritual teachers really mean when they said, "Don't have a self?" Often our thinking about ourselves is *limiting* rather than *enabling*, describing what we're *not* or *can't be*, rather than what we *are* and *can be*, and this is probably one aspect of what these teachers meant.

However, I think that the main thing they meant was, "Don't have a *conscious* self," and I completely agree that is a worthwhile goal—even though their instruction leads to the opposite of what they intended. I want your self-concept to be as *unconscious* as your name is during peak performance—until and unless someone asks you about it, or you have some other need for that information.

Connection

I also want to be sure that your self-concept doesn't separate you from others. Many people complain about a sense of isolation from others, and seek a more intimate connection with loved ones, with their work, or with nature. The goal of many spiritual traditions is the direct experience of oneness with the divine, or the universe, a sense of intimate connection with all. Years ago, Connirae developed a process called Core Transformation, that starts with a problem, or conflict, and leads to this experience of universal connection, which people describe variously as inner peace, being, love, or oneness. (3)

In experiences of peak performance, or a flow experience, people always report this kind of *oneness*, of responding appropriately and unconsciously to events all around them, and feeling a part of it all. There is no sense of self, no sense of "other," no separation, self-consciousness, or any other kind of conflict to get in the way of that smooth flow of experience and action.

One of the basic functions of self-concept is to make a distinction between yourself and your surroundings, and I want to be sure that this distinction doesn't result in a sense of separation or isolation. A conscious self-concept will lead you to feel separate, and that will interfere with feeling connected.

When we think about ourselves, we make images of who we are—even if those images also involve sounds and feelings. When you make an image of yourself, you are seeing yourself "over there" somewhere (even if the "over there" is in your mind), so you are separated from it by a certain distance. While dissociation is a very useful skill contextually, it isn't usually useful to be dissociated from your sense of who you are, except perhaps temporarily while problem-solving.

If you were to remain dissociated from your images, you would be separated from them, and from your sense of who you are. So I was originally concerned that the self-concept could separate you from yourself, and that this might then result in separating you from others. It would be a bit hard to connect with others if you were already disconnected from yourself!

Again it can be useful to think of what happens in the Swish Pattern. Although you initially create a dissociated image of yourself, you *become* that image incredibly quickly. Since the dissociation doesn't last, separation from your self-concept is not a problem.

However there is another potential barrier to connection with others that is very real, and unfortunately very pervasive; the separation that comes from making *comparisons* between ourselves and others, and noticing the *differences* between us. There are many ways that people single out themselves, their family group, their football team, or their country as different from (and usually better than) others. A great deal of human misery results from this kind of separation, including all the hostilities between different political, ethnic, racial or religious groups. I want to be very sure that anything that I do with self-concept does not add to that problem.

There are two different aspects to avoiding this kind of separation. One is a process distinction and one is a content one. The *process* distinction is that you not make *comparisons*. "I am a kind person" simply states something about myself. I am not comparing myself with others, just saying something that is true of me. "I am a kind person" doesn't presuppose that others are unkind—even if other experiences may show me that some people are unkind. It would be possible for everyone to be kind, so that statement does not automatically separate me from others. A healthy self-concept focuses on qualities that I have, without comparisons that result in my feeling better or worse than other people. That is very different than, "I am kinder than Joe," in which I make a comparison that elevates me and separates me from someone else.

The *content* distinction is to avoid using words that *presuppose* some kind of comparison. "I am a king" presupposes subjects; "I am a Nobel Prize winner," or "I am a saint" presupposes those who are not. Although all of us may do this from time to time, many people have a self-concept that usually compares and separates them from others. "I am this, and you are that." "I am successful and you are not," etc. This is most obvious if you examine the people who are responsible for large scale conflicts, destruction and killings. It is a deadly irony that while most religions begin with a prophet who teaches acceptance, tolerance, personal connection, and unity, their followers often end up in violent crusades or jihads to convert or kill anyone with different beliefs.

This potential for comparison, separation and conflict is another reason I think that most mystics have advocated eliminating self. Too often the self-concept includes comparisons that *separate* from others and from the rest of the world. Since the goal of most mystics has been to cultivate an experience of *connection* with, and participation in, all of creation, any comparison and separation will definitely be a barrier to the spiritual experience of oneness.

Defining identity by comparison is found at the heart of all human conflicts, and the path to resolving those conflicts is always to start focusing attention on the *similarities* that unite the two sides—noticing all the ways in which the two are the *same*, instead of the ways in which they are different. With a positive representation of self that unites rather than separates, we can have a sense of self that is not in conflict with a profound spiritual experience of connection, and I think that this eliminates the problem that the mystic sages were concerned about.

Now I have a little joke for you. What did the Buddhist say to the hot dog vendor?*

Another familiar teaching of many mystic spiritual traditions is that you are *already* one with everything; it is just a matter of *realizing* it. You may not have had a personal experience of this, but I hope the idea is familiar to you. Becoming one with everything is a way of describing an integration of opposites, so that someone can function without conflict. NLP has many ways to achieve integration, and there is one NLP process in particular that can help provide a basis for understanding how this is true.

Integration Through Reimprinting. In the original process called "reimprinting" (2, Ch. 1) someone thinks of a memory experience that troubles them when they think of it. That memory is usually experienced as bothersome, separate, and sometimes intrusive. Yet this memory clearly exists in the person's mind, and *is* a part of them, no matter how alien it may seem to them. Somewhere in their mind there is a representation of this memory, and some other part of their mind is troubled in response to it.

First we ask them to reexperience the memory in the present, in order to discover what kind of personal resource, response, or understanding would make the experience much easier to deal with. So, for instance, if they had had a broader perspective, or kept their long-term outcome in mind, or had a feeling of calmness, or a slower tempo, etc., their response in that situation would have been much more satisfying to them. Then we

*"Make me *one* with *everything*."

assist them in fully experiencing the appropriate resource and combining it with the memory experience.

When this is done skillfully with an appropriate resource, the person feels much better, and the memory doesn't bother them any more. In fact, it becomes a *positive* experience—because now it has become transformed into a situation in which they coped well with a difficult situation. The memory that had been alienated is no longer separated from them, but is comfortably incorporated into their sense of who they are, and what they are capable of.

In the original troubling situation, the person not only felt separated from the memory, but also from the resourceful response that they needed. They had them, but they were separated from them. So we could say that they were already "one with their resources," as well as "one with the troubling memory" that they had alienated; they just didn't realize it.

Now let's go one step further. In Robert Dilts' adaptation of reimprinting, (14) a troubling experience with another person (or persons) in the past is changed by adding resources into the *other person's* experience in the same way. So for instance, let's say I'm mad at my father because he yelled at me for making a mistake when I was a child. I go back to that memory and add patience (or caring, seeing the larger context of the mistake, etc.) into my *father's* experience, so that *he* can respond more resourcefully. As a result of this process *he* can speak to me calmly about how to do better next time, instead of becoming angry and yelling at me. Now with this revised memory experience I feel more resourceful, and the original experience doesn't bother me any more.

How does this work? How does adding resources to *someone else* in my memory help *me* feel better? My father has been dead for 55 years, so he only exists in my nervous system as an image, a representation in my mind. I may say, "My father yelled at me," but at this moment that is only my *memory* of what happened quite some time ago. In other words, my memory of my father is actually a part of *me*, but I label it "father" as if it were something separate and different from me, and I respond by being angry at what "he" did.

Usually someone in this situation will experience their image of the other person as separate, autonomous and not under their control. The image or voice may appear on its own at the most awkward and inconvenient times, and may be thought of as tormenting the person. In extreme cases, this may even be experienced as "demonic possession."

When someone separates from a part of their own neurology, they first lose control over a part of themselves, and then they have to use another part of themselves in the struggle *against* this alienated part—the anger, or

preoccupation with revenge, etc. Someone in this position has considerably less than their full potential available to them. If they had that neurology available to them they would be more whole and capable, more full and integrated. In addition to the loss of neurology, this struggle will occupy a lot of the person's attention, and there will be much less attention available for the rest of living.

Dilts' reimplanting takes a vitally important step toward resolving this kind of inner separation. By integrating resources into my *image* of my father, *I'm actually combining resources with a part of myself*. My "father" becomes more reasonable, more accepting, less alienated, and ultimately a friendly ally, another useful personal resource to support me in my current struggles with my real-world challenges. When this healing process is complete, there is no longer any separation between the once-dissociated, rejected parts of myself and what I usually think of as myself. I become more complete and whole, connected to the world, rather than separated from it. I think it is likely that this is the kind of experience that mystics were pointing to when they said that "You are already one with everything; it's just a matter of fully realizing it." We'll return to this important topic later, when we study connection in more detail in chapter 14.

Self-importance and Egotism

Finally, I want to be sure that anything I do with the self-concept doesn't result in adding to the self-importance, arrogance, and posturing that we all do at times, and that many people do a lot. Many mystics have taught that self-importance is both a personal trap, and also a barrier to spiritual experience. Carlos Castaneda's Don Juan was particularly eloquent about this. Most mystics have felt that they were an incredibly tiny and unimportant part of an immense whole, while the universe of the egotist revolves around himself, his possessions, and his immediate surroundings.

Self-importance is a heavy burden for the person who has it, and an even heavier burden for others around them. Preoccupation with self-importance makes it very hard to value others as important, and this narrow tunnel vision also separates them from their wider experience in many other ways. Much direct harm is done to others in the effort to bolster self-importance by judging, scorning, and condemning others in an attempt to elevate the self. The extreme of this has been called "Narcissism," after the mythical Narcissus, who became so enthralled with his own reflection in the water that he ignored everything else around him.

Egotism begins with the comparison with someone else, and then the separation and judging yourself as better than them. If you are more important than someone else, that can justify any and all mistreatments of them,

including torture and murder. Look around at all the conflicts in the world, from personal to international, and you will always see these processes in action. My dislike of pomposity and vanity was one of the things that originally got me interested in studying self-concept, because I wanted to understand self-importance better, and if possible, find a cure for this disease.

Self-importance is actually the conscious half of an uncertain and ambiguous self-concept. A self-important person is actually in great doubt about himself and spends a lot of time and effort seeking external evidence and support from others that s/he is really OK. The more s/he seeks this support from others, the more s/he becomes dependent on them, and less able to rely on their own self-evaluation. I recently saw a great quote from Dr. Herbert Shofield, which may be a little harsh: "Egotism is the anesthetic which nature gives us to deaden the pain of being a fool."

In contrast, when you know who you are, and you're comfortable with it, there is no need to announce it to anyone or brag about it. With a solid and congruent self-concept, you know who you are internally, so you have no need for the posturing of self-importance or the adulation of others to uphold your image and status.

When some people walk into a room, their nonverbal presence *radiates* how capable they are, without their having to say a word. It is simply a *quality* of who they are, and they have no need to demonstrate it or talk about it unless someone asks them to. It's no accident that this is exactly the kind of image that is used in the Swish Pattern.

Developing the Criteria for a Healthy Self-concept

One of my best models for learning about self-concept is a contemporary mystic. He has no following, and lives quietly with his wife in a small town where almost no one knows anything about the main focus of his life. He is very curious, and totally unflappable. If you said to him, "You son of a bitch!" he'd simply be curious. "Oh really? Can you tell me more about that? I'd like to understand." It is quite wonderful to be around him, because he has nothing to defend, no agenda, no demands, no pretense, simply an immense curiosity about why God has brought you into his life, and what he can learn from this meeting. He is free of self-importance, seeing himself as one of the tiniest and insignificant elements in the universe, and with a very profound sense of connection with all of it. He looks on his own personal identity as a kind of ridiculous joke, useful only for knowing what name to sign on checks, and which bags to pick up at the airport.

He is also very, very capable in the practical world, and has plenty of accomplishments that he could be egotistic about. Besides a number of books on mysticism (17), he was once the chief psychologist at a large state

mental hospital. He developed a formula for evaluating the yield of second mortgages and published a book about it. He is a precision target shooter, has a US second mate's license, oceans unlimited, and teaches in the US coast guard. I have always mistrusted mystics who claimed to be experts on the spiritual world, but who had great difficulty in the material world doing such simple things as cooking their own meals, or tying their shoes.

I also approached modeling self-concept with ideas drawn from Christ, Zen Buddhism, Carlos Castaneda, Sufism, and many other spiritual and mystic traditions that had interesting ideas about the self, ego, and self-importance. These have all provided useful directions for asking people questions about how they think about themselves, and understanding the answers that I got in response.

But that was only a start; the criteria presented here are greatly refined from the somewhat vague ideas and directions that I began with. The real credit for these criteria goes to my fellow explorers, the participants in many seminars (especially the earlier ones) who discovered and reported many of the specific aspects of self-concept described in this book. They often offered fascinating observations, and asked questions that I couldn't answer, spurring me to think about them and experiment more thoroughly, until I was satisfied with the answers that we developed together.

Summary

The criteria that I have discussed (*durability, accuracy, self-correction, unconscious, connection, and freedom from self-importance*) are important general qualities of a self-concept that functions well. A healthy self-concept is durable and lasting, and this strength makes it comfortable to receive and consider feedback about mistakes. This corrective feedback maintains the accuracy of your self-concept, so that you can know who you really are, and not get lost and become "a legend in your own mind." Unless you deliberately make it conscious in order to adjust it, a healthy self-concept is unconscious, making it impossible to be consciously self-important. This frees your attention for events and people around you in the here and now, so that real connection with them is possible. And all this protects you from the loneliness and dangers of an egotistic false self that may crumble at any time.

Next we'll begin to discover exactly how your self-concept works, and how you can strengthen it, and change it when it doesn't serve you well.

4

Changing Structure

Your self-concept is made up of many aspects, many different beliefs or generalizations about yourself. At a relatively small level, part of your identity could include specific physical characteristics, immediate environment, or behaviors. Statements like "I'm a blonde," "I'm a New Yorker," or "I'm a truck driver" are statements about identifying with your physical body, your surroundings, and your work. In contrast, if someone said, "I have blonde hair," "I live in New York," or "I drive a truck," that indicates that they think of these more as something that they *have* or *do* rather than who they *are*. They don't identify quite so strongly with these aspects as someone who says, "I *am*."

At the largest level of identity, we could speak of our place in the entire cosmos. "I am a child of God," or "I am a tiny speck of self-aware matter in an enormously complex and indifferent universe." At this very large level of identity most of the specific details are lost and there is a fairly vague representation, emphasizing the overall similarities and connection, and ignoring most of the smaller differences and distinctions.

Other parts of your identity are more intermediate in scope—your attitudes, capabilities, traits, or qualities. "I am a kind person" is much larger in scope than "I'm an accountant," yet much more specific than "I'm a Christian." These intermediate-sized qualities of identity are particularly useful for learning how your self-concept functions, because while they are fairly specific, they also apply to a very broad range of experience. They typically embody important personal values, so changes in them will have a significant impact on a wide range of activities.

I want you to choose something in this intermediate range to explore, because it's large enough that any changes will generalize to a lot of your behavior and be quite important and useful to you, while being small enough that you will have a lot of specific experience to experiment with. Later you can explore the smaller and larger chunks of your identity, but I want you to start with something of intermediate size, because it will be much easier for you to learn how your self-concept works.

For the first several exercises I want you to choose a quality, capacity or attitude that you *know* is true of yourself, and that you *like*. Pick something like intelligence, sensitivity, ability to learn, persistence, adaptability, etc. You can just say to yourself "I am—" and see what comes to your mind—kind, honest, considerate, steady, flexible, diligent, loving, cheerful, loyal, dependable, spontaneous, thorough, etc. Of course, you are much more than any single one of these qualities. But for learning about the structure of self-concept, I want you to pick just one to explore.

Since some people think of themselves more in terms of what they *do* or *have*, than who they *are*, it may be helpful for you to bridge from always *doing* something, or often *having* an experience, to *being* a certain way. For instance, if you take care of others a lot, that is equivalent to saying that you *are* a very caring person.

After thinking of several possibilities, choose one that you feel very *solid* about, which means that this aspect of yourself is *durable*. And be sure that it is also a quality that you *like*, which indicates that it's congruent with your values, and part of the basis for your positive self-esteem. Later we will explore aspects of your self-concept that you're not sure of, or that you don't like, but it will be *much* simpler and easier to start with something that you're sure of, and that you like, so there is no internal conflict to complicate your experience.

Whenever we want to investigate a process like this, we always ask the process question, "*How* do you do that?" This question asks about aspects of your experience that are usually unconscious, but that you can *become* conscious of if you focus your attention. So this is a territory with a lot of unconscious participation. Ben, let's say that you and I are in a conversation, and I ask you, "Are you a kind person?" What would you say?

Ben: Yes.

*OK, *how do you know* that you are a kind person?

Ben: I have an image of what it's like to be kind.

*A paragraph following a comment by a training participant always indicates a response by the author.

So you have a image of being kind. Ben's mental picture serves as a quick reference, what I call a "summary" representation, that identifies a quality of his self-concept, in this case, kindness. When I asked, "Are you a kind person?" he responded very quickly and congruently. However, he wasn't conscious of how he was able to do that until I asked him *how* he knew that. Instead of an image, he could have had a internal auditory voice saying, "I'm kind," or he could have had a kinesthetic feeling of what it feels like to be kind—or he could have had any combination of those. This is what we call the sensory *modality* (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and to a lesser degree, smell and taste) of an internal representation. All our experiencing, remembering, and thinking is composed of one or more of these modalities.

If I asked you if you know what a chair is, I assume that all of you would say "Yes," and you would have a some representation of a chair—usually an image of a fairly ordinary chair. Although it is less common, instead of an image you could have the feeling of sitting in a chair, or perhaps even the sound that a chair makes when you sit down on it. Or you could have thought of any combination of those. That representation is a very simplified image of the essential qualities of a chair, and I call it a "summary," because it summarizes the basic characteristics of a chair.

Connected to that simplified image is a much larger database that includes images of all the many *different* kinds of chairs that you have experienced in your life—dinner chairs, easy chairs, office chairs, folding chairs, chairs made of wood, leather, plastic, metal, and perhaps even a box, stump or rock that once served you as a chair. The summary image that you have for the word "chair" is a bit like a handle on a suitcase; it allows you to get hold of the set of experiences that you have in the suitcase. This database has *much* more information than the summary representation.

People generalize about themselves in much the same way that they generalize about their surroundings. As you learn how you generalize about yourself, you will also be learning how you create understandings about other people and the rest of the world. However, your generalizations about yourself are much more interesting to explore because their impact on your life is greater.

The first thing I want you to discover is your summary representation of the quality you have chosen. Keep in mind that this can be in any major modality—visual, auditory or kinesthetic—or any combination of them. Noticing this is usually very easy and immediate.

After you have done that, I want you to explore the *database* of experiences that underlies the summary representation. The handle of a suitcase is only useful for carrying it; what the suitcase *contains* is much more useful and important.

Since I am asking you to turn inward and pay attention to aspects of your experience that are usually unconscious, or on the edge of consciousness, you may be a bit uncertain and confused at first. But as you gradually become more familiar with the inner landscape of your experience of yourself, it will become clearer.

If everyone had the exact same way of having their self-concept, or if there was a single best way to do it, this would be a *very* short training. I could just teach you the "right" way, and we'd be done. However, there are a great many different ways to have a self-concept that works well, and I want you to find out how you already do it before trying out other ways.

There are also some very useful unifying principles that underlie the rich variety of what people do. These principles provide understandings that simplify our task, and make it easier to discover and work with the wide variety of ways that people have their self-concept. But if I taught you the principles first, that would be like giving you a bunch of different suitcase handles. You would have the words, but since you had no experiences connected to them, they would have very little meaning.

If I gave you more information at this point, it would tend to obscure what you already do, and make it harder for you to discover your own unique way of thinking about yourself. That would also rob you of the valuable experience of learning how to discover what is going on in your mind on your own—a skill that has *many* other useful applications besides self-concept. You can use that same skill to find out how you make decisions, how you motivate yourself to do unpleasant things, how you learn, or any other ability or problem. So rather than start with principles, I want you to start with your own experience, and then share your experience with others. Then we will draw generalizations out of this wealth of examples, building on a solid foundation of personal experience. That way the principles will have a rich and resourceful meaning to you, and not just be clever words.

Exercise 4-1 Discovering Your Self-concept (trios, 15 minutes)

I want you to get together with two other people to form a trio, and enjoy a short discovery exercise. I assume that you have already identified some quality or characteristic in yourself that you are *sure* of, and that you *like*. As soon as you sit down together, I want you to close your eyes, and silently explore your own experience for about five minutes, asking the question "How do I know I'm _____?" It should be fairly easy to identify the summary representation; probably you have already done that. I want you to spend most of your time examining your *database* of examples to find out what that is like. What images, feelings, sounds or words do you have, and where and how do you experience them?

Then open your eyes and take another ten minutes to share your experiences. You can learn a lot just by doing this yourself; you can learn even more by sharing with others, and assisting each other by asking questions. I want you to do this *without ever mentioning the content—the name of the quality that you are examining*. Talking about the content would only distract you from the task of finding out *how* you represent the content. Talk to each other only in terms of the structure—the pictures, sounds, or feelings that constitute your database, and how and where you represent them. You can always talk about the content later if you want to.

"Well, I do this and that; what do you do?" Share your experience, and if anyone has any difficulty, assist each other, "Well, how do you do that?" and watch for nonverbal cues and gestures that often clearly indicate the size, distance and location of images or voices, to get the basics of how s/he does this.

I'll give you more specific directions later, but for now I want you to explore on your own. Then we'll get together and discuss what you found. Are there any questions about the exercise?

Tess: Please go over the distinction between the summary representation and the database again.

Perhaps an example will help. I often use kindness when I need to talk about content, because I like kindness, and I think it would be nice if there were more of it in the world. You could have an internal voice that says, "I'm a kind person," but that general statement doesn't specify what kindness actually is. However, your database contains a wealth of examples of how to talk kindly, act kindly, touch in a kind way, think of kind words to say, kind things to do, etc.

From now on we will be working almost entirely with your database, because this is where the real information about your self-concept is. That is where you can transform yourself by making profoundly useful changes in how your self-concept functions. Out of all the experiences that you have had, over however many years you have been on the planet, how do you know that you are a kind person—or that you are tenacious or sensitive to others, or whatever your chosen quality is? Which experiences do you represent, and more important, *how* do you represent them? When you make changes in the database, you can really make your self-concept work well—but before you change anything, it's important to know what is already there.

* * * * *

I'm sure that you didn't complete the exercise, but I wanted you to dive in and explore a bit before giving you more direction. Soon I'll give you more time to explore further. But for now, what kind of database did you find?

Jean: When I asked myself, "Well, how do I know I'm that way?" a picture just sort of popped up, and then more and more, kind of like popcorn. At a certain point they filled my visual field, but they kept on popping.

Kirk: I have a kind of collage, spread out in front of me at arm's length, with lots of little pictures of different times and places where I have had the quality. Some of the pictures are flashing, kind of blinking at me.

Jan: Mine is auditory. I have a set of voices, sort of tucked under my left ear; each of them reminds me of a specific situation in which I had the quality.

Fred: I have a kind of little filing system, low in front of me. I pull up one card at a time (gesturing with his right hand) when I want to see what's on it. It shows up on my work station right in front of me, about a foot away and two feet by two feet. First I get the picture, then the auditory, and then the feeling.

Bob: I have a long strip of images at my left side, arranged in time, with the oldest ones behind me, and the most recent ones a little in front of me, but to the side. The images get larger as they near the present moment.

Pam: I had a kinesthetic feeling first, and then a whole bunch of pictures appeared, and also words and sounds that confirmed the feeling.

Great. Those are all nice examples. Each of us has a fairly unique structure for representing our self-concept. Asking you to find out how *you* do it respects your individuality, and also makes it much easier to make useful changes. What works wonderfully for one person may not fit well at all for someone else. We are complex creatures, and your self-concept has to fit in smoothly with all the other elements of your functioning. There are many ways that work very well, and I don't know of a single "best" way to do it.

On the other hand, each of us learned how to do this essentially by accident or chance, rather than being systematically taught how to do it by a parent or teacher. So while it's very important to respect each person's uniqueness, I have found that there are *always* a number of useful ways to significantly improve what someone does. You can discover this by gently exploring and experimenting, to find out what works best for you. Some mothers who don't want their kids to make faces, warn them that if they do, their face may freeze in one position, even though there is actually no danger of that. Likewise, you can experiment freely with changing your database, because a change will only "stick" if you find that it really works better for you than what you were already doing.

When exploring processes like this that are usually unconscious, people often think that they just "made up" whatever they found. However, I guarantee that when you start experimenting with trying out different ways, some of them will feel *much* more comfortable and "right" than others. No

matter what I might say, *your truth will be found in your own experience, your responses to trying different ways*. There are also some general principles that can be useful, but I want you to become more familiar with the varied inner landscape of self-concept before offering you principles.

I have a list of questions I want you to use to direct your further exploration of your database. Answering questions is usually pretty easy. Thinking up good questions is the hard part. When you ask the right questions, sometimes the answers are immediately obvious. For instance, if you ask a stranger on the street, "Do you see movies in your mind or still pictures?" most people will look a bit puzzled and say, "What?" or "I have no idea."

But then if you say, "Think of a special friend," they will usually say, "Oh, OK."

"Look at that image; is it a movie or a still picture?"

"Oh, it's a movie."

When you ask a specific question about their experience, they can easily respond, "Oh, that's interesting. I didn't think of that before." But until you asked the question, they never even thought of it. So here is a list of questions for you.

Checklist 4 Process Elements of Self-concept

Number of Examples. How many examples are in your database? (roughly) One, five, thirty, a hundred?

Location. Where are your examples in your personal space?

Simultaneous/Sequential. Are examples available to you *simultaneously*, all at the same time, or *sequentially*, one after the other (or both)?

Modalities. Are all major modalities included? (visual, auditory, kinesthetic feeling)

Association. Can you easily *step into*, and *associate* into any example?

Submodalities. (Submodalities are the smaller elements within a modality.) Which *submodality elements* (size, brightness, distance, movie/still, tonality, volume, etc.) make them robust and substantial, real and convincing to you?

Exercise 4-2 Changing Your Self-concept (trios, 15 minutes)

Again I want you to start by silently exploring your own experience for about five minutes, guided by these questions, and then share and discuss what you found with the others, and help each other find out what you do by observing nonverbal gestures and asking good questions.

After you have shared, I want you to start experimenting with *changing* elements of your database, and noticing how that changes your experience of it. One thing you can do is to go down the checklist, changing each

of the variables that I have listed. Try adding or subtracting examples in your database. Whatever number you have, try making it considerably more or less. If your database is sequential, try making it simultaneous, and vice versa. Try adding or subtracting modalities. Find out what difference it makes to associate into an example as if you were there, and then dissociate by stepping back out of it and seeing it as if it were a still picture or a movie on a TV set. Play with changing the submodalities that you use in the database, making the pictures or sounds more or less intense, making them closer or farther away, larger or smaller, etc.

Another way to explore is to try on the ways that the others in your trio use. If you have about five large examples spread out right in front of you, and one of your partners has thirty smaller ones off to her left, try doing it her way. Make only one change at a time, so that you can notice how *each* change affects your experience. First you might add in twenty-five examples to the five you already have, and see what difference that makes. Then change back to the five you started with, and just make them smaller. Then change them back to your original five again, and move them off to your left. Finally, try making all these changes at once, so that you can experience the same thing that she does.

As you experiment, the main thing I want you to notice is how each change affects your feeling of *certainty* or *solidity* about your self-concept. In the example I gave, you can compare the difference between having five examples and having thirty. Which one feels stronger—more real or true? This feeling is a good indication of the durability or strength of your quality. Start with five minutes of silently using the checklist to examine your own experience, before sharing and experimenting with the others in your trio.

* * * * *

Now I'd like to go through the checklist, and find out what you experienced, starting with the number of examples.

Max: I had a fairly small number, perhaps five or six, and when I increased the number, it felt much stronger; I loved it! I went from "Yes, I am" to "Yes, I *really* am."

Sarah: I started with dozens of examples, and when I narrowed it down to one, I started getting anxious, like, "I'm not sure if this is true. Maybe I could do this, but I'm not sure if I really can."

Great. I'm really glad you had that feeling. There are some people who conclude from a single example that they can do something anywhere, any time, under any conditions, while standing up in a hammock!

Over twenty years ago, Connirae and I were participants in a five-day NLP seminar. At lunch the first day, one guy told us that he was going

home. He was totally satisfied that he had already "learned it all," so it would be a waste of his time to stay! He also told us about having learned to fly a plane once, so he knew he could fly a plane. He was happily flying around one day when he realized that the clouds had closed in and he couldn't see the ground. He had learned what are called "visual flight rules," but he didn't know how to use the instruments to get down through the clouds. He was talking to the tower for a while, and they were both getting a little disturbed, when a little hole opened up in the clouds so he was able to descend and land.

That is an example of the high confidence, low competence situation that I spoke of earlier, and that is a typical consequence of having a big, bright summary image of yourself, but not much of a database of actual experience to back it up. Those people tend to get "culled from the herd" sooner or later, and unfortunately they often take others with them. There is a saying in flying that "There are old pilots, and there are bold pilots, but there are no old bold pilots."

Now Sarah, what happens if you increase the number of examples to eight or ten dozen? By the way, if you, or anyone else, ever wants to stop interacting with me at any time, just make the sign of the cross, and I will disappear in a puff of smoke, and not bother you further. That way I can feel free to ask you questions and play with you, comfortable in the knowledge that you have complete permission to stop at any time.

Sarah: Increasing the number makes it feel even more solid. When I reduced it to just one, I could only see me doing it in one context, so I thought, "Well, maybe I could do it there, but not necessarily anywhere else."

Yes. That is why in the Swish Pattern we always ask the person to see an image of themselves *without* a context, so that the change in self-concept will generalize as widely as possible. We also ask the person to see themselves *not* doing any particular behavior, because that would tend to limit them to only the particular behavior they pictured. By seeing yourself with *qualities*, but without context or specific behavior, that makes it much more generative. Now, Sarah, try just having one picture again, and then try deleting the context, so that you continue to see yourself, but your surroundings disappear. It's like seeing yourself on stage, and then all the scenery and other people vanish.

Sarah: That's better. Now I have more of the sense that I could probably do it in different contexts, but it's still not as good as having more pictures, and actually seeing myself doing it in all those different places.

Right. Seeing yourself in a wide range of situations is even better than seeing yourself without a context. That is one of the ways in which changing your database can be even more powerful than the Swish.

Rich: I sort of piggy-backed with Sarah. I really liked dropping the context, taking all the detailed scenery away from the examples. When I did that with several events, what was left was me sitting, leaning forward with my eyes wide, watching, being really, really interested. That makes me feel much more like this quality is an inherent capability that I *am*, rather than just a response to something, "Hey, that thing is interesting." *I am* the one generating the interest and it feels much more like a personal quality. It's a lot more solid.

So it makes it more a part of you, rather than the context, since the context is gone.

Rich: Right. Yeah.

When you remove the context, it widens the generalization. Hopefully you can supply any context and the behavior will fit. Now, of course, that can be a little misleading, because certain qualities are much more useful and appropriate in certain contexts than in others. So that is one potential problem. There is also another possible problem with this. Can you tell me a little about the content?

Rich: Well, it is several different things—working on computers, playing a musical instrument, cooking.

Excuse me; my question was unclear. I assume those are the contents in your examples. But what is the name of the quality?

Rich: Curiosity.

OK. That is a pretty good one to do that with, since it is mostly an internal state. But even with that, you might lose data about how specifically you are curious. In other words, what exactly do you look for when you are curious? What are the perceptual qualities of it, and the behaviors that are part of it, rather than just the feeling of curiosity?

Rich: I still see the bright pictures, and hear the sound track and I still get those positive feelings of almost being pulled forward.

Right. But that is all internal, right?

Rich: Well, that was the point. It was *my* state of curiosity. There are things that are similar throughout all those different examples.

Yes, and that state of curiosity is also exhibited in external behaviors, like the leaning forward and looking intently, and so on.

Rich: Well, that's not a problem for me. I can look at Mike over there and just be curious. It does feel more internal, there is a kind of detachment from reality in a certain way. That is not the way I usually do it, but I was enjoying experimenting. I like having the context because it makes it fuller. It makes it feel more like "This is me, and there is reality over there, and we're interacting."

Yes, it's nice to maintain that connection. Now let's return to the num-

ber of examples. Usually increasing the number of examples makes it stronger, and reducing the number makes it weaker. That makes sense, doesn't it? If you have lots and lots of examples of your having had a particular quality in lots of different situations doing different things, you can feel more secure about your actually *being* that way than if you only had one example or a few.

However there are some apparent exceptions to this. When you examine them closely they make sense too, because increasing the number may affect other important elements. Is there anyone who found that adding examples made your sense of the quality *weaker* instead of stronger?

Al: When I added more examples, it became overwhelming, like a multimedia show, but then I slowed down the tempo and it was OK.

Great. You were able to make an adjustment that made it comfortable.

Sue: I had about five examples, and when I added a lot more, it became weaker.

Can you tell me how adding more examples made it weaker?

Sue: The colors became dimmer with more examples; it kind of leached out of the images.

Are your examples simultaneous? Do you see them all at once?

Sue: Yeah, some are farther away and some are closer, but they all appeared at once. When I added more examples, they all became paler and quieter.

OK. When you have a simultaneous display, and you add images, the images probably have to get smaller.

Sue: Yeah, they did.

And when they become smaller, they are harder to see, so that reduces your response. And you also said they became quieter, so when they became smaller I assume that the auditory also went away. Try making the display bigger.

Sue: Then I can't see them at all. They started out really large already; I can look around and see them. (Sue looks pleased.)

And what is the advantage of that?

Sue: (animated) Oh, I can jump right into them when I want to. It's really great!

And what is it that makes that great?

Sue: Well, then I have all the feelings of being there, and I can also hear the sounds. It's more full that way.

Yes, being able to step into, or associate into, an example is really important, because association allows you to recover the sounds and feelings of that experience. That provides a fullness and richness of experience that is not available from a dissociated image.

I want you all to try something. Some of you had images that you could easily step into, while some of you probably had more distant and dissociated images. I want those of you who *did* associate into your images to step back out of them, so that you temporarily stay dissociated from them. And I want those of you who *didn't* naturally associate into your images, to pick one, make it large enough to step into and then pull it around you, so that you are back inside it again. I want you all to compare the experience of the dissociated image with being inside the same image....*

Which one gives you more of the feeling of solidity or reality?

Dave: When I step back out, it's like watching a movie I've already seen, and I know what's going to happen. But when I'm inside it, it's like being live on stage, and all kinds of unknowns can happen.

That's an interesting observation, but it isn't quite what I asked about. Which of those gives you more of the feeling of solidity and reality?

Dave: Oh, the "live on stage" one. Because that's how life really is. You never really know what will happen next.

Yes. When you step into an image, it's like being there again, so of course it feels more real. I like to use travel posters as an example of the importance of association. Those glorious pictures of the tropics don't include the whine of mosquitoes, or the damp feeling of your sweaty shirt. If you were really able to step into that poster and have the sounds and feelings that go with that picture, you could really experience what it is like to be there, and you might decide to take your vacation somewhere else! Playboy centerfolds are another example; you don't hear the whiny voice tone that goes with that beautiful body, or experience the annoying habits, or any of the other aspects of being with that woman that might not be so appealing.

Dan: I'm thinking of the reverse. Sometimes I've talked to a woman on the phone who has a warm, wonderful voice, and I imagine how beautiful she must be, and then when I meet her, she doesn't look like that at all!

I think most guys would be much better off going with the voice tone, if they're looking for a life partner. Voice tone usually indicates much more about someone's personality than their looks—and in a relationship they will probably be spending more time listening to her than looking at her.

Sue: Does it matter whether the summary representation is associated or not?

Not as far as I know. If it is associated, it may take you a little bit longer to get the feeling of it, but that would also make for a fuller and richer experience.

*three periods (...) indicate a pause.

Now, Sue, I invite you to experiment a bit. We want to preserve your ability to step into an image, because that's very important. But there is also an advantage to seeing a large number of examples all at once, so that you can see *all* those times when you had that quality in different situations, doing different things with different people, etc. The sheer number gives a sense of solidity and certainty, that can let you go "Wow!"

Sue: Yeah, I get that.

However, when you have a large number of examples simultaneously, the individual images have to be much smaller, so it's harder to see what's in the images, and they usually become dimmer and less colorful, etc. I want you to think about how you could have the advantages of *both* the large array and the smaller number of larger, more colorful pictures.

Let me offer you something that many people do, and see if it works for you. Many people have a little automatic mechanism that does the following: When you focus on one example, the image quickly gets very large and colorful, so that you can easily step into it and associate into the feelings and hear the sounds that are in that experience. Try that...

Sue: That works for me. When I see them all at once, I can't really see what's in each picture. I just sort of know what's there. Then I move closer to one, and it gets large. It was a little slow at first, but it's already speeding up, and I have the sense that with a little practice it will be just as fast as what I was doing before.

Usually when you do something new, it is a little slow at first, because it's unfamiliar. But if it is a useful change, usually it will speed up quickly as you do it a few more times, and then it will become as unconscious and automatic as what you were previously doing.

The principle is to take whatever structure is already there, and ask, "How can I *add* to it, without subtracting anything useful." It is important for you to be able to associate into an example. So the question became, "How can we preserve this aspect of what you were already doing, while adding the larger number of examples?"

George: I tried doing what you suggested to Sue, but it didn't work for me. I have a few large pictures, so I can see all the details. I can understand the advantage of seeing a large number of pictures, but I really like having just a few large ones. And when I tried zooming in on one at a time, it shakes me up, which is uncomfortable.

So you are responding to the size and the detail. What if you had the pictures sequentially, one at a time, large and detailed.

George: That doesn't work for me. I want to spend more time with each one and really savor it. I think when I change the image too often, that is what shakes me up, because I get a different feeling from each one.

OK. Try this. You have just one large detailed picture, and you can take all the time you need to savor it. (George smiles.) And as you experience that one fully, you can also see the edges of all the other examples, sort of peeking out from behind this one, like a deck of cards that has been spread out on a table, so you can know that all those others are also there, waiting for their turn to be savored....

George: Yeah, that's much better.

Stan: For me there was an optimal amount of detail.

What happened with too much detail?

Stan: I would go into overwhelm and start to shut down because I couldn't absorb it all.

Did anybody else experience that?

Dan: I added a lot of detail, but it wasn't a problem for me.

OK. What did you do so that it wasn't a problem? Maybe we can find out what you do and teach it to Stan.

Dan: Well, I had all these experiences, and I couldn't do them all simultaneously. But if I would pop into any one of them, then it was like being right there.

So your attention moves to one of these examples or to some aspect within one of them.

Stan: Well, that is another way to eliminate some of the detail. You are focusing in on some part of it.

Right. Are you trying to pay attention to all the detail in all the different examples at once? You can't process them all at once, but if each one of them *has* a lot of detail, then it is *available* to you whenever you focus on it.

Stan: Sure. That's easy. I can do that.

Alice: Mine works like a magnifying glass. I sweep through the ones I want to look at, and whichever one I'm looking at at the moment is big, and the details are clear.

That's another great way to do it. What's essential is to have flexibility, some way to shift from seeing the large array of examples to concentrating your focus in some way, so that you can see all the detail in one of them, or a part of one of them.

Most of these structures have been primarily in the visual system, which is not surprising because we live in a very visual culture. The visual system is also particularly useful in presenting a very large amount of information *simultaneously*, so it's a very good choice when you want to be able to scan very quickly through a lot of information. When an image becomes a movie, it can also present information *sequentially*.

You can present many sounds simultaneously in the auditory system, but they have a tendency to blend together more, unless you have a lot of

musical training in discriminating them. It is possible to experience a limited number of auditory experiences simultaneously, but most sighted people are not very adept at this. Most of the information in the auditory system is much more *sequential*, so it takes considerably longer to scan through a group of different experiences auditorily. Kinesthetic experiences are also mostly sequential, so you tend to experience them one at a time.

Translating an experience from one modality to another is a very useful skill, because then you can easily adapt a principle for someone who doesn't visualize well, or for whom an auditory or kinesthetic modality is more compelling. For instance, you can do the same thing that George did in the auditory or kinesthetic modalities. The large image with the edges of other images behind it could be represented in the auditory modality as a solo voice or sound, with a soft background chorus of voices representing all the other examples. In the kinesthetic modality it's a bit harder to describe, because we don't have a good vocabulary for it. But you could also have the full feeling of actually doing the quality in one specific context, while using other parts of your body to experience a smaller sense of how it feels to do that quality in a variety of other situations.

Molly: I had a sequential database of images in one location. Each picture stayed for a while, and then when it changed, my feelings sort of jumped to the next one. They didn't really coalesce into a unit until I speeded up the tempo of the sequence of images—then it all came together, and I had a sense of all of them at once, instead of one at a time.

Tom: I started with a feeling, one that I treasure. I gradually came up with an understanding that there is some kind of picture behind me, but I don't see it. That picture immerses me in this very strong feeling, but I don't see the picture itself. I don't know whether it is sequential or simultaneous, but the feeling that comes for me is very important.

OK. I encourage you to play a little bit with that. The feeling is important, but you always lose data when you concentrate on the feelings. Emotional feelings are particularly good for *summarizing* a lot of data, for bringing things together. But they are much less effective at presenting specific *detail*. Since the picture is behind you, you can always turn around and look at it to find out how you represent it visually. Or you could experiment with moving it around in front somewhere, where you could see it better—maybe not right in front where it might get in your way, but off to the side somewhere, where you could see it more clearly.

I have also demonstrated how to experiment with changing some of the other elements on the list, so I'd like to summarize some things. About a third of people have simultaneous databases, about a third have sequential, and about a third combine the two. A simultaneous arrangement of

images makes it easier to present the sheer quantity of examples you have, which is very compelling. A sequential presentation allows for more specific information and detail, and also makes it easier to step into an image and get even more information, and that is also compelling. These can be combined to get the advantages of both, as I did with Sue and George.

We all use submodalities like location, size, color, brightness, etc. to literally "highlight" what is important to us. Usually memories that are large, colorful, close, etc. will feel much stronger and more real and important. If you're not familiar with this effect, try reducing the intensity of your submodalities, making the images smaller, dimmer, farther away, etc. Usually you will feel more shaky about whether this quality is really true of you or not, the way Sue did when her images became smaller and quieter.

Doris: I have a clear example of that. I have four or five images, about a foot high and 20 feet away, a little to my right side. As I get closer to them I feel more connected, and when I'm inside it, I feel shivers, almost tears. When I experimented with seeing them on the left side, I wasn't nearly as connected. I also tried making the pictures three feet high, and that made me feel more connected with them even when they were still 20 feet away.

Sam: I started out with sequential images, but now I have a simultaneous collage like Sue's, without intending to make this change, and I wonder about that.

That often happens. As we experiment with changing these elements, and discussing the advantages of different arrangements, your unconscious mind is also paying attention, and if it thinks it would be a good idea, it sometimes just goes ahead and changes what you do spontaneously. That is one reason why I didn't want to give you too much direction at the beginning, so that you could find out what you already had to begin with, rather than be influenced by what I said.

Melissa: I had still pictures, and the other two in my group had movies. From what you're saying, it sounds like movies would be better than stills.

Well, I don't want you to take my word for it, and I also don't want you to try to figure it out intellectually. Just *try it out in your own experience*. Pick one of those still pictures, and turn it into a movie, and then back to a still, and compare your experiences of the two. Which one gives you a stronger feeling of this quality being true of you?

Melissa: The one with movement. The picture also gets brighter when it becomes a movie.

Sure. A movie is essentially a long series of different still pictures, so it has much more information. We already talked about the importance of being able to step into any example in order to get the sounds and feelings, so that you have as much information as possible.

Next I want you all to experiment with changing the location of your database in your personal space, without changing anything else, in the way that Doris did. Leave the database itself just the way it is, but see it in a different location in your personal space. If it is high, move it lower; if it is on the right, move it to the left, if it is close, move it farther away, etc., to experience what that is like....

Molly: I didn't like it. I moved it back right away.

Location is a particularly important submodality, because it applies to *all* three major modalities. Whether you are paying attention to a visual image, a sound, or a touch, they will always occur *somewhere*. Location is also one of the ways that we *integrate* experiences, which is the brain's main job. Think how weird it would be to hear a voice from a location with no person or other sound source visually present, or to see someone near you, but when you reached out to touch them, you felt nothing! Location is one of the major ways that our brains integrate the information from our various senses into a coherent whole.

The overall generalization is that the more information you have in your database, the stronger your self-concept will be. The task is to be able to find a way that all the different elements that provide information can support each other in making the self-concept strong. When you go back to your trios again in a few minutes, I want you to experiment in the ways I have demonstrated, in order to find ways to further add to the strength of your self-concept.

Sensitivity to Feedback

But before you do that, I want you to consider a very different question: "How will the elements that we have just explored affect your sensitivity to feedback when something happens that doesn't fit with this aspect of your self-concept?"

To answer this question you have to enlarge the scope of your thinking to include not only your self-concept as a guide to behavior, but your actual behavior in the larger context, and the fact that we all slip up and make mistakes from time to time. No matter how kind you are, there will be times when someone else will think you're being unkind. When that happens, I want you to *notice* that discrepancy, so that you can respond to it.

When you find yourself behaving in a way that is unlike you, you might be very pleased, and decide that the way you had been thinking about yourself was inaccurate. For instance, you valued courage, but you didn't think of yourself as courageous, and then you found yourself doing something that clearly showed courage.

The other possibility is that your self-concept is already aligned with

your values. Then when you find yourself behaving in a way that doesn't fit your ideas about yourself, you will be strongly motivated to change your behavior so that it realigns with your values.

A colleague of mine, Robert McDonald, told me a particularly striking example of this. One of Robert's strongest values is not to harm anything or anyone who is helpless, so this is a major part of his identity. Robert had been a heavy smoker for many years, and of course he had read and heard all the information about how smoking is physically harmful to the lungs, etc.

At a certain point he decided to find out how his lungs were responding to his smoking, so he closed his eyes and imagined being small enough to take a walk in his lungs inside his chest. When he asked them how they were handling his smoking they responded, "We're helpless; we have to take whatever poisons and toxins you send us." Robert suddenly thought of his lungs as helpless babies and realized that his smoking had been violating a key aspect of his values and self-concept. He was *so* sorry about this that he wept very strongly for a long time, apologizing to his lungs for harming them. After that he never smoked again, and he had absolutely no withdrawal symptoms or any other difficulty in stopping. That is both an example of noticing and responding to feedback, and also an example of how powerfully self-concept affects behavior.

Robert smoked for many years before realizing this major discrepancy between his behavior and his self-concept. When you get feedback that your behavior differs from your self-concept, that discrepancy powerfully motivates you to change either your self-concept or your behavior so that the two become more congruent. This example highlights the question that I want you to think about now, and also keep in mind for the rest of this exploration. What elements of self-concept ensure that a person is sensitive to feedback, and *notices* this kind of discrepancy as quickly as possible?

To start this process, I want you to return to the elements on the checklist we just reviewed, and think about each one in turn. We found that more examples make the self-concept stronger. Will more examples make it more or less likely that someone will be sensitive to corrective feedback?

Ben: Well, I'd think that with more examples, you'd be more likely to notice whether your behavior matches or mismatches your self-concept, because you'd have more information inside to compare with what's happening outside.

Yes, exactly. Sometimes it can be useful to use extreme cases to think about these things. Let's say that I tell you that I think you are a very glorpful person, but you have no idea what I mean by that; because you have no examples of what glorpness is. You would have absolutely no way of know-

ing when your behavior was glorpful or not. Then if I gave you one example, that would give you a meaning for the word, but it would be a very narrow meaning, because you wouldn't know about all the other events that also exemplify glorplicity.

If you have lots of examples of being kind—in many different contexts, with people of different ages and from different backgrounds and cultures, being kind to yourself, being kind with animals, and perhaps even being kind to inanimate objects like your car, that provides a very rich and detailed meaning for the word "kindness." All those examples can be compared with actual events to see if they match or not. Those examples provide a basis for unconsciously scanning for kindness, and you will notice it around you when it happens. When your behavior matches, that becomes one more example that you can add to your database. When it doesn't match, it alerts you to a discrepancy.

Most of us have self-concepts that are somewhere in between these extremes. We have a certain number of examples that we can use to compare with our behavior, but we could always have more, and we can never have examples of all the possibilities. In any area where we have only a few examples, we won't be as sensitive to noticing whether our behavior matches or not.

Sue: I think I have an example of that. I had never thought of being kind to my car. When you mentioned that as a possibility, it kind of jolted me, and I realized that I'm not very gentle with my car. If I thought about being kind to the things that I own, they might last a lot longer!

Yes, that's a nice example. I want you to notice something very important: having a large number of examples makes the self-concept stronger and more durable, *at the same time* that it makes it more sensitive to feedback! As I said earlier, I cannot tell you how happy I was to discover that strength and sensitivity to feedback go together, because I had originally expected that a strong self-concept would be less sensitive to feedback than a weak one. I am *so* glad that I was wrong, and that *strength and sensitivity actually support each other*.

Now let's examine simultaneous and sequential. Which will make it easier to notice a discrepancy between your self-concept and your behavior?

Fred: Well, if you have a large simultaneous visual display, you can scan it really quickly to see what matches and what doesn't, so I'd think that would be better.

Melissa: But when examples are sequential, you get a lot more specific details from each one, and that would make it possible to make much smaller distinctions. That would allow you to make finer discriminations and notice smaller discrepancies.

I agree with both of you. They *both* have very important advantages, and that is one reason why I recommend combining them. A simultaneous display allows you to present a lot of information all at once, while experiencing one example at a time sequentially gives you an opportunity to notice much more fine-grained detail.

How about having all major modalities and association. These two are very closely related to each other, and they are also related to having examples sequentially. Earlier we discussed the difference between a dissociated image and one that you can step into and associate into, so that you can also get the auditory and kinesthetic aspects of that experience. Which of these will make you more sensitive to feedback, a dissociated image or an associated one?

Fred: An associated image will have information in all three major modalities—and sometimes also smell and taste—so there is much more information to compare with what is actually happening in the world. So an associated image will provide more sensitivity to feedback.

Yes. If you had only dissociated images, you would be able to notice discrepancies in the visual modality, but not in the others. If someone only had pictures of being kind, but no kinesthetic examples, they probably wouldn't notice if they touched someone else in a rough way unless the other person visibly winced or cringed. And even if they noticed the wincing or cringing, they might only be puzzled by it, since it would be hard for them to connect this with the way they are touching. The same would be true if someone had only auditory or kinesthetic examples. If someone had only a representation of the words that express kindness, they likely wouldn't notice when their tonality was harsh and grating.

Alice: The quality that I chose is one that I exhibit in very difficult situations, so I didn't want to associate into them because it was unpleasant. Then I realized that the fact that I can have this quality even in those very difficult situations is further proof of how important that quality is to me, so I felt good about that, and stronger about that quality—but I still didn't want to associate into them.

That sounds like a good choice in that case, and it's also a nice example of how simply examining examples can provide very useful information. Remember that *useful* doesn't always mean *pleasant*. Unpleasant experiences often have a *lot* of useful information.

I want to mention another point. Several of you have talked about "better" examples of the quality, and I assume that means that it was a particularly strong or rich example. While those outstanding examples are very important and influential, they are also usually relatively *infrequent*. The smaller, less outstanding examples—like smiling at a store clerk, or waving

to a stranger to signal them to pull in front of you in heavy traffic—may have a far greater impact on your quality of life, because those more ordinary opportunities happen much more *often*, and that multiplies their impact.

Finally, let's consider submodalities. Association is a major submodality that allows you to access other modalities, so it is particularly important, as we have already discussed. Most submodalities have a dual function; they provide *more information*, and they also *emphasize* and draw your attention to some of the information that is already there. Some submodalities, such as auditory tonal, provide additional information that you simply wouldn't have without it.

Other submodalities, such as size and closeness, primarily emphasize the importance or significance of the information that is already there in the image. However, it is also easier to see the details in a large close image, so that also provides more information. Many other submodality elements, like color, 3-D or movies, etc. provide more information at the same time that they emphasize the importance of that information. To summarize again: *the more information you have in your internal representations, the more you are likely to notice a discrepancy between your self-concept and your behavior.*

Exercise 4-3 Sensitivity to Feedback (trios, 15 minutes)

Now I want you to return to your trios for another fifteen minutes to experiment with some of the things we've been talking about in regard to the checklist. Try out different ways to represent your examples, and use your felt sense of its stability or strength as a guide to how you can make that aspect of your self-concept even stronger and more durable. Anything you do to make it stronger will also tend to make it more sensitive to the discrepancies that provide feedback about how well your behavior is aligned with your self-concept. Again I suggest that you start by silently experimenting in your own mind, and then share and assist each other in playing with this.

* * * * *

Do you have any questions or comments now, after another opportunity to experiment with these elements of self-concept?

Al: When I was examining my examples, there were a few that were actually examples of my *not* having the quality. I think those must be important, and I wonder why you haven't mentioned them.

Those counterexamples are *very, very* important, and we'll spend a *lot* of time with them later. For now I want to ignore them, because I want to build a solid foundation of basic understanding before we explore coun-

terexamples. All these things are going on at the same time, so the sequence of our exploration is somewhat arbitrary, but I have found that it is very useful for you to have a thorough understanding of some simpler aspects of self-concept before learning about counterexamples.

Summary

We have been exploring how you *select* and *assemble* examples into a structure that provides a basis for your knowing that you have a quality. We have examined the effects of a number of very important process variables: *number of examples*, *location*, *simultaneous/sequential*, *modalities*, *association*, and *submodalities*.

We have also been finding out how changes in these variables also affect the content that is represented in your database. All these elements make a quality of your self-concept more *durable* and *more responsive to feedback* at the same time. This is the first step in transforming yourself: making the qualities that you like even stronger and more sensitive to feedback.

Keep in mind that the structures that we have discussed are only a very small sample of the many ways that someone can put these variables together to provide a basis for knowing who they are. However, now you have some generalizations about these processes, that will enable you to explore and understand the structure of anyone's qualities, even if it is quite different from the ones we have discussed.

I'd like you to take a minute or two to reflect back on when we began this exploration a short time ago. When I first asked you to turn inside to find out how you thought about this quality in yourself, you were probably a bit confused, because it is something that is usually unconscious and out of your awareness. But like many other aspects of our mental functioning, it is *available* to consciousness if we take the time to turn inward, ask the right kind of questions, and be sensitive to our responses.

Next we will examine time, a very important process variable that has a great impact on the richness and effectiveness of your self-concept.

5

Changing Time

So far we have been exploring variables that primarily affect the process, *how* you represent examples in your database. We haven't been paying much attention to the *content*—what's actually represented in the examples, other than specifying that they are different examples of the quality you have chosen to explore. This distinction between process and content is actually somewhat artificial, since the process distinctions that we have been exploring often also affect the content of examples.

The sheer number of examples provides an opportunity to represent many different kinds of contents and contexts. Changing the modality also changes the kind and amount of content presented. A visual image presents some of the content exquisitely, but can't do justice to the content that can only be presented well in the auditory or kinesthetic modalities, and vice-versa. Submodalities draw attention to content that might otherwise be overlooked, and also affect the content presented. For instance, increasing the size of an image draws your attention to the content, and also makes that content much easier to see, because smaller details become more apparent.

Time is another important process variable that strongly affects the content represented. Just as the sheer number of examples provides opportunities to represent many different contents and contexts, selecting a variety of time frames does the same. The way you represent examples in time will have a major impact on how well your self-concept carries *through time*, the *continuity* that is one of the most important aspects of identity. There are a number of different elements in how we represent time, so I have another checklist for you to use to guide your exploration of this

important aspect of your self-concept. I want you to use the same quality that you explored previously.

Checklist 5 Aspects of Time

Past, Present, Future. What *timeframes* are your examples in? Do you have examples in the *past*, *present*, and *future*? You could have examples from different periods in the past. You could also have present examples, and different people define the present differently. For some people, the present is only a tiny point where the past and the future meet, while for others, the present is somewhat broader. You can also have examples in various times in the future.

Distribution in time. You could have examples fairly evenly distributed throughout your life, or most of your examples might be fairly recent, or in the distant past, or perhaps only in the middle of your life, etc. It would even be possible that all your examples were in the future. If you notice some period of time for which you have no examples, you can decide whether or not this is appropriate, or whether it would be useful to find and add examples during that time period.

Chunk Size of Time. An example might last for seconds, minutes, hours, days, or years. It can be very useful to examine your examples to see what *span* of time they encompass and whether this span is an accurate and appropriate way to represent the quality.

Spreading. How far does a quality *spread* across time? People often speak of a "bad day" or a "good year," as if every moment in that period of time was bad or good. Yet this is almost always a huge generalization, since even a really bad day had at least a few satisfying moments, and a good year must have had at least a few bad days in it. Find out how spreading a quality across a longer or shorter period of time in this way can affect how you think of this quality.

Exercise 5-1 Exploring Time (trios, 15 minutes)

Using the same quality that you chose earlier, I want you to start by silently exploring these time variables in your database for about five minutes, and then take another ten minutes to share and discuss what you found with the others. Assist each other in finding out what you do by asking questions and observing nonverbal gestures. After you have shared with the others in your trio, I want you to experiment with changing the variables that I have listed, and notice how that changes your experience of your quality.

Try adding or subtracting examples in different time frames, and compare your experience of your database with them and without them, pay-

ing particular attention to the impact of future examples, and the effect of having a period of time with no examples.

Take some time to examine the span of time in your examples, and then experiment with varying this. What is the impact of having only examples with a very short span of time, compared to examples with a long span?

Examine a span of time in which you exhibited the quality you are exploring, to find out which parts of it actually represented that quality, and then experiment with spreading that quality over a shorter or longer span of time and notice the impact.

As before, I want you to notice how each change affects your feeling of certainty or solidity about this quality of your self-concept. I also want you to consider how these elements you are experimenting with will affect the responsiveness of your self-concept to feedback.

* * * * *

Time Frames and Future Examples

How many of you didn't have any future examples? About 3/4. And what happened when you added some in?

Ann: It was great! When I put future examples in, it changed my present. It just changed everything.

Can you be a little more vague?

Ann: Clearer. Everything I saw was clearer, and I could hear more clearly; it was more detailed, and associated.

Did that aspect of yourself seem more real when you had future examples?

Ann: Oh yes!

Does that fit for the rest of you? It gave it more juice, right?

Ann: More confidence, yes. More solidity.

When you imagine having a certain quality in the future, that is essentially the same process as what is often called "future-pacing," a way of programming a desired response into a future context.

Fred: I didn't find that future examples made any difference for my quality. I already felt so sure about it that future examples seemed kind of irrelevant. And then I thought, "What if I future-pace this into a different context where I don't normally think about having that quality?" When I did that, I got more confident in that context.

Great. Some of you had future-paced examples already. What happened when you took them out?

Lori: Terrible. My future was empty. I felt as if I couldn't have that quality in the future.

Bill: When I took away my future representations, my auditory thought went from, "I *am* this" to "I *did* that once."

Yeah. "I used to do it." If you only have past examples, the quality is likely to remain in the past, and not occur in the future. Future-paced examples carry the quality into the future and at the same time they add to the variety of your examples, and give you more data.

Rich: After checking my future examples, I flipped it and went into the past. I went to one of my earliest memories, and Al kept saying, "And what about the time before that?" And I went back and back until it was preverbal. At first I was an adult going for positive states, so I kind of ignored the earlier childhood examples. But then I realized those were even *more* important than my adult examples, because they show that I was curious right from the start, before socialization and all that. I am an *enthusiastically curious* person. Now if you give me feedback to the contrary, that is going to be good for adjusting my behavior, but I know that I *am* and I *was* and I *will be*, because it is obvious that I'm always the same. I *am* a curious person. If I get feedback, that is just about something I *did*, but it has nothing to do with who I *am*.

Right. The stability of that quality of your self-concept is enhanced by additional examples that are distributed widely in both the past and future. Many people think that a certain quality is only for people at a certain stage of life, so they discount ("not count") examples that are in different time frames. So it can be very useful to notice examples that the person rejects for some reason, and then explore their criteria for rejecting them, to see if they make sense or not. When people dismiss experiences, they often make hand gestures as if throwing something away, or pushing it aside, so watching for those nonverbal gestures can be a big help in noticing when this is happening.

One very important aspect of the self-concept is that it provides a sense of continuity of identity through time. By exploring these aspects of time, we can discover exactly *how* this continuity is created, and how you can enhance it. With this solid sense of knowing who you *are*, any information about a behavior that doesn't fit is only about something you *did*, not about who you *are*. You don't have to be defensive, so you can be open to the feedback, and perhaps even welcome it, since it is an opportunity to develop even more of the quality.

This distinction between *self* and *behavior* has been an important part of NLP for many years. When someone is struggling with a problem, it can help a lot to say, "Look, this isn't about *you*, or about who you *are*, it's only about a particular *behavior* that you have done, and want to change." However, there is a huge difference between saying those words to someone,

and helping them develop their internal database in ways that make this distinction clearly, and at a totally unconscious level, so that the person *pre-supposes* it. What you are describing, Rich, is knowing this distinction internally, so you don't need someone else to remind you of it.

In one sense the distinction between self and behavior is a bit artificial, because as far as I know, your "self" is really the sum total of all your behaviors and responses, and a quality is a way of describing a certain set of those behaviors. If a person had no behavior, we'd have no way of knowing what his attitudes or qualities were. It might be more accurate to say that at least 99.99% of the person's behaviors are working fine, so that provides a solid foundation for working on the .01% that is a problem for them at the moment. But for most people it is much simpler and more understandable to make the distinction between self and behavior.

Rich: Nothing changes now. It's way beyond behavior.

Yes, that's what identity is; it's something that *is* you. It is a state of being that you can exhibit in different behaviors and in different contexts, but it is a quality that you carry through time, independent of behavior or context. The more you have examples widely distributed in lots of different time frames and lots of different contexts, the more you can feel that this quality is an inherent part of yourself that is independent of outside circumstances.

Future examples are very powerful in making your self-concept much more solid and durable. That stability is a great basis for feeling undefensive and *willing* to accept feedback. However, you could be very open and willing to get feedback and still not *notice* it. I want to ask a slightly different question. How will future examples actually make people more *sensitive* to feedback—not just more *willing* to notice it, but more *able* to notice it?

Sue: Well, I always want to do things better. I want to refine my abilities and behaviors to be more appropriate to who I am, so I'm always looking for how I can do that.

OK. So one of your values is to continually improve, and this alerts you to how you could do things better. I assume that might work by examining something you did, and then perhaps making images of how it could be better next time, and then putting those better ones into the future.

But this is still not quite what I asked about. Even if you didn't have the desire to be better, how does the very fact of making future images affect your sensitivity to feedback information? When you create a future example of a satisfying attitude or quality, and put it into your future, that *programs* you to respond in the future, just the way any other future-pacing does. That makes it more likely that you will actually *be* that way when that future time arrives. It also adds to your database and makes it more solid,

giving you a sense that this quality is part of who you *are*, throughout all time frames, as we have discussed.

However, a future example is also a *prediction* about how you will be: "This is what is going to happen." A prediction sensitizes you, and makes it more likely that you will *notice* whether it actually happens or not when the time comes.

To take a simple example, let's say that you tell someone that you will drop by their house today at 5:05 PM. You are much more likely to notice what time you actually arrive than if you had made no prediction. If you had made a more vague prediction that you would drop by sometime during the week, you might notice if you didn't arrive until sometime the following week, but you probably wouldn't notice the time of day. The very act of creating a future example makes it more likely that you will notice whether or not your behavior matches what you had planned. The more specific and detailed your prediction is, the more you will notice small differences in what actually happens, and the better your feedback will be.

Sid: I have future possibilities of everything, including the fact that this quality of myself may cease to be important to me at some point in the future. If I do a full future-pace of this piece, I feel limited and stuck, because I am committed to something that I don't have the flexibility to change any more.

This is very curious. You started speaking of "future *possibilities*," and that the importance of a quality might *change*. Then at some point you decided that you were committed to these "future possibilities" and couldn't change them anymore! I assume you can also change your future examples any time you want to.

When I create a future-paced example, this is only a plan that I make now, in this moment, for what I believe I want to have happen. At any future time, including a moment from now, I can always revise it. Making a firm vow at any moment in time means that you think you are smarter now than you will be in the future—either you expect to learn nothing in the future, or you expect to be dumber! Hopefully that's not true, and you will keep learning more as time goes on, and when you do, you can change your forecasts at any time. It doesn't lock you into anything; it just directs your attention to what you want to happen.

My future is simply my best idea, at any particular time, of what is likely to happen, and how I want to be, and do, and respond to events. That is always adjustable. Is there anyone here who has never adjusted a plan when new information came in, or your desires changed, or something unexpected happened? Future examples simply give me some degree of control over what happens in the future by directing and guiding my attention

and behavior. Given that I want to be a certain kind of person in the future, future examples help me be that way. I think it was Alan Kay who said, "The best way to predict the future is to invent it."

Al: I did something related to that. As I went into the future, I spotted pieces of it that I could adjust to make it better than it was.

So in the process of building some new future-paced representations, you reviewed the images that were already there, and identified some that you want to improve on to make sure that they would have this quality.

Lori: When I first put in future examples they didn't seem real until I juiced up the submodalities to make them more compelling.

Fred: I went into the future and then looked back to see what I had done. I noticed different things that I had changed to adjust the situation earlier, in order to get to where I was.

So you went into the future, what Milton Erickson called "reorientation in time," and then looked *back* to see what you had done in order to get there. Many changes appear to be difficult when we think about doing them in the future, because of all the work we will have to do to get there. However, from the vantage point of already *being different* in the future and looking back on the necessary changes as having *already* happened, it appears to be much easier. "Here I am in the future, where I wanted to be. What did I have to do in order to get here?" That's a great piece that many people can use.

Fran: I future-paced that I would like to encourage people. And then when I future-paced it, I noticed I wasn't necessarily compelled to encourage, but I was much more cautious and attentive to *what* I was encouraging, as well as *how* I delivered that encouragement. I was also more willing to receive feedback and adjust.

It sounds great to be more attentive as you are encouraging someone. So if you say something like, "Yeah, you can do it," you are paying more attention to their responses and also to the quality of your own behavior—your tone of voice or how strong it was, or how intense, etc.? Is that what you are talking about?

Fran: Yes. More attentive to the whole situation.

That is what the future is for—to envision how you want to be, and noticing how you may want to change any parts of it that you're not satisfied with. Those are all nice ways to be sure that envisioning and revising the future is an ongoing process for you.

It can be useful to remember that the "future" is just a prediction that we make in the present. Most animals probably have no future in the sense that we do. They behave in ways that affect their future, but as far as we know it seems unlikely that they have any consciousness of how those

behaviors are future-oriented, or how to systematically change those behaviors in relation to the future.

There is another nice piece that can add to this. If you only project into the future what you have already done in the past, that could restrict you to what you have done before. When you make future examples, you can always change them in the ways that we have discussed. But you can also build a creativity generator. You can add in a few somewhat vague examples in which you are pleasantly surprised by exhibiting your quality in a new way, or in an unexpected context, or with someone that you previously thought it wouldn't be appropriate with, or whatever. This lays a foundation for what a friend of mine calls the "vuja de" experience—the sudden realization that you are doing something for the first time. That builds in opportunities to stretch whatever conscious or unconscious boundaries you have put around how you express that quality.

Ecology and Congruence

Lou: It seems to me that there could be ecology problems in building future examples. I can imagine building examples that might look great, but that I didn't have the competence to actually do, or that might have unpleasant or unanticipated consequences. How do you check for ecology?

There certainly can be ecology problems whenever you create your future, particularly if it is significantly different from your past. Interestingly, *future-pacing itself is the best way to check for ecology*. By imagining a future scenario in detail, and in all modalities, you provide a specific plan for all parts of you to consider, and possibly object to. When AI and Fran examined their futures, they automatically noticed aspects that they wanted to adjust.

My primary goal has been to teach you the many ways that future examples are useful in strengthening your self-concept and making it more responsive to feedback information. I have also been assuming that you all know that any changes need to be checked to be sure that they really will benefit you, and not cause worse problems than they solve. I'm also assuming that you all realize that any objections that you find must be fully respected and satisfied before proceeding with the change.

I like to turn inward and go, "Alert! Hey you guys, this is what I'm thinking of doing. Does anyone have any objections?" and then pause to notice any response. Most often I just imagine a crowd of people smiling and clapping, indicating that what I want to do is fine. But I have learned that I need to really look around to see if anyone on the fringes looks unhappy. If some are bored or distracted, that's OK, because that just means that they couldn't care less whether I do it or not. But if someone is scowl-

ing or unhappy in any way, I need to take time to communicate with them and not proceed until, and unless, we have worked out a solution that we are both happy with. So by all means do an ecology check with any future examples you create.

This might be a good time to mention something very important that John McWhirter has pointed out. What we have been calling an "ecology check" in the field of NLP for over 20 years, is actually only a *congruence* check. We are checking the *internal* ecology of a person, the congruence of their internal parts or processes, but we are not really checking the larger ecology of family, friends, co-workers, living situation, social group, etc. Even when we ask someone about these people in their life, the answers come from this person's *ideas* about how their spouse or boss, etc. would respond to a proposed change. If we actually asked the spouse or boss, we might get a *very* different response. So while "ecology checks" are extremely valuable, it would be much more accurate to call them *congruency* checks, and that would help us remember that we still don't know about the larger ecology.

When you add future examples of a quality into your database, there are a number of factors that make objections or problems much less likely than in most other change work.

Firstly, I started by asking you to choose a quality to work with that is something that you *like* about yourself, and that you are *sure* of. If that is true, that means that it is a quality that is already aligned with your values, so it has probably already had some pretty thorough ecology testing in a variety of contexts, and over some period of time. So if you simply take examples from your existing database and forecast them into your future, the only thing that you are changing is the time frame. Unless your living situation has significantly changed, that should just result in more of the same, so there are no changes to check.

When you make significant changes in your future examples, such as changing the behaviors, or the contexts, or the people you will have this quality with, there is somewhat more likelihood that you might encounter problems.

However, when we future-pace *qualities*, or *capacities*, rather than specific behaviors, there is much less likelihood that they would interfere with other parts of your functioning. If you decide today that tomorrow morning at 10 AM you will fly a Boeing 737 loaded with supermodels to the Bahamas, you'd better do some serious congruency checks today! But if you decide that tomorrow you'd like to have a quality of curiosity or kindness in *whatever* you do, it's a lot easier to make small adjustments tomorrow to fit the events that actually unfold. A future-paced *capacity* has

relatively little to do with *what* you will do, and a great deal to do with *how* you want to do it.

Since the future is inherently uncertain, that adds another margin of safety. Even if you have tomorrow tightly planned and scheduled, you really only have a general outline of how the day is likely to unfold, and I assume you're aware that the day could be very different from how you imagine it will be. Whenever we make images of the future, it's wise to allow for this by making them somewhat vague and uncertain.

Finally, we are future-pacing abilities or capabilities, what you are *capable* of doing, what you *could* do. You don't *have* to do it; it's just your best forecast of how you would *like* to be. Earlier Sid missed this distinction and thought there was a problem. When the future arrives in the present, something may have changed and you may decide to do something else to satisfy other outcomes.

Because of all these factors, when you future-pace examples of qualities, the congruency test can usually wait until you get there; you don't have to do it ahead of time the way you need to if you are future-pacing a specific set of behaviors at a specific time.

Putting examples into the future is a particularly important and powerful process in building a self-concept that works well, and only about a quarter of you already did it. I didn't do it either, until I started investigating self-concept and learned it from an early participant. So make sure that using future examples becomes an automatic part of the structure of your self-concept.

Time Distribution

We already had a great example of the impact of gaps in the time distribution with Rich, in which he originally had only adult examples of being curious. He went back through his childhood and collected younger and younger examples of being curious, and added all those examples into his database, giving him a much greater sense that curiosity was definitely an inherent quality.

When we select experiences to represent a quality, there will always be a bias. For instance, most people take photos of their families and their various activities from time to time. If you studied someone's family photos, would you get an accurate sample of their living? Would it be anything like what you would get if you had someone taking photos continuously, or at random times during the day or week?

You would have a *very* biased sample, because people typically only take pictures on birthdays, vacations, family visits, and other special times.

People very seldom take photos of people sleeping (a third of your life!), having an argument, doing the dishes, or other mundane activities, and the same is true of your memories. Because of this, it can be really useful to re-view your examples for this kind of bias. I'd like to use travel posters as an example again. The posters of Ireland always show bright blue sunny skies, with perhaps a small fluffy cloud or two. Then when you get there, you may notice that two-thirds of the time the sky is overcast or raining, and that your image of Irish skies is a bit inaccurate. This is the value of examining your examples and noticing *when* they occurred. By doing this, you can find out how your representation of the quality is biased because there are periods of your life for which you have no examples, or only a few.

Sue: When I looked at the distribution of my examples, there were a few in early childhood, and a bunch in adulthood, but none during most of my school years. So I reviewed my school years and found a lot of nice examples that I had labeled differently because of my mother's attitude toward them. That quality feels a lot fuller to me now.

It can be helpful to think of a gap like that as an unused set of resources. Sometimes you may not have exhibited a quality during a particular time period, but it's much more likely that you just overlooked it because of other events that were more noticeable. Having examples throughout all time periods is one way to be sure that self-concept is an *accurate, through-time* process, one that carries through all time. How many of you already had examples pretty well distributed throughout your life? About half. I'd like you to try temporarily deleting all the examples in a ten-year period and compare that with having them in.... What is that like?

Al: I don't like it. It feels like an empty space. There is nothing to support that quality there, and I feel a little wobbly about it.

Yes. Over and over again we find that more and varied examples make your self-concept feel stronger. What effect will a wide time distribution of examples have on sensitivity to corrective feedback?

Fred: My father-in-law thinks of himself as an athlete, based on his successes in sports during his high school and college years. Those experiences are now at least 30 years old, so his self-concept is way out-of-date. I'm thinking that he probably doesn't have any examples from recent years, because since I've known him I've never seen him lift anything much heavier than a glass of booze.

OK. What do you think would happen if he did search for examples of being athletic during the last 30 years, and all he could find were examples of bending his elbow to lift a glass?

Fred: I think he'd have to change his self-concept to make it more

accurate, that he *used to be* an athlete—and then maybe he wouldn't insist on telling me about it quite so often. Or maybe he'd change his lifestyle in ways that would support his being athletic again.

Yes, either way he'd be noticing more about how he actually exhibited this quality, and whether that fit with his concept of himself. A wider time distribution of examples increases the sensitivity to feedback, making the self-concept more accurate.

Ann: I'm thinking about a friend who is in an AA program, where they insist that people continue to think of themselves as alcoholics, even though they may not have had a drink for ten or fifteen years. Thinking of yourself as an alcoholic in that situation seems to be very useful, yet it also seems inaccurate.

That's an interesting example of a use of self-concept. That self-definition of being an alcoholic is probably accurate in regard to his vulnerability to alcohol. The AA program is very valuable, and has helped many people, but it doesn't make it possible for someone to become a social drinker, or an *ex*-alcoholic. In fact the AA program believes that is impossible. One aspect of the AA belief system is that if the person takes a single drink, they will get drunk, so total abstinence is the only solution the AA program offers. Within that definition, the person *is* still an alcoholic—that is, they are unable to control their drinking except by abstinence. Ideally an alcoholic could learn to have choice about drinking and truly transcend being an alcoholic. Then if he unknowingly eats a piece of rum cake on Christmas eve, he won't have to go on to get drunk. Social drinkers do exist, and some alcoholics have learned to become social drinkers, so it must be *possible*, even if we don't yet have a dependable way to achieve it. That would be a very useful thing for someone to model.

This brings up an important exception to our generalization that it is usually good to have a wide distribution of examples. If someone has made a significant life change, it may be entirely appropriate to have no examples before or after the life-change event, whether that occurred in the past, or is a plan for the future.

I have recently had to give up my two favorite sports, volleyball and skiing, because they are too hard on my arthritic knees. I am no longer a skier or volleyball player, and I would likely make a fool of myself—as well as a complete and painful wreck of my knees—if I continued to think of myself in those ways. However, the rich memories of over half a century of both sports are still with me, and they still help define who I am and the kinds of activities that I enjoy. They also serve as resources to guide me in selecting replacement activities that are easier on my knees.

If someone is contemplating an important life change, it can be very

useful to define the old behavior as something that s/he *used to do*, and make sure that they *don't* have future examples of that. Of course you would want future examples of the new behavior. And if you can find past examples of the new behavior, that can serve as convincing evidence that they *already* have the ability to do it, which will make the change seem easier and more solid.

So far we have been speaking in terms of time periods spanning a few years or more. Some people don't sample certain periods in their lives when they think of a particular quality, and if they did, they would have a richer and more accurate representation of themselves. Now let's explore chunk size.

Chunk Size of Time

Every example in your database will have a certain time frame, and it will also have a certain *duration*, even if it is only a still picture of a very short split-second moment of time. You can have examples that are minutes or hours long, or perhaps days, months or even many years in length. Qualities like spontaneity or excitement might need only a short time span to represent adequately. On the other hand, qualities like persistence or loyalty are only meaningful over much longer periods of time, so in order to represent that kind of quality well, a much larger time chunk is required. This could be either a continuous movie, or a movie or film strip that is made up of lots of smaller pieces selected from a longer time span.

One easy way to explore this is to think of an example of your quality, and then think of considerably longer or shorter examples of it. Perhaps you were kind to a sales clerk for a few minutes, kind to a friend for several hours, and kind to a sick family member for a month. When you compare those experiences, which one provides more support for that quality, and which is likely to be a basis for more sensitivity to feedback?

Bill: When I do that, the longer one feels much more solid. It's pretty easy to demonstrate a quality for a short time; a longer time span proves that I can sustain it over time, and as circumstances change.

Ann: But in a longer time span it is more likely that a lot of things can happen—different events, activities, people, contexts, etc., so I don't think that is a fair comparison. I compared one longer chunk with a number of shorter chunks that added up to about the same total amount of time. When I did that, the longer chunk still seemed more important than the smaller ones, but the difference wasn't as great.

Very nice. By making the total time the same in both examples, you controlled for the total duration of time. That comparison is a little more complex, and it's a much better test. With roughly the same total amount

of experience, it's easier to compare the impact of continuity compared to discontinuity.

Tess: I like having *both* short and long chunks. When I tried eliminating the short ones, it seemed like that quality had to be a long-term commitment, so I had to pause to think about whether I really wanted to commit myself to it or not in a given situation. With only short examples, I felt a lot freer to go ahead, and I had more of a sense that I can be that way "at the drop of a hat," but the quality didn't feel quite as solid or real. With *both* longer and shorter examples I felt freer about being that way, knowing I could stop any time, while the longer examples gave me a more solid feeling of knowing that I *can* do it for a long time when I want to, or the situation requires it.

Great. Yes, it's nice to have a range of time chunks, because there are advantages to both.

Time Spreading

As I mentioned earlier, there is yet another way that people can chunk time and events in a way that affects the self-concept, and an example of this process is whenever someone says they had a "terrible week" or a "fun evening." If you take a close look at a "terrible week," you will find that a lot of things went reasonably well, but a few important things went very badly. Rather than describe this as a good week in which there was a bad hour or two—or often much less—we often *spread* the bad feelings and describe it as a "bad week." It's as if the unpleasant experience gets spread across the good parts of the week, tending to obliterate them. Likewise, even a really fun evening probably had at least few boring or unsatisfying moments, but enough things went well that we overlooked them and described it as a "fun evening."

It's important to realize that this process can go either forward or backward in time. If something bad happens at the beginning of the week, it is likely to be a "terrible week," regardless of other nice things that happen later. Someone may be having a great vacation, but when something unpleasant happens near the end of it, I have often heard someone say emphatically, "That ruins the whole vacation!"

There is no limit to the time period that you can apply this process to. Someone can have a very satisfying marriage over a period of many years, but then if it ends in an ugly divorce, that whole period of time is often described as a "bad marriage," and all the wonderful years they had together are discarded. This process is also a typical element of depression, in which someone may spread some unpleasantness across their entire life. "Life sucks." Some people decide on their deathbed that "My whole life has been

a waste." Even if someone truly wasted a great deal of their life, there must have been at least a few redeeming moments.

People usually seem to have a tendency to spread unpleasantness more often than pleasantness. People often speak of "*moments* of glory" but "*periods* of depression." That has always seemed backwards to me. Why not have moments of depression and periods of glory? Like most things that we do in our minds, these processes tend to be out of our control unless we become aware of them, and actively choose to make use of them to improve our living.

I want you to pick an example from your database that is in a mid-range of chunk size for you, and then experiment with spreading it over a shorter or longer time frame. So if you have an example of kindness that lasted an hour or two, first examine that time period in more detail to identify exactly which smaller parts of that time period actually exemplified kindness, and what other qualities are also there in addition to kindness. Even if no part of it showed meanness, there were probably parts that exemplified other qualities....

After doing that, take that same hour or two of being kind and spread it farther into the past and future, until it is considerably longer than it was. Explore what happened before and after, to find to what extent those periods also exemplified kindness. Experiment with that for a few minutes, and then we'll discuss it....

Sue: When I examined an example in smaller detail, I found all sorts of other qualities mixed together with the quality I had chosen to explore, and that made it much richer for me. It wasn't *just* an example of that quality; it was blended with the other qualities that I have, and that made me feel more *whole*. My qualities aren't just separate things that I display one at a time; they exist together in everything I do.

Yes. That's a very important observation. We're always doing many, many things at once, even if we think of only one or two that seem more prominent or important at the moment. When someone is being kind, they aren't only being kind, they are also being perceptive and responsive, and strong and active, and lots of other things. Sometimes later we realize that what we thought was most important was actually much less significant than some other aspect of what we were doing.

Over twenty-five years ago I taught a weekend seminar, and of course I was mostly focused on doing a good job of demonstrating and teaching. Now, looking back at it, it is obvious to me that the really important and lasting thing about that seminar was relating to a young woman who later became my wife.

Ben: When I tried making the chunk size larger, it seemed a bit artificial at first. The first thing that I noticed was the larger context around the quality—what preceded it and what followed it, and that connected it with other parts of my life, giving me more of a sense of wholeness and direction. And then when I looked at the events that preceded and followed the example more closely, I realized something like what Sue described. I hadn't described those events as having the quality, because other qualities were more prominent. But when I looked more closely, that quality *was* actually present, even though I hadn't been paying attention to it. So that made me realize how much that quality really did carry through time.

So you got more of a sense of wholeness and unity, and that made it feel more solid, just as Sue's realization of many qualities being expressed at once did. If you can spread that quality over your whole life span, you can increase that even more.

Usually by this time someone has asked how all our different qualities are integrated into a single sense of self. That question puzzled me for years, and despite thinking about it a lot, I found no answer that satisfied me. Fairly recently I realized that the question starts by assuming that all these qualities are separate, and that assumption is false. The clarity, brilliance and hardness of a diamond are all qualities of a single thing. They don't have to be unified; they are *already* unified. When I finally realized that, I felt both *very* stupid and *very* pleased!

Of course the big difference between our qualities and the qualities of a diamond is that we can change our qualities by thinking about them differently, but a diamond can't. And although we may single out a particular quality for attention, as we have been doing, that is only because our minds have difficulty grasping the whole, but we can work effectively with smaller chunks of the whole.

The ability to chunk down an experience into its smaller parts is a very useful skill, and is exemplified by the old question "How do you eat an elephant?" The answer is, "One bite at a time." I once read about a guy who ate an entire small airplane over a period of about three years! He ground it up into very small pieces and mixed it in with his mashed potatoes every day. The article didn't say specifically, but I think he probably emptied the gas and oil out of it first. A few years before, he had eaten a bicycle as a paid stunt, and then went on to bigger and better things! I wouldn't hold that up as a particularly *useful* thing for a human being to do with his life, but it certainly is a memorable example of how a seemingly impossible task can be accomplished by breaking it down into smaller chunks!

It can be useful to realize that although we divide time into past, present and future, and can chunk down much smaller than that, *all these time*

representations actually exist in the present. First our brains divide up time into chunks, and then we can do a variety of things to restore the original continuity. The fact that we are able to think of all these different time frames in the same moment means that the past enters the present and future, and determines our present and future responses. And our future images also enter the present and the past in the same way. We will respond to the past and present differently now depending on the future that we envision, and that was also true of us in the past. My past determines my future, which rebounds and determines my present. And yet *all this happens in the present moment.*

Summary

We have been exploring these different smaller elements of time, because they all affect the *continuity* through time that is so important to self-concept. The *distribution* of examples in time, and particularly *future-paced examples*, the *chunk size* of time and *spreading*, all contribute to how well your self-concept creates continuity. Keep in mind that any representation of a quality of self-concept will be biased, so it's not a matter of finding the "truth," but a matter of finding a representation that serves you well in being and becoming who you want to be.

So far we have been examining a number of process variables, finding out how they can be used to make an aspect of your self-concept both more durable and more responsive to feedback. Next we will explore how to directly examine and work with the content of your examples, giving you yet another way to transform yourself.

6

Changing Content

We have explored a number of different process variables and time variables that affect how well your self-concept functions. Making changes in these also result in changes in the *content*, in *what* is represented. But we can also directly change the content of what is represented. This is another way to enhance a database by increasing the variety and appropriateness of *what* you select to put in the representation, and by deleting content that isn't useful. Again I have a checklist for you.

Checklist 6 Aspects of Content

Perceptual Positions. Are all three *perceptual positions*—*Self*, *Observer*, and *Other*—included? You could see an example of being kind to someone else from your own *self* position, as if looking out of your own eyes. You could watch the same event from the position of an outside *observer* watching both you and that other person, or you could see the same event from the eyes of that *other* person, as if you were them. Find out which positions you already include in your database, and then experiment with adding or subtracting examples from these different positions.

Specific Detail vs. Metaphoric. Are the examples in your database *specific "real-life," examples*, like a detailed photo or videotape, or somewhat *metaphoric, symbolic, or iconic*? Details are all the little bits of an experience that makes it rich and real, all the things you could notice if you were actually in an experience. The visual and kinesthetic texture of clothing, the sound clothing makes when someone shifts the position of their body, the sound of a refrigerator when it clicks on, the feeling in your arm

as you lean on a table, the rain spots on a window, the way the hairs on your arm reflect sunlight, or the shadows between your fingers.

Often there are questions about what I mean by metaphoric or symbolic examples. There are important differences between metaphors, symbols, icons and diagrams, etc. However, they *all* delete specific detail, and present a more simplified and abstract representation, so for our purposes here, they are equivalent. Basically the question is, "Do you have any examples that are *other* than real-life videotape examples, and if so, what are they like?" You could represent strength by an image of a horse, the powerful sound of the snort or whinny of a horse, or by feeling a horse's muscles with your hands, and all of those would be specific and detailed representations. On the other hand, you could represent the same information visually as a simplified outline of a horse, a stick figure, a depiction of a horse from mythology, or any other greatly simplified metaphoric or iconic image. You could do the same kind of simplification in the auditory or kinesthetic systems.

If all your examples are real-life, try making one of them into a more abstract and metaphoric one, and then compare your experience of the two. If you have some metaphoric examples, take one and transform it into a detailed "real-life" example, and then compare that with the metaphor.

Other People. When we observe other people who demonstrate qualities or abilities that we value, we often use representations of them in our database, in order to identify with them and take on their qualities. This is a very valuable and fundamental process in human learning, one that can be seen most clearly in small children, as they play "dress-up," identifying with adults in order to learn how to do all the useful things they need to learn in growing up.

However, this process is also one that bears examination, because we can also learn *unuseful* things in the same way. If we identify with *all* of a person's behaviors, we may find ourselves taking on behaviors from them that we *don't* value. Many adults find themselves acting in some of the same ways that their parents did, even when they disliked those behaviors. So it can be very useful to examine *who* else is in your examples besides yourself, and be sure that you *only* include representations of behaviors that you value.

Major Life Contexts. The contexts that appear in your examples will determine where and when you exhibit a quality. Most of us sort our many life activities into a few major categories, such as home, work, play, school, etc. If all your examples of being kind occur at home, it's likely that you will be kind there, but perhaps not at work, or in other life contexts. So it can be very useful to examine the examples in your database and notice the

major life contexts that are represented in them, and think about whether you might want to add examples of having the quality in other contexts that are omitted or poorly represented.

Other Content Distortions and Biases. If you compare an internal image of yourself with a photograph of yourself at the appropriate age, is it fairly accurate, or is it distorted in some way? Some people see themselves quite differently than how they actually look and behave. In shame, for instance, people often see themselves as shorter, misshapen, or uglier than they really are, emphasizing all their "faults." (2, Ch. 14). In shame's opposite, pride, people often see themselves in an idealized way, looking far better than they actually do, deleting their faults. Some people see themselves looking significantly younger or older than they are, taller or shorter, or more or less capable, etc. If you find any distortions, experiment with changing them to see what you can learn, and decide what serves you best.

Exercise 6-1 Exploring Content (trios, 15 minutes)

Now I want you to examine the examples in your database in the ways I have just discussed, and experiment with changing them. Which *perceptual positions* do you include? Try adding or subtracting examples of one or more of the three positions, and compare this with having a balance of all three positions. Try adding or subtracting *detail*, making some of your examples more or less *metaphoric* or realistic. Notice any *other people* who are included in your database, and whether any of your examples include behaviors that you *don't* want to identify with. Notice what major *life contexts* are fully included, and which are absent or underrepresented, and try adding or subtracting examples of those. Examine the images of yourself for any *other content distortions and biases*, and find out whether any distortion serves you well, or whether a more realistic image might serve you better.

Again I want you to begin with five minutes of silent exploration. Then take another ten minutes to share experiences, and try changing these aspects of the quality you are exploring. Notice how any changes affect your feeling of the stability and durability of your self-concept, and also think about how these elements you are experimenting with will likely influence the responsiveness of your quality to ongoing feedback.

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Perceptual Positions

Let's discuss what you discovered when you checked your examples for perceptual position. I assume that most of you had at least some examples that were from self position, since that is the most basic one. How many of you also included some examples from observer position? About

half of you. For those of you who didn't already include observer position, what was the effect of adding in examples of that position?

Fran: When I added observer position, I saw another totally different aspect of the quality.

And when you saw that different aspect, what effect did it have?

Fran: It had two effects. One was that the quality seemed more solid, because I could also see myself from this additional perspective. The other was that I could better understand some things that had been puzzling to me about other people's responses, and I could see what I need to do to improve the situation.

So adding observer position immediately helped you understand something that wasn't clear before, and it also helped you notice how it could be improved.

Fran: But people don't like it if you take observer position while you're interacting with them, because then you're distant, like an uninvolved scientist.

Well, that's generally true, but there are always exceptions. If you were talking to an uninvolved scientist, that would probably be a perfect match that she'd be completely comfortable with. Remember that our outcome in adding observer position is to make your quality stronger. Even when you don't want to take this position at the time, you can always do it *later* to see what you can learn, as you just did. And you can even do this *during* an interaction, if you explicitly acknowledge it. "I need a minute to reflect on what we have been discussing. Let's take a brief pause, and then begin again." Once you get more adept at taking observer position, you can even do it very quickly during the interaction itself, and no one will notice anything more than a brief pause.

Andy: When I took observer position, I saw much more about what I was doing that affected a situation. Some of the things I was doing were less useful than I'd like, so that gave me valuable information about what I can do differently next time.

Dot: I had one very questionable example. When I took observer position, it unfolded in a new way that made it into a much stronger example.

Often simply examining an experience from a different perspective like this will transform it in a useful way.

How many of you already had examples of other position? About a quarter. And what happened when you added that perspective?

Tess: I think it's amazing that you can ask me all these questions, and for a lot of them I can go, "Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I can do that; I can see that," and then when I stepped into other position, that one totally grabbed me by the gut and blew me away and the light bulb went on! That was a revelation

to me. Now I know what that other person experiences—something I didn't have a clue about before!

Getting a sense of someone else's internal experience of a situation can sometimes provide *very* striking and useful information, and most of us don't do it nearly as often as we could. The ability to take someone else's position is one of the most important abilities that separates us from other animals and makes us human. It is the necessary basis for empathy and compassion, and it is also the basis for our ability to learn a physical skill from someone else, just by watching what they do, and "stepping into their shoes."

Very small children can't yet take other position, and neither can autistic people, though some of them are exceptionally good at observer position. Many adults have never learned to do other position well, and may use it only in a limited way for certain relationships. Psychopaths don't seem to do other position at all. I don't know whether this is inability or choice, but I suspect that at least some of them could be taught how to do it.

Assuming that your quality is one that is pleasurable to receive as well as to give, then taking other position *doubles* your pleasure. And it also provides good feedback about whether the other person is experiencing what you intended. I don't want you to think of where doing this would be *particularly* enjoyable. I happened to be observing one group while they were experimenting with this, and when Joe added other position, he flushed and turned bright pink!

In contrast, all military training is designed to *reduce* the likelihood of taking other position with the enemy, because it is much harder to kill someone if you are aware of their human feelings. In wartime, the enemy is always depicted as less than human, usually as a stupid, evil, bestial caricature, not deserving of human treatment. That makes it much easier for a decent person to kill them.

Jim: When I added other position, I realized that the other person didn't like the quality that I had. Their disliking that quality became an additional confirmation that I had the quality, and the useful information was that I'd better find someone else who does appreciate that quality.

Stan: When I added in other position, I found that it weakened the quality. I got information that some of my examples weren't really examples from the other person's point of view. That gave me useful feedback, but it weakened the quality. I guess that is going to be useful in the long run, but at the moment it doesn't feel very good.

Getting feedback like that is never a lot of fun, but it's sure a lot better than having to crash later. Now that you have noticed this discrepancy, how will you use that information?

Stan: Well, one thing that I could do is to find out what sort of behav-

iors that person would think of as expressing that quality, and decide if I want to do that. Or perhaps I could enrich their understanding, so that they would see what I already do as an expression of that quality.

Great. Those are useful ways to make use of that feedback, and they are a *lot* more useful than just feeling bad about having made a mistake.

Ann: I noticed that all my images were of seeing someone else responding to my quality.

So your images were of the *results* of your having a quality, rather than of you having the quality itself, is that right? Results are great for motivation, and also for feedback about how others are responding to you. Do you also see yourself in those images?

Jean: No, I don't have that—just others' responses.

I also want you to see *yourself* having the quality. It's very useful to include others' responses, but it's essential that you include yourself, so that you have a representation of yourself with the quality.

Ben: When I took observer and other positions, I didn't want to just put them back into my database randomly, I wanted them to be *together* with my own view of the situation. So I put them together into a single hologram that I can rotate quickly, depending on which position I want to experience.

That's a great way to tie them together, and make sure that all positions are quickly and easily available to you.

Tess: When I experimented with removing self position, it was like I pulled the plug on the TV set. Everything went fuzzy and meaningless.

Sure. Self position is the only position in which you can really live your own life. Observer is very useful to get additional information, particularly about how you and someone else interact, and how *your* behavior elicits responses in others. It's also very useful for a short time to escape the turmoil of very difficult situations, in order to problem-solve, or for physical pain. But if you stayed there, you'd only be a disinterested onlooker, and not really experience your own life. Years ago, a "Ziggy" cartoon said, "The key to living without frustration and worry, is to avoid becoming personally involved in your own life." That does work, but the price is a bit high. Existentialist novels, like Camus' *The Stranger* provide vivid examples of this.

Other position is extremely useful to understand and empathize with someone else's experience, and it's absolutely essential for experiencing compassion, and the felt understandings that are based on compassion. But if that were all you had, you'd live someone else's life instead of your own. That is the underlying basis for what is often called "codependence." A codependent lives so much for someone else's needs and values that they take responsibility for the other person's life, rather than their own, and

their own needs tend to be ignored and forgotten. I have three favorite co-dependent jokes that exemplify this:

1. Do you know how you can tell if you're codependent?*
2. What kind of insurance does a codependent get?
3. How many codependents does it take to change a light bulb?

Self position alone is just as limiting, as we can see in very small children and psychopaths. A good relationship is one in which your position and the other person's position are *both* respected; "Does this fit for you *and* for me?" In order to do that, you need to experience both your own position and also the other person's.

Even when both people's needs are respected, they may have very different criteria for meeting them. One person's criteria for honesty might include being polite and tactful, while someone else might like being very blunt and direct. Since most of us usually assume that others appreciate the same thing that we do, this often leads to problems.

Connirae and I both enjoy being physically touched, but in *very* different ways. I like a very light stroking with fingernails that I call "tickle skritch," which she can't stand. She likes a much stronger stroking with the whole hand, which I find very irritating. It took both of us some time to learn to use the kind of stroking that the *other* likes, rather than what we like for ourselves. Taking other position periodically can alert us to these kinds of differences so that we can respect them.

Ideally you use the information from observer and other positions to inform and enrich your self position, which remains primary. In order to make full use of each position, it's important to *align* them, so that each one is clearly distinct, and not mixed together with the other positions. Aligning Perceptual Positions is a very useful process that Connirae developed, and I'd like to give a couple of examples of alignment for those of you who are not familiar with it.

Observer position should be equidistant from self and other in order to provide an unbiased objective viewpoint. If observer is located nearer to self position, it is likely to be biased in favor of self, and if it is closer to other position, it will be biased in favor of other. All positions should be at the same height. If any position is higher, it is likely to become "superior" and judgemental or critical, rather than simply presenting a different point of view with equal value. And if a position is lower, it will tend to be weaker,

* 1. When you're about to die, someone *else's* life flashes before your eyes.

2. "My fault" insurance.

3. No, no, let me do it!

inferior, less important. There are many other elements of this kind of alignment, and the result of full alignment is to greatly clarify confused feelings, and sometimes to reach complete resolution of a difficult situation.

Now back to my perennial questions. How will adding in examples from any missing positions affect the strength of the self-concept, and how will it affect your responsiveness to feedback information?

Jim: Well, they give you additional viewpoints, with more information, so that makes it stronger, and that additional information also makes it more likely that you will notice discrepancies between your self-concept and your behavior. The richer your internal world is, the more you are able to make fine discriminations on the outside.

Yes, if your self-concept is accurate, adding in any missing positions will confirm it and make it stronger. If your self-concept is inaccurate, adding in missing positions will give you valuable additional information about what aspects of your ideas about yourself need some modification.

More than 200 years ago, Robert Burns said it well (in Scots dialect):

Oh wad some pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
And foolish notion.

Sensory Detail vs. Metaphoric

How many of you already had some metaphoric examples? About 20%. Earlier we discussed how specific details give you fine-grained information about a quality of your self-concept. What did you find when you compared a real-life photo or videotape example with one that was more iconic or metaphoric?

Alice: I was having a problem understanding if an example was symbolic or iconic.

Well, they are different words and there are useful differences between their meanings, but right now I don't care about the differences. What's important for self-concept is that they are both less than, and more than, a specific videotape segment of "real-life" experience. One of the simplest examples of moving in the direction of metaphor is to leave out the color in an image. As you leave out more and more elements of an image, it will become more and more metaphorical or symbolic.

Fran: I had several images that I sort of swept together into one. That one picture became a symbol of the quality. When it became a symbol, it wasn't just behaviors anymore, it felt much closer to my identity; it became much more solid and real to me.

OK. So you took a number of examples, "swept them together," and sort of compressed them into an archetype, or a symbol, of the quality. That is a nice way to create an icon as a summary for your database. An icon packs many similar events into a single representation that ignores all the differences between those events. However, it is generally going to be more useful if you preserve as much specific data as possible in your database, so that you have a really rich background of detailed experience.

Fran: I don't see that as a problem, because I know I can get the examples back at the appropriate time.

Great. As long as you know that you have a way to get back to the specific examples when you want to, that's wonderful. However, some people have a wonderful icon or general picture, but *without* the specific examples that tell them how to actually do that quality, and that can be a problem.

For instance, I have a number of general concepts with regard to the physical world that I learned in college physics classes many years ago. However, when I have tried to explain some of them to our boys, I find that I have forgotten most of the details and the math that supports those concepts, so my understanding has some serious gaps.

A physicist and a "new ager" might both say, "It's all energy," but their internal experience of that sentence is quite different. For the new ager, it's a very general and vague metaphor, rather like some of my physics concepts. But to a physicist, that statement has a very detailed database that specifies mathematically exact amounts of different kinds of energy, and the processes and conditions that transform matter into energy, etc.

Al: I put an icon into the database, a living icon that represented persistence, which for me was a lion. I had a big screen with a lot of different detailed experiences moving together into the icon. I could step into the lion, and that really strengthened the whole experience of it so that nothing could tip it over to what I would call a doubt or negative experience.

And the icon helped that. Do you know how it helped it?

Al: It took me out of any separate individual experience, and gave me a rich representation of *all* of them together. So it was like stepping into the essence of *all* those experiences at the same time.

Yes. An icon gives you a sort of summation of the feelings that you get from each of the experiences that the icon represents. It helps you generalize by emphasizing the essential elements of something. A physics diagram that shows how a lever works is a very simple sketch that can be applied to how our forearms work, a car jack, or any other situation we could describe as a lever. *Icons are particularly useful for your summary representation*, which generalizes about all the examples in the database, and packs them all into one powerful representation. A few icons could also

be useful to have in the database, for the same reasons, as long as you also have specific, reality-based, examples.

In Greece, you can see many trucks with "Metaphora" painted on the side, because the original meaning of the word is transportation—to carry something from one place to another. A metaphor carries meanings from one context to another. When you step into an icon, it is usually very motivating, because it gives you a sense of being able to carry that quality into any situation, even one that is unfamiliar.

Now, what if *all* the representations in your database were iconic?

AI: That would not be useful. Then I don't have any reality to it, because I wouldn't have the specific data.

Will metaphor or specific detail be more effective in sensitizing you to feedback about how well you are expressing your quality?

Adam: If I only had a metaphor, I'd only have a general idea to compare with what I did. But if I have lots of specific detail in my images, I'm able to notice much finer distinctions in my actions, and notice smaller discrepancies.

Yes, an icon is a wonderful way to bring everything together, but it is not so good as a guide to what to actually do. What tone of voice or posture would be appropriate? What kind of touch would you use? How far away would you be from the person in a particular situation? That kind of specific information is provided by the detail in the database. On the other hand, a detailed representation provides only *one* way to manifest that quality in a particular situation.

Detailed images and iconic images are both very useful. When you understand the valuable aspects of each, you can make the best use of them, and avoid their limitations. I'd like to offer you some ways to combine an icon with the specific detailed examples, that provide the advantages of both. You could have a large icon of a turtle, representing the overall quality of tenacity or persistence, *and* the whole surface of its shell could be covered with smaller images of specific detailed examples, all dark green, the color of the shell. Or you could make the turtle image transparent, and the specific examples could be inside its outline, or behind the icon. Or the icon could be at the top of a pyramid of specific examples. This kind of icon unifies and summarizes, at the same time that it provides ready access to all the specific examples represented in the same space. You might enjoy playing with that kind of integration.

Other People

What did you discover when you examined your database to see who else is represented besides yourself?

Paul: I was surprised to find how many representations I had of my parents, even though they are not really the best examples of the quality. I also noticed that quite a few of the images dated from my childhood, so I think I need to spend some time updating them. I have sometimes found myself doing some of the things that my parents did, even though I don't like what they did, and I think that cleaning up those images will probably help a lot with that.

Yes, many people find themselves behaving like their parents, even when they don't like it, simply because they are represented in their database. A lot of psychological theories say that there is some hidden reason why people do that, but I think that it is usually simply because their images are inappropriate. If all you saw as you grew up were people acting in a certain way, all your images would reflect this, and you would have no idea that anything else was possible. At least some of the time, behaving in a way you don't like is simply because the images in your database aren't useful in specifying how you want to be. Changing the images in your database can help a lot with that. That is one very direct application of this aspect of identification.

Lori: What really struck me was that many of the people in my examples wore glasses and were overweight. Those are not things that I want to identify with, but somehow I associate glasses and weight with that quality. So I am going to go on a search for models of that quality who don't have glasses or a weight problem.

Many years ago I was learning Gestalt Therapy from Fritz Perls who was a heavy smoker. One day I was imagining leading a group that evening, and was startled to notice that there was a cigarette in my hand! Even though I have always disliked smoking, I found myself identifying with that aspect of Perls' behavior along with his therapy skills.

Images of other people can serve as rich and detailed representations of the qualities that we want to have for ourselves. But we will tend to become *whatever* we represent, whether we value it or not. So it is very useful to review the images of the other people that we have in our database to be sure that they represent *only* what we want to become. A little editing of our internal images or movies may be enough to remove any objectionable aspects of someone that we use as a model. But sometimes it is better to choose a completely different model who has *only* the qualities that we want to become.

Major Life Contexts

What did you find when you examined the contexts represented in your examples?

Sue: All my examples were with family or other personal relationships.

When I added examples from more impersonal contexts, like business or shopping, I felt a mixture of strangeness and relief, and it definitely felt a lot more solid. I have always been very different in impersonal contexts, and people have often commented on the difference, and sometimes asked about it, but I couldn't explain it to them. I think now I'll be a lot more consistent.

Cathy: The examples of my quality were divided into two different strips, depending on context. I do a lot of business consulting, and my examples in that context are big bright, detailed, dissociated movies with sound, that I can step into any time I want to, with all modalities, and all three perceptual positions. But for my relationships with men, where I have had more trouble, I had smaller pictures, and only observer position, so my emotions were detached. I'm doing the same kinds of behaviors, but I'm not engaged. When I tried changing the images of being with men to make them the same as in the business context, that made them completely different. I'm pretty sure that in the future I won't have the trouble with men that I have been having.

That is a great example of how your internal representations of context can guide your behavior. And it is also a great example of how adding in representational systems and perceptual positions can make a big difference.

Ed: I'm a self-proclaimed "workaholic," and examining context provides at least one reason why. Nearly all my examples were in work contexts. There were very few in personal or family contexts, which I tend to avoid. My parents weren't so great, so I developed most of my competencies in work situations. It's as if I only really know who I am in the work context, and I feel incapable and out of my depth in family matters. As I added in more family examples, I felt a lot more resourceful there, and it's becoming clearer to me that a lot of my business skills, like planning and negotiation, are equally applicable to family life. I think it's going to take some time to add in enough examples to reach a good balance.

Well, that may not take as long as you think. Your realization that many of your work skills can be directly translated into family situations will help a lot. You can help this process along by thinking of a work context in which you already have some skill, such as negotiation. Putting yourself into that context fully in imagination will help you access all those skills. Then you can change the people involved, and the context to a family dispute. Then you can do all the kinds of things that you have done in the work situation, finding out how you need to adjust your behaviors to make them more appropriate to a family discussion.

Some people live somewhat limited or specialized lives that are concentrated in only one (or perhaps two) contexts, so all their qualities are limited to those contexts. Then when they venture out of those contexts they

feel quite lost, because they lose a major part of their sense of who they are. I once knew an aging volleyball player who had placed all his emphasis on volleyball, and most of his other activities also revolved around the game. Once I heard him say, "My whole life was volleyball." Now that he was having to give up volleyball, it was very difficult for him, because there was very little else in his life that he identified with. This is often a major factor in what people call a "mid-life crisis" or an "identity crisis."

Many people in the world live in a very limited context, both physically and culturally. When they are forced into another context by drought or war, or economic upheaval, their whole identities are severely stressed. Most of us experience some of this when we are in a foreign country where we don't know the language, because our native language also sets a context for our identity. If someone's identity revolves largely around the use of alcohol or drugs, they will be understandably unwilling to give up the drug until they have built a strong and positive identity that can be comfortable in a context without drugs.

Having a broader base of contexts in our experiential database makes it much easier to adapt to change. Often people have wonderfully resourceful behaviors in one context, but don't realize that these behaviors would be just as effective in another. Of course, some behaviors are better contextualized to business or personal life, but usually you want most of your personal qualities to be consistent across contexts.

Other Content Distortions and Biases

How many of you found distortions in your image of yourself? About a third. And what did you discover about their impact when you tried adjusting them to make them more realistic?

Carl: It took me a while to notice that I usually see myself as smaller, and a bit "wimpier" than I actually look in photographs. I think that has had the effect of making me less assertive in a lot of situations. I tend to hang back a bit rather than step forward, even in situations where I have a lot of knowledge and experience. When I made myself look taller and a bit stronger in my images, I could feel my body straighten up and move forward a little—more "ready for action," and I like that.

Andy: I am slim, dark-haired and 26 in all my self-images—rather than 60, overweight and balding.

Does that serve you?

Andy: You bet it does. I tried getting more real, and it was *dreadful!*

Well, sometimes dreadful can also be *useful*. I'd think it would be a bit of a shock for you every morning when you see yourself in the bathroom mirror. I think that much of a disparity could lead to behavior that some people

might find unusual. I suggest that you take a close look at that in different contexts, and find out if it really does serve you, or if in at least some contexts it might be a good idea to update your images by a few years.

Bill: I found that I see myself looking somewhat younger than I really am, mostly in the face and head—I think my image of the rest of my body is pretty accurate. People often comment that I look at least ten years younger than my actual age, and I wonder if there is a connection there. I tried to find ways that that could be a problem—like attempting to do things that I can't do any more because of my age. When I couldn't find any problems with it, I decided to leave it that way. So I'm thinking that it might be fine for Andy to continue to see himself younger than he really is, as long as it doesn't get him into trouble in some way.

Keep in mind that some distortion is inevitable. In some recent work on recognition, researchers found that people recognized *caricatures* of famous people *faster* than actual photographs of them. That strongly suggests that our memories are distorted in much the same way. When you think about it, it would be much more efficient to recognize a friend's face by noticing only the unique features that set them apart from others, and exaggerating them to make them easier to recall. The point is to be aware of what you're doing, and the consequences, so that you can check to find out if what you're doing serves you well or not.

Ann: I found that in certain contexts I was quite small, and in others, quite big, regardless of age—age had nothing to do with it.

And did you experiment with adjusting that?

Ann: No, I was so interested in finding the different sizes.

Pick one where you're small, and change it to life size.

Ann: I feel much better.

Now pick one where you're big and change it to life size.

Ann: I feel quite nice being big.

You like being big. OK, think about being big in this context. Is there anything about it that is not so nice? One aspect of an experience can be nice, while some other aspect of it might not be quite as nice.

Ann: Maybe if I take other position. Maybe then it's not so good.

I'd like you all to think of some situation in which you felt "bigger than life." I'm sure that there was a good aspect of it—feeling powerful—but was there also something not so good about it?

Dan: I was in a bar once, and I thought I could take on the whole place!

Alice: In a training situation, it's good to be confident, but if you're *overconfident*, that could be intimidating to others, and blind you to any mistakes, or ways that you could improve what you do.

If you're "bigger than life," that means that there is something not quite

real about it, so usually it feels a bit wobbly or unstable. At one level you may think that you can take on the whole bar, but at some level, part of you probably realizes, "No, I don't think this is going to work." So this is most likely a situation in which you actually feel ambiguous or in conflict between feeling powerful and feeling weak, something we'll explore in more detail later.

Barb: I have always had a problem with shame, and I found that my internal images were very uncomplimentary, exaggerating all my faults. So I decided to do the reverse, and exaggerate all my better points. Boy, did that feel better! I could feel my body straighten up, my world opened up, and I felt ready for anything. I realize that this is also a distortion, but I think I want to experience this one for a while as a kind of antidote to what I used to do, before settling into just seeing myself the way I am.

I think that's a fine choice, as long as it's temporary. Pride may feel a lot better to you, especially after feeling shame. But those are both unbalanced. In both pride and shame you compare yourself with other people, and that is one of the things that I warned you about earlier. That kind of comparison always puts you at risk of flipping from one side of it to the other, since no matter what your quality is, you can always find someone who is better or worse than you are. Comparisons always put you at the mercy of who you are around, and what you choose to compare.

Pride is one factor in creating a false self that is more positive than you really are, and a shadow self that includes less valued qualities. Shame creates a false self that is more negative than you really are, and a shadow self that has more valued qualities. Simply knowing who you are keeps you safe from both pride and shame.

One way to slip out of the comparison trap is to refocus your attention on the immediate *satisfaction* that you get from an experience, and stop there—instead of going on to compare yourself with someone else, or some social ideal that you have accepted. Your experience of satisfaction with any thing or event is a personal response that is not dependent on a comparison with someone else, so it's a lot more stable.

Andy: Earlier you made a distinction between being and doing, between someone who says, "I *am* a truck driver" and someone who says, "I *drive* a truck. It seems to me that some people identify just as strongly with their doing as with their being.

Yes, some people certainly do. However, even then, there is still a difference. For most people it is much easier to think of *doing* something different, learning some new behavior, than it is to think of *being* different. This is another way of stating the self/behavior distinction that I talked about earlier. *Being* different means changing a large quantity of behavior all at once, while *doing* different means changing only one or a few behaviors, leaving the rest of your identity intact.

What we have been doing so far is studying how we make generalizations about ourselves. By examining a group of experiences, we notice something that they have in common, by a process logicians call *induction*. This is a universal human process that is nicely exemplified by a joke: "What do the following three things have in common—birthdays, anniversaries, and toilets?"*

One of the reasons why very few people think of the answer to this joke is that it is an unusual way to generalize, one that hinges on a double meaning of the word "miss." But another reason is that we all tend to immediately generalize about the obvious similarity of the first two items, which are both annual celebrations. Having made this inductive generalization, it becomes much harder to let go of it, and think of another generalization that can also include the third item.

What we have been calling a summary representation is a generalization about a quality, while the database contains examples of the generalization. The summary contains *all* the criteria that someone has for including an example in the database. In effect, the summary says, "Kindness is this *and* this, *and* this, *and* this, etc...."

The examples in the database all have the criteria contained in the summary, but expressed in different ways, different contexts, etc. Knowing the criteria in the summary, you can know that each example will satisfy all these criteria, a process called *deduction*. Each example will also usually contain *more* than these basic criteria, elements that support the criteria, even though they aren't required. In effect, the database says, "Kindness is this, *or* this, *or* this, *or* this, etc...." A large number of examples provides a rich basis for generating new behaviors that express the quality, by recombining elements in different examples.

Summary

The content areas that we have been examining—*perceptual positions, sensory detail vs. iconic, other people, context, other distortions and biases*—are some of the main areas to examine for biases in the way that we think about ourselves. Even if we never changed, we could never fully know ourselves, so our concepts of ourselves will *always* be distorted and limited in certain ways.

Despite these limitations, we can learn how to examine qualities of our self-concept, discover many of our biases, and then add, subtract, or change examples in our database to reduce the biases that we find, and be sure that any remaining biases serve us well. All these changes will result in

*Men tend to miss them.

reducing our unreal "false self and reducing or incorporating aspects of our unacknowledged "shadow self." Although many think of the shadow self as containing qualities that are troublesome or problematic, it often includes many very valuable and beautiful qualities as well.

In the preceding exercises you have learned quite a number of different ways to make your self-concept stronger, more accurate, and more responsive to feedback. Although we have only begun to explore the structure of self-concept, what you have already learned is a very powerful set of interventions that can be used to "tune up" someone's positive quality so that it is even stronger and more open to feedback. I have yet to find anyone who does all these processes in the best way that they could, and many of the people who don't go to seminars or read books have an even greater need for many of them.

Exercise 6-2 Putting it into Practice

Next I want you to practice what you have learned so far with one or two people. Start a conversation with a family member, or a waitress, or call up a friend. Then at some point I want you to ask them about a quality that is important to them, and ask the kind of questions that we have been asking, in order to find out how they know this quality is true of them. Here I have asked you to do this without content, so as not to distract you while you were learning about structure, but now you will need to use content.

You can just tell them, "I'm learning about how people think of themselves, and what is important to them, and I wonder if you'd be willing to help me for a few minutes." Rather than a long explanation about what a quality is, it will usually be easier to give a few examples. "A lot of my friends think of themselves as honest, or kind, or intelligent, or sociable, and other qualities like that. Can you tell me something about yourself that is true of you, and that you like?"

When they answer you, you can ask about their summary representation. "I'm curious how you know that. Do you have a mental picture of _____, or a feeling or internal voice that lets you know that you're _____?"

Then you can go on to ask about their database. "It's great that you have that quick way of knowing that's true of you. I'll bet you also have lots of other examples of being _____. One of my friends sees lots of pictures of kindness, sort of like a big collage in his mind, while I have sort of a rolodex file, where pictures come up one after the other. How do you do it, and how many examples do you have?"

As you gradually find out how they have this quality, I want you to ask the kinds of questions we have been asking, and offer them alternatives that you think might be useful. "What would it be like if you had

more examples? Can you step into one of those images and feel what it would be like to be there in that experience again? Do you have examples of being _____ in the future? Do you know what it feels like to be someone else receiving your _____? Do you have examples of _____ at work as well as at home?" etc.

In order to remind you of all the elements we have explored, I have a checklist outlining them, in the same order in which we have explored them.

Up to this point we have been examining examples in your database that support a quality of your self-concept. Next we will examine one of the most important elements of the self-concept, *counterexamples*, examples that are "counter to," or that contradict the generalization. If you think of yourself as kind, how do you deal with those times when you were abrupt, abrasive, or insensitive? The way that you represent counterexamples in your database will have a very profound impact on how well your self-concept functions: how durable it is, and how well you respond to experiences that provide useful feedback information.

Outline of Checklists

Checklist 4. Process Elements of Self-concept

- Number of Examples**
- Location**
- Simultaneous and/or Sequential**
- Modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic)**
- Association**
- Submodalities**

Checklist 5. Aspects of Time

- Past, Present, Future**
- Balanced Distribution in Time**
- Chunk Size of Time**
- Spreading**

Checklist 6. Aspects of Content

- Perceptual Positions**
- Specific Detail vs. Metaphoric**
- Other People**
- Major Life Contexts**
- Other Content Distortions and Biases**

7

Utilizing Mistakes

Now we turn to one of the most important elements of your self-concept, times when you made a mistake and didn't exhibit a valued quality, which I call a *counterexample*. A counterexample is an experience that is *counter* to a generalization X—a time when you were *not* X. There will always be counterexamples to every generalization (yes, even that one!). No matter how persistent you are, there will be times when you give up quickly. No matter how honest you are, there will be times when you don't tell the whole truth, or perhaps even lie. *How* you represent counterexamples to a quality will have a *major* impact on how you think of yourself, and your resulting behavior and responses.

I want you to discover how you represent counterexamples, using the same quality that you used previously—something you *know* about yourself, *and* that you *like*. This time I want you to explore individually, and then we will discuss different examples one at a time as a group, using the following checklist to guide your exploration.

Checklist 7 Aspects of Counterexamples

Are you *aware* of counterexample representations? (If not, search for them.)

What form do they take? *Where* and *how* are they represented?

Are your counterexamples an *integral part* of your database of examples, or are they represented *separately* in a different location or in a different modality, or both?

Are your counterexamples *obvious*, or more or less *hidden* and easy to overlook?

What *modalities* and *submodalities* are used to distinguish counterexamples from examples?

Exercise 7-1 Discovering the Structure of Counterexamples

I want you to turn inward for about 5 minutes and silently notice how you represent counterexamples. *Don't change anything yet*, because there can be some unpleasantness if you try changing counterexamples without knowing what you're doing. Just find out what's already there. When you're done exploring, we'll experiment with changing them in a very cautious and step-wise way. But for now, I want you *only* to find out what is there.

* * * * *

Before we start experimenting, I want to see by a show of hands, how many of you already had counterexamples as an integral part of your database? About a third of you.

So the rest of you had a database without counterexamples included in it. How many of you found that your counterexamples were in the same modality, but in a different location? About a third of you again.

I assume that the rest of you found that your counterexamples were not only in a different location, but also in a different modality—for instance, your examples were primarily visual images, but your counterexamples were auditory voices or kinesthetic feelings.

Is there anyone who had your counterexamples in a different modality, but in the same location? No one. Although this is theoretically possible, I haven't yet found an example of it.

Integrated Counterexamples

I want to begin with those of you who had your counterexamples as an integral part of your database, and I'd like some examples of how they were represented, and how they were different from your examples.

Terry: I have a large collage made up of little pictures, and a few of them are darker, and have little wisps of smoke rising from them. Those are the times when I "crashed and burned."

Frank: My examples are on little cards in a small file box. I have a few counterexamples, also on cards, scattered here and there, and they have a darker border on them. Even when I can only see the edges, I still know they are there.

Jean: My counterexamples are like little tags stuck onto the edges of my big examples.

Those are some nice examples. They are so clear and specific that it would be very easy to teach someone else *exactly* how to do what you do. Now I want you to experiment with temporarily removing the counterexamples from your database to experience what that is like. Just take them out and set them aside somewhere safe where you can easily retrieve them and put them back in later. Contrast your experience of your database with and without them....

Jean: When I take off those little tags, it feels more pure, and richer. I like it better.

I agree that it's purer without the counterexamples, but I'm more interested in how strong it feels to you.

Jean: Well, I guess it doesn't feel quite as strong when it's pure.

Stuart: When I take the counterexamples out, it feels less solid, less real, and I feel like, "Something's wrong." That's the opposite of what I expected. When I put them back in, my whole body settled a bit, and I felt more grounded and relaxed.

Alice: My counterexamples were on the side, kind of pastel and blurry, attached to the group of examples with strings. When I tried cutting the strings so that they could go away, it felt really unbalanced, and I thought, "Then I could really crash bad."

Yes. Having a few counterexamples in your database actually strengthens it. This surprised me too, when I first began exploring this. Then I realized that it's a little like putting a small amount of carbon or tungsten into iron to make steel, which is much stronger than pure iron. A database with some counterexamples is *less pure*, but it's *more real*, and that makes it stronger. Did any of you have a different experience?

Al: I had a lot of counterexamples, and when I took them all out I felt more relieved, but at the same time I felt a little wobbly and insecure about the quality. Then I experimented with putting some of them back in, and that felt the best of all. I left the others in a kind of storage box.

Great. This illustrates a key criterion for including counterexamples—to have a relatively small number of them. Too many counterexamples, or counterexamples that are too large, too close, too loud, or too prominent in any other way will weaken the generalization. That creates ambivalence, something that we will work with later.

Wendy: I'm not sure if what I have are counterexamples or not. They are times when I expressed the quality, but I didn't get the response that I wanted.

OK, so for example these were times when you expressed something like kindness, but the other person didn't perceive it as kindness. Can you

all think of a time when you tried to do a favor for someone, but they were not pleased at all? I would call them counterexamples, because you didn't get the outcome you wanted. They certainly are indications of where you need to "tune up" your quality to make it more effective. Perhaps you need more choices in how to express kindness with certain people. Finding out what someone's criteria are for your quality would be helpful in this. Taking other position is a good way to get some of that information; simply asking them would be another.

Counterexamples in a Different Location (Same Modality)

Now I want to work with those of you who had your counterexamples in the same modality, but in a different location. I'd like some examples of what you found.

Connie: My examples are spread out in front of me in a strip, a little above eye-level, at about arm's length. My counterexamples are in a smaller strip, just below my examples. They are smaller, dimmer, and bordered, and they are yellow-brown, like old photographs.

Andy: I have a big collage in front of me, maybe 100 pictures, in color, and easy to step into and get the feelings and sound. My counterexamples are flat, black and white pictures behind my head.

Beth: My examples are in color on my left, and my counterexamples are on the right, at about the same distance, but smaller and darker, and flat, and without sound.

Notice that most *counterexamples are deemphasized* somehow, by being smaller, dimmer, flat, bordered, or yellow-brown, in contrast to the more life-like and colorful positive images of the database. That is *very* important. When they are less prominent, counterexamples provide useful information without overwhelming your database. When they are less prominent, you can comfortably include more of them. But if you deemphasize them too much, you may lose the valuable information in them.

I want those of you who have their counterexamples in the same modality, and in a different location to experiment *very cautiously*, and wait to do anything until I have finished giving you directions. I want you to take only *one* counterexample, and move it very slowly and cautiously toward your database. As it moves to become part of the database, make sure that it is darker, or flatter, or smaller, or framed, etc., so that it is *less* prominent than your positive examples.

As you are moving this counterexample slowly toward your database, if it becomes more prominent than your positive examples, immediately move it back to its original location. Then either experiment with ways to make it less prominent, or wait for my assistance.

After moving one counterexample into your database, pause to notice how it feels different to you with it included. Then experiment with moving several more counterexamples, one at a time, until you have several integrated into your database. The appropriate number will vary, depending on how many examples you have in your database, and how prominent they are, but usually about 5-10% is a good proportion. Then pause to notice how this feels to you. If you decide that you moved too many counterexamples into your database, simply remove a few and put them back where they were. Are there any questions? OK, go ahead....

* * * * *

First I want to hear from those of you who were successful in moving some counterexamples into your database.

Ann: My examples are kind of in chronological order, like a deck of cards slightly spread out, so you can see them overlapping. When I added in counterexamples, they have dark borders, in contrast to the bright examples, so I can see they're there, even when I can't see the the image. When the counterexamples were all together, I didn't like it. But when they became part of the database, I liked it a lot better, because it became more of a percentage thing.

Andy: When I moved counterexamples in, they formed a spiral that embraced my montage of examples, and shrank it down a bit, limiting it.

Chris: When I moved them in, I found that although all my examples were self position, all my counterexamples were observer position. When I experimented with changing them to self position, I felt much more resourceful and able to handle the situation.

Sally: My examples are life-size movies in 3-D and color, and associated. My counterexamples were closer and smaller, flat still pictures. At first I felt bad when I looked at them, they were scary; I didn't want to deal with them. But when I put them into the database, they became 3-D with sound, but still dissociated and small, and I felt better about them.

Do you have any idea why you felt better about them when they changed to 3-D movies with sound?

Sally: Well, it's easier to look at them when I can see all the positive examples around them; I can also see them better now, and what's in them. I look at it more as information.

When you see a counterexample in the context of the examples, it is much more comfortable, because then you are responding to *both* the examples and the counterexamples, and that puts it "in perspective." (see Appendix)

In addition, whenever you separate from an unpleasant or difficult

experience, it usually becomes *more* scary because you lose information. It is harder to know what the threat is, and it's easy to start thinking that it is much worse than it really is. Then when you get more information, it becomes less of a threat.

Years ago, when I taught psychology in junior college, most students had pretty extreme ideas about mental illness. Helped by movies and novels, they had wild images of homicidal maniacs and screaming chaos. Since I wanted them to have a more realistic view of mental illness, I would take them on a field trip to the nearest mental hospital to give them some direct personal experience.

As part of preparing them for this, I would tell them, "While some of the people there are somewhat strange, one of the first things you're going to notice is that most of them act just like your friends, and you're going to be wondering where all the 'nuts' are." I also insisted that they spread out and talk and interact with the patients there, so they wouldn't just be a clump of gawking sightseers. They returned from that trip a *lot* more comfortable with mental illness than they had been.

Bill: When I moved a counterexample over, it was too big. So I shrank it down and made it a little dimmer, and then it felt OK. Then I put a few more in, sort of scattered here and there. When I was done, I noticed that my shoulders were more relaxed, and I felt relief.

That sounds like what Stuart reported earlier, and that is what a lot of people experience. Do you have any idea why you felt relief? Why does adding in counterexamples result in relief and relaxation?

Bill: Now I don't have to be perfect. Before, I had only positive examples, so I couldn't make a mistake. Now it's OK; I know that mistakes are possible, so it takes the pressure off.

Yes, if you have only perfection in your database, you will strive to meet that impossible standard, and there is no room for error. That certainly ought to tense you up! This is what some people have called an "ideal self," something that often results from social or religious teachings, or other idealistic ideas about how you *should* be.

It's one thing to have a goal to move toward, as long as you don't ever expect to reach perfection. You can be satisfied with what you do, and continually strive to be better and better as long as that's satisfying to you. But perfectionism is a curse, because you *always* fall short of that unrealistic standard. Henny Youngman said it well: "Perfectionism is man's ultimate illusion. It simply doesn't exist in the universe.... If you are a perfectionist, you are guaranteed to be a loser in whatever you do."

Including counterexamples saves you from the heavy burden of perfectionism, trying to achieve an ideal standard for yourself. That also saves

you from trying to impose that impossible standard on others. If you have no counterexamples in your database, then when someone else messes up, it's easy to compare yourself to them and feel superior and prideful. Perfectionists are often driven to achieve a lot, but at great personal cost. It's a full-time job with very low pay.

If you know someone who is a perfectionist, teaching them to integrate counterexamples is a *very* useful thing that you can do. After I had worked with one woman, a friend asked her what she had done to change her appearance, and asked if she had changed her make-up, because she had a much softer and more attractive look. She told her friend that she had "changed her make-up from the inside out."

Dan: When I think of my clients who are perfectionists, most of them can trace this back to dysfunctional families, and trying to please parents who had perfectionist demands.

Sure. There are different ways of working. You can work with history, or you can work with structure. History undoubtedly creates structure, and if you change the history, that can result in changing the structure.

What I'm teaching here is *how to work directly with structure*, and then you often don't have to work with history. When I ask you to integrate counterexamples with examples, that is a *purely* structural change, because I don't ask you to change the historical events represented in the counterexamples. The change in your response is completely a result of changing the structure—*where* and *how* you represent your images. An even clearer example of working exclusively with structure is the NLP phobia process (2, Ch. 7) in which you don't need *any* information about what the person is afraid of, or the historical origins. You simply change the person's memories from associated images to dissociated ones.

When you work with structure, history sometimes becomes relevant, and then you have to deal with it. However, then you can be sure that the history is directly related to what you're trying to accomplish.

My father was a perfectionist, and it's quite clear how he got that way. His father was a third-generation Baptist missionary in Burma, who insisted that he listen to each Sunday morning sermon, and then recite it word for word from memory—and the sermon was delivered in the native Karen dialect, not English! Whenever he made a mistake, he was beaten with a leather strap. When my sister once got straight A pluses on her report card, my father looked at it and said, seriously, "See if you can do better next time." So history is clearly important, and of course the past is represented in most of the images in your database.

Most of you commented on the change in your response to the counterexamples when you integrated them. Now I want to ask you the same

question that I asked the first group with integrated counterexamples. What effect did integrating counterexamples have on your sense of how strong the quality is? Did you have a sense of your quality being stronger or weaker after you included a few counterexamples?

Beth: Well, it felt more *real* to me. That's the way the world is. Having no counterexamples seemed kind of "Pollyanna" by comparison—artificial and unreal, a little "floaty." It was a little like skiing on ice, where a tiny slip can make you fall, compared with powder, which supports you more.

Although counterexamples weaken the *purity* or *universality* of the quality, they increase its *credibility*, so it becomes more *real* to us, and more solid.

Sandy: When I moved the counterexamples in, I particularly noticed that the contrast of the counterexamples made the examples more intense and robust, stronger because of the comparison.

Again, well said. Did any of you have any trouble integrating your counterexamples?

Lee: I have a sequential database, with each image staying a while before changing to the next one. When I first moved a counterexample in, I was uncomfortable, because that's all I saw for a while. When I speeded up the sequence, I saw it for a shorter time before it changed to an example again, so then it was OK.

That's a nice example of making your own adjustments to make it work for you.

Carol: I couldn't integrate mine. The counterexample got big and scary, and would have covered up my database. I couldn't find a way to shrink it down.

That happens fairly often. You said that what you did was scary. If you had proceeded and it had covered up your database, what do you think would have happened?

Carol: It would have been terrible! My sense of that important quality would have vanished.

Yes, it's very unpleasant to have even one element of your sense of yourself disappear, and this is my main reason for asking you to be very cautious. Carol, try this. Actually reach out to where your counterexamples are, and pick up one and hold it firmly in your hand. If you want it smaller, squeeze it in your hand, as if it were a lump of clay, until it's small enough, and then cautiously move it over and put it with your examples....

Carol: That sounds too ridiculously simple to work, but it did.

Rene: When I moved my counterexamples in, at first I didn't like having them there, because I felt bad about not showing the quality in those situations. Then I realized that the fact that I feel bad about them is an indi-

cation of how important that quality is to me. When I think about them that way, including counterexamples actually supports my commitment to the quality.

Yes, that is another way that counterexamples can support a generalization. At one level you feel *bad*, because your behavior didn't meet your standards. But when you think about feeling bad in the larger context, you can feel *good* about that, because the *meaning* of feeling bad is that you are committed to your standard. If you didn't care about it, you wouldn't feel bad. So the more you feel bad about a mistake, the more you can feel good about it!

That's one of the tricks we can play with our minds when we shift levels of thinking, and in this case, it's very useful. Feeling good about feeling good also usually works pretty well; it doubles your pleasure. Of course people can also use the same process to feel bad about feeling bad, or even feel bad about feeling good. Those are usually not nearly as useful.

Ann: My examples are on the right side. The counterexamples were like a couple of gray blobs on the left. When I moved them over, they covered up the examples. I didn't like that at all.

Were they amorphous, like a cloud?

Ann: We thought so, but then I tried to blow it away, and it got sticky.

So you had two blobs side by side, covering up your examples. That is not how I want you to integrate them.

Ann: I didn't want to; it just happened.

When elements of your internal experience "just happen" like this, that's a pretty good indication that we are in territory that is not under conscious control. Did you manage to separate them again, and put the blobs back where they were?

Ann: Yes, finally, after a lot of work. But I have the sense that they are still lurking there.

If they are gray blobs, you probably can't see much of the content—do you have any information about the situations they represent?

Ann: No, I don't.

Not having any information will make them scarier and more of a threat, and more difficult to integrate. Since part of the problem is that the blobs are so big that they cover up your examples, it might work to make them smaller, or take a small part of one of the blobs and try integrating that. However, I have found that *integrating a metaphoric counterexample into a detailed database usually doesn't work very well*, and I like to know at least a little about what's in the counterexamples.

One possibility would be to transform the blobs into more detailed images to find out what the blobs represent. You could do this hypnotically:

"Allow the blobs to slowly coalesce into images that reveal the specific incidents that they represent." Or you could communicate directly with the blobs, and ask them to please provide detailed images for you. Then when you have images of what they represent, it should be much easier to integrate them into your database one at a time.

Amy: When I tried to move a counterexample in, my examples said, "You're not one of us, you don't belong here." And then I realized that they weren't really counterexamples, they were "not enough" examples. They were actually times when I was exhibiting that quality, but not as much as I want to. If I included them, I would lower my standards for the quality.

OK, so you want to maintain high standards, and the objection is that including counterexamples would result in lowering your standards. So my task is to show you how including counterexamples could actually *support* your high standards. I assume that the fact that you have high standards for this quality means that it is very important to you. As a way of maintaining your high standards, I think it could be very useful to include a few examples of "not enough" to alert you to how you might be most likely to fall short of your standards in the future. That way you could be on your guard in those kinds of situations, and be prepared to make the extra effort needed to maintain your standards. Of course you would want to make those images different in some way to clearly indicate that these have "not enough" of that quality, perhaps by making them dimmer, smaller, specially color-coded, or using some other convenient distinction. With these understandings clearly in mind, try moving one of those "not enough" examples into your database....

Amy: Hmmm. That's interesting. It's all right now; it moved in easily; it's got a sort of gray cast to it, and the quality does feel stronger now.

What I did with Amy is an example of how to reframe objections. The positive function was to maintain high standards. I just offered Amy a new frame of understanding in which including counterexamples actually *supports* maintaining high standards, so that satisfied the objection.

Fred: My examples are specific visual images, but my counterexamples are iconic, and when I tried to move them in, they really didn't fit. So I got specific examples of what the icon represents, but when I tried putting a few of them in, I got a headache.

I would take that as a signal that some part of you may have a concern about doing this, so the first thing to do is move them back out again, and find out what the part's objection is. It has some outcome that it believes would be threatened by integrating counterexamples, at least in their present form, so you have to find a way to satisfy that part's outcome before continuing.

Bob: My counterexamples were a part of my database of file cards, but they were all together at the back, where it was easy to ignore them. As you were discussing these other examples in which the counterexamples were completely separated from the database, I thought it might be better to have mine scattered throughout my database. When I did that, I put a special border on them, so I can tell they are there even when I can only see their edges. Now that they are more integrated, I'm more aware of them, and I think that will make me more careful. And I think that will also make me notice better when I don't exhibit that quality.

Great. That is the other main question I have been asking you to consider. Will having counterexamples in your database make you more or less responsive to corrective feedback?

Terry: Corrective feedback essentially *consists* of counterexamples, times when you didn't act in the way that you think of yourself. So when you have counterexamples in your database, that would sensitize you to when they occur in the real world. Someone who had no counterexamples would tend to be resistant to feedback, because recognizing them would have a tendency to destroy their generalization. Since that is so unpleasant, the person would try to avoid it at any cost.

Yes, that is one of the big dangers in having a pure database that only includes positive examples. If you have an absolute generalization, with all your counterexamples stored elsewhere, it only takes *one* counterexample to shatter it, and that isn't any fun, so of course people avoid it. Several of you experienced the unpleasantness of losing your positive generalization when a counterexample overwhelmed your positive examples.

But there is another important aspect to that experience of having a generalization shatter. Not only does the positive generalization vanish, but it is often *replaced* by the negative one. Seeing *only* the counterexample means that you now have to think of yourself as someone who behaves in *opposition* to your values. Faced with the alternatives of crashing in this way, or denial, it makes sense to choose denial. Unfortunately, that doesn't avoid the crash, it just postpones it.

Whenever someone avoids knowledge of counterexamples, that is an area of their behavior that they don't acknowledge, so this kind of denial is one of the major factors that contributes to the unknown "shadow" self. Integrating counterexamples is one way to integrate this shadow self.

Another way of describing the situation in which all your counterexamples are represented separately in a different location from your examples, is that each group of experiences is a digital "all or none" "either/or" generalization, so you have to choose between them. When the two are separated, it is much more likely that you will pay attention to one *or* the other

sequentially. The greater the separation, the greater is the danger that someone will flip from one to the other. Since both representations are one-sided and unrealistic, neither one is a full and balanced resource, so it's an inherently unstable situation. The extreme of this is seen in manic-depression. In the manic phase, *everything* is wonderful, and in the depression phase, *everything* is terrible.

Our brain's main task is to integrate and organize our behavior, so that we do the appropriate things at the appropriate time. Any time you have a separation, it's a basis for conflict, and an invitation to trouble. In the 60's movie "Dr. Strangelove," the ex-Nazi scientist keeps giving the Hitler salute with one hand, and then he pulls it down with the other hand. It usually doesn't work so well if you have different parts of you trying to do different things at the same time, unless you can actually do those two things simultaneously without their interfering with each other.

Integrating a few counterexamples transforms a pure, *digital* database into an *analog* one—more or less of something, or as Ann expressed it earlier, it becomes "more of a percentage thing." Since the counterexamples are embedded in a number of examples, seeing both provides a balanced perspective. Then it is much easier to see them simply as information, rather than as a threat. "Oh, these are times when I messed up; let's see what can I do about it next time." Earlier Sally said that when she integrated counterexamples, she became more comfortable and she could see them "more as information."

Counterexamples in your database alert you to the kinds of mistakes that you have made in the past, and could make again in the future. They provide warnings about contexts where you might need to make an extra effort to maintain that quality, or that you need to avoid because you can't yet manifest that quality there. Then when you mess up again, it's not threatening to recognize it. That is a much more stable situation, because you are open to considering feedback as it happens. Feedback about mistakes indicates where you could usefully take the time to do some learning or change work in order to be able to successfully uphold this quality in the future, and soon we will take up that process in considerable detail.

Dan: My first counterexample was bigger and closer than my examples, so I was worried that it might eclipse my examples. I tried to make it smaller, but that didn't work, so I made it much bigger, bigger than life, and then it completely lost focus and I could see right through it.

That's what we call a threshold effect, as in the compulsion blowout pattern (9, Ch. 5). At a certain point, increasing the size made something else change—in your case, focus and transparency. When you were done, could you still see the counterexample?

Dan: Not very well—but I still knew it was there.

I think it might be a good idea to continue to experiment with making it an integral part of your database, so that you can have the specific information in the counterexample available to you.

Alana: I have quite a lot of counterexamples, and I don't think I want them all in there. What do I do with the others? Just leave them out?

Yes, for now I think that's a good choice. If you have a lot of them, that sounds more like an ambiguous quality, with roughly equal numbers of examples and counterexamples, rather than a solid quality with only a few counterexamples. Soon I'll show you how to do something even more useful with counterexamples, but for now, just leave them where they are. If you were to put in too many counterexamples, they could overwhelm the examples, and the whole meaning could flip to its opposite, which wouldn't be useful here. However, a process that is a problem in one context is often a great resource in another one. I'd like you to think about when that same process could be very useful...

What if you had a quality that you *didn't* like, like "I'm always a klutz," or "I'm a lousy planner," and you wanted the opposite? If you add enough counterexamples into that kind of database, it will eventually flip to its positive opposite. I'll teach you how to do that, but first I want you to understand more about how counterexamples work.

Counterexamples in a Different Modality and a Different Location

Now let's take an example of someone who had their counterexamples in a different *modality* as well as a different *location*. I have deliberately spent a lot of time discussing the usefulness of including counterexamples in the database to provide you with a vicarious experience of the many possibilities and their consequences.

Charles: I have a large visual collage of examples in front of me, and a voice in the back of my head that says, "No, you're not," and then tells me about times when I wasn't.

Great. We could easily describe this situation as a polarity, one that is separated by modality as well as location. We could integrate these two opposites using a number of older and cruder NLP methods, such as integrating them using the "Visual Squash." (2, Ch. 13) However, I want to show you how to do this much more gently and ecologically. Charles, I want you to take just one of your auditory counterexamples, and first shift it into a visual image. Listen to what the voice is saying and make a picture of the meaning of the words, just as you do when you make meaning out of the

words that you hear someone say to you, or when you read words in a book. Let me know when you have that image....

Charles: OK, I have an image now. I had to listen to the voice for a while, and ask it some questions before I could really know what it was talking about.

Great. Now take that image and cautiously move it toward the visual database in front of you, in the same way I previously asked the others to, making sure that the image is relatively small in relation to the other images in your database....

Charles: As it became part of the database, it didn't seem as bad and threatening as it did when it was separate. When the voice was separate, I felt a sort of tug-o-war inside me. That lessened when I brought the picture forward and put it with the others. I felt a relief, and some relaxation. It seems much more "matter-of-fact" now—still important, but not as upsetting. Before, I just thought of one *or* the other, but now I can see them both.

Yes, exactly. Now do the same with several other counterexamples that the voice gives you, one at a time....

Charles: That's interesting. I took the second one, which was a scary one that said, "You'll never amount to anything." When I made it into a picture, I saw a sheepish smile on his face, and that told me that he doesn't actually think that what he said is true. He knows that what he's saying is garbage, and that actually I'm right. So now it's an *example* instead of a counterexample. What a relief!

Wonderful. When you shift a counterexample from one modality to another, you often get additional information that enriches it, and sometimes that changes its meaning. Go ahead and move that picture into your database, and then keep doing the same thing with any other voices until they are all integrated visual images....

Charles: I feel very different now that they're all together. I don't feel that tension any more; I just feel calm and thoughtful. Those voices always made me doubt myself. Now that they are pictures, it's a bit weird—but very nice—to see them actually reinforcing and supporting that quality in myself.

Trying to integrate a voice and an image is like trying to add decimals and fractions. Before you can add them together, you have to transform the decimal into a fraction, or the fraction into a decimal. So the first step is to shift the counterexample into the same modality as the examples in your database, and then change the location.

Fran: I'm in much the same situation as Charles. But when my voice tells me about the counterexample, I just have a feeling of letting go, sort of like, "Oh, what the hell."

Can you say what you're letting go of?

Fran: Determination.

I assume that determination is the name of your quality, and there is a voice that says something about a time when you weren't determined, and the "Oh, what the hell" is letting go of the generalization. This is the same situation as when a counterexample image gets so large that it overwhelms a visual database. It is also an example of the instability of having a database without any counterexamples, since a single counterexample can clobber it.

I spoke before about the inherent instability of having examples and counterexamples in separate locations, because you are likely to notice one *or* the other, and flip from one extreme to the other. When the two are separated by modality as well as location, this instability is even greater, and there is even more danger of wild mood swings when someone flips from one to another.

I don't want you to let go of that generalization, Fran, because I think determination is a very useful quality. Everyone has some kind of "work station" somewhere in their mind, where they plan, experiment with alternatives, adjust images, and so on. I want you to take that voice to your work station, and listen to it carefully, and notice the words it says, the tonality, the person who is saying it, the context, and any other information that comes up. Then use all that information to create an image of that counterexample situation, an image that is much like the images of the examples in your database.... (OK.) Now, with the same cautions I have been offering—keeping that image fairly small—move that image slowly over to become part of your database....

Fran: Now it heightens the example. The contrast makes the examples stronger.

Great. Now you can do the same thing with other voices.

Ada: My examples are images, filling my whole visual field in a panorama. My counterexample is completely kinesthetic, a whole body feeling of tiredness and anger.

OK. Notice that your feeling is an *evaluative* kinesthetic, rather than a *perceptual* kinesthetic. The feeling is not actually a counterexample; it's your feeling in *response* to a counterexample, just as others had unpleasant feelings in response to counterexample images or voices. So the first thing is to use that evaluative feeling to back up in time to the experience that resulted in the feeling. Pay attention to the feeling, and go back to the event or events that the feeling is in response to.... Take all the time you need, and let me know when you have an image of the event that you are tired and angry about....

Ada: OK, I have an image now—or several, actually.

Great. Now take one of those images and cautiously place it somewhere in that panorama of images, so that it becomes part of your database. What is that like?

Ada: At first it didn't seem to fit—there wasn't a space for it. Then it sort of circled around a little, like a cat getting ready to lie down in the grass, and the other images moved aside a bit to make room for it. When I look at it now, there isn't any anger, I still feel tired, though not so much, and disappointed, rather than angry—sad that I couldn't maintain the quality in that situation.

That sounds like a useful shift. Although sadness is not much fun, it is a very fundamental and authentic emotion, one that often underlies anger and other feelings.

Exercise 7-2 Integrating Counterexamples (trios, 15 minutes)

I have demonstrated how to integrate counterexamples when they are separated by location or both location and modality. I want you all to have a chance to do this thoroughly, and I also want those of you who had counterexamples already integrated to experience what it is like to have them separated.

If you already had counterexamples integrated into your database, experiment with separating them out and putting them into a different location, so that you can experience what that is like. Then shift them into a different modality as well, to experience what that is like. Be sure to integrate them back into your database when you're done experimenting.

If you have counterexamples in the same modality, but in a different location, I want you to experience two things. The first is to change your counterexamples into a different modality, to experience what that is like. Then I want you to change them back and then integrate them cautiously into your database, one at a time. If your counterexamples are metaphoric, change them into more detailed representations before making any other changes.

If your counterexamples are in a different modality and a different location, first shift them into the same modality as your examples and pause to experience how that is different, and then integrate them into your database. Doing this will give each of you a full experience of all three possibilities.

* * * * *

Do you have any questions, or observations to report?

Melissa: I had my counterexamples integrated to start with. When I moved them out into a different location, I really got a sense of what some of my friends must experience when I offer them feedback. I ask for feed-

back and welcome it, but they don't, and now I understand how difficult and stressful it must be for them.

Great. When you really experience someone else's world from the inside, that makes it a lot more understandable, and easier to know how to offer ways to shift their experience.

Carl: Both my database and my counterexamples were metaphoric, and I couldn't see any content. My database was like a rope that angled away from me, and I could also feel it with my hands. My counterexamples were little sparkling points of light behind me. When I tried to integrate one of the points of light, it got agitated, like a little angry energy ball, and I felt uncomfortable, so I stopped. Then I tried transforming the rope into a series of linked images, to preserve the form of the rope. Then I transformed one of the sparkling points into an image, and brought it over and integrated it into the "rope" easily, and then did the same with the others.

While sometimes you can integrate metaphoric representations, usually it doesn't work very well, because a metaphor is almost always a *summary* of a group of examples, in contrast to one of the individual examples in your database. So when you try to integrate a metaphor, you are usually integrating *everything* in the underlying database at once, instead of one example at a time, as we have been doing.

Jan: I found it very difficult to transform and integrate my visual counterexamples into my auditory examples. And then I thought, "Why don't I do it the other way around?" That was also difficult to start with, but then it became a color and all spread out, and the rest integrated easily.

Wonderful. Probably that worked better because integrating in the visual system is easier than in the auditory system for most of us. However, some people might feel bad at first when looking at those counterexample images. And adding in examples probably wouldn't make much difference at first, so that might be discouraging. But if it worked for you, I can't argue with it.

Yet another possibility would be to translate both the auditory examples and the visual counterexamples into the kinesthetic system, and then integrate them. In general I wouldn't advise that, because integration in the visual system is usually easier. However, for an athlete, that might be perfect, and it's always nice to have another way to try if you get stuck. When you keep your eventual goal clearly in mind, you can try different ways to get there until you find one that works.

Integrating counterexamples is a very profound change in the way many people think of themselves. It is also a change that can easily be offered conversationally in everyday contexts, especially when you use hand gestures that make your communication even clearer and more explicit.

"Can you see that time you messed up, completely surrounded by

images of times when you did exactly what you want and value? If that image were a voice, what would it say? I don't suppose you could hear that voice surrounded by those voices that tell you about times when you have had that positive quality."

Julian: I'm wondering what keeps counterexamples from leading to behavior in the same way that the positive examples in the database do. If having examples of a quality of yourself is a basis for that kind of behavior, why wouldn't counterexamples do the same?

That's a *very* good question. Does anyone have an answer to that?

Ben: Well, you keep emphasizing that the counterexamples are to be less prominent than examples, and I think that would make them much less likely to actually lead to behavior.

Abe: And I'd think it would be very important to not have any future representations of counterexamples.

Yes to both of you. When Connie described her counterexample images as being "yellow-brown, like old photographs from the past," I thought that was a nice way of identifying that they were in the past—and by implication *not* in the future. If you look at the whole integrated database, there is little likelihood that a counterexample could lead to behavior. However, if you zoomed in on a single counterexample, and made it big and bright and stepped into it, that *could* lead you into exactly the kind of behavior that you don't want. So although there are some safety factors, the danger that Julian asked about does exist, and next we will explore how to avoid this possibility.

Summary

We have been experimenting with *integrating counterexamples* into your database, because it makes it both *more real and solid*, and at the same time makes it much *more stable and balanced, and open to feedback*.

In contrast, having counterexamples separated from the database makes for a very *unstable* situation, which can easily flip to its opposite. A pure database without counterexamples results in perfectionism. Since a single counterexample can easily shatter a pure generalization, it is very resistant to feedback, leading to rigidity and denial, a false self and an unacknowledged "shadow"self.

When counterexamples are integrated into your database, they warn you about where and when you messed up in the past. That keeps you from thinking that you are perfect, and makes it much easier to accept feedback about a new mistake or two, because you already realize that you sometimes make mistakes. Mistakes alert you to where and when you could take steps to learn to do better next time.

However, there is an even better way to integrate counterexamples, by first transforming them into *examples* of what you want to do the next time you encounter a similar situation in the future, and then future-pacing those new desired behaviors. This preserves all the benefits of integrating counterexamples, while programming resourceful new behaviors, and avoids the problem that Julian just pointed out, that a counterexample could lead to behavior that is the opposite of the quality that you want. Next we will explore how to do this in considerable detail.

8

Transforming Mistakes

Counterexamples serve many very useful functions when integrated into the database—creating durability through balance and credibility, responsiveness to feedback, and avoiding perfectionism. However, there are a number of ways to process counterexamples so that they can be even *more* effective in all these functions. Once a seminar participant said something to me that I thought was a particularly apt description of one aspect of how I like to teach. He said, "I see what you're doing. First you show us how to pound a nail with a rock, and then you show us how to use a hammer." Now I want to teach you several additional ways to utilize counterexamples, and then how to *transform* them into examples.

Excluding Counterexamples

Although we have explored the value of integrating counterexamples, there are certain contexts, such as performing a difficult and complex task under pressure, in which you don't want to take even the slightest chance that a counterexample could distract your attention and lead your behavior into what you don't want. In that kind of situation, it can be much better to have no counterexamples at all—only superb examples of having that quality.

Often in the midst of performance, people recall a time when they didn't do well, or an internal voice says, "Don't choke up," "Everyone is watching," or "You have to do well," or some other distraction. Most people try to fight, eliminate, or block distracting parts that interfere with performance; they try to wipe them out or kill them. They don't realize that

all parts of a person are useful, because they all have useful information. But *when* they provide the useful information is negotiable. If I have the information before the performance, it can help me prepare for it, and if I have it afterward, it can help me prepare for the next one. But if I get it *during* a performance, it will only interfere with doing the best that I can.

One way to do this is to use an internal negotiation to schedule counterexamples and the valuable feedback that they provide *out* of a performance situation, using a method called Reframing. (13, Ch. 3; 12, Ch. 2) You negotiate with the part that offers counterexamples and say, "Look, I know that you have valuable information about how I have made mistakes in the past. I know that I need that information in order to improve what I do. But I need it *before* or *after* performance, and *not* during it—*not* while I'm actually doing the surgery, or the pole vault, or the training, or the interview."

For instance, let's say that you have an internal voice that criticizes you just after you have made a mistake. You already have communication with the part, so you can say, "I'm glad that you have so much information about how I messed up, and how I can do better, and I assume that your positive intention is to improve what I do. (That is usually the positive function of a critical voice.) Now, since you're so smart, why don't you tell me *ahead of time*, so that I can do something about it, instead of waiting until *after* I mess up?" That's a little rude, but it usually gets that part's full attention. You can get the same message across more politely if you think that would work better.

Then you can negotiate a more useful time to receive the feedback. This kind of negotiation will only work if you truly welcome and respond to counterexamples at the specified times, and utilize them to adjust and improve what you do.

Ben: I'm wondering when it would be most useful to utilize the information in counterexamples—for instance in a sport like golf.

When you utilize information will depend on when the information will do the most good. Different information will be useful at different times. The crucial thing in golf is the swing, because that is what actually puts the ball into the cup or not, so just before the swing might be a good time to get information about how to adjust your stance. However, it might be even better to get this information the day before, or even the month before, so that you have more time to practice it and make it smooth and automatic. If the information is about physical conditioning or preparation, it won't do much good to think about it right before the swing, because conditioning takes a certain length of time. So the best time for utilizing feed-

back information depends on the part of the task it applies to, and how long it takes to make use of it, as well as the inherent nature of the task.

Exercise 8-1 Excluding Counterexamples (trios, 15 minutes)

Negotiating with inner parts (13, Ch. 3; 12, Ch. 2) is a method that has been a part of most NLP trainings for many years, so we won't take time for an exercise, but I recommend that you make a note to practice doing this on your own, because it is very useful.

Adjusting the Scope of a Quality

Sometimes there are a number of troubling counterexamples that are similar, and it can be useful to think of the quality in a different way, so that the counterexamples simply don't apply anymore.

The first step is to *group your counterexamples* and then *examine them carefully for what is common to all of them (or a group of them)*. For instance, let's say you think of yourself as being kind and considerate, but sometimes you have been rude, or angry, or impatient instead. When you examine your counterexamples for what they have in common, you may find that in all of them you were overtired (or rushed, or preoccupied by many urgent things on your mind, or you were in a public situation, or in the presence of a man/woman, or a particular person, etc.).

For instance, I have found that when I need all my resources for an unfamiliar task, I have difficulty if there is too much auditory stimulation—talk, music, noise or other sounds. In that kind of situation, I literally start to have symptoms of "attention deficit disorder."

Narrowing the Scope. When you have identified the factors that are common to your counterexamples, you can adjust the scope of your quality "I am a kind person" by adding "under the following conditions: as long as I'm not tired (or rushed, or preoccupied, or in a noisy situation, etc.)." This is an example of *narrowing* the scope of a quality, excluding the counterexamples from the quality by redefining the scope of your generalization.

It can also be useful to notice if there is some other value coming into play in all, or a group, of your counterexamples. For instance, let's say that your quality is motivation. When you examine your examples of *not* being motivated, you may find that they are all situations in which you are exhausted, and you really need rest to let your body recover. These apparent counterexamples to motivation are actually all *examples* of the importance to you of maintaining your health, and that is more important to you than continuing to work. Since they really aren't counterexamples to motivation, they don't belong in this database; they are examples of another

quality that belongs in a different database of its own. Maintaining your health is something that you require to be motivated, since it's very hard to be motivated if your health fails. So you can simply separate what had appeared to be counterexamples to motivation, and relabel them as examples of a different database for "maintaining health."

We have many important qualities, and although we might like to demonstrate them all throughout our lives, in some situations we have to choose between them. One of your important qualities might be communicating sensitively and compassionately with others, while another might be the ability to react quickly and effectively in an emergency. When you are reacting quickly in an emergency situation, there may not be time to communicate compassionately. This choosing simply indicates that one is *more important* than the other in that context. So when you react efficiently in an emergency, this is not really a counterexample to being compassionate and sensitive, it is an *example* of a different quality.

Widening the Scope. Sometimes it can be useful to *widen* the scope of a quality. When you widen the frame in time, you may find that examples of being unkind in the short term are actually examples of kindness in the long term, as when you refuse a child something s/he wants out of concern for her future health or safety.

When you widen the frame in space, an example of your being unkind to one person may be an example of kindness to someone else, as when you ask someone to turn music down because someone else is resting.

You may have thought of kindness as being something that only applies to others. When you widen the scope to include yourself, many examples of being unkind to others may become examples of being kind to yourself. By widening the scope of the counterexample so that you can see the "big picture," it becomes an example.

Integrating Scope. If you examine the group of counterexamples along with the examples, you may find it useful to think of them *both* as examples of a larger and more important quality. The NLP presupposition that positive intent underlies all behavior is an example of an overarching category, because it includes both undesirable and desirable behaviors in one larger category of positive intent.

Examples of motivation and laziness may both be examples of flexibly paying attention to *all* your needs, a more important larger quality that integrates the two. Motivation satisfies needs by getting us moving, but laziness also satisfies needs for rest and rejuvenation. If you were always motivated, you'd become exhausted.

Another way of describing this is that for many qualities there is an alternating rhythm, such as between waking and sleep, work and play, being

social and being alone, etc. One is not a counterexample to the other. Each makes the other possible in a natural alternation that provides balance. The Chinese Taoist yin/yang symbol is an expression of this principle of the balance of opposites. It also exemplifies the principle of including counterexamples; the white area of the symbol includes a black spot, and the black area includes a white spot.

These are all ways of reorganizing your memories according to criteria that are important to you, so that you can recategorize your experience. Any experience can be categorized in many different ways, and you can use this flexibility in ways that serve you.

Exercise 8-2 Adjusting the Scope of a Quality (trios, 15 minutes)

Get into trios again, but with different people this time, and experiment with examining your counterexamples, and changing the scope of the quality you have been using. Start by *grouping your counterexamples*, being cautious not to group too many at once, since that can sometimes be overwhelming and unpleasant. After grouping counterexamples, examine them to *find out what they have in common*. When they are grouped, often you can immediately see how they are similar—it usually just "pops out" without any effort.

Then experiment with redefining this aspect of yourself by *narrowing* or *widening* its scope in space, or time (or both), or by thinking of a larger overarching category that *integrates* the two. If you find that some "counterexamples" are actually examples of a different quality that is more important to you, you can separate those and put them in the appropriate category. Do as much as you can on your own, assisting each other in your trio as needed, and then share experiences.

* * * * *

Do you have anything interesting to report from this exercise?

Pat: When I grouped my counterexamples, I got overwhelmed, upset, and found that I couldn't focus any more, and I let go of everything.

That can occasionally be a problem any time you group counterexamples. In an experience of "overwhelm" there is too much information for you to process, so you need to find out what you can do to reduce the flow of information. You can either reduce the amount of information, or slow the tempo to give you more time to process it. If it is simply the number of counterexamples, remove some of them until you feel comfortable—or better yet, start over, and group only a few at a time, so that you stay within your capacity, leaving the rest of them for later.

Perhaps most of the counterexamples can be farther away from you in

the background, so that you can ignore them temporarily, and fully attend to the few in the foreground. If you have a bunch of voices speaking all at once, try making most of them soft, so that you can hear one at a time clearly. Or it could be that you are too close to them, and you need to back up, or allow them to move away, so that they aren't "in your face." Perhaps the tempo is too fast, and just slowing it down will make it possible for you to process the information. There are many possibilities, and you just have to find out what you can easily do to make it comfortable for you.

Rich: When I examined my counterexamples to curiosity—times when I was bored—I realized that without some boredom, I would have "burned out" on curiosity. Looking at the larger picture, times of boredom support my curiosity, because without them, I couldn't be curious most of the time. Thinking about it in this way, times of boredom are not really counterexamples at all.

Another way of describing that, is that they both indicate the importance of moderation or balance in what you do, and if you didn't have that balance, you couldn't have curiosity. That balance is probably also necessary for many other important qualities. So you are a person who puts a high value on balance, because that is necessary in order for you to have these qualities.

Ann: My quality was compassion. The common element in my counterexamples, which I call "judgement," was that they lacked other position. If I don't have that other position, then I go into judgement.

Yes, other position is required for compassion; that's how you get there. Without that, compassion is not even a possibility. Compassion literally means "feeling with," and the only way to do that is to experience what is happening to someone else as if it were happening to you. If you don't do that, the most you can feel is pity, which is staying separate, and being sorry for someone else from an outside perspective. Pity is better than indifference, but people don't like to be pitied, because of that separation and superiority. Judgement has two meanings in English. One is of discernment or noticing, as in, "She has good judgement." The other meaning is condemnation.

Ann: Right. And mine was the condemnation.

If you don't have compassion, it's easy to condemn. I wouldn't think that kind of judgement would be a valued quality for you.

Ann: Right. It gets in the way.

So when you grouped counterexamples, you realized that they all lacked other position, and when you added that in, judgement transformed into compassion. That is a very important piece that I really wish more of the world understood, because that would eliminate a lot of persecution and suffering.

Sue: I'm mulling over the problem that I get into over what I would call values conflicts. I want to be kind, but I also want to be honest. I want to be honest, but I also want to have friends. It seems like whatever I do, I end up criticizing myself and feeling guilty for not upholding the value that gets ignored.

Well to start with, try a ridiculously simple change that can have a profound impact. Replace "but" with "and." "I want to be kind, *and* I want to be honest." "I want to be honest, *and* I also want to have friends." "But" separates experiences, and tends to erase whatever precedes the "but." "And" joins experiences and acknowledges both. We often have to make choices like the ones you describe, and guilt or regret is a common troubling experience.

Guilt and Regret

I'd like you all to think of a time when you did something that harmed someone else, and now you feel guilty or regretful. When you feel guilty about harming someone else, that means that you violated your own values or qualities in some way. I'd like you to reexamine that incident and find a name for the harm that you caused, and also for the value or quality that you violated.

One of the first things to realize is that the strength of your bad feelings is a good indication of the importance to you of the quality that you violated—if it didn't matter to you, you wouldn't have any feelings about it. So even though the feelings of guilt or disappointment are unpleasant, they are an indication of how much you value that quality, so you can feel *good* about that.

Another measure of the strength of your commitment to the quality is your willingness to apologize, make amends, or compensate somehow for the harm that you caused. So one thing you can do is to take a few minutes to decide now, what sort of appropriate apology or compensation you are willing to make, and future-pace that. Perhaps you need to talk to that person and find out what kind of amends *they* think would be appropriate. Your firm commitment to making amends in some way will strengthen your sense of this quality. Willingness to take action to compensate for what you have done is a lot more convincing, and a lot more useful, than just feeling guilty, and it can also heal the separation and bad feelings between you and that other person.

Now I want you to think again of the incident in which you harmed someone else, and ask a very interesting question: "Given my perception and understanding of the situation at that time, *was there a more important value that I was actually following?*" ...

Sometimes you weren't following a higher value. Sometimes you just made a mistake, or misunderstood the situation, or didn't fully realize the consequences of your actions. But at other times you were faced with a very difficult decision, and whatever you did, you couldn't follow one or more of your values. When that happens, people often focus narrowly on the value that was not followed, and feel terrible.

It can be very helpful to see *both* the value that you followed *and* the value that you didn't follow, and this is another example of widening the scope of your thinking. "Oh, I really am a person who follows through on my values. It's just that I was faced with conflicting values, and I followed the one that was more important to me, and I couldn't find a way to follow the other one at the same time."

That is a *much* more balanced and resourceful state than guilt or regret, one that makes it a lot easier to examine the situation without self-judgment, and begin a search for ways that you could express *both* values if you are ever faced with a similar situation in the future. What personal resource would make it possible for you to manifest *both* those qualities, even in those situations in which you previously had to choose between them?

Transforming Counterexamples

The various things that we have done so far with counterexamples are very, very useful, and they are relatively quick and easy. However, even when you reschedule counterexamples, adjust the scope of a quality, redefine your quality to exclude them, or find a larger quality that integrates them, counterexamples still indicate where, when, and with whom your behavior is not fully aligned with your valued quality. They point out where you experience an unpleasant incongruence, an opportunity to do personal change work to gain further integration, and greater competence.

When you transform a counterexample into an example of how you want to be if that kind of situation ever occurs again, you can expand your ability to have that quality even in those more difficult situations. This is an even more useful and elegant way to utilize counterexamples.

Transforming counterexamples also prevents the potential problem that Julian pointed out earlier—that counterexamples could sometimes lead to unwanted behavior. But even more important, it provides you with additional behavioral choices in precisely those situations in which you were previously not able to exhibit that important quality.

To transform a counterexample, treat it just as you would any other difficult memory or problem situation that you would like to change. "How do you wish you had responded when that happened? How would you like to respond if that kind of situation ever happens again in the future?"

You can use simple "videotape-editing," taking that memory movie into your private editing room, and changing it until you are satisfied with it. You can use the "change personal history" pattern in which you access appropriate resources and integrate them into that unsatisfactory experience so that it becomes one that you like. Or you can use *any* other method you know to transform that counterexample into an example. Sometimes it can be useful to do some of the things that we already did earlier with process, time and content changes—changing submodalities, chunk size, perceptual position, etc. Ann found that by adding in other position, all her judgement counterexamples changed to examples of compassion.

Keep in mind that every change process should include a congruence check, to be sure that the change fits with all your other valued qualities. When you are satisfied with the results of this process, put the transformed counterexample (which is now an *example*) back into your database.

An alternative is to *link* the original counterexample to its positive transformation in some way, and include *both* in the database as a unit. You can link them by having one blend into another, or use a small arrow, or a short movie or filmstrip, or any other way that works for you. Then if you attend to the counterexample, your attention will go directly to its transformation.

Exercise 8-3 Processing and Transforming Counterexamples (trios, 15 minutes)

Return to your trios again, and take about 15 minutes to transform several counterexamples into examples. Take one counterexample out of your database and move it to your mental "work station" or wherever you review and process experiences. Then use your skills to transform it into an *example* by representing *what you wish you had done in that past situation, and what you would like to do in the future*, if that kind of situation ever happens again. Then return the transformed example to your database.

I want you to compare having *only* the transformed counterexample in your database, with having the counterexample *linked* to the transformed example, to find out which way feels best. Then do several more counterexamples, one at a time. Work by yourself as much as possible, assisting each other as necessary, and then share your experience.

* * * * *

How many of you preferred to have the transformed counterexample linked to the counterexample, and how many preferred the transformed counterexample alone? About 80% preferred to have it linked. Can you say what you liked about having it that way?

Alice: When I just had the transformed example alone, I was worried that I'd forget that I had made mistakes in the past. I liked being able to see when I goofed, and also what I'll do next time.

Dan: I think that the context makes a difference. My quality is one that I have in a high-stakes performance situation, so I preferred having *only* the transformed example. I don't want *anything* there that could distract me from having that quality.

Sally: I liked having some of both. Like Alice, I wanted to be reminded of times when I messed up, but I didn't want to have too many of them, either.

OK. Both of these work, but they are a little different, so it's important to find what suits you best. Just as counterexamples are often color-coded to distinguish them from examples, you can also color-code transformed examples as a way of reminding you that those are times when you messed up in the past.

Alice: I had trouble transforming some of my counterexamples because they were in contexts where I really don't know what is appropriate to do. So I think that means that I need to have some experiences of learning what to do in those contexts before transforming them.

Yes, one of the useful things you can learn from examining counterexamples is that you simply don't know enough, so you need to seek out some kind of information or training in order to exhibit the quality.

Grouping Counterexamples Before Transforming Them

You have just learned how to take a single counterexample and transform it into an example. Previously you grouped counterexamples in order to find out what was common to all of them, and used this as a basis for adjusting the scope of your quality. Next I want you to *combine* grouping and transformation, in order to make your task easier and more efficient.

When you group similar counterexamples together, that makes it easier to see what they have in common, and what sort of change would be useful in *all* of them. By grouping them together in your mind, you create a new category or generalization, and usually the worst example can serve as a sort of icon that represents all of them. Often the first one is the worst, because of the shock of its being so unexpected. Then when you do change work with the worst one, the change will usually generalize to the entire group. Occasionally it may be difficult to determine which is worst, and in that case you can pick any of the stronger ones.

For instance, let's say that when you group your counterexamples, you find that they all are times when you were overtired. Then you can ask,

"What resource would allow me to be kind, *even though* I am overtired?" and then do some change work with the worst one. When you transform that one, the changes will usually automatically generalize to the entire group, and that can save you a *lot* of work doing them one by one. Of course it's important to check to be sure that the change has actually generalized to the others in the group. Sometimes you may need to transform several examples before the change will generalize to the whole group.

Whenever you group experiences in this way, it is because you notice similarities between them. But of course there will also be differences, and sometimes these differences will be more important to you than the similarities. Some experiences may be quite unique, and not similar to any of the others. Any change work that is directed toward a similarity will tend to generalize to the extent that you perceive similarity, and not generalize to experiences that you perceive as being significantly different.

So far we have been presupposing that we want a change to generalize widely, and this is usually the case when we are changing a valued quality of self-concept. But of course there are also times when you *don't* want a change to generalize too widely. A man's self-concept might include his ability to elicit loving sexual states in his wife, and if you accidentally generalize this to others, that could result in a lot of difficulties! So it's always important to examine the change work that you are doing, and be sure that it generalizes *only* as far as will be useful—and that word "only" can be very useful in setting limits to generalization. "Of course this is *only* appropriate with your wife."

Exercise 8-4 Grouping Counterexamples and Transforming the Worst (trios, 20 minutes)

Get into trios again, working silently by yourself, assisting each other as needed, and then share experiences.

1. Grouping. Examine your counterexamples, and determine what a group of them have in common.

2. Worst. Use these common elements as a basis for selecting the *worst* one.

3. Transformation. Do appropriate change work on this counterexample, being sure to include a congruence check: "Does any part of me have any objection to this change?"

4. Check generalization. Think of several other counterexamples from this group, and find out if they have already been transformed. If so, you are done; if not, cycle back to step 1 and transform another one—perhaps using a different resource—and again check for full generalization.

If you have more than one group of counterexamples, repeat this process with each group.

* * * * *

Do you have any questions or observations?

David: When I transformed one, all the rest flipped automatically, like dominoes. I know you said that they usually would, but it still surprised me.

Al: I took my counterexamples and slowed them all down so that I had more time to process the situation, and that made it possible for me to respond the way I want to.

So you added in a personal resource—in this case, a slower tempo—that made it possible to transform them all into examples of your quality.

Ann: My quality is that I am a caring person. When I examined counterexamples where I was abrupt with someone, I realized that when I get in the position of being a "crusader," sometimes people would get dependent, and come at me and ask me questions, and sometimes I felt like I was dragging them around on my back. That's when I would get snappy with them, even when I still had caring in my heart. I decided that it was much better for both me and the other person to do what I can to give *them* a way to handle their own problems. So when I get in that situation, I could be able to turn it around and say, "How do you think you'd like to handle it?" and give them some of the responsibility, instead of taking it all on myself.

Bob: I took out the worst example and transformed it. Then when I put it back in, I noticed that it was much more specific and detailed than my other examples, which were more vague and general. So I think I need to review my whole database and make them all more specific than they are now.

Sally: I found that my counterexamples fell into several groups, so I had to process a worst for each of them. Then I thought, "How could I use this in the future?" I imagined that I had some counterexamples in the future, even though I didn't know what they were. As I started to imagine some counterexamples to the quality, before I could even see what they were—boom—they transformed automatically.

Great. By doing the process several times, it became unconscious and automatic. Of course, there is always the possibility that some of your future counterexamples might be significantly different, and require a very different kind of resource or transformation than you used just now. In that case, the mechanism that you developed might not still work.

This strategy of grouping problem situations and making a generalization about them before transforming them is something that is very useful for therapists, no matter what kind of change work they do. Beginning therapists often encounter the following situation: A client comes in with

a complaint, and they do some change work that the client is satisfied with. Then the client brings up another complaint that seems remarkably similar to the first, and they do change work again. Then the client mentions another complaint, that looks very similar to the first two. This can go on for a very long time, and it's a good way to get bored with doing change work. If the client thinks of each of these problems as separate, and has not grouped them into a category, then you have to change them one at a time.

But if you ask the client about several experiences *before* doing any change work, you can create a category in their minds, and then you can change them all at once. "All these seem to me to be examples of feeling disappointed by women friends. Does that fit for you?" "Can you think of other examples of this kind of problem situation?" "Oh, so *all of these* are situations in which you felt small and inadequate to deal with a situation, but you had to anyway."

When you get a congruent response—*especially* one that signals, "Oh, yeah, I never thought about it that way!" that indicates that you have helped them create a new generalization. Then you can ask, "Which one was the worst?" And when they say, "Oh, *this* one was the worst!" and you change that one, all the others in that category will also change. Because in their mind the presupposition is established: "These are all the same, and this is the worst. So if it works for that one, it will work for *all* of them."

Summary

Counterexamples are extraordinarily important aspects of your self-concept. They strengthen the self-concept and make it more resilient, at the same time that they alert you to exceptions, and make you much more open and responsive to corrective feedback. Temporarily *excluding* counterexamples, *adjusting the scope* of your quality, and *recategorizing* some apparent counterexamples as examples of another quality, are all useful ways to reorganize your experience.

Transforming counterexamples into examples is an even more elegant way to utilize them. *Grouping* counterexamples by similarity, and then transforming the *worst* one, provides a way to greatly simplify and speed up the work of transformation. The outline on the following page summarizes all that you have learned about integrating and transforming counterexamples.

Transforming counterexamples also provides a basis for learning how to take an element of self-concept that is ambiguous or negative, and transform it into something positive, a truly revolutionary change. But before we learn how to do that, I want to show how you can use all that you have learned so far to do something considerably simpler—building an entirely new quality of self-concept.

Integrating and Processing Counterexamples

(After "tuning up" the existing database using structure, time and content—see Checklist, p. 99)

1. Counterexamples Checklist

Where and how are they represented?

Integrated or separate?

Same modality, same location

Same modality, different location

Different modality, different location

Obvious or hidden?

Modalities and submodalities

2. Integrating Counterexamples

Integrate one counterexample at a time

Control size and other submodalities to prevent overwhelm of database

Limit number of counterexamples to approximately 5-10%

3. Utilizing Counterexamples

Excluding counterexamples from peak performance by negotiation

Grouping counterexamples and finding similarities

Adjusting the scope of a quality in space and/or time

Narrowing

Widening

Integrating with an overarching quality

4. Transforming Counterexamples

Grouping counterexamples

Finding similarities

Recategorizing the group as a different and separate quality

Identifying the worst one

Transforming the worst one

Checking others in the group for generalization

9

Building a New Quality of Self-concept

We have been exploring the impact and the interaction of both process and content variables in making a quality of your self-concept durable and responsive to feedback. We have also explored the importance of integrating counterexamples, and how to transform counterexamples into examples. With what you have learned, you could ask someone about any important quality of their self-concept, ask them questions to find out how they already do it, and then teach them a variety of additional skills so that their self-concept functions much better than it already does. Making this kind of change will reverberate throughout their life, affecting many specific behaviors and responses.

Now it's time to demonstrate how to use all this information to do something even more useful and generative, namely to *create a whole new positive quality of self-concept* when a person has no representation of this quality.

When someone thinks of themselves as having a certain quality, such as being lovable, that indicates that they have a positive self-concept with regard to that quality. Since they have this basis for inner knowing, they don't need others to tell them, and when others express their recognition of it, they can fully appreciate the additional confirmation.

When someone says, "I'm *unlovable*," that indicates that they think of themselves as *not* lovable, a *negative* self-concept with regard to that quality, something that we will explore in considerable detail later. If we were to try to build a positive self-concept for that quality, it would be *very* difficult, because this would conflict with the negative self-concept that is already

there. And if we did succeed in building a new positive quality, that would create ambivalence and uncertainty. Some people are already ambivalent in this way. Sometimes they feel lovable, sometimes they don't, and often they are just unsure.

When someone says, "I don't think of myself as lovable," we need more information to know what their inner experience is. They *could* be saying that they have a negative self-concept. Or they could mean what the words literally say—simply that they *don't* have a positive self-concept (or a negative one) with regard to that quality. They presumably know what the word "lovable" means, but they have not assembled experiences (either positive or negative) that provide any information about whether *they* are lovable or not. For convenience I will call this absence of a database a "null set."

Since they don't know if they are lovable or not, they typically often ask others for confirmation. But even when they get this support from others, it doesn't last very long, because they don't have a way to *store* this information. Hearing the external confirmation is like receiving water in a sieve—it goes right through and disappears. So they are likely to ask again soon, and are often described by others as "insecure," "needy," or "dependent."

In this case it is appropriate to simply assemble experiences into a desired quality of positive self-concept, a method that was first described years ago. (2, Ch. 3). Since often someone already has an ambiguous or negative representation of the quality, the opportunities for using this pattern are somewhat limited. However, for teaching purposes it is useful to start with the simplest case, in which there is no negation or ambivalence to deal with, and we can simply use what we have learned to build a new quality of self-concept. Soon we will go on to learn how to transform an ambivalent or negative quality of self-concept into a positive one.

The verbatim transcript that follows is of a demonstration from an NLP Master Practitioner Training conducted in 1992, and is available on videotape (6). At that time I was still in the process of modeling self-concept, so I knew *much* less than you do now. I had made a brief introductory presentation much like the foregoing, and when I asked for a volunteer for a demonstration of this process, Peter raised his hand.

Demonstration

And what is it that you'd like to—? (build)

Peter: Well, "lovable" really hit a chord.

OK, you don't think of yourself as lovable.

Peter: Not particularly.

I think of you as lovable, so come on up. (Peter comes to the front of the room.) OK, now when I said that, what did you do inside?

Peter: (shaking his head and shrugging) I sort of went, "Nope."

OK. Now, if you go "Nope"—give me some more, (to the group) See, I'm testing to make sure it's not one of these (negatives).

Peter: Well, it sort of hits a— I get a sense that it hits a blank.

"A blank." OK. That sounds good. Because if it's one of these (null sets), then it's like there's just nothing there. It's not that there is a negation. And as I experience you, I don't— I wouldn't think that you think of yourself as *unlovable*.

Peter: Not really, no. It's more— I don't think of myself as unlovable; I don't think of myself as lovable.

Yeah. That's good. (to the group) That's what we want. Does it make sense that I'm testing a little bit here? Because I want to make sure it's one of these (null sets). What happens if you just go ahead and build one of these (positives) and you don't weaken one of these (negatives)?... Think about it. Now . . . I'm serious. This is an important point. If someone has a negative belief—If he thought he was *unlovable*, and I build a belief in here that he is *lovable*, now what? . . . Now you've got a parts problem. Most people have enough conflict as it is; let's not build in more. (to Peter) Think of something that you *do* believe is true of yourself.

Peter: (nodding) I think I'm intelligent.

Intelligent. Good. And you're pretty sure of that, right?

Peter: (nodding) Yeah. (laughter)

Yeah. (joking) Now we didn't say, "arrogant," we said, "intelligent." (more laughter) OK. Now, what I'd like to know is, what is your evidence? How do you represent this sense of yourself as being intelligent?

Peter: Hmm . . . Umm, (laughs) I'm not really sure. Urn, it's sort of like it's so built into me? . . . (gesturing toward his left ear) I have a voice that tells me that "I'm smart."

OK. So there's a little voice over here. Now, what is its evidence? See, a voice is just a voice, right? So there's a voice on your left that says "I'm smart." OK. And that's fine; I'm not disagreeing with that. I just want to know what is its evidence? How does it know that that's the case?

Peter: Other people have told me.

Well, I don't trust other people. Do you?

Peter: (nodding) Yes.

You do? So all I have to do is tell you that you're lovable, and from now on—

Peter: I guess if I hear it *enough*.

"Enough." OK. And so—

Peter: Yeah. Now that kind of fits. Because that's what you were saying—like I'm always wanting my wife to tell me how much she loves me. And her experience is that that's really excessive. (laughter)

Yeah. (laughter) (to the group) This is what we want. This is what we want. We've got it both ways, because the two major tests have just been fulfilled. The one is that he tends to go for confirmation from others, and the other is that if I tell him he's lovable it's like it doesn't compute. It's like, "Well, uh, it's like there's a blank." And that's what we want. OK, great. (to Peter) Now, in terms of "I'm smart," do you have an auditory memory of lots of different people saying that, in a lot of different contexts? Is that the evidence?

Peter: (nodding) Yeah, and um, I've done a lot of things that I got external confirmation.

OK. So, as you hear these—let's just take one—can you think of a particular one, where someone says, "You said something intelligently," or something like that? Or whatever?

Peter: (nodding)

An auditory remembered— So what kind of thing might it say?

Peter: I remember my father saying, "I can't imagine where you got all this intelligence from."

Oh, that's nice. Do you hear it? It's presupposed. "I can't imagine where you *got* all this intelligence *from*." There is also an implied comparison, isn't there—that he's not that smart. Peter is saying that his father told him that he was smarter than his father.

Peter: That created lots of strange stuff inside me, because I had always believed he was a lot smarter than me. So that was a real—(Peter looks amazed).

When he said that. Got it, OK. (to the group) I'm just going to jot this down, because I want to remember it. Sometimes you get a good one like this, and it's just wonderful for teaching. "I can't imagine where you got all this intelligence from." That's a good one. I wish more parents did that. What would most parents say? . . . Keeping the same form of the sentence, and just changing a few things? What would most parents say? "How'd you get to be so stupid, obstinate." "I don't know where you got all that stupidity from." OK, well, let's not dwell on that. (to Peter) And are there others? Can you hear other voices in there? And what I hear from you is that it's important *whose* voice it is. Is that right?

Peter: (nodding) Yeah.

If this were just a man in the street, would it matter as much? Would it be as compelling?

Peter: It wouldn't be as compelling; it would still—it would still compute.

OK. So it would still be part of it. OK. Good.

Peter: The more intelligent the person is who's noticing, the more impact it has.

Sure. So the source is important. OK. How many voices in there do you have, do you think? You said you had a bunch of them, remembered, people—

Peter: (shaking his head) I don't know, but a number came to mind of fifty.

Fifty. OK. This is a thorough person, right?

Peter: I guess so.

OK. Good. All right. Now, anything else in terms of the evidence? There's this voice that gives you the message, and there's the evidence behind that, of all these different people, saying this kind of thing. Anything else?

Peter: Umhm. There's—When you first asked the question I didn't have anything—any pictures particularly. It was more an auditory thing. As you're asking me now, I can remember pictures of when I went and accepted my degrees, and I have certificates hanging on walls that let me know—

And if you hear your father's voice saying this sentence, "I don't know where you got all that intelligence from," is there some picture along with that?

Peter: (shaking his head) Um, no. Just the picture of him—I mean, just him saying—I can remember the situation in which he said that.

Well, yeah, but do you have that—Is this a voice crying in the wilderness or do you have some picture along with it of when he said it? (Peter is English, so it makes sense that his representation is primarily auditory, but I am checking to see if the visual is also present, which is usually more prominent for Americans.)

Peter: (nodding) I think the auditory is much more important than the visual.

OK. Fine. Good. Now I'm going to ask you another question, which may seem a little strange. "Are there any counterexamples in there?" Are there any—?

Peter: (smiling broadly and shaking his head) No. In a way yes, and in a way, no. I mean I know that I sometimes do things that are kind of stupid, but (shaking his head) that doesn't change the belief. For some reason it doesn't have an impact.

OK. That's fine. Now I want to do something—kind of an experiment,

and you tell me how it goes. What if you have one voice in there—at least—let's say one, or two, or three that says, "every once in a while you screw up."

Peter: That's fine.

Is that fine? OK. Now what I'm doing here is something that—it's a way to avoid pomposity. It's wonderful to have generalizations, but all generalizations break down somewhere. Even the most intelligent person in the world—I don't care who you choose—is going to say stupid things from time to time—or be stupid or act stupid, or whatever. If the person has *only* positive examples in their generalization, then they *may* think, "*Everything* I say is gold. *Everything* I do is perfect; everything I do is right."

Peter: (shaking his head) Nope.

(to the group) This is not (the case) here. OK. And one of the ways you can do that (protect against pomposity) is to deliberately build in counterexamples to the generalization. It's wonderful to have a big solid generalization. He has fifty (examples); some people have *one*. There's the old joke about the guy who knows that all Indians walk single-file, because he saw one once. (laughter)

And this is a whole area that's fascinating to explore, in terms of self-concept, and generalizations in general. Because the self-concept is simply a generalization about the self. Some people *do* make generalizations based on one example. A person does one thing, and they go, "Oh, that's *that* kind of a person," because they saw them once—it's just like the "single-file," really. And others are much more thorough, and they have to get a whole bunch of examples in order to build a generalization.

Did you ever see someone who thought they were really, really intelligent and other people didn't agree with them? Unfortunately clients don't come in to you saying, "I'm just too pompous, and I'd like you to change that." (laughter) They don't. If a depressed person believes that nothing will work, he won't come in to tell you about it, because (he thinks) that will not work either. So there are some loops that people can get into with certain kinds of problems, *they* will not bring themselves in. Somebody *else* may bring them in—a wife, or son, or daughter or someone else, but the person does not perceive it as a problem (or that a solution is possible).

Most of the frames that we've had around the NLP that we've been teaching you is a voluntary client, somebody who comes in and says, "I'm hurting; my life is not working in this way; I want some help." There are other things like this that are a little harder to deal with, because you have to kind of convince somebody that it's a problem (or that a solution is possible).

(to Peter) OK, back to this one now. What I propose to do—and I'd

like to know if you have any objections—is to build the same kind of representation here that you're lovable.

Peter: (emphatically) *No* objections! A lot of voices are going inside "*Yeah, yeah, yeah!*"

And your wife will like it too. Now, you know where you hear these voices, and how loud, and the details for the "I'm smart" or "I'm intelligent." And I want to do this in the following way, because I think it will work better. You have this—the major generalization is "I'm smart." I want to build that (summary generalization) *last*. Before I do that, I want to build these other ones, specific examples in the past. It doesn't have to be that you're "lovable"—that word doesn't have to be in there. It could be, you know, "You just did a very loving thing with that child," or "That was a sweet gift you gave me," or whatever. And I want you to take the time, one at a time, to build fifty of those. And when you have got fifty of them built, then you give me—then build this one, the major voice that lets you know "I'm lovable," or "I'm a caring person," or however you would like to say it. The words are not important, except to the individual, because some words will work better for an individual. Do you have any question about that?

Peter: No.

OK. Go for it. (Peter closes his eyes.) Just search back through memory, . . . and of course your unconscious mind can participate fully in this, . . . to think of different times in your life . . . and just as it was important in the other one that the person was intelligent who said that you were intelligent . . . it would probably be important that the person who says these things . . . be a person who is intelligent, and lovable, or has something else that you respect along the same lines. Does that make sense? (Peter nods) OK. Just take your time. . . . Gradually assemble, one by one . . . voices that sincerely and congruently . . . give you appreciation for being a caring, lovable person____(There is a 26-second pause, while Peter finds and assembles examples.)

And I don't think you really have to count to fifty.

Peter: (in a softer voice, nodding) No, I was just getting a sense that the process is complete.

So you have a sense of that being complete. You can also put in a few more in your spare time, too—when you're waiting for a bus, or something like that. OK, now, have you already built the voice here that sort of summarizes all this?

Peter: (nodding) Umhm. (softly) It says, "I am loved."

"I am loved." Good. That's a good one. And I like the tone of voice, too.

Peter: (smiling broadly) Yeah. I like that one, too.

Now. Are you a lovable person?

Peter: (softly) Yeah.

How does that feel?

Peter: (smiling) *Very strange.*

Yeah. It will at first. It's a new thing. It's like a lot of changes that are strange at first, but it's a nice strange, right?

Peter: Yeah. It's sort of thinking about myself in a whole different way. ... Do I *sound* different?

Uhuh. (group members agree.)

Peter: Because even to me, my voice sounds different.

Uhuh. It has more depth. It's a little lower.

Peter: Ooooh! (smiling broadly) Thank you.

OK. How does it feel now? Now that you've had all of twenty seconds to get used to it. (laughter)

Peter: Um, it kinds of feels like there's a whole bunch of bouncing around going on inside. And, um, it's a little shaky. And I think I have a—the greatest thing is a sort of a feeling of *total wonder*. (softly) It's like *wow!*

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About three minutes later, Peter commented: "What I'm having the sense of now, as I was going back through time, was a whole bunch of events immediately sort of came out as, 'Oh that's an example of that,' and 'That's another one,' and 'There's another one.'"

That is a typical response as the new generalization becomes a nucleus for collecting other examples that fit the newly-organized quality. This session, including the teaching points with the group, took seventeen minutes.

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Follow-up interview with Peter

The following is a verbatim transcript of an interview with Peter two weeks later, the day after Valentine's Day.

So it's been a couple of weeks, Peter, since we did the thing on being lovable—or loved, as it came out to be, and I wondered if you had noticed any changes—and especially you had mentioned something I believe that you had kind of kept asking your wife if she loved you and stuff like that, or if she's noticed anything.

Peter: I'm not sure if she's aware of what's changed. *I'm* certainly aware of it, in that I feel a lot more independent. It's like—exactly that—I don't need that constant feedback. And the thing that was kind of interesting was—of course Valentine's Day is a great time for this. And yesterday I got some really *great* Valentine's gifts, a lot of them in a row, that really

showed me clearly how much she does care about me. And that, in itself, was a difference, in that I really *noticed*. I mean like, it *had* an impact. Whereas before I'd sort of take this stuff and "Ahhh, well," (Peter gestures with his left hand, as if casually throwing it away over his left shoulder) and it would sort of flow over my head (gesturing over his head).

That's a nice gesture. (laughter) (imitating) "Do you love me?" "Yes." (copying Peter's gesture) (laughter)

Peter: (smiling and nodding) It's not possible. Whsst. (Peter repeats the gesture) So now, I was really noticing all the extent and—

You could really savor it, and experience it, rather than just discard it. (Peter nods.) Great.

Peter: Yes. That was really nice. The other thing that came up, I did a presentation to a group of people yesterday that I think are probably not particularly open to the kind of thing that I had to say. And I was amazed at how well it went over, the positive response that I got back from them. It was a *really* positive feeling, and again, I'm not quite sure how that ties in, but I've got a sense that that's involved. Like there's something very different about what I'm putting out in situations, or what I'm allowing to come back in.

Perhaps both.

Peter: Yeah. So I've been great. I'm—I'm *feeling* it.

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Follow-up interview with Peter's wife

A week after the follow-up with Peter, I talked with Peter's wife, Joan. At this time, Peter still had not told her anything about the work that I had done with him.

Well, Joan, it's about three weeks now since I did some work with your husband, Peter. One week ago I had a little follow-up interview with him, and I asked him if you had noticed any difference in his behavior, and he told me that he hadn't asked you. So I guess he didn't even tell you that I had done some work with him. Is that right?

Joan: No, he didn't tell me the process. I kind of asked him what—that, you know, I had noticed changes in him.

Can you say what those changes are?

Joan: Oh, well, it was amazing. What I'm doing now is going back to the first time he came through the door after three weeks ago. And I noticed right away that even physically there was a change. There was more bounce in his step. There was a lightness about him. His eyes were brighter. His face was not as tight; it was a lot more relaxed. His voice was softer. The changes that I've noticed behaviorally in how we interact—

Yes, that's particularly what I'd be interested to hear.

Joan: He's a lot more fun. He plays a lot more. He's gentler on himself—not as goal-oriented.

Can you think of any specific things that were different before and after, or something that happened during the last couple of weeks that he wouldn't have done before, or anything like that?

Joan: He listens.

He listens?

Joan: *Listens*. Instead of being as judgmental as before, like saying right/wrong stuff, it was like coming from a more loving and understanding place...where there was no right, no wrong. It was just listening to me.

You like the changes.

Joan: Oh, I *love* the changes! They're wonderful. We interact a lot more in a fun way. He's lighter, he's happier—

Nicer to be around.

Joan: Oh, bubbly, like—yeah, a lot nicer to be around, I love that.

Great. Is there anything else? Then I'll tell you what we did.

Joan: It's like he—I keep wanting to say—it's like he loves himself more, and everybody else more, is more able to play.

It's made a big difference.

Joan: Oh, an incredible difference. Yeah, I really, you know, *yeah!*

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In a discussion that followed this videotaped interview, Joan mentioned two other changes in Peter. One was that he had played for a *long* time with a child who was visiting, and that he had never done that before. She also said that Peter no longer worried if she wanted to do something on her own. If she were going to be away for the afternoon, he didn't need to know where she was, and he didn't need to call to find out when she was coming home.

Discussion

Do you have any questions about this videotaped session?

Fran: It just seems too easy and undramatic. Most people think that identity level change is very difficult and takes a long time.

Well, anything is hard, if you don't know what to do, or how to do it, and most things are easy when you do. Can you all think of an experience of using a new piece of equipment for the first time, and being frustrated and upset by not knowing how to use it? But as soon as you found out how, it was easy?

What I demonstrated with Peter is the simplest kind of identity change.

It was a change that he congruently wanted, there were no negative beliefs to get in the way, and there were no conflicting outcomes to satisfy.

Most people who attempt to build a more positive sense of themselves find it very difficult because they already have a *negative* sense of themselves that gets in the way of this. That's a little like trying to lift a big rock that is firmly attached to the ground, so of course it's very difficult, and very dramatic. Soon I'll teach you how to deal with those kinds of situations, but they do complicate the process somewhat.

Many people equate a large show of emotion with effective change, and I think that is one reason why NLP has often been criticized for "leaving out the emotions." There are plenty of counterexamples to the idea that drama and emotion is a sign of effectiveness, and I think that this idea is actually exactly backwards. Quite often when people are very emotional, they are simply expressing their frustration, and their *lack* of resources to deal with a difficult situation.

In contrast, when your resources are adequate to cope with a difficult situation, you may not even *think* about it, much less become emotional about it! Think of tying your shoelaces, and all the other things that were insurmountable challenges for you as a small child, that are now so routine and unconscious that you don't even think about them.

Engineers know that any machine that makes a lot of noise is inefficient, because noise is a form of energy that is being wasted (unless the purpose of the machine is to make noise). An efficient machine is very quiet, because all its energy goes into carrying out its function.

Many years ago, I used to do Gestalt Therapy, which has *lots* of drama—people screaming and yelling at empty chairs, and pounding pillows. It was very dramatic, but the results were seldom particularly useful. Before antibiotics or immunization, every family experienced many life and death dramas as their children struggled with diseases like scarlet fever and smallpox that are now virtually unknown. Antibiotics and immunization are *very* undramatic, and *very* effective. In nearly every field, when we know exactly what to do, change is easy, and very undramatic. Many of the changes you have already experienced were very undramatic, but they will have far-reaching consequences for you.

Dan: What if someone can't find examples of the quality that they want to have?

That is usually a matter of how they are searching for them. Often when they can't find any examples, their criteria are too high and perfectionistic. If they're searching for examples of "courage," they may think that word can only be exemplified by winning a small war single-handed. Or they may examine all their examples of courage, and find that none of them are quite

perfect. In that case you need to loosen their criteria, and broaden their definition a bit, so that more of their memories will fit that word. Courage can mean a wide range of behaviors in which someone stands by their principles and values and bravely faces some kind of opposition. Once you have broadened their criteria a bit, most people can find plenty of examples.

But let's say that someone still couldn't find any examples. In that case you could use all your skills to help them access appropriate resources and revise memories so that they were courageous in the past, and then future-pace them into the future, so that the person has future examples as well, and then use both for the database.

Ann: Can you give an example of that?

Sure. If they can't find examples of courage, ask them to think of a time when they weren't courageous and wanted to be. Then you ask them to review that situation and think of what personal resource would have made it easy for them to be courageous. Perhaps if they had simply thought at the time of the effect of this situation on their kids, or someone else, it would have been easy to take action. Then they can replay that situation with this larger frame in mind, running a movie of what they would have done differently until it's what they want. Then put that experience into the future wherever they are likely to need it, and then put both the revised past example and the future example into a new database for courage.

Or perhaps they were too concerned about other's opinions of them. Then you could ask them for a time when they didn't give a damn about someone else's opinion, and when they are fully experiencing that feeling, have them rerun that situation, and see how it unfolds differently. They can do this kind of adjustment and testing as many times as they want until it is satisfactory, and then put this experience into the future, and into the database.

Bill: I'm wondering if people might have different kinds of templates for different positive qualities.

I haven't investigated that. What I demonstrated with Peter has always worked fine, so I have assumed that a person's templates for different positive qualities are either the same, or else so similar that any differences don't matter. I think it was Gregory Bateson who said that "A difference that makes no difference is no difference." I have been most interested in the practical question of what people can do to change, but that would be an interesting thing to research, and you might discover something useful.

Lois: I'm surprised that you didn't give Peter more detailed instructions about what to do. It obviously worked fine, but I'd think he'd need more specific direction.

This was in an NLP Master Practitioner Training, so I could presup-

pose that Peter already had a lot of advanced skills and understandings about submodalities and so on. If he had any difficulties, I would have made the instructions more detailed and step-by-step.

Sometimes people need more instructions, and sometimes less. Some are really fast, and will run ahead of you. If you give detailed instructions, some will interrupt and say, "Will you please stop talking. I'm already doing the process, and you're distracting me." At other times you describe the next step in a process, and they say, "Yeah, I already did that." Of course, sometimes they run ahead in the wrong direction, and you have to back them up to where they got off track. The main thing is to notice what the person needs, and adjust your behavior to make it as easy for them as possible.

Stan: It seems to me that Peter was an example of what you described earlier, someone who was competent, but not confident.

Yes, I agree. Peter was a pleasant guy to be around, and his wife loved him, and many others liked him. However, he simply hadn't assembled his experiences into a form in which he could know that as an aspect of himself. I really want to emphasize how important it is to *assemble* experiences. When I began, I said to Peter, "I think of you as lovable," but it just didn't compute. I'm sure all of you have had the experience of trying to convince a friend or a client of something by offering a counterexample to their limiting belief, and getting nowhere. A single counterexample is usually (and often literally) just brushed aside. But when you *assemble a group of examples*, in the *appropriate form* for the person you are working with, they become very compelling. Now Peter thinks of himself as lovable, and this is just as automatic, and "built into me" as he put it, as his knowing that he is intelligent.

Fred: It seems to me that what you did could also be described as building a piece of what has been called "internal reference," the ability to know something internally, independent of others' opinions.

Yes, that's another useful way of thinking about the change in the way Peter thinks about himself. When people use the term "internal reference," they often think of it as a single thing—that someone is internally referenced about *everything*, rather than understanding that it is made up of many smaller aspects that are often dependent on content and context. Saying that someone is internally referenced is always a huge overgeneralization, because there will always be contexts in which someone will be externally referenced. Before I worked with him, Peter was internally referenced with regard to his intelligence, but very externally referenced with regard to being loved. Learning a new skill is a situation in which it is totally appropriate to carefully choose an expert in that skill as an external reference.

You could also say that Peter had been very dependent on others in regard to loving and affection. By helping him create an internal knowing that he is loved, he was no longer dependent on others for this. I also want to mention something else that I think is *very* important. Many people mistakenly think that independence results in indifference. As the follow-up interview shows, now that Peter is independent with regard to being loved, he is both more loving, and also able to enjoy his wife's affection and caring much *more* than before. Independence frees you to respect and appreciate and interact with others, instead of being caught up in your own desperate needs.

A participant in a previous seminar worked with a man who was very critical, building a quality much like the one I built for Peter. The next week the man's girlfriend came to see her, very curious about what she had done with him. The girlfriend said that she had been about to leave him, but that he was now softer and more open-hearted than she had ever seen him, and once when he was irritable, he apologized instead of blaming her.

Ken: When you were testing at the end and you asked him if he was lovable, you followed up by asking how that felt to him, and he said, "Very strange." You described that as simply being unfamiliar, and that seemed to fit for him. I thought that could have been an indication of an objection to the change.

It could have been an objection, but strangeness is a very common response at this point, because they literally think of themselves very differently, so the difference is in the *thinker* as well as what is being *thought*. In all change work it's very helpful to make a clear distinction between an objection to a change and simple unfamiliarity. Unfamiliarity is not an objection, just an observation. They notice how different they feel, and comment on it—it's strange, but it's OK. The nonverbal indications of "strangeness" are quite different from those of an objection. Some of the most prominent ones are that in strangeness, the eyes are typically wide open, and the face is somewhat relaxed and open, and the head moves slightly forward. In an objection, the eyes are usually narrowed, the whole face is more tense, and the head moves back a little. In order to sensitize yourself to these differences, you can ask a friend to alternately think of an experience of each, and notice how they differ.

When someone says, "I don't feel like myself," that's a very strong indication that you have made a significant change in their self-concept, and that the change will be very widespread, whether or not that was your goal. If you want to be sure that there is no objection, you can always ask, "All right, is it OK to be someone else?"

Usually the feeling of strangeness wears off fairly soon, as they get used to it. But if they continue to be preoccupied with it, you can ask, "How many times do you need to experience something new for it to become familiar?" Usually people will give you a number that is ten or less, and then you can say, "OK, take a minute or two to experience it ten times, and let me know when you're done." Since your question (and their answer) presupposes that it will feel familiar after a certain number of times, it will feel familiar to them. But if it really was an objection, the feeling won't go away with repetition.

There is another frequent apparent objection that some people haven't yet learned to distinguish. Often someone will say about a proposed change, "I don't think that can happen." That is not an objection, that is a statement about their belief or expectation. All you have to do is acknowledge their doubt, and separate that from whether they have an objection or not. "Fine, I understand that you don't think you can make that change. *If it did happen*, would you have any objections?"

You really have to listen carefully to people's answers to your questions. If you asked someone where they lived, and they answered, "Thursday," you probably wouldn't accept that as a valid answer, so you'd ask again. Yet many people will ask if there are any objections, and when the person says, "I don't think it will work," they will accept that as an answer to the question they asked. Earlier I asked someone how a specific change affected the strength of a quality, and they said, "I like it better." Since that was not an answer to my question, I had to ask again.

Ted: I noticed that you didn't ask him to include any counterexamples in his new quality of being loved.

I agree. If I were doing this today, that is one of several things that I would definitely do differently. Remember that this video was made eleven years ago, and I have already taught you much more than I knew back then.

Ann: All you did, really, was to help him select and organize his memories in a particular way that worked for him. You didn't access resources, or anchor experiences, or do any of the other kinds of NLP change work that I'm familiar with.

I basically helped Peter *select* and *assemble* a set of memories into a generalization about himself, patterned on one that he already had for being intelligent. Eliciting his structure for intelligence serves two purposes. One is the obvious one of finding an internal structure that already works for Peter, so that I can build a new quality that will function as well as the one that he already has. The other purpose in eliciting this structure is that it is a powerful *convincer* for Peter that it is *possible* to have a stable internal

representation that works to provide him with knowledge about himself. Without that, he might say something like, "Loved isn't something that you *are*; it's something you get from other people."

However, you could also describe this process in the terms you mention. Each of his memories is a resource that is an anchor for a particular positive state. A set of voices in a particular location is a powerful anchor for a group of experiences that are significant to Peter, and so on.

Each of us has an immense wealth of different experiences, but most of it goes to waste because it isn't *organized*. It's as if you had a big barn jumbled full of stuff piled to the roof, so you couldn't see anything but some of the nearer stuff on the top, and a few things near the door. You couldn't use all that stuff in that form, because it's not organized in a way that you can find what you need. In many ways, building a quality is similar to the "change personal history" pattern, in which you search for, and access a resourceful response, and *connect* it to a context where you want to have that response available. The major difference is that in this pattern we assemble a *group* of experiences, and we pay particular attention to the *form* of this group.

Most NLP patterns develop specific solutions for specified tasks or situations. But unpleasant and challenging events happen to all of us, and there is such a variety of them, that we can't be prepared with a specific response for every one of them. When you work with self-concept, you create much more general attitudes, capacities, and qualities that fit with your values, how you want to respond, and how you want to live your life, irrespective of what happens. Personal qualities like resilience, honesty, curiosity, patience, etc., constitute a resourceful personal foundation for finding solutions to a very wide range of specific challenging events.

This might be a good time to put in a plug for a very useful and often ignored quality, *tenacity* or *persistence*. Many people could use a more robust ability to hang in there and stay with a project or job or marriage through the difficult times, in order to reach a worthwhile outcome over time. When someone is having trouble staying with a diet or exercise or some other program, usually people think of motivation, or excitement, or some other way of getting the person going. However, motivation and excitement are often fleeting, and usually the problem isn't in starting a program, but in *staying with it*. Many people have started on a hundred diets, but had great trouble *continuing*.

Tenacity can keep you going, not because it has intensity, but because it has *duration*, the ability to keep going through time. Many people desperately need tenacity to make a go of it in the world. Tenacity has a lot less drama than excitement, but it's usually a lot more useful.

A closely-related quality is *commitment*, making a decision *now* to do something for an extended period of time. If you decide to diet, or to get married, it doesn't work very well to wake up every morning and go through a process of deciding whether to stay with it or not. It works a lot better to make a commitment, at least for a period of time, and not reexamine that decision too often. Of course, there will always be times when tenacity and commitment can become a liability, when it might be better to give up what you have been doing and try something else. Any skill can become a limitation if it is overdone, or used in an inappropriate context.

Next I want you to experience what I did with Peter. This can be a real opportunity to build a wonderful new quality for yourself. One possibility is to search for an experience of dependence, such as Peter had, which often indicates where a quality is missing. Peter often asked his wife to show that she loved him, but the feeling he got from it didn't last, so he had to continually ask for it again. If you can think of a situation like that in which you repeatedly ask others for some kind of reassurance or validation, but when you get it, it doesn't last very long, that is probably an indication where this could be useful.

Peter's wife found his continual asking for reassurance "excessive." So another way to search for something useful to build for yourself is to think of the kinds of complaints that you frequently get from others, and examine those situations. What quality could you build for yourself that would make those complaints much less likely? For instance, if people tend to complain that you are critical and judgemental, perhaps you could build a quality of acceptance of how things are. If you often get comments about being distant and uninvolved, you could build a quality of being present and involved.

Another possibility is to think of someone that you have admired or envied, examine what it is that impresses you about them, and consider whether you would like to have that quality for yourself.

Or you could read through the following list and notice which qualities sound interesting to you: curious, gentle, playful, healthy, balanced, funny, sensual, witty, honest, steadfast, scintillating, courageous, thoughtful, flirtatious, organized, loyal, creative, wise, kind, loving, deep, impeccable, social, considerate, centered, thorough, useful, responsive, adventurous, passionate.

Remember that all these words are only broad nominalizations that can mean very different things to different people. For one person, "adventurous" might mean going up to someone and giving them a compliment, while for someone else that word might mean hanging by their heels from a bungee cord being towed by a helicopter over a mountaintop!

For one person "considerate" might mean thinking about someone's physical needs and convenience, while for someone else it might mean thinking about their feelings and emotional needs—and for someone else it could mean both.

So as you read down the list of words, or think of other possibilities, it's important to notice what the words mean to *you*. As you consider these possibilities, probably sometimes you'll think, "Yep, I've got that already," while for others you may think, "Nope I'm definitely *not* that." When you get to one where you respond, "Hmm, I never really thought about being that," that might be one for which you have no database, and you might consider building that, or some variation of it, for yourself.

After choosing a possible quality to build, ask yourself, "What do *I* mean by that word?" Think of specific examples of that quality, examine them carefully, and then adjust them so that they fit well for you. For instance, kindness, consideration, and thoughtfulness share many criteria, so they are very similar, and for some people they might be interchangeable. However, for someone else they may have very different meanings, because of the specific experiences that they use to give meaning to the word. One of them may feel appropriate and comfortable, while the others might not quite fit for you.

The next thing to do is to check carefully to be sure that you don't already have a negative or ambiguous database for this quality that would interfere with building a new positive one. One way to test is to think of your examples of this quality. If all your examples are of *other* people and they all stay distant and dissociated, that is probably an indication that you don't think of this quality as being part of *your* identity.

Another way to check is to imagine someone else saying to you, "You're a very _____ person," and notice your response. If it's "No, I'm not," that likely indicates that you already have a negative database. But if you respond, "Huh?" or "What?" or some other "does not compute" response, that probably means that this would be an appropriate quality to build. I have always thought of myself as being very unreligious, and sometimes even anti-religious. Years ago when a friend said to me, "You're a very spiritual person," I had no idea what she was talking about; it just didn't compute. For weeks afterward I kept wondering what on earth she meant by that. Now I have a much broader meaning for the word "spiritual," but at the time I was totally puzzled. That's the kind of experience that indicates an absence of a database.

There are a couple of other situations in which this process can be very useful. One is where you do have a sense of having a quality, but it is very

weak because you don't have a very extensive database. Then you need to add more examples to the database you already have. Or you might need to adjust the *form* of your existing database to be sure that it is in the form of your positive template.

Another possibility is to create a new quality that is intermediate between two extremes. Let's say that sometimes you are very social, and get so caught up in enjoying the situation and responding to others that you lose your sense of yourself, and later find yourself exhausted, or regretting some things that you did. At other times you really enjoy solitude, because you can fully acknowledge all your internal experience, but at those times you find it difficult to respond to others and be social.

You might consider building a new quality that is a balanced *integration* of the valuable aspects of *both* these extremes. To do this, you need to examine both extremes carefully, and then find or create examples of balance. In this example, you would think of times in your life when you could respond fully to others, while at the same time fully experiencing your own internal responses at the time, and then assemble these into a new quality.

An example of opposing extremes is bulimia. The typical pattern in bulimia is to alternate between rigid conscious control of eating, and total unconscious control of bingeing, followed by conscious disgust and induced vomiting. Someone in that kind of situation desperately needs to have a balanced quality that respects *both* the conscious social need to be slim, with the less conscious biological need to eat, and create a balanced way of eating moderately.

Given all this discussion, I want you to take a little time to consider what you might like to build....

Do you have any questions?

Sue: I'd like to be "scintillating," and for me that means that I could talk fluently about a lot of different abstract topics. But I don't have a lot of information about many things.

Well, it sounds like you might need to adjust your criteria for being "scintillating," so that it fits for you. I can think of several people whom I'd call scintillating, and for them it is based much more on *listening* to other people than talking intelligently about abstract things—asking little questions to draw the other person out, making them feel noticed and appreciated. and responding attentively and enthusiastically. In exploring different meanings for "scintillating" it will probably also be useful to ask yourself what your positive outcome is for being scintillating, and to explore different ways of being scintillating to get that outcome.

Melissa: I got a number of objections to having the new quality that I

selected. I was able to satisfy some of them, but there was still one big one left—that if I show this quality in certain contexts, it could get me into trouble with some people who don't value it.

Ask that part if it would be all right for you to know that quality about yourself solidly in those contexts, as long as you were careful not to show it. In other words, you know that you have that quality, and you also know that you have the choice whether to behave in that way or not, depending on the situation.

If you know how to drive a car, you can still know that, even when you're not actually behind the wheel driving. You can know what your name is, even in situations where you'd rather not tell someone else what it is. Remember that we are dealing with *qualities* and *capacities* that you know are inherent in you as part of your identity. But you always have the choice whether or not to express that to others.

Ben: I either had a "yes" or a "no," or "I don't think I want it," so I decided that it wasn't appropriate for me to do this.

OK. It might be useful to reexamine some of the things that you think you don't want. If you have a lot of experience of a quality, you probably have good reasons not to want it. But if you don't have much experience of it, then you may not have a very good basis for knowing whether you'd enjoy it or not—like a sport that you have never tried—and it might be worth a second look. Have you ever seen an unfamiliar food that looked pretty awful, but when you tasted it, you liked it?

Another thing that you can do is to try crossing some identity boundary in your mind, such as gender or age. You might consider a quality that you think of as a feminine, or one that only children or older people have. But perhaps you could be comfortable having that quality, as long as you did it in a way that was appropriate to who you are.

Exercise 9-1 Building a New Quality (pairs, 15-20 minutes each)

This time I want you to get into pairs, and use this process to build a new quality for yourself, using the outline below. Since all of you have already explored how you experience a positive quality in yourself, you already know what your positive template is, so this shouldn't take very long, perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes. Work by yourself, assisting each other as necessary.

Building a New Quality Outline

1. Content. Identify what quality you would like to have as a stable part of your identity. This pattern will work best with a capability or

quality of intermediate chunk size: tenacity, loyalty, dependability, intelligence, etc.

If you want a more specific behavioral ability (such as the ability to drive a car or fly a plane) that requires learning specific behavioral skills, that's not appropriate, since it's not useful for you to believe that you can do something that you have not learned to do. However, if you already know how to drive a car and want to be able to do it with a particular *quality*, such as smoothness, or alert attentiveness to the surroundings, etc., that is appropriate.

2. Congruence check. Do you have any objection to having this quality? Check carefully in all modalities, and satisfy any objections carefully, usually by modifying your definition of the quality.

3. Testing. Be very sure that you don't already have a database for having this quality. Proceed only when you are sure that you don't already have a negative or ambivalent self-concept that would conflict with the positive quality that you would like to have.

4. Positive template. Elicit the structure that you use to represent a strong positive quality that you like. This will include both a summary representation that serves as quick reference, and also the database of specific examples that support the generalization. The database will most often be primarily in the visual system, but may include any (or all) of the other systems. If the database is primarily kinesthetic, be sure that it is composed of the *tactile* and *proprioceptive* kinesthetics, and not just the evaluative kinesthetic emotions and feelings. (This is what you have already been doing.)

5. Tune-up. Use all that you have learned to improve what you already do, to make your representation of this quality even better, by adding future examples, other perceptual positions, integrating or processing counterexamples, etc. (Again, you have already been doing this.)

6. Build the new quality. Using the positive template as a model, find appropriate memories to use as examples in a database for the desired new quality, and assemble them into the form of the positive template. When you are done, create a summary representation of the quality. Be sure that the new quality has all the "tune-up" elements we have been working with, such as future examples, etc.

7. Testing. Imagine someone asking you, "Are you ___?" and notice your response, with particular attention to the nonverbal. If your response is ambivalent or ambiguous, back up a few steps, and gather information. The most likely difficulty is that your testing in step 2 did not detect a preexisting negative or ambiguous representation. While there are effective ways to deal with this situation, you haven't yet learned the skills you need for this.

8. Congruence check. Do you have any objection to having this new quality? Again, check carefully to be sure that this new quality fits with all your other qualities. Satisfy any objections.

* * * * *

Further Discussion

Now that you have all had an experience of doing this, do you have any questions or comments?

Sam: I'm feeling something similar to what Peter described. It's like having a whole new focus that I didn't have before, looking at myself in a whole different way, a quiet knowing where there was just a kind of vacuum before.

Al: What I noticed most was the change in how my physical body felt. My new quality is one that is particularly evident in posture and movement, and my body feels longer and straighter, more flowing and soft.

Fred: I did it with something that I was mildly ambiguous about at first, but it worked fine anyway. There weren't many counterexamples, and they weren't very intense, so they didn't get in the way.

Melissa: I created a new balanced quality, and I love it. I used to be on the end of a teeter-totter, always up or down. Now I have a wonderful feeling of standing right on the pivot point, where I can shift a little from one side to the other, yet still stay in that stable middle zone of balance.

Ann: Even though we thought we had tested really well to make sure that there was no negative belief already there, when I started to build a new quality I had a feeling of being torn between the new quality and its opposite. So we backed up and dismantled what we had done. Then I picked another quality to build, and that went smoothly.

Good. When an ambiguous or negative structure is already there, it's a little more complicated, because you have to deal with a significant number of counterexamples to the new quality. Soon you'll have the skills to deal with that situation too.

Summary

Everything that you have learned so far can be used to build an entirely new quality for yourself, by *selecting* and *collecting* examples into a new database. As long as you build this new quality in the same form as *your* unique positive template, it will function in the same way, providing a solid and unconscious basis for knowing that you have this quality, and being who you want to be. Next we'll explore how to make a similar kind of change when someone has an uncertain self-concept because they have roughly equal numbers of examples and counterexamples.

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Transforming an Uncertain Quality

Up to this point I have asked you to explore a quality that you *know* is true of yourself, and that you *like*. That specifies that it is a quality that is solid, and is in alignment with your values, so you already have a fairly extensive and effective database of examples, with relatively few counterexamples. This is the simplest situation for learning about the various process and content aspects of self-concept. Of course, what feels "solid" to one person might feel "very shaky" to another, so we have still encountered quite a range; some of you had considerably more counterexamples than others. Some of your "solid" qualities were actually somewhat ambiguous because of the large number of counterexamples, or because of the way that you represented your counterexamples.

Now I want you to choose a *different* aspect of yourself, one that you feel ambiguous or uncertain about. Again I want you to pick a quality about which your *values* are clear; *you know how you would like to be*. For instance, sometimes you think you're considerate, and sometimes you think of yourself as inconsiderate—or perhaps most of the time you are simply unsure about whether you are considerate or not, but *you know that you would like to be considerate*.

When an aspect of yourself is ambiguous, that usually indicates that there are roughly equal numbers of positive examples and counterexamples, and because of this, you can't come to a firm conclusion. There could be a lot of each, or only a few of each. A more disturbing ambiguity will usually have many examples, or more intense examples on both sides. It is also possible that you have only a few counterexamples, but the *way* you

represent them creates ambiguity because of the resulting intensity. Or your unsureness might be simply the result of having very few examples.

Since you are unsure about this quality in yourself, it is unlikely that you feel good about it, so it probably doesn't contribute much to your positive self-esteem. However, if you think that you *should* manifest this quality unambiguously, the fact that you don't could result in low self-esteem.

The last thing that we did with counterexamples was to group them, find the worst one, and then process that one in order to transform the group into positive examples, and then return them to your positive database. There are only two important differences between that situation and working with an ambiguous quality. One is that the ambiguous quality probably has a greater number of counterexamples, so it might take somewhat longer. However, if you know how to mow one lawn, you also know how to mow three lawns; it just takes longer. The other difference is that the positive side of your ambiguity may not already be in the form of a positive quality for you. Simply putting the database of that ambiguous quality into the form of the positive template will make it more convincing.

The first thing that I want you all to do is to take a few minutes to examine how you represent this ambiguous quality in yourself. Find out how your database for this ambiguous quality is organized.

* * * * *

Just as when we explored counterexamples previously, there are three possibilities for the organization of your ambiguous database:

1. Examples and counterexamples are integrated into the same database, using the same modality.
2. Examples and counterexamples are represented in the same modality, but separately in different locations.
3. Examples and counterexamples are represented in different modalities, *and* in different locations.

First, I'd like to see by a show of hands how many of you found that your database fit the first possibility? About a third.

And how many fit the second possibility? About half.

And how many the third? Only a few.

Did anyone have counterexamples in a different representational system, but in the same location? No. Although it is theoretically possible, no one who comes to seminars seems to do it, but perhaps someone out there does it, so it's good to keep the possibility in mind.

And how many of you had an ambiguous database that was already in the same form as your positive template? Only one. Usually the positive examples are not in the form of the positive template, and the first step is

to put them in that form, because when they are in that form, they are most compelling to you.

One of the first things that you can do is examine the content of your counterexamples as we did before, and consider the possibility that some, or all, of the counterexamples might actually be examples of a different quality. In that case, we can *divide* this ambiguity into two separate generalizations. The positive examples would form the basis for the unambiguous positive quality, and the counterexamples, or a group of them, would form a basis for a different and separate quality.

For instance, let's say that your ambiguous quality was intelligence, and you find that all the counterexamples are situations in which you simply hadn't had an opportunity to learn anything about a topic. Then you could think of all these "counterexamples" to intelligence as *examples* of situations in which you hadn't yet had an opportunity to learn, or simple ignorance. Ignorance doesn't have anything to do with intelligence, although many people confuse the two. This would resolve the ambiguity about the original quality, and clarify that there are certain situations in which your intelligence can't be expressed well because of a lack of information.

Of course, this process still leaves you with situations in which your intelligence can't be expressed well, but this is simply one of those difficult situations we face in life. If it's important to you, then you can seek out and learn the kind of information that will make it possible to be intelligent in those situations, too.

This is another way of understanding and accomplishing the process called *content reframing*, finding a different "frame" of understanding for a certain set of experiences. By reexamining a generalization, you can find a different way of thinking about the same information, such that it is valued differently. Although most of my examples here are of changing a negative evaluation into a positive one, you can also change a positive evaluation into a negative one, when someone doesn't recognize that a quality has harmful consequences. Someone's quality of being a "free spirit," and "responding spontaneously," can also be described as being irresponsible and thoughtless of others' needs. Reframing can be a very rapid and effective way to transform the meaning of a group of experiences. Since this process has been described in great detail elsewhere, (12, Ch. 1) I won't spend much time on it.

Let's say that you have already examined your counterexamples, and have separated some of them out as belonging to some other valued quality. The next thing to do is to process any counterexamples that remain, in order to transform them into examples of the positive quality.

Since there still may be quite a lot of counterexamples, it will be even

more useful to first gather them into groups before processing them. Transforming an ambiguous quality into a positive one is a significant change, so it requires particular attention to congruence. Although all the processing methods include steps that check for congruence, it is useful to begin with one about the overall process itself. "Does any part of me have any objection to having this positive quality unambiguously?"

The last important element is to check to be sure that the final database containing both examples and transformed examples is represented in the same form and location as the positive template. Now I would like to demonstrate how to transform an ambiguous quality.

Demonstration #1 Ambiguous Quality to Positive Quality

So, Janice, there's some quality that you are aware of, and you're not sure if you have it or not. Is that right?

Janice: That's right.

I'd rather you didn't mention content, by the way, unless we get stuck somewhere, and then you can just whisper it to me. Mentioning content would distract others from following the process, so I want to be kind to them and withhold it. You have already worked with a quality that you were sure of and that you liked. Can you tell me a little bit about the structure of your positive template?

Janice: I had sort of a collage of pictures here in front of me.

OK. Fairly close, are they?

Janice: Yes, quite close, about here. (She gestures about a foot in front of her face.)

And tell me a little bit more. About how many images are there?

Janice: Oh, *lots*.

Lots. Hundreds?

Janice: Probably. Lots of them.

So then the pictures have to be fairly small.

Janice: Yes.

OK. And are they more or less rectangular?

Janice: No, they're kind of oval shaped.

Ovals. And how about the overall shape of the collage—is it kind of an oval, as well?

Janice: It's kind of wavy.

OK. Now, given that the pictures are fairly small, how do you access information from them?

Janice: I can choose any one of them and step into it. It happens spontaneously.

So it's easy for you to associate into any of them. It's very quick, you go into it, and it's right there in front of you, right?

Janice: Yeah.

And when you see the whole collage, there's probably no sound, but when you step into one, then you get the sound and the feelings.

Janice: Yeah, it gets big. (She gestures broadly with her hands.)

Usually the nonverbal gestures give you wonderful information that confirms what the person says. Occasionally they appear to disconfirm, and then you need to check more to find out what's going on, or if something important has been left out. OK, this is the positive template, the structure that we want to end up with when we are done. And Janice, you know all the ways in which you improved this template earlier.

If I were working with someone who didn't know anything about what you have been learning, I would go through the list of all the different things that we've done, and make sure that they have all three perceptual positions, small chunks and large chunks of time, future examples, counter-examples, and all those other things that we have been working with. Since you have all done that, I can just demonstrate the overall pattern.

Next, Janice, we need to know the structure of your ambiguous quality. I'd like to call the positive aspect of your ambiguous quality "Q," just so I have a way of talking about it without mentioning content. And there's also the negative aspect, the "not Q." How do you represent the ambiguity at this moment?

Janice: (looking up) Ummm, it's in a grid.

It looks like it's higher.

Janice: Yeah. I have quite a lot of examples of the positive. But equally as many negative.

And are they in the same place? Tell me a bit more about your grid.

Janice: It's more rectangular, and the individual pictures are more rectangular. . . . And I've got it tied in with time. They mostly alternate—the negatives and the positives. Sometimes there can be a bunch of either one or the other. The negative ones are brighter.

The negative ones are brighter. That probably makes them more prominent to you.

Janice: Yes, I notice them more.

When you say it has to do with time, does that mean that each image is later in time than the one next to it, in a sequence?

Janice: Yeah.

And they more or less alternate, right? So you get a plus, then a minus, then plus, then every once in a while you get a few minuses, and then maybe

a few pluses or whatever. They're organized by time, and the negatives ones are brighter. Are there any other differences between the negatives and the positives? How about size—they're both rectangles?

Janice: The negative ones are maybe a bit more three dimensional, like a relief.

OK, Are there any other differences? ...

Janice: I think those are the key elements. With the negative ones, there's more auditory.

There's more auditory with the negative ones.

Janice: Yeah, there is some auditory. If there's any auditory in the positive ones, it's much quieter.

Since the negative ones are brighter, more 3-D, and have auditory, I'd guess that you more often think of yourself as "not Q." Does that fit for you? (Yes.)

Before proceeding, I want you to do a thorough congruence check. Turn your attention inward, and ask if any part of you has any objection to your having Q as an unambiguous part of your identity. Be sensitive to any signal in any modality—Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic....

Janice: No, all I have is a nice expectancy, a kind of eagerness to go ahead, and that's in all modalities.

OK, fine. I noticed that your head and body also moved slightly forward, which is congruent with that. Next I want you to group all the negative ones and then examine them, to see if a group of them are actually examples of some other quality, because if so, then we can simply separate them from Q.

Janice: No, I don't think so.

OK. There are a number of choices about what sequence we use to transform these negative ones into positive ones. I'm going to try one sequence, and if it doesn't fit for you, you can let me know, and we'll back up and do it a different way, because I want to make sure it's comfortable for you. If at any time we do something that is at all uncomfortable, let me know, and we'll try something else.

I'd like you to start by just bringing this collage for the ambiguous quality down into the same space where the positive template is. It looks like they're both about the same distance, right?

Janice: Yeah.

Try just bringing it down into the same space that the positive template occupies ... and report back to me about how that works for you, and if that results in any other changes....

Janice: It gets softer.

It gets softer. Did the images become more rounded? Does it take the

form of the template—with the wavy rounded outside, and oval individual examples and counterexamples?

Janice: Yeah. They become more random, as well. The distribution isn't arranged by time any more.

OK. Great. That sounds good to me. Notice how important location is. When Janice moved the grid down into the location of the positive template, several things happened spontaneously. The time sequencing disappeared, the positive and negative ones became more randomly oriented, the shape changed from rectangles into ovals. Often when you make a location change, many other things change spontaneously. I always like to track that, so I know what's happening. Is that comfortable for you?

Janice: Yes, I like the softness.

Now, I want you to see if you can find any other examples of positive Q that you could add in to that. They might all be in there already, but maybe you could find some other positive ones, other times when you have had that quality in the way that you would like....

Janice: I think I have most of them in there already.

OK, fine. I'm doing what I can to make Q more like the positive template. Sometimes people go, "Oh! There's this other one and that other one," and so on, and then they can add more positive ones into it, which makes it even stronger.

OK, now I'd like you to take a look at the the images of negative Q, the counterexamples. You said that now they are ovals. Are they still brighter? And 3-D with auditory and so on? Or has anything changed in that?

Janice: I get auditory if I step into them. And, yes, they're still brighter.

OK. And how about the 3-D relief?

Janice: Uhhh, no, they're flat now.

Now I want you to close your eyes and allow those counterexamples, the negative Q, to group themselves. Maybe they start moving or swimming around and end up grouping themselves into certain assemblages that have something in common. Perhaps it might be one group, perhaps it might be several, I don't know. But they'll group themselves somehow in terms of what they have in common....

Janice: There are a number of different commonalities between them. And yet in some ways they could also share those commonalities, so it could be, say, three descriptions that would—

OK, so there are three criteria that are common to all of them?

Janice: Yeah.

Let's try taking them all at once and see what happens. I'm lazy, so if we can do something that could change a whole bunch of experiences at once, I always like to try for it. And then if it doesn't work, or there are

some left over, then we can always work more with those. So you're aware of how they all share these three criteria, is that right?

Janice: Well, I think I can group the three criteria actually into one word.

OK, so the three criteria can even be grouped into one word, so they all have this in common. Now, choose the most significant one of those counterexamples—the *worst* one that somehow symbolizes all the others, and represents of all of them.

Janice: Could I take two?

Sure. Take two if you want. And now do some kind of transformation with them. I would transform them one at a time, probably, but do whatever is easiest for you. Start by trying simple videotape-editing. If you were to go through that kind of experience again, what would you like to do differently that would be an example of positive Q? You don't need to tell me about it. Just let me know if you need any assistance in transforming those two examples.

Janice: Well, in both situations there's another person involved... who is implanting the negative aspect.

OK. So what resources would you need to be able to comfortably deal with that situation in which this other person is behaving in a way that's difficult for you? If you run into any difficulties, let me know, and I'll offer you more specific instructions....

If I were working with someone who didn't know anything about change processes, of course I would need to do much more, and I probably wouldn't do it content-free. I would need to know something about the content of this one word that encapsulates the three words, which describe what is common to all the counterexamples. At this point, it's a matter of using any change technique at your disposal to assist someone in transforming the counterexamples into positive examples.

Janice: I am having a bit of difficulty in finding resources to deal with it.

OK. Can you think of someone else that you know, or you've heard of, or seen in movies or something, who has that kind of resource? Someone who can deal with that kind of situation in a way that you consider resourceful and appropriate....

Janice: OK.

So have you got it the way you want it? Have you done both of them?

Janice: Yes, I've done both of them.

So now you have two representations of positive Q that have been transformed from the negative. We said these were to represent all the others, so I want you to check several of the other negative ones, and see if they are transformed, or if we have some further work to do.

Janice: Mmhm.

Are they all different, too?

Janice: They're not as bright.

That's probably a good indication. I want you to pick any one of them and step into it, and find out if it is transformed, or if it is still a negative example. Doing change work on a group of experiences usually transfers to all of the examples, but I like to check to make sure.

Janice: Should these all feel like the positive Q?

Uhhuh.

Janice: (hesitating) Well, they're not negative. Even the ones that I deliberately transformed are less negative, but they're not—

OK. Now, that's an indication to me that you need an additional resource, because we want these to be *fun*, not just less negative. Maybe "fun" is the wrong word. But, we want them to be really *positive*, not just "OK."

Janice: "Fun" sounds good.

If it fits for you, that's wonderful. But whatever resource you add, we want these experiences to end up being so positive that no matter what happens out there in the real world, you're "bullet-proof," and you can take great pleasure in that. So maybe you need to search for another resource. Maybe fun, maybe humor—that is a wonderful resource—or some kind of enjoyment.

And since you said this has to do with another person, I'm going to suggest a couple of things, without knowing anything about the content. Sometimes it can be very helpful to have some compassion for them, and to realize that their negative behavior is just what they're doing out of their own unhappiness, or their own limitations, or family history, or whatever. In other words, what they're saying or doing is not really about you—it's about *them*.

Janice: Mmhm.

Are they positive examples now? (Yeah.) Great. Now check some of the others to make sure they're also positive now. (Yes.) Great. Are there any leftovers? (No.) When you look at them, do you have some way of knowing which ones are transformed and which ones really happened?

Janice: Yes, the transformed ones are smaller.

OK. And they're not as bright now, is that right? (Yes.) OK. Now, I want to ask you about them being smaller. I'm a little concerned that by making them smaller you would be deemphasizing them. Those transformed examples could be even *more* valuable as a direction for you in how you want to be in your life than the original examples, because they represent how you can exhibit that quality in situations where you previously couldn't. I suggest that you consider color coding them in some way to indicate that they were transformed from counterexamples, so that they could be the same size as the others.

Janice: In the positive template, the counterexamples are turquoise, so I could use that color.

That sounds fine. Go ahead and do that, and then see if it is OK to have the transformed ones be the same size as the originals.

Janice: Yes, that works.

Now I'd like you to compare what you have assembled with the original positive template, and find out if you notice any differences.

Janice: The only difference I see is that the positive template has those turquoise counterexamples that haven't been transformed.

Oh, you still have counterexamples there? Counterexamples are useful, but they are relatively crude, so my preference would be for you to take the counterexamples that are now turquoise in the original positive template and transform them into examples in the same way that you did the others.

Janice: OK. Mmhm.

Take a minute to do that.

Janice: It's done.

It's done already. OK, fine. Sometimes people are fast, and jump ahead. So now if you compare Q with the positive template, are they the same structurally? (Mmhm.) Now I want you to check to be sure that Q is an appropriate name for this database we have just created, or if some other name would fit better.

Janice: Q is fine.

OK, great. Open your eyes. Are you a Q person?

Janice: Hmm! (slightly surprised) I *am* a Q person. (she laughs)

Can you say anything about how you feel about that?

Janice: Very positive.

And if you look back and compare what you're experiencing now with what you experienced 10 minutes ago? . . .

Janice: It's hard to remember. (laughing) It feels much stronger.

I'd like you to examine one of the transformed examples, which used to have a lot of auditory in them. If you step into one of those, does it still have a lot of auditory, or is it different?

Janice: It has the auditory, but it's much softer and kinder.

OK, so the tonality of the voices or the sounds has shifted.

Janice: Yes. And it doesn't "get me" emotionally in the same way.

Great. When I ask questions like this, I am also testing, to be sure that the changes are complete. Janice, I want you to check again to find out if any part of you has any objection to the changes we have made? . . .

Janice: I just have a little happy bubbly feeling all over, so I'm pretty sure the answer is "No."

Do you have any questions for Janice about her experience of doing this? Save any questions about the process for me.

Fran: How did it feel when you were changing?

Janice: Much easier than I anticipated. It was primarily visual. Because I only had the auditory if I stepped into a picture, what was going on was really just visual. When I grouped them together and looked at what could be their positive intent, there was a sense of relaxation when I recognized that there was a positive quality to the negative. So that was a sort of a "Whew!" feeling. And then when they were transformed, it just felt good. But primarily it was visual.

Are there any other questions for Janice? . . . Thanks very much. Do you have any questions for me about the process?

Tess: I'm wondering why you got all the information about the positive template and the ambiguous quality first, before asking about congruence? Why not ask about congruence right at the beginning?

If you do a congruence check right at the beginning, there is some danger that the change we are proposing might be unclear, and that muddies the communication. A part of the person that might actually object to it might not realize it, and a part that wouldn't actually object to the change might be worried and think that it did have an objection. By gathering all that information first, I set the stage for the check, so that every part of the person knows *exactly* what we're proposing to do. "We're planning to make *this* ambiguous quality just like *that* positive template." That's a very clear and specific communication that makes sure that we get any real objections, and not have to deal with concerns that are only due to vague communication.

Fred: I still wonder about making all these transformations. If all I had is transformed examples, I might forget all the mistakes that I made in the past, and the way I thought of myself would be kind of a lie, because I didn't actually do all those things.

Well, there are several related issues here that I'd like to respond to. The first is that if you are concerned about forgetting past mistakes, make sure that you include the counterexample linked to its transformation, or color code the transformed examples the way Janice did. If you include the counterexample itself, then you have all that information about how you made mistakes in the past available to you. If you code the transformed examples in some way, that indicates that you made mistakes in the past, but omits the detailed information about how it occurred.

The second point I want to make is that a transformed quality might be a lie with regard to the past, but it's a truth with regard to the future. Remember that *your self-concept is a feed-forward system that creates how*

you want to be in the future. In one sense, NASA's moon program was a lie for years until it actually put a man on the moon. If you have made effective transformations of past mistakes, they will result in your actually *being* different in future situations, and that is the truth that matters.

In order to understand behavior, psychology and psychiatry has searched for cause-effect relationships in people's lives, and that has produced a lot of useful information. However, sometimes that gets warped into the idea that we are *only* products of our past, or completely trapped and determined by our past experiences. We also have feed-forward systems, in which our goals in the present determine our future—and the self-concept is the most powerful one that I know of. If you *didn't* utilize your self-concept in order to change your future, *then* you would be trapped by your past.

Alice: Janice's ambiguous quality was in the same visual representational system as her positive template, but in a different location. What if the ambiguous quality was in the auditory or kinesthetic system, as well as being divided in different locations?

OK, let's assume that the positive template is visual, and the ambiguous quality is divided between the positive auditory examples and negative kinesthetic examples. I would first take the positive auditory ones, and change them into visual images, and then put them into the template, because that gives you a head start on creating the positive quality.

Then I'd take the negative kinesthetic ones and change them to visual images, examine them, group them, and transform them into positive examples, and put them into the template. However, if that sequence wasn't comfortable, I'd try something else. When you keep your eventual outcome clearly in mind, you can vary how you get there.

For instance, I might first try just moving the entire ambiguous representation into the location of the positive template, as I did with Janice, to see if the examples would automatically change into visual images. I wouldn't count on that working, but it might. Rather than talk about it, let's demonstrate. Who has an ambiguous quality that's in a different modality *and* in different locations?

Demonstration #2 Ambiguous Quality to Positive Quality

Bruce: My positive template is basically like a screen of televisions, and my counterexamples are like smaller flatter televisions within that, a little lower. There are three of them, and they are meshed in.

OK. So you've got a display of larger TVs, and every once in a while you get a little one that has a counterexample in it, and you were gesturing a couple of feet in front of you. So this is what we want to end up with. Now tell me how your ambiguous quality is represented.

Bruce: Well, there are sequential images, a bit to the right. They're actually quite small, but about the same distance, about two feet. A picture flashes up of how I would like to be, the times when I'm that way, the positive ones, and that gives me an auditory, "That's great." Then I get a feeling that contradicts that image, and then an auditory that goes with that, and then I get a second kinesthetic feeling of heaviness, of settling down.

So the first image and voice is the positive image and then you get the contradictory feeling, that has an auditory with it. What does that auditory say?

Bruce: It says, "I can't be bothered. It's too much effort."

Do you believe the "too much effort"?

Bruce: Yeah, it just seems to be—I could get over it, but unless I had a really strong outcome, it's just too much of a struggle.

OK. I want to say something, just in case it might be relevant. I said I wanted an ambiguity where your values are really clear, and it's possible that your values are not clear on this. You might think, "Oh yeah, I'd like to be this way all the time," but it might actually be too much effort, "Well, you know, it's really not worth it." I just want to raise that possibility for you to consider. Do you have any response to that?

Bruce: I would like this particular quality to kick in sooner. It does eventually, but it has to kind of go through a threshold when the situation around me escalates, then I have to kick into that quality.

OK. So it's a little bit too slow for you; you have to reach a threshold, and it's effortful. These are some of the criteria that we probably will want to use when we transform counterexamples. The reason they are counterexamples is because of the slowness in reaching threshold, and the effort. There might be more, but this is at least some of the content information that would be relevant.

We've got the basic structure of the ambiguous quality. Now it's time for a congruence check. Close your eyes and ask, "Is there any part of me that has any objection to having this as an unambiguous positive quality?" You wouldn't have to go through the effort of reaching threshold, it would be quick and automatic. You always have the choice of exhibiting it or not, but it could be right at your fingertips, immediately available, just as with all the other positive qualities that you have. Given all that, do you have any objections?

Bruce: No.

OK, that looks good. The first thing I want you to do is take a positive example, one of those pictures that flashes, and represent it in this template. Make it into one of those TV screens.... You're taking a little while to do that. Is it difficult?

Bruce: Mmhmm.

What makes it difficult?

Bruce: As soon as I start to get a positive example of demonstrating this quality, I get a "but—" right away.

OK, great. I apologize; let me adjust my instruction a little bit. I want you to take one of these *units* that includes *both* the positive and the negative. The positive is already an image, so that already fits the positive template. Take the kinesthetic that follows and the auditory that goes with that, and transform those into a visual image. What is that feeling about? What is that voice about? Trace it back from the voice and the kinesthetic to get a visual image of what that counterexample is....

Bruce: I saw two things. One is me just kind of slumped in a chair, and the other one is actually an image of my father making passing comments on a series of things that I've done, but always adding in, "*but* you could have also done this as well."

OK, we're getting into content a bit more than I like for a demonstration. Pick either one of those images—or both if you want—and then take this unit that includes both the positive and the negative images, and represent it up here in the form of the template, so that you have the positive on the big TV screen, and the counterexample a bit lower in a small screen....

Bruce: Now the "but" is easier to ignore. I know it is there, but it's more matter-of-fact. That makes it much easier

Great. Now it has less impact on you. I apologize for making it hard for you at first. Usually they aren't linked in the way you have them. Now take another one and do the same thing....

OK, do you have several up there? Do you have your screen pretty much full?

Bruce: I'm still filling in a few more examples.

OK, take a couple of minutes, or whatever time it takes, to get a few more, until it's the same as your positive template. Initially there may be more counterexamples than you'd like, but at least the form will be the same, with the larger screens for examples, and the smaller ones for counterexamples....

Now I want you to examine the counterexamples to find out what's similar about them. Given what you said about the first one involving your father, It sounds like they might have to do with somebody else's opinion.

Bruce: I think that the common central theme is disappointment. I disappointed myself by disappointing somebody else. Having squashed those counterexamples down, it sort of changed the meaning of those pictures. Now it's more about, "Why did I put so much pressure on myself to do these things?"

OK. Now take the worst one, and think about what you would have *liked* to do in that situation, and what resource would allow you to transform it into what you want. From what you've said, it sounds like a little bit of evaluation might be helpful. Perhaps taking time to step back out of the situation for a moment to consider, "Is this something *I* want, or is this something somebody else wants, or perhaps both?" Consider what resource would be useful, and then transform the worst one, and check to see if the rest are also transformed....

Bruce: Yep.

Are there any counterexamples left?

Bruce: The counterexamples are now more just feedback opportunities that I can use, instead of straightaway going to the pain, the "beating myself up." If I can have it as an image, then I can look at it and I can go, "What can I dismiss from this particular opinion that's coming at me, and what can I take as something valuable to use."

OK. That sounds great to me. Unless you want to go straight for the bad feeling?

Bruce: No, I don't think so. No.

Making a little joke like this can actually be quite useful. When I say, "Well, you can always choose to do the old thing," and they say, "Well, I don't think I want to do that," it kind of locks in the change a little bit. "No way! No, I don't want to do that."

Bruce: This works a lot better.

Are there any other remaining counterexamples?

Bruce: No. The ones that really sort of stuck out are all taken care of.

OK, great. Is your name for this quality still appropriate? Given that you've made some changes and some transformations, it could be that the name is a little archaic and needs a little update.

Bruce: Well, the word is still fine, but the *meaning* of the quality has changed for me. Before it was a very digital representation, and now there's a whole range of other ways to demonstrate this quality that I never even thought of before.

Interesting. How did you get all these other ways of demonstrating the quality?

Bruce: Well, now that it is a way of *being*, I can just behave, rather than have to do it so intensely.

I see. Before you had this need to have it intensely because of the ambiguity? (Yes.) OK. Now I want you to imagine going into the future. Think of a time that you might encounter one of these situations where this quality would be particularly useful, and just step into that and find out what it's like...

That looks pretty satisfactory; you're nodding your head. Do you have any objections to that? . . .

Bruce: No, it's fine.

From your present position, looking back on when you were ambiguous about this quality, what do you notice about the difference between those two experiences?

Bruce: Well the first thing that comes to mind is that sense in my body, that I have had to battle a lot of the time—I'm not going to have to do that any more. That heaviness that I had in the past is not there. And the tension through the shoulders that I usually have is gone. Instead I've got a nice energetic movement, a slight swirling through the middle of my back,.

Do you notice anything in the auditory system?

Bruce: I'm neither having to "coach" myself one way or the other—either talk myself into demonstrating this quality, or talk myself out of it.

OK. Do you have this quality?

Bruce: (quickly) Yes. Yes.

That looks good to me—a nice quick and congruent response.

OK, do you have any questions of Bruce? Keep any questions for me for later.

Sally: Do you feel confident of that?

Bruce: Yeah. I am confident. What lets me know that is the lack of auditory. I don't feel the need to talk myself into one way or the other. I just will be that way. It's not like "trumpets" or anything like that going on inside, because there's no need for that kind of intensity. It's just quite quiet, and very matter-of-fact.

That's a *very* nice answer, and that's exactly what you want to hear at this point. If you do hear "trumpets," that means that they still feel ambiguous about the quality. For example, what if you went up to a door and as you opened it, you announced to everybody, "I can open the door!" That might be appropriate for a small child who has just learned how to do it, but it would be pretty ridiculous for an adult. When people are uncertain about something, they typically have that quality of being *too* strong, *too* much, *too* conscious of it. When you presuppose an ability, you don't even think about it, you just do it.

A lot of people think that confidence *is* like the "trumpets" that Bruce mentioned, and a lot of politicians and motivational speakers talk like that. For a lot of people that is very convincing, because they don't realize that *overconfidence* is actually a sign of *uncertainty*. Bruce's answer is great. "I don't have to talk myself into it, I don't have to talk myself out of it. I just do it." That tells you that now it is simply and solidly a part of his identity.

Thanks very much, Bruce. Now do you have any questions for me?

Stan: I really like the idea of testing your work by looking back and comparing after making a change. Can you say a little more about that?

Sure. That accomplishes several things simultaneously, and some of them aren't obvious. The overt question is to gather information about what is different, to be sure that the changes are in line with what we're trying to accomplish. However, I'm also *presupposing* that there will be differences; if there weren't any, of course that would be clear evidence that we need to do more. Bruce was very eloquent about the shifts in his physiology. The internal auditory battle and the heaviness and tension in his shoulders is gone, and now he has a nice energetic movement in his back.

But asking him to look back is also a way to *consolidate* the change, because it presupposes that he fully *associates* into the present and *dissociates* from how he was. I'm also expecting that the present state is more satisfying than the old one, and listening for any possible indication to the contrary. So there is quite a lot going on in that simple instruction—so much that it's pretty unlikely that someone could track it all and consciously fake a response that they'd like to have, but don't really feel.

Lois: When you transform an ambiguous quality into a positive one, how can you be sure that it will fit in with all the other qualities of the person?

Remember that I specified at the beginning that your values were clear—that you know that you *want* to be like the positive side of the ambiguity. That presupposes that you have already gone through a process of thinking about it, and have concluded that's how you want to be.

However, just because I asked you to choose a quality for which your values are clear, that doesn't mean that they necessarily are. When you examine the examples and the counterexamples carefully, you might discover that your values actually aren't clear. If you're not clear about what you want, it's totally appropriate to feel ambiguous about a quality. You would have to clarify your values first, and decide what you want to do. Earlier I made a few suggestions about how to do that. Usually the most useful thing you can do is to experience specific situations to find out what you value, rather than trying to figure it out intellectually.

Andy: It seems to me that what we have been calling an ambiguity is the same as what has often been called a "polarity," so I keep thinking of other ways that I have learned for working with polarities, like internal negotiation between the two sides, or the "Visual Squash," in which the two representations are moved together into the same space with the hands, and I'd like you to comment on those methods.

Yes, polarity and ambiguity are two names for the same thing, as far as I'm concerned. We could speak of "one part of you" that believes that you have the quality, while "another part" believes the opposite. There are

older NLP methods that can be used to integrate them, and one example is the Visual Squash (2, Ch. 13). Although these methods are quite powerful and effective, they are also very crude, because we don't have much chance to gather detailed information about either side, and that makes it difficult to make detailed predictions about the results of the integration.

Another problem with simply integrating the two sides of a polarity is that it all happens at once—*all* the examples and counterexamples of both sides are slammed together at a moment in time—rather like instantly moving two very different households full of furniture together into one house. That is why most people require a good deal of time for integration afterwards. It takes a while to sort out the mess and make it livable—to decide what furniture goes where, what to store in the attic, and what to sell or give to a thrift store, etc.

When you transform and integrate counterexamples one at a time, or in groups of similar ones, you have much better information about the content of your examples and counterexamples. That allows you to carefully consider the best kind of resource and transformation, and your internal ecology. Rather than just anchoring the two polarities and slamming them together, you take one counterexample at a time (or a group of similar ones) *transform* it first, and then *cautiously* integrate it.

If there is some objection, we back up and find out what we need to do first in order to make it easy. This makes the process much more detailed, elegant, and less disruptive, and it requires very little time for integration and sorting things out later. Doing this kind of process is a lot less dramatic than the visual squash, but it is also a lot gentler and more thorough, and much more respectful of all aspects of the person.

Follow-up Report

Now I want to offer you a follow-up that I got from a participant a week after she had worked on being healthy, which had been ambiguous for her:

There would be pockets of time when I would be healthy, when I would eat really well and exercise regularly. But more often I wouldn't eat properly and I wouldn't get enough sleep, and I wouldn't be healthy. I tended to sit down at my computer and just work until I was absolutely *starving* and then I'd have to grab from whatever was in the fridge that only took five minutes to prepare. And then I wouldn't do any of the exercise either, because I'd be busy doing work, and I also wasn't sleeping enough.

So I revised those counterexamples to what I wanted instead. I took your advice of looking at the entire scope of the day—instead of just the moment when 'I'm starving what do I about it?' looking at replanning my whole day. 'A healthy person eats regular meals, they make time for exercise, and preparing food.' And then I also looked at a span of a whole week and thought, 'Well, whether I do all the work in one hit, or whether I do it over a week, it's exactly the same. The work gets done, the outcome is the same, so why don't I just pepper in all these other things?' I also added in other resources of creativity and sensuality, so that cooking can be creative and sensual and more fun for me.

So all those counterexamples became healthy examples, and since then it's been fabulous! I'm on automatic pilot now with being healthier. Now when I hit 9:00, I realize I need to have breakfast. And then when I'm at the computer or doing something else, I now say to myself, 'OK, well I've done this for a couple of hours,' so I'll stop and say, 'OK, well I've gotta go prepare something.' Or I'll say 'OK, well let's go for a walk,' or I'll go play in the garden. It's just all automatic; it just happens. I don't have to really think about it. It's just like a clock goes on in me and says, 'OK, time to switch.' That never happened before, and it's lovely. I really like the idea of doing change work using that larger scope of time, rather than a single experience. That was incredibly helpful for me.

I want to point out that previously she had imposed a rigid hierarchy on herself by continuing to work at the computer while ignoring her need for food—until she was "starving" and *had* to pay attention to it. Her resolution respects the natural heterarchy of her various different needs.

I want you to pair up and take turns practicing this process with each other, using the outline on the next page. An ambiguous quality will usually have a fairly large number of counterexamples, so it is likely that there are some other important outcomes that have to be respected. That makes it more likely that there may be objections to transforming the counterexamples, and it may take a bit more change work to make it congruent.

I want you to work primarily by yourselves, but I still want you to be in pairs, in case one of you needs some assistance, and also to share experiences afterward. Those of you who are therapists might prefer to guide each other through this process: one of you can be a client with a troubling ambiguous quality, and one of you to be the change agent, and then switch.

Exercise 10 Transforming an Ambiguous Quality into a Positive One. (pairs, 20 minutes each)

Pick an aspect of yourself that is ambiguous—sometimes you think you're "X," sometimes you think you're not "X," and you *know* how you'd like to be—your *values* are clear. The steps below are a suggested sequence. A different sequence may work better for a given person. Keep the eventual outcome in mind, while respecting the individual's needs.

1. Positive template. Elicit the structure/process that you use to represent a positive quality that you like. (What you have already been doing.)

2. Tune-up. Use all that you have learned to improve what you already do to make your representation of this quality even better, by adding modalities, future examples, other perceptual positions, processing counterexamples, etc. (Again, you have already been doing this.)

3. Elicit the structure/process of the ambiguous quality. How do you represent the examples and counterexamples of this quality?

4. Congruence check. "Does any part of you have any objection to having this quality as an unambiguous positive part of your self-concept?" Satisfy any/all objections, through refraining, redefining the quality, accessing resources, building behavioral competence, etc. before proceeding.

5. Examine counterexamples (or a group of them), to find if they actually represent a different quality that can be named appropriately, and separated from the original quality.

6. Represent examples in the form of the positive template. If your positive examples are not already in the form of the positive template, shift them into that form.

7. Group and transform any remaining counterexamples into examples of the quality, and place them into the database with the other examples.

8. Check summary. Review your name for this quality to be sure it is appropriate for the modified database.

9. Looking back. Looking back at your previous experience, what differences do you notice between what you are experiencing now and what you experienced before?

10. Testing. "Are you ____?" Observe nonverbal responses.

11. Congruence check. Again check for congruence with the work that has been done. "Does any part of you have any objection to the changes that you have made?" Satisfy any/all objections.

* * * * *

Do you have any questions or comments?

Frank: I'd like to report what mine was like. My positive template is represented here in front of me at eye level, and a little to my left, about a foot away. There's a big picture here, almost in front of me, and then a couple of smaller ones to the left of that one, that are sort of "backups," ready to take the place of the big one whenever I need it. The rest of my database is in a vertical arc that passes between the big one and the two smaller ones. When I focus on any image in the database, it moves up here where the big image is, and then when I'm done with it, it moves back, and then one of the smaller ones moves over to take its place. My ambiguous quality had the same kind of structure, but the two backup images were blank, and when I searched for examples in the database, there were also a lot of blanks. There were a few positive examples, and a few negatives, but mostly it was just a lot of empty frames where examples ought to be. So I just searched for positive examples and put them into those empty frames until they were all full, and then transformed the counterexamples.

Great. So that was actually very similar to building a quality—assembling positive examples in the form of the positive template.

Demie: My positive template is a collage of slides, about a foot away, about six rows and six columns, with bright light behind, and they are all positive examples. If I bring in a counterexample, it always goes right into the middle, where it's surrounded by positives. The slides go out of the display on my left side, and circle around behind me into a storage bank, and then they come in again on my right side when I need them. But in my ambiguous quality, all the slides in the three rows on my left side were negative, and all the ones on the right were positive. I felt so awful looking at it, I didn't have a clue what to do. My partner looked at the way the slides in my positive template rotated around behind me, and suggested that I move the whole collage to my left, so that all the negatives could go into storage, while more positives could come in on the right. I couldn't believe how simple that was, and how relieved I felt. Then I could bring one negative at a time into the center and transform it. When I was done with that, I was crying, because it was so nice to know that I had that quality.

Great. In these two examples the ambiguous quality was organized in a way that was very similar to the positive template, and that made it much easier to transform it into a positive quality. It's not always that easy, but sometimes it is. What can you say about the experience of having had an ambiguous quality from this new perspective.

Demie: It's like looking at a stranger. I don't know how I could have felt so bad.

Frank: The main thing I noticed was very similar to what Bruce said.

I feel much more comfortable now that the ambiguity is resolved, because I don't have that back-and-forth doubt. I don't feel any need to tell anyone about the positive side of it, whereas before I did. And because I wanted to cover up my own uncertainty, I came across too strong.

I talked about this before, but it is so important that I want to say even more about it. When I described the criteria for an effective self-concept earlier, one of them was that it be free of the self-importance, egotism, and superiority that results from consciously comparing yourself with others.

I want you all to think of some situation in which you felt uncertain about your ability to meet some important challenge, like a job interview, or a date with an awesome person. Most of us tend to tense up, and struggle to look *more* confident and capable than we actually feel, and our behavior is likely to have this *too much* quality.

It takes a lot of time and effort to maintain a false self, particularly when you include all it takes to buy and maintain the fancy car, big house, etc. that someone needs to support their self-importance, even when they aren't inherently enjoyable. And this is often true of social "rebels" as well. I knew one guru "wannabe" who spent hours making sure that his hair had the Baba Ram Dass look, and a punker once told me that it took a couple of hours to color and set his spiked hair each day. If someone truly enjoys any of those activities, I have no argument, but if it is primarily to announce their identity to the world, I think that they could probably spend that time in ways that they enjoy more.

A false self is usually created in response to accepting some sort of social demand or ideal. Thinking that you "should" be a certain way, rather than how you are, is a good way to make your life "shoulddy." Some people create a false self out of social expedience, while retaining a strong sense of who they really are. Others may get so involved in maintaining their false self that they lose awareness of who they are, and it's all too easy to slip from expedience to denial.

Curiously, many spiritual paths or self-improvement programs often become yet another set of "shoulds" to be imitated in the competition for status within those groups. Back in the '60's, with its emphasis on being in the "here and now," there was a syndrome that could be described as "Nower than thou," which actually put people clearly in the "there and then," of self-importance. Social and political groups are often led by egotists who bolster their own uncertainty by becoming expert leaders or gurus, and many of their followers do the same by identifying with the guru's charisma and success.

At some level, someone with a false self—and we all have some of

it—realizes that it isn't real, and that creates yet another trap. When someone responds to a false self, that means that the response isn't really to the person, but only to the false image, so they can't enjoy it. That is the source of a lot of loneliness, which is most obvious in movie stars, politicians, or other famous people who work at creating an image, and then find it hard to believe that anyone could love the person behind the image.

Many people think pride is a good thing, despite what the Bible and many other spiritual sources clearly say. Like its opposite, shame, pride always involves comparing yourself to someone else, and being either better than, or worse than them. Pride and self-importance are signs of a shaky self-concept, one that can easily flip to its opposite, shame and unimportance. When things go well, an egotist is glad to take responsibility for it, but when things go badly, suddenly it's someone else's fault. "Scratch a braggart and find a complainer." Curiously, even humility can be a source of pride, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge pointed out a couple of hundred years ago:

... the devil did grin, for his darling sin
Is pride that apes humility.

When someone feels insecure about a quality, they take any challenge to it *very* seriously, and will respond defensively and do almost anything to restore their sense of importance. One example of this is a "macho" male who struts and brags about his manhood, and who will take offense at the slightest word or action that appears to challenge it, and *has* to respond, often with violence, sometimes even to the point of killing the offender. What a trap!

Men in trouble with the law are often in this situation, though not many are willing to admit to it, since admitting to it would also be a challenge to their image or status. Many prisoners have such an inflated and unrealistic way of thinking about themselves that they completely believe that the only reason they are in prison is that someone made a clerical error. "It's all a terrible mistake."

It's no accident that pride and envy are among the seven deadly sins in Christianity. In the old Greek version they were understood to be the *worst*, and the ones from which all the others spring. Anger, another of the deadly sins, is seldom in response to actual physical harm or danger. Most anger and violence is in response to criticism, insult, disrespect, or some other challenge to someone's self-importance, or what is often called ego.

Many people believe that anger is in response to hurt, and at one level, that's true. But hurt is usually in response to some kind of disrespect, an

injury to how someone *thinks* of themselves. In the 60's movie *The Russians are Coming*, as Alan Arkin (a Russian) climbs out of a bullet-riddled Volkswagen, he says, "My dignity only is injured."

When our expectations are not met, there is always a loss, and the first response to loss is disappointment and sadness. This feeling is often so immediately and completely overshadowed by anger and other attempts to avenge or repair the pride of the damaged ego, that the sadness is not noticed. Sir Walter Scott said it well over 200 years ago:

Vengeance, deep brooding o'er the slain,
Had lock'd the source of softer woe;
And burning pride and high disdain
Forbade the rising tear to flow.

When something terrible happens, sadness is a more basic feeling, and usually a *much* better place to start problem solving than pride, anger, and vengeance.

There are many other much subtler signs of self-importance and egotism. A friend of mine often used to comment on food by saying things like, "That was *such* a good steak." It took me a while to realize that she was not really talking about the steak! The steak was just a convenient way to brag about *herself* and her exquisitely superior taste discrimination. Often people are talking much more about themselves than they are about the apparent topic of conversation, so you can gather a lot of useful information without even asking any questions.

Whenever you observe pride or self-importance, that is an opportunity to resolve an ambiguity using this process. A stable self-concept can only be based on who you *are*, and the *satisfactions* of living a life that exemplifies your values, without comparing yourself to others. When your self-concept is solidly based on your own experience, then *no one can take it away*, and you are safe from disrespect, humiliation, anger and hurt—and all the turmoil and suffering that results from it. When Buddhism and many other spiritual traditions advocate eliminating the self, I think what they really mean is eliminating the egotism that results from ambiguity. By transforming an ambiguous quality into a positive one, this egotism is eliminated.

Sarah: When you talk about the macho male, and others who aren't willing to acknowledge tenderness and tears, etc., I think of the approaches that advocate accepting your "dark side" or "shadow" self, as a way to become a more whole and complete human being.

Yes, when someone consciously identifies with one side of an ambiguity, often because of rigid and absolute social or religious beliefs, they

often *disidentify* with the opposite, which becomes a kind of hidden "shadow" self. Because of our society's sex-role stereotypes, the shadow self for a male in our society is likely to include the things that you mention, while for a woman it is likely to be things like assertiveness, anger, power, etc. Some people think of the shadow self as being evil or dangerous, and it does often include unacknowledged anger, aggression, and other natural, though troublesome, responses. But often it also includes very wonderful and valuable qualities that are unacknowledged because they don't fit the social stereotypes. I will have more to say about the shadow self soon, but I want to wait until some other understandings are in place.

Summary

You have learned how to transform an ambiguous quality of self-concept into a positive one, using two major processes. One is to *place the positive examples into the form of the positive template*, which may require *changing the modality of the examples*. The other is to *transform counterexamples*, so that they become *examples* of how you want to be, and then add them into the positive template. There are several steps in this process of transformation. You *group counterexamples*, *transform the worst one of the group*, *check the rest of the group to be sure that they are also transformed*, and then *place them into the positive template*.

The very same process can be used to transform a negatively-valued quality into a positive one. Although this is often the most difficult kind of self-concept intervention, it is also the one with the most profound benefits.

But before we do that, I want to explore a different and much simpler kind of negative self-concept, in which the representations of the summary and the database are *negated*. In what I call the "not-self," someone defines themselves by what they are *not*, rather than by what they *are*. This is very different from the negation of *not liking* how they think of themselves. The "not-self" can be either the easiest, or the most difficult to change, depending on how extensively someone has become trapped in it.

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Changing the "Not Self"

When people speak of a "negative self-concept," what they usually mean is that someone has a self-concept that is negatively-*valued*. When someone says, "I'm clumsy," that is probably negatively-valued, since people seldom value clumsiness. However, even if the person doesn't value being clumsy, "clumsy" is a name for a set of behaviors that can be *represented* positively, without any negation. That is, I can make images of what it means to be clumsy—pictures of myself stumbling, or spilling things, breaking things, etc.

Before learning how to transform a negatively-valued aspect of self-concept, I want to explore a very different kind of negative self-concept, in which the *representation* of self-concept is negated. Fairly often you hear some people say, "I'm *not* the kind of person who—" or "I'm *not*—" rather than "I *am*—" If clumsiness were described as "not graceful," that would be an example of a self-concept in which the *representation* is negated.

If you say to yourself, "I'm not graceful," that usually elicits a very different set of representations than if you say to yourself, "I'm clumsy." I can imagine some of you saying, "Well, 'not graceful' means the same thing as 'clumsy.'" Negation is very difficult to talk about, and we have to make a very careful distinction between the *words* that people use and the *experiences* that underlie them. While those two sentences might mean the same thing in ordinary language, the experiences underlying them are often *very* different, and the consequences of defining the self by using a set of experiences that are negated can be profound and far-reaching.

"Notself" (negatively-valued)

I want you to think of something that you're *not*, some quality that you *don't* like. Because of the difficulty of talking about negations, it is helpful to use a little bit of content, so I'm going to use "cruelty" as an example, but you can use any other quality or attribute that you don't like, if you prefer. If you say to yourself, "I'm not cruel," how do you represent this internally? Take a few minutes to experience what it is like for you to define a quality in yourself by what you are *not*.

It can help to contrast your experience of the same quality defined positively and negatively. What is the difference between your experience of "I'm *not* cruel" compared with "I'm kind"? What is your database like for "not cruel"? How do you respond to it, and what impact will this response tend to have on your behavior? . . .

I'd like to gather several examples of how you experience a negatively defined (and negatively-valued), quality. To preserve your privacy, I suggest that whatever disliked quality you chose to experience, you talk about it using the word "cruel," as a kind of code word for it.

Bill: I felt awful. When I tried to think of "not cruel," all I could come up with was times when I *was* cruel. Then I had to push that away and do the right thing.

Fred: I see the word "cruel" much more boldly and clearly than the word "kind." The database of cruel is what you would expect—lots of examples of people being mean, and enjoying someone else's suffering. I don't like seeing all those images, and I want to pull back from them.

Rene: I see images of other people being cruel, but I stay dissociated. I usually step into my images, because even if I don't want to actually do something, I want to have a sense of what it would be like. So I begin to step in, and then a voice says, "No," and I back away from it. Then I feel kind of apathetic and bored, because I don't know what to do.

Lois: I do much the same as Rene, but when I step in, I feel scared, and then I think, "Well, if I'm not that, what am I?"

Al: I see indistinct, almost stick figure images, of someone being cruel, and then I have a feeling of recoiling, and curling up, wanting to defend myself.

Although each of you has noticed somewhat different aspects of the experience, those are all pretty similar. Words are clumsy things, and often people find creative ways to understand them. Did any of you do something different?

Ann: I made images of a number of times when I could have been cruel, but wasn't.

Sally: As soon as you said, "not cruel," I immediately went to seeing the opposite—being kind.

OK, you each did something a little different, but you both saw the *opposite* of being cruel. You did something that is different from what most people do, and in this case it's a very good choice, for reasons that will become clear as we explore this further.

However, right now I want you to make images of being cruel, and then negate them in some way, so that you can experience what that is like. When you know how others experience this, then when someone describes themselves with negation, it will be a lot easier for you to get rapport, and help them learn how to do something more useful.

Bill: I sort of flipped the words in my mind, and made images of all the things that *don't* fit the definition of being cruel—which is a *lot* of different things! My mind got pretty crowded with all that stuff.

"Not cruel" can mean very different things to different people. It can either mean "kindness," or it can mean *all* the things in the world that aren't cruel. It's easy to fall into thinking in digital "either/or" categories, completely ignoring the fact that there are a lot of things or events in the world that are *neither* kind nor cruel—the carpet on the floor, for instance.

Whenever you hear someone say or presuppose an either/or category like, "You're either with us or against us," or "either I have to do everything my wife wants, or get a divorce," that is an indication of a very limited world view that could use some finer discrimination, and exploration of all the possibilities in the middle zone between the two extremes of the "either/or."

Now I want you all to take this negation to the extreme. What would your life be like if not just one of your qualities, but *all* your qualities were described as negations? Take a minute or two to experience what it is like for you to imagine that whenever you think of yourself, it is always in terms of what you're *not*. *All* your qualities are experienced in this way. What is that like? . . .

Sam: It's very dark; I feel very alone and scared, separate and powerless, hemmed in by all these things that I don't like.

Ann: I have a tendency to feel like doing what is in all those images, and then I pull back from doing it. I feel as if I am all those awful things, but at the same time I wouldn't want to think that.

Alice: I'm very aware of seeing all these things around me that I don't like, and I'm pulling back from all of it. All my attention is directed to all this unpleasant stuff around me.

Yes, it's definitely an experience of going *away* from unpleasantness,

with no possibility to go *toward* anything. With no positive options to go toward, you naturally feel very limited and stuck.

Imagine that your home was entirely decorated with images of things that you don't like—and that you never left home—and you will have an idea of what this is like. Some people collect unpleasant experiences—grievances, guilts, regrets, disasters, ugliness of all kinds, and then live surrounded by them in their minds. Most people who come for therapy do much the same, at least with a problem situation. They are so aware of what they *don't* want, that they don't have much attention left for what they *do* want.

Lois: I can't see any distinctions. I have this sense of emptiness in my belly and chest, of not knowing anything about who I am, only who I'm *not*.

Yes, by focusing on the negation, there is no way to think about who you *are*, and there are no positive criteria for making distinctions. You can even take negation a step further and say, "I'm not the kind of person who—" The phrase "kind of person" describes a *category* of people, which separates the person even further from the negated behavior.

Or someone could say, "I'm not dishonest." Since "dishonest" is already a negation, they are negating a negation! In Spanish, that's easy to process, because multiple negations always produce a negation. But in English, each negation flips the one before it, so you have to go through some mental gymnastics to figure out whether the meaning is positive or negative. There may be some interesting and useful consequences of these variations, but the main point I want to make is that when someone defines themselves by negation, that gives them nothing positive to identify with.

Since the kinds of images that we make in regard to ourselves will tend to generate the behavior that is in the images, what kinds of responses would likely be generated by negated images?

Fred: I'd tend to notice cruelty, and all these other things everywhere in the world, and probably miss all the positive stuff. I'd also feel superior to all those people around me who are doing all these terrible things.

Yes, there is an implicit comparison between myself and others. Other people do these awful things, and I don't, so I can feel superior to them. And that comparison and superiority will also result in my feeling very separate from them, different and alone.

Rich: Since I feel an awful emptiness inside because I don't know who I am, I'm preoccupied with what others think of me, as a way of having *some* sense of who I am.

If you lived your whole life like this, what would a psychiatrist call it?

Fred: "Paranoid" is the word that comes to my mind. Imagining and

noticing bad things all around you, being scared and vigilant, ideas of self-importance and superiority, feeling alone and threatened, and fighting back.

Paranoia

Yes, exactly. Paranoia is the extreme of a process that nearly everyone does to some extent, and that was described over a hundred years ago as "projection." I "project" my unpleasant thoughts into the world, and see them all around me, rather than in myself. But although projection was described in some detail long ago, no one has ever proposed a mechanism for how it actually works, or how to change it. It was always just, "This is what happens, and everyone does at least a little of it, and paranoids do a lot of it, and this is how to recognize it."

Paranoids are usually thought to be very angry people who repress it, so it can only be expressed in retaliation against their persecutors, but I am not at all sure this is true. When I was in high school, living in a very small community on a ranch, I knew a truly sweet and gentle man, from a Quaker background, who cared a lot for other people. He repaired cars, but then found it very difficult to sell them. When someone would be interested in a car, he would ask them what they would use the car for. Then he'd usually tell them, "You don't want this car," and then tell them what kind of car would serve them better.

Even after fifty years, I can recall his face, and hear his voice clearly. When talking about himself, he nearly always said, "I'm not the kind of person who—" When I last saw him about fifteen years ago, he had gone all the way to full-blown paranoia—he *knew* that the FBI, the CIA, and the Mafia were *all* out after him. Perhaps psychiatrists are correct that paranoia begins with angry impulses that are denied. Since my friend came from a Quaker background, he may have suppressed times when he was angry because he internalized the peaceful ideals of that religion. Or paranoia may be simply the result of a self-concept that uses negation, and the natural consequences of doing that a lot. I think it traps a lot of very sweet and gentle people in a really cruel dead end.

Here's another example of the same process, though not quite so extreme. Recently I was driving four 9th graders on a field trip. Two of them were in the "cool" group, and talked almost non-stop on the one-hour trip. Much of their talk was reenactment of some bits of TV programs and movies, some was about the field trip and other current events. I gradually realized that what was common to *all* their comments was their attitude of scorn, derision, and disgust. All their conversation revolved around what they *weren't*, and their laughter expressed their superiority to the objects of their scorn. In short, they considered themselves "cool" because they

scorned nearly everything. There was nothing in their statements about who they were, only about who they *weren't*. That has got to result in their feeling empty inside, and being with the "cool" group is a temporary refuge that provides at least a little bit of identity and connection with others. Since they were so focused on what they weren't, they had very little awareness of who they *were*.

Another way of describing your response to a "not self" representation is that it acts in much the same way as a negative command. "Don't think of purple bunnies. Especially not dancing. And certainly not turning somersaults." Anything stated in the negative makes us think of exactly what we *don't* want to think of. Thinking of yourself as "not cruel" results in your thinking of being cruel, just as many well-meaning parents trap themselves and their children with negative commands like, "Don't spill the milk," or "Don't worry about how things will turn out," not realizing how that programs their kids to do exactly what the parents want to protect them from.

A very simple example of this is those "no right turn" signs—a bent arrow with the superimposed red circle with a slash across it. First your mind makes a representation of what a right turn is, which prepares you to do it, and then you have to stop it, and do something else. I'd like to talk to the person who invented that system! It would work a *lot* better if the arrow told you what to *do*, instead of what *not* to do. Under stress, I'll bet quite a few people do exactly the wrong thing, because their unconscious response is faster.

Since the unconscious doesn't respond to negation, it will respond to whatever is negated. Meanwhile the conscious mind will identify with its opposite, creating an inherent conflict between the conscious and unconscious. Consciously someone could feel good about thinking of themselves as "not cruel," while unconsciously they will identify with being cruel, creating a deep and serious ambiguity.

This disparity between conscious and unconscious response will have a lot of unfortunate consequences. Since the conscious mind identifies with one side of the ambiguity, while the unconscious mind identifies with the other, the person will often find themselves acting in ways that are inconsistent with their conscious identity. When the unconscious side is expressed, the person's conscious mind will usually ignore it or rationalize it.

And if someone else draws attention to their unconscious responses, this will be incomprehensible and puzzling to them. Because it is exactly the opposite of how they think of themselves, they are likely to interpret the comment as completely unfounded, or perhaps even malicious.

This opposition between conscious negation and unconscious affir-

mation is a major process that creates a division between a conscious false self and an unconscious "shadow" self. The shadow self is not simply a response to uncertainty or ambiguity, because someone can be acutely aware of both sides of an ambiguity. It is only when one side of the ambiguity is *negated, judged* and *rejected* that the shadow self is created.

This happened in the US on a national scale during the cold war. Our government became so focused on *anti-communism*, that we allied ourselves with many very corrupt, tyrannical and undemocratic governments as long as they were "*anti-communist*." We didn't notice what they *were*, because we were only interested in what they were *not*, and we had only one negative criterion for defining that. When some people tried to point out the horrors that some of these governments were committing, often with our money and support, they were dismissed as disloyal troublemakers or communists. That's an example of denial and the "shadow" self at a national level, and although the content has changed, the same process is still very evident today.

This shadow self may become very powerful, and relatively independent of the person's conscious control, and express itself independently. A classic extreme example of this is a "fire and brimstone" TV preacher who is caught repeatedly with prostitutes. Here in Colorado about ten years ago a radical right, anti-gay, congressional candidate turned up a couple of years later on a videotape having sex with an underage male! You can probably think of many other examples of that kind of puzzling situation. Embracing the shadow side is a good start toward becoming more whole, but only if it includes transforming it—by eliminating the negation, and then integrating that side to resolve the ambiguity.

Multiple Personality

Doris: The shadow self sounds quite a lot like multiple personality, where there is another identity that is unknown to the conscious self which emerges from time to time, and where there seem to be two distinct personalities in one body. That seems like the "mother of all ambiguities."

I think there may well be a connection between the two, and that multiple personality is another extreme form of a self-concept that is based largely on negation. However, multiple personality is very different than paranoia, so how could the two result from the same process? There is one clear difference that might explain this. While a paranoid perceives the shadow self in the *outside* world, a multiple keeps it *inside* their body, and it is possible that this difference alone causes one rather than the other.

In most multiples, the main personality has completely internalized social values and is hardworking, churchgoing, polite, etc., while the other

personality values the *opposite*, and is lazy, rebellious, coarse, etc. Over 90% of multiples are women, and women tend to internalize social values more readily than men do. Although a paranoid also internalizes social values, apparently they do it in a very different way. Although I haven't been able to find very good statistics, most sources state that over two-thirds of paranoids are male. That is an additional suggestion that in some way paranoia and multiples are very similar, yet somehow also mirror-image opposites. Is a multiple simply a case of denying normal healthy impulses that don't fit with a rigid and perfectionistic social ideal, or does a multiple think of these forbidden impulses in the form of "not self" representations? It should be fairly easy to determine this.

I have never worked with a multiple, so you should receive anything I say about multiples with great caution and skepticism. To simplify our thinking on a very puzzling topic, let's restrict ourselves to *dual* personality. The first multiples to be described only had two personalities. In recent years both the number of multiples reported, and the number of personalities per multiple has exploded. It's unclear whether this is a process of discovery, or creation, or overenthusiastic diagnosis. I have some very strong doubts about those who report more than two, and even experts in the field say that most of the additional personalities are "fragmentary," so most of them are probably more like what we would call *parts* of the person related to different outcomes, rather than full personalities.

One way of thinking about dual personality is that rather than having scattered individual ambiguous qualities, the way most of us do, one side of each ambiguity is assembled into one personality, while the other side of each ambiguity is assembled into another. Each personality functions as a one-sided integrated whole, but there is a vast gulf between the two.

Milton Erickson, who worked with a number of multiples, believed that each personality used the same set of experiences, while applying completely different *values* to those experiences:

... it seems to me that dual personalities actually represent well-organized, coordinated, and integrated use of the same total experience, but from two entirely different points of orientation....

My finding with dual personalities is that they react in both ways simultaneously. Usually one of the personalities is active and builds up an experiential background in that way. The other tends to be passive and to orient itself about things of only minor consideration to the other personality. As a consequence, you get two personalities constructed, each of which has its own set and

scale of values, based upon totally different usage of the common experiences. (18, p. 143)

While the ordinary personality is usually present, nevertheless the secondary personality is very definitely in the background, observing, participating, and sharing, but in a fashion unknown to the ordinary personality. I will agree, however, that when the secondary personality is in the foreground, the primary personality is most completely out of the picture, and, so far as I can tell, actually misses completely the experiences of the active secondary personality. Just how this is possible, I cannot conceive, and yet it seems to be so. (19, p. 144)

If Erickson's understanding is correct about different personalities arising from differently valuing the same experiences, that would also fit very nicely with what I have presented. Assuming for the moment that the conscious personality defines itself by negations, then the conscious mind would value the negated representation, while the unconscious would value its opposite. That would result in the secondary personality being completely unconscious and unknown to the conscious personality. Then when the unconscious self becomes conscious, it would make sense that the previously conscious self would continue to be totally unaware of the other personality, and whatever it did while it was in charge.

Some day I hope to find time to locate and interview a dual personality. I think that I could use the approach presented here to learn more, and perhaps confirm some of these guesses. I'd make a list of each personality's constellation of qualities, to hopefully learn more about how they remain separate, and how to integrate the two, and I would determine to what extent each personality defines itself by what it is *not*. If my guesses are correct, the primary personality defines itself by negation, while the secondary personality doesn't. By working at the level of qualities, rather than at the level of the whole personality, I think that integration would be much easier and faster, just as the integration of ambiguities as I have presented it here is much easier than when using the Visual Squash.

There still remains the question of how two sets of qualities can each be organized into a separate personality in relation to opposing sets of values, and how this is different from other extreme polarities such as bulimia. Most people include both sides of an ambiguity or conflict in one identity, even when one of them is severely dissociated and alienated.

Since multiple personality is such a rare disorder, we also need to consider the possibility that some kind of neurological damage prevents the usual integration of identity. There are a number of neurological injuries

that severely disturb the sense of self, so perhaps there is a unique and rare kind of injury that results in multiple personality.

When I have seen films and videos of people who were described as multiples, most of them have not been very convincing to me. I usually didn't see the kind of complete nonverbal reorganization that people report. I saw only the incongruence and partial dissociation that is familiar to anyone doing NLP work with different parts of a person with conflicting outcomes.

However, many years ago I personally experienced a multiple who was very, *very*, convincing to me, so I am sure they do exist. I was with a casual acquaintance who was under considerable stress at the time. I looked away from her briefly, and when I looked back, there were strikingly different intently piercing eyes, commanding voice and posture. I am not easily scared, but this was a scene that could have come straight out of the movie, "*The Exorcist*." It made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end, and the best way I can describe it is that *someone else* was there! I later found out that this other personality was a Mediterranean fertility goddess who took over control of her daily, and was typing the manuscript of a book!

Most multiples have been discovered during hypnotherapy, so we also have to consider the possibility that inappropriate hypnotherapy may play a part in creating a multiple. Erickson reported a couple of multiples who had not experienced hypnosis, at least not officially, but some hypnotic life experiences could have had a similar effect. For instance, some parents say to a child who has just misbehaved, "Where's my sweet little girl? Where did she go? Who is this bad girl?" If this sort of hypnotic language is used often, or during the kind of stressful events that often create traumatic "imprints," I think it could at least contribute to creating a multiple.

Keep in mind that a lot of this is speculation, and that I haven't tested it by working with a multiple. It might well be that this is one of those theories that Thomas Henry Huxley spoke of: "The great tragedy of science is the slaying of a beautiful theory by an ugly fact." At minimum, these are some possibilities that could be checked out by people who work with multiples.

Changing Projection

Now I want to return to projection. Discovering the underlying process was a completely unexpected result of modeling how the self-concept functions. Projection begins with negated internal images of what I'm *not*, and the rest is my natural response to these negated images. Now that you have an understanding of this process, you will be sensitized to it and start noticing it in what other people say and do. Knowing how this process works

also points the way toward how to change it. Assuming that negated images cause projection, how would you go about changing it, so that someone would project less?

Sally: Well, this sounds too easy, but couldn't you just ask someone to make *positive* images of what they have been negating? "OK, you're not cruel; what *are* you?" That would get them to make positive images of being kind or whatever the positive quality is.

Exactly. If you say to them, "OK, you're not cruel, so I assume you're kind," what are they going to say? It's something that they *have* to agree with, because of the logic—and usually paranoids are *very* logical, which is one feature that makes it hard to work with them. And when you change a negated representation to a positive example, you are only changing the representation, not the meaning, so that makes it very easy to do.

"Tell me one of the ways in which you are not cruel."

"I don't torture cats."

"OK, great. What *do* you do with cats?"

"I pet them and feed them."

"Great, put an image of petting and feeding them in the place of that image of not torturing them."

You first change the summary label for the database from "not cruel" to "kind," and then have them go through their entire database and change each of the representations to positive ones of kindness. That might seem a bit tedious, but it actually goes very quickly, especially when you group similar examples. And usually the person's unconscious mind gets the idea pretty fast and does the rest on its own.

Of course this process is a lot more difficult if someone has progressed all the way to full-blown paranoia, because then you are part of his dangerous and threatening surroundings, so he can't trust you. If you suggest changing negated representations to positive representations, he will probably think that is part of the plot against him, and refuse to do it.

Sally: How can you tell if someone has gone too far into paranoia?

I thought that probably *you* were one of *them*, too. But when you asked that trick question, you revealed yourself for what you are.

Sally: Oh crap. All right!

Dan: What if you told them in great detail what *not* to do? "Don't change any of your images of what you're not into images of what you are." It seems to me that if you are not trusted, and you tell him not to do something, that could be taken as a good indication that he ought to do it.

That could work, but I think you might have to build in some rationale for doing it that paced his belief system—perhaps something, just casually mentioned in passing, about the great danger in making negated images,

because they tend to blind you to what is really going on around you, and of course that makes you vulnerable to people who want to harm you.

Another way to go about it is to pace the mistrust by saying, "Don't trust me." That paradoxically makes you at least somewhat trustworthy, because you are agreeing with their belief system. "I want you to carefully scrutinize everything I say and do, to be sure that there is nothing harmful in it." That paces what s/he is going to do anyway, while presupposing that "There is nothing harmful in it." Then you could go on to say something like, "Even if I'm acting with the best of intentions, I might do something to harm you inadvertently."

That sentence may seem like a pretty innocuous pace, but it presupposes two very important and closely-related distinctions: One is the difference between intention and behavior, and the other is the difference between intention and accident. A paranoid takes perceived harm as *proof* of bad intentions, so thinking about the possibility of harm resulting from good intentions, or accidental harm completely separate from any intention, introduces two different kinds of possible counterexamples to his belief system in one sentence.

Just as very few people understand the consequences of negative commands, most people have no idea how important it is to have positive representations of their qualities (even if they don't like them) rather than negations. They don't realize how a self-concept that is defined negatively can get them into serious trouble. There are plenty of people who can benefit from learning how to think of themselves without negations, and this is a change that is usually very easy to accomplish once you know what to do.

"Not self" (positively-valued)

We have been exploring the experience of *not* being something that you *don't* value. The other possibility, thinking of yourself as *not* being something that you *do* value, turns out to be very different. Again think of something that you are not, but this time make it something that you *value*. "I'm not tenacious," "I'm not graceful," "I'm not patient," or any other quality that you value. Take a couple of minutes to explore how you represent this, and what that experience is like....

Amy: I see a lot of pictures of what it would be like for me to have that quality, and I can sort of step into them to feel what it would be like, but the feeling is only partial, and I know I'm not there yet.

"Not there *yet*." So this is a quality that *you hope or expect to have in the future*. What is your response to those pictures, and the feeling that you get from them?

Amy: It draws me toward them, it's motivating. I think about it a lot.

It sounds like you might have future-paced examples of this quality, but you don't have present or past examples of it.

Amy: Yes, I think that's how I know I don't have it yet.

Sam: I thought about a quality that I have, but I want to have more strongly, so I know I don't have that additional strength yet. Like Amy, I feel drawn forward, and I like it.

Yes, representations of something that you expect to have in the future are pretty direct and useful; they set a goal that is positively motivating. Each of us did a great deal of this while we were growing up and developing our adult skills and abilities. However, thinking of a quality that you don't have and *don't* expect to have in the future is very different. Does anyone have an example of that?

Sue: Yes, I see others with the quality that I don't have. I feel vulnerable because I don't have it. I'm envious of them, and I feel different and inferior in relation to them.

Now I want to ask you all to do what Sue did, and to take this process to the extreme. Imagine that all your focus was on valued qualities that you are *not*, and that you expect that you will *never* have them. Take a couple of minutes to experience what that is like....

Alice: I feel like a Martian. I don't like that everyone else has all these wonderful qualities, and I don't. I feel really inferior to everyone else, and I don't like them for being so different from me.

Dan: Again I feel an emptiness inside, because all I notice is what I'm *not*, and I don't have any sense of who I *am*. I also feel a lot of distance, and the word "unfair" comes to mind.

Yes, thinking of yourself as not being able to have a quality that you value usually involves thinking of others as having it, so again there is an implicit comparison, noticing the differences between yourself and others. One of my criteria for an effective self-concept was that it not have comparisons, but only contain positive representations of your own qualities. Another criterion was that a useful self-concept would join people and not separate them into up/down, superior/inferior, etc.

When we compare ourselves with others, we usually think of only one or two qualities at a time; we usually don't think of all the other differences between us, or about all the many similarities. When we compare ourselves with others, we can always find someone who is better or worse than we are, depending on what we choose to compare.

Whether we feel inferior or superior, this comparing makes our self-concept dependent on others, rather than being something that we have internally. Comparing with others also draws our attention away from the qualities that we value in ourselves, and is likely to result in judgement of

our shortcomings, bad feelings and other unuseful consequences. When I feel small and inadequate, criticizing others can give me a little temporary superiority, and make me feel a little better about myself. Now what is it like if you think of having that quality someday?

Dan: I feel a lovely release, like energy and attention flowing outward toward what I now think I could become.

Sue: It never occurred to me that I could have it.

Well, it is occurring to you now. Play the "As if" game. What is it like if you think about expecting that you could have that quality someday?

Sue: If I think about having that quality someday, it's still a bit unreal to me, but I start wondering how it would feel to have it, and how that could happen, so I feel better about not having it. I'm more curious about how those other people have it, instead of just feeling bad because I don't.

Our expectation of future possibility makes a *huge* difference in how we respond to an experience of not having a valued quality. If you expect to have a quality in the future, it can provide a wonderful experience of being motivated to develop the quality. Seeing someone else who expresses a valued quality can be a rich resource for finding out how much is possible, and for finding out how you can also develop that quality.

However, if you don't expect to have something in the future, and you compare yourself to the people who have it, this often results in dissatisfaction, envy, feeling inferior, etc. So if someone is thinking about a valuable quality that they *don't* expect to have in the future, and you work with them to change their belief of impossibility into *possibility*, that can transform envy, inferiority, and unhappiness into eager motivation, and that is a *huge* difference!

"What experiences and beliefs underlie your expectation of not having the quality in the future? What is your evidence for this belief about yourself, and what evidence is there for the opposite belief that you could hope to achieve this quality at some time in the future? When did you experience even a small degree of the quality, perhaps in an unusual situation, or perhaps long ago, or in a dream? Can you think of a time when you thought you could never have something, and then later you surprised yourself? If you could have this quality, how would your life be different?"

Once you have loosened up their belief about the *possibility* of having the quality, you can often proceed to either build the quality, as I did with Peter, or transform an ambiguous quality into the positive one that they want.

Fred: At a certain stage of life, some things may no longer be possible for someone, especially when there are physical limitations.

Well, all of us *always* have physical limitations. Remember that we are dealing with personal *qualities*. Although a quality affects what we do,

it primarily affects the *way* in which we do it. Even if there are major limitations in *what* we can do, we always have some range of choice in *how* we do it. A quality like physical grace can be expressed in pole-vaulting, or with offering someone a slice of toast, and that is true of most qualities.

Did anyone do something different that what we have discussed so far?

Wendy: When I thought of myself as "not kind," all my counterexamples to kindness jumped out at me and became very prominent and overwhelmed the examples of kindness, so all I had left was cruelty.

Melissa: I started out with a movie of kindness, but then it turned into cruelty.

So you both flipped from "not kind" to representations of being cruel, a negatively-valued quality. People have lots of different ways of responding to words of negation, so *you really need to find out what they're actually doing in their minds*, and not assume that they are doing the same thing that you do. I think we have discussed all the different possibilities, so these can guide your information gathering when you want to find out if someone is negating their internal experience.

Summary

Since it is very difficult for us to think and talk about negations, we need to make a very clear distinction between the *words* that people use, and the *internal representations* that they make. When someone says, "I'm not cruel," they could be making images of being kind, which works fine. Or they could be making images of cruelty and then negating them, or they could be doing both.

When we think of ourselves as *not* having a quality that we *don't* like, we set a process in motion that creates a division between our conscious and unconscious minds. This becomes the foundation for an unacknowledged "shadow" self, a process that can ultimately lead to paranoia. The same process may also lead to multiple personality, if the shadow side is thought of as being *inside* the body, rather than outside. Replacing the negation with a positive representation of who we *are* is easy in the earlier stages of this process, but much more difficult later.

Negated representations of *valued* qualities can be *very* useful and valuable motivators, as long as we think it is *possible* to develop that quality at some future time. If you don't think it's possible, this usually leads to envy and feelings of inferiority. Changing your belief from impossibility to possibility opens up a wide range of choices, from eager motivation to a decision that even though it's possible, you don't want to put in the effort required. If we really conclude that we can't achieve a quality, it is much better to simply focus our attention on all the valued qualities that

we *do* have. We can admire and take pleasure in the unique and exceptional qualities that others have, and dispense with useless comparisons and negated representations of ourselves.

Finally we have learned everything we need to know in order to make the most difficult and useful kind of self-concept change, transforming a quality that someone *doesn't* like into its desired opposite.

12

Transforming an Unwanted Quality

The situation that people are usually most interested in is in transforming a quality that they consider negative, into something more positive. Someone may value kindness, but realize that they usually behave in ways that are insensitive, harsh or abrasive, rather than kind. "I'm mean, and I wish I weren't." This results in bad feelings, and low self-esteem. They would much rather think of themselves as being kind, since that would fit with their values, and result in behaviors that provide a basis for self-esteem.

The database for a negatively-valued quality will consist of a number of examples of behaviors that you *don't* want. Although we could call these examples of the negative quality, to be consistent with what we have been doing so far, I want to continue to call them *counterexamples*, because they are *counter* to what you want and value.

This situation is fundamentally *very* similar to transforming an ambiguous quality, which you have already done. The major difference between a negatively-valued quality and an ambiguous quality is that there are more counterexamples. Although there are a large number of counterexamples to be transformed, there must be at least a few positive examples somewhere. Just as with any other quality, someone may be thinking "always," or "never," but that is never really true.

Since there are a large number of counterexamples, it may take a lot of different interventions to transform them into their positive opposite, particularly if the quality is something very large and global, like, "I am a bad person," or "I'm not deserving." Those larger beliefs usually include a lot

of smaller qualities, and it will be much more effective to first identify and work with one or more of these smaller component qualities, rather than with the larger generalization.

However, in some cases, transforming a negative quality can be easier than changing an ambiguous quality. Remember that all behavior has a positive intent that expresses some value. If you *consistently* behave in a particular way, that is a pretty good indication that you are actually manifesting an important value. This positive outcome provides powerful leverage for reevaluating or changing a lot of different behaviors all at once.

For instance, you might think of yourself as being "wimpy" or "mousy" because you are usually quiet and don't speak up in group situations, and you would like to be more outspoken. When you examine the experiences represented in your "mousy" database, you might find that in all of them your positive intent was that you were sincerely interested in what others were saying, and wanted them to have a full opportunity to express themselves—and that being respectful of others in this way is something that you value much more than being outspoken.

If you can find a consistent value like this in all your counterexamples, or a group of them, sometimes all you need to do is redescribe this quality by thinking of a new summary representation. Rather than being "wimpy" or "mousy," you might redescribe these as "being considerate of others," or "listening attentively and respectfully," or some other more appropriate name. When you can do this, you don't have to change the "counterexamples" in the database itself. By changing how you think about and describe them, they cease to be counterexamples to what you want, and become valued examples of another quality. This kind of "content refraining" is a very easy and rapid way to recategorize what you had previously thought of as negative into something that you can enjoy thinking of as positive.

You may still want to explore how you can speak up more, while still being considerate of others. However, this will be *much* easier now that you have a positive way of thinking about what you previously thought of as negative. The positive frame provides a balance and perspective, a good start for making further desired changes.

As we have already discussed, you may find that you can do this with a group of counterexamples, but not all of them. In that case, you can relabel the group and separate them from the negative quality, leaving fewer counterexamples to deal with. Sometimes you can do this repeatedly, until there are none left, and the negative quality will have vanished. At that point, the situation is appropriate for simply building a new positive quality, as we did with Peter.

However, usually it is not that simple. When we worked with an am-

biguous quality, some of you encountered a number of objections. When transforming a negatively-valued quality into its opposite, you may encounter even more objections, and you will likely have to do quite a lot of change work.

As you are involved in all this change work, an outside observer might think, "This looks just like working with the same kind of problem or outcome that we always work with in personal change. What makes it any different, and why is this described as 'self-concept work'?"

What makes it different is that all the work begins and ends with the eventual outcome of creating a database for a positive quality that is in the form of your positive template. Changing specific behaviors in specific contexts is not an end in itself, but is one step in creating a database that will provide a basis for knowing who you are. Remember that Peter had many examples of being loved, but when they were scattered through his memories they didn't provide him with an internally-based knowing that he was loved. You can do lots of different change work with someone, but unless they *assemble* the results of all these changes into a form that provides evidence for their *being* a different person, it won't affect their self-concept.

When you do any change work, you can leave it at that, and it will be a useful change in certain contexts. But if you frame the problem or outcome as a *quality of the person*, and assemble these separate experiences into a quality of their identity, it can become something that goes with them everywhere. As you are involved in all that change work, you know that you are not done until you have pulled it all together into that inner knowing that will stay with the person and guide all their future behavior.

One of the most effective ways to make an identity change out of a behavioral change is what is called "Timeline Generalization." After making a change of any kind, you can say, "Now I want you to consider the changes that you have just accomplished, and realize that you are someone who can make this kind of change and have a new response in a situation like this. Now take this valuable new ability with you, and go back to a very early time in your life, before you encountered any of those challenges, and come rapidly up through time, carrying this with you. As you do this, this new resourceful ability can automatically change any situation that is appropriate, modifying the experience in the light of this ability you now have. Continue to travel up through time, and when you reach the present, open your eyes and see yourself continuing through life with this new resource as a part of you." That transforms a specific contextualized behavioral change into a more general through-time ability that is part of who they are.

Now I want you to think of a negatively-valued quality in yourself, which presupposes that you value the opposite. If you initially think of

something very large, like "I'm a terrible person," reduce it down to a more specific component of this, such as, "I'm physically awkward," or "I'm short-tempered." Take a few minutes to explore how you represent this disliked quality....

For how many of you is your database for the negative quality in the same form as your positive template? Only a few, perhaps 15%.

Now I want you all to take a few minutes to examine your database of counterexamples to what you want, and do what I have just described. Ask yourself, "Do these experiences (or a group of them) actually *exemplify* some other quality that I value." If you can do this with a group of them, redescribe them and separate them from the negative quality. If you can do this with all of them, just redescribe the entire quality in a more positive way.....

Let's assume that you have already tried redescribing or reframing your negative quality, and were unable to find anything whatsoever positive in your examples, or in a group of them. This is actually pretty unlikely, since if there were *nothing* at all positive about them, there would be no point at all in doing them. That would violate the NLP presupposition that all behavior has positive intent, so assuming that there is nothing positive provides a more extreme situation than you will ever be faced with.

Before transforming counterexamples, it can be very useful to collect and assemble examples into the form of the positive template, no matter how small or insignificant they are. "Think of a time when you were kind, and put it into that form. Now think of another, and put that one in there too," etc. Since you have only positive examples in it, you are starting to build an unambiguous positive quality, and every little example will make it stronger.

Often people are perfectionistic, and will dismiss and reject positive examples because they don't meet their high criteria. They may think that "Creativity" is a word that only applies for Monet or Beethoven, not for rearranging a room, or taking a new route to the grocery store—even though they utilize the same kind of creative mental process. In that case it can be helpful to loosen their criteria, so that more examples will qualify. "When were you even a *little* bit kind to someone for a *very short* time?"

Be on the alert for nonverbal gestures of throwing something away or pushing something aside, because that indicates when they are discarding experiences that might be very useful. When this happens, you can say, "Wait a minute, what did you just throw behind you?" They will probably say something like, "Oh, well that doesn't count *because*—" and whatever they say next will provide useful information about their criteria. You can say, "Well, I think it counts. Let's put it in there anyway, even though you

don't think it's a very good example." Even though they may be minimal examples, at least they're positive, and collecting them provides a start on the positive quality. Remember that those small examples can be even more important to you than the big impressive ones, because the small ones can happen many times a day, while the big ones may only happen once a year, or once in a lifetime.

If you tried to add these positive examples into the database for the negatively-valued quality, instead of starting with an empty positive template, that would be much more difficult. Have you ever tried to cheer up a depressed person by pointing out the good things in their life? Whatever you say doesn't make any difference, because they have so many counterexamples. By starting with a new positive template, you can create a new database that is completely made up of positive examples, and that provides a basis for later dealing with the counterexamples.

The next step is to transform counterexamples, as you have already learned how to do with an ambiguous quality. If a substantial number of counterexamples can be grouped together and transformed all at once, it could take no longer than with an ambiguous quality. Now I'd like to demonstrate how to do this.

Demonstration: Transforming a Negative Quality

Sam: I often fall into being very authoritarian (He makes a hammer-like pounding gesture with his right arm, his hand in a fist.), especially with my kids, and I'd really like to be like other parents I have seen who treat their kids much more like equals, and don't get into the "Do as I say, or else!" thing.

OK, "Pound them down." That sounds like a good one to change. How do you represent that quality of being authoritarian?

Sam: I have images up here. (He gestures high above his head and to the right, about arm's length.) They are jagged and rough. They make me think of a wound or lightning. There is *no* border around them, and they're not clearly defined; there's sort of a muddled quality about them. There's some color involved, but the color is mostly red and black and not a lot of greens and blues or other colors, and they feel like they're three-dimensional. They feel like an out-of-control amorphous something. And I associate that with this cold feeling in my pelvic region, lower abdomen and groin.

OK, good. Now, I want to set that aside for a little while; just put it on a shelf. Now tell me about your positive template for something that you know about yourself that you like.

Sam: I'd like to use a different quality than the one I first used. Last

night I was exploring a much more general quality, a much larger spiritual resource that I have been cultivating for years. (He gestures with his right hand in a circular motion in the area of his upper left chest and shoulder.)

OK, it could be interesting to use a positive template based on a much larger scope.

Sam: It's fairly close to my chest. It was mostly in the realm of feeling, but as I was looking for it, I was surprised to get a color that's almost the color of my shirt today, a sort of red/purple. It was radiant, luminous, reddish-purple-violet and it didn't have a frame. It was just a nice big glow and I didn't even see the edge of it; it just seemed to fill my whole field of vision. I can't recreate it right now; I can't get it again. It was very strong, but I think I've kind of talked myself out of it in the meantime.

OK, that's very metaphorical. Can you see any content in there, so that you know what it's about? You must know, because you started out with an idea about what the quality was, but is that representation a single image of the purple glow, or were there other images in there?

Sam: No, it was a single image. It had to do with my cultivating qualities in my quiet time, bringing a lot more order literally into how my feeling life goes, just generally quieting.

It's a fairly large general quality.

Sam: It's a *very* large general quality.

As you know I usually like to work with something a little more detailed and specific, but let's try it, because this quality is obviously very powerful and important for you.

If you were to look at that purple glow now, just remembering back to it, you don't have to recreate it again, although if it does, that's fine. If that were to become a set of images of what it refers to and what it points to, can you do that? Can you allow images to form out of that, to give some indication of the content? . . .

As you described this image that you got of the purple glow, it represents a whole bunch of different things, different activities. I forget the exact word you used, but it was something about organization—

Sam: "Order."

Yes, "order." So one way of describing this quality could be, "I'm an orderly person."

Sam: Yeah. I'd almost put it in the realm of order in the sense of a cosmology—extremely large. And, boy, when you asked me to recreate that, I got that glow immediately. It started fading as we were talking about it, but I think it's in the realm of something profoundly spiritual. If I were to clothe it in words—it seems odd to me, but it's like—it's not I, but Christ *in* me, and it relates to something *way* out there—the whole world and the

stars, the planets, rhythms—it's sort of a wonderfully hanging together, meaningful picture of everything.

OK, great. There's a *lot* of stuff in there. You spoke of liking the kind of thing other people do with their kids, treating them like equals. I assume that you mean sharing perspectives, finding common ground, coming to a decision together, rather than one person ordering the other around.

Sam: Right. I'd call it "mutually respectful."

Now does any part of you have any objection to your transforming your being authoritarian into being mutually respectful in a way that would fit with this cosmic order? . . .

Sam: No objections.

OK. Now I want you to examine those times when you have been authoritarian, and see if you can find what is common to them all, or a group of them. . . .

Sam: Well, they are all times when I'm stressed out, out of choices, and something needs to be done to hold things together.

So these are all difficult situations where you are feeling very limited, and you need to do something, and ordering someone around seems to be your only choice. Other than realizing that you are someone who is willing to take responsibility in difficult situations, I think that recategorizing them is not going to be particularly useful, so lets go directly to transforming them.

Now, I'm sure there have been times in your life when you have been mutually respectful.

Sam: Oh, yeah. But there is this potential knee-jerk reaction, where I just—

We'll deal with that in a little while. Now first I want you to close your eyes for a minute, and assemble examples of when you *were* treating others as equals, with mutual respect. Find times in your past when you were mutually respectful with your kids. Just go through your past, pick examples, and put them in the form of a purple glow, there just above your left chest. If I imagine doing this, they would kind of melt into the purple glow, and become part of that, because I assume that would also be a part of the whole natural order of the cosmos, and so on. (Mm hmm.)

Whereas, if I'm being authoritarian, it's sort of disrupting, not part of the natural order. Does that fit for you? (Absolutely.) So continue to find a bunch of examples of your being mutually respectful, and put them all together into that purple glow. Take a few minutes to put in a whole bunch there. . . . (Mm hmm.)

Now I want you to do the next step, and I want to start with a single example, so that we can be very specific. Pick one of those examples of

being authoritarian, and then transform it into what you'd *like* to do the next time something like that happens. And as you know, there are a variety of ways to do this. "What can I do different here? What would I like to do next time that would be really pleasing and satisfying?" And you always want to *add* something. You could add in the larger picture. Instead of just seeing the specific thing that you don't like—you could include your caring for them, or the realization that here's someone you're raising to grow up to be an adult, and what you want them to learn, or whatever. Make a much larger picture that includes your larger outcomes.

Sam: Yeah, I've got a real specific situation, relatively recent. I see—

I don't need the content. Just let me know when you've got an image or a movie of what you'd like to do next time. (Mm hmm.) So that's an example of being mutually respectful, right? (Mm hmm.) OK. I'd like you to put that one into that luminous purple glow as well.... (OK.) Is that satisfactory for you? (Mm hmm.)

OK, now I want you to think about all those other examples up there—all those jagged red and black ones—and think about "What do they have in common?" If you look at all those examples, what is common to them?

Sam: I would say they all have something to do with woundedness, being off-center, being hurt.

You being hurt?

Sam: Yeah, if they're related to things that happened to me, my being hurt, but also knowing that what was done to me was out of the hurtness of the other person. So it all has to do with hurtness, hurt on both sides, and through hurt comes this outrageous egotism that has to—

Yeah. Right. (both laugh) I know this one quite well. So in the example you just transformed and moved into the purple glow, did you do something about your own hurt? You can't really do something about somebody else's hurt—that's kind of their job.

Sam: I actually did something that addressed both at the same time, and it had a great deal to do with compassion. Being authoritarian had to do with, "Here I am. I need this, I want this; you're not giving it to me and I'm being a hard-ass, cold, arrogant son of a bitch." (Yeah, right) And I turned that into simply embracing the other person in *their* hurt, and *their* being overwhelmed, and saying, "I acknowledge you're overwhelmed—this is what you're experiencing."

That sounds great to me.

Sam: And my need isn't recognizing or allowing me to see where you're at. I'm just being an asshole going, "Well, dammit!!"

Did you know that 50% of men have hemorrhoids? (No.) The rest are perfect assholes. (Sam laughs)

OK, this is all great. This sounds wonderful. Now, here's the question: Would that same resource of embracing and acknowledging someone else's hurt, and compassion—that whole set of responses—would that work in all those other examples up there? I'd like you to contemplate that for a while, and find out. Examine one at a time, and see if that same orientation or attitude or however you want to say it, would be useful in those other examples. I have a hunch they would....

Sam: Yes, without question.

OK. Great. Now, I want you to pick the *worst* one of those, a time when you *really* "lost it."

Sam: OK, I got it. I didn't lose it; I was actually clamped down to *keep* from losing it.

OK, but you would have lost it.

Sam: (laughing) I *definitely* would have lost it; It would have been a bad scene.

Take the time to transform that one thoroughly. Because this one can be sort of an icon, representing of all those other ones. When you transform this one, all those others can transform in the same way, and then you won't have to do them one by one. Go back and redo it to your satisfaction, so that you do what you would rather have done, and would like to do next time....

Sam: I'm going back into that situation and that time, and my utter lack of resourcefulness or disempowered state is kind of washing things away and I'm having trouble connecting with that compassion and acknowledgement. I could sort of do it with the editing of a movie, but it feels superficial to me. I would love to see if, in that state, I could reconnect, but it's almost like I'm so shriveled up, so atrophied, so lacking, that I'm not sure how I could know that within that situation, to—

OK. let's try something a little different. Go back six months or a year *before* that event happened. And create that state there, that experience of being nourished and full and compassionate and so on....

And in your own timing, when you're really into that state of being compassionate and understanding and seeing the large picture and so on, then come quickly up through time and through that situation where you would have lost it if you hadn't been clamped down....

Sam: Mm hm. It's odd. When I go a half a year back, or even take it back as much as a year or so, and I still feel, interestingly enough, this cold. It's not so much in my abdomen, as in my groin region. And I'm having trouble connecting with that wonderful sort of a rose-red purplish glow, and all of what I described as sort of wonderfully meaningful ordered hanging together....

OK. Let's try something else, and see if we can find something that works.

Sam: I could work easier back from where I am now to there, than from there.

OK. What do you mean by working back from here?

Sam: Taking where I am today back into the past.

Oh, good; let's do that. That's what I intended you to do; I guess I wasn't very clear. Take all the time you need to really get into that state here. . . . And when you're really into that state, that rose-red purple glow, I want you to take it back with you as part of yourself to a very early age, perhaps as a small baby, or as a small child, and then travel rapidly up through time. And when you get up to the present, you can open your eyes and see yourself going on through life with the same resource, the same wonderful sense of that purple glow—the luminous, compassion, and so on, seeing the very large picture.... (long pause) OK, I see you nodding. How was that?

Sam: It was interesting and it was quite wonderful. I had gone past the point that had been my example of dysfunctionality at it's epitome, the absolute worst. I was way back, I was like 4 or 5 years old. I know that there was a lilac tree in our back yard, and then I go, "Gee, one color of lilac is just like this purple shirt." And lilac is my mother's favorite flower fragrance. And we had a big lilac tree and I had a little tree house my parents built for me—and it must have been my idyllic childhood kingdom, not even something to retreat into as a refuge, just the epitome of a nice place to be. I have just vague memories of it, nothing detailed, but I took it from there, and I took it forward. I tried to think of all the places that needed it and I eventually passed that point and then I said, "Oh, I went past that point. Let me go back to that point."

Well, that's wonderful. When you think about it, that's the way most of our life is. Once it was a struggle to put on your pants. And now you don't even think about it, because now you have the resources; since you know how to do it, you have your pants on before you even think about it.

Now I want you to look at these other examples up here and see if they're transformed. Just check one, two, three, four of them, and see if they are different.

Sam: Wow. Now I'm getting (laughter) a reddish-purple glow up here (gesturing up and to his right, where the jagged examples of being authoritarian are). It's like it's here (gesturing toward the lower part of the jagged examples) and it hasn't permeated quite all the way into the farthest regions, but—

OK. So just take one of those examples, and make sure that it's transformed into what you'd like to do next time something like that happens,

and then bring it over here by your left shoulder, and put it into the purple. Then go back and get another one, and just keep doing that. If you run across one that isn't transformed, then we can work with that, but I have a hunch they will probably all be transformed, because of the way you spoke about them earlier. (long pause)

Sam: I'm not quite sure what's going on. Initially, the glow was everywhere, and then when I tried taking one of the more difficult ones and sort of brought it into this realm (gesturing toward his chest), the whole thing became more abstract, and I lost the rich reddish-purple glow....

OK, then I think you need to put that one back up there (on the right).

Sam: OK. The other thing that happened is that things got cold again, sort of more in the groin and lower feet region.

OK. Well, that indicates to me that it's not transformed satisfactorily yet. So let's take another look at this, and find out what additional resource you need. You said you took one of the more difficult ones, right? Once it's transformed, it won't be difficult, because then it will be an *example* of being mutually respectful, which is part of the natural order. So if you think about that particular example, and the content of that example, and the context in which it happened, what would you need to be able to be mutually respectful in that situation?

Sam: Well, this goes back to that most extreme example that I had actually gone back to, because I had missed that one. I'm in the depths of depression, and a tremendous amount of family dysfunctionality was evident in that situation.

It was really "in your face."

Sam: *Utterly* in my face, the utmost provocation, not even directly to me, but happening to someone else in my family. I was looking to go to that person's rescue, and I was stopped, and maybe it was a wise thing to stop me, because I probably would have just blown the situation apart, with devastating consequences. So only with utmost loving resourcefulness could I have brought something positive to that situation. I was so utterly drained and devastated, there was just no way in the world I could have had it at that time, that I can even imagine right now.

Right. OK, open your eyes, come back. (Sam laughs) Now, when in your life have you had this "utmost loving resourcefulness" that you spoke of?...

Sam: I would say predominantly in the last three or four years.

Think of a time when you really had it, really fully in your body.... And when you can really feel that fully in your body, take that back to being 5 or earlier, and then come back up through time with that loving resourcefulness. (pause of several minutes)

How's it going in there?

Sam: For the most part, really really really good. I went to immediately after birth, probably even partially pre-birth. There was much much much more detailed touching many many many wounded places in my life. And going through them was really quite interesting. It's almost inconceivable the degree to which almost everything else seems worked through in myself. I mean it even went to the point of—without my consciously being aware of it, but then becoming conscious of it—I went to "I AM loved" and then to "I AM love." And I thought, "Oh, where did that one morph? Cool!" What I'm still stuck with is that literally my balls are cold. I'm not having the warmth and richness there. And there's this association with "having the balls needed to do something." It has to do with courage....

OK, let's look into that. The first thing I want to check is this. If you think about these situations that evoke this response of not having the balls to do something, are these situations in which you really *could* have done something? Because sometimes you would really *like* to do something, but if you really look at the situation, there's no way that you could have.

Sam: No. There's no way. Yeah....

So it's not really a matter of not having the balls to do it, you just couldn't do it. It was impossible.

Sam: Right.

There are some situations you go into and you kind of hold yourself back and think, "Well, if I had the balls, I'd go ahead and do something." But if you really couldn't do anything, in your best estimation, then it's not a matter of "balls."

Sam: In my best estimation, you know, a 14-year-old kid can't stand up to his dad, where his dad is so afraid that things are going to completely fall apart and says, "Look, Son, this is how it is." And from his lack of resourcefulness, he did the best he could—

Life sucks sometimes. I want you to think about some of those events—at least three or four of them—and just quietly say to yourself, with a sense of acceptance, "There's nothing I can do in this situation. That's just how it is," and see if it fits for you. Some people talk about this as "giving yourself permission," to just be. There's really nothing you could have done. Let's try that out and see if it fits for you....

Sam: Well, I can tell I don't like being powerless. (Sam laughs)

I don't know anyone who does. But isn't it the truth that sometimes you are? Even Superman was powerless when there was kryptonite around. Which do you like better, though—being powerless and not liking it, or just being powerless? That's your choice.

Sam: (laughing) Maybe I was overly ambitious, but I was trying to get rid of the feeling of having cold balls in that situation.

Well, it might be appropriate. I would think that if you really accept that there are some situations in which you are just powerless, that then you'll have warm balls.

Sam: That's what I was trying to get to, and that's what I was hoping for, and it's not happening. I'm in love with this color—red with an overlay of purple, and it was there, and I'm visualizing these things, and I'm clearly seeing and remembering them in this field—and my balls are still cold. And in my cosmology, it's like if we're a being of spirit and soul, we have a preview of our life and we say yes to these things. So we can consciously work with them, with the idea that there's a tremendously powerful purpose in having lived through them. And if we truly meet them in the right way, which is very much like what we're doing right now, that there is something wonderfully healing that can happen.

Sure, I understand that.

Sam: But even with all of that, I haven't got warm balls.

OK, let's go back to the situation of being powerless. You can not like it—that's normal. I don't know anybody who likes being powerless. But is it better to simply acknowledge that feeling of powerlessness, or to be angry about being powerless or some other response? . . .

Sam: I don't even remember at the time feeling particularly angry. It was just, "You are powerless, and if you try to assert your power, you will be *crushed*. You do not have the right to assert your power. I will disempower you. If you try to empower yourself in this situation, you haven't got a chance. Whether you're right or wrong—

Right. A little bit authoritarian.

Sam: Yeah. "The situation is so hairy, don't rock the boat, or you're going to get thrown out of the boat. I don't care if you're right or wrong, just *shut up, just cool it!*"

And it was probably smart that you did.

Sam: Yeah, but it could have been handled more graciously.

Well, of course.

Sam: It could have been, "Hey, here's the dilemma we're in, and here's what I need you to do. And I don't mean to put it this way, but just don't rock the boat." And I have had discussions about this with the person involved, and he goes, "Well, I've thought about that a lot. How could I have done it better, and what damage did I do, and so on and so forth. And we have broad consciousness and some degree of heart-to-heart talking, looking back about it—as much as I think I could touch on it and con-

sciously look at it with him. That probably could be taken further, but that's a huge thing to have done already.

Sure, absolutely. And in that process were you able to feel compassion for him and his limitations—how boxed in and powerless he felt, and all of that?

Sam: A degree of that. I think I could bring more of the compassion to that situation.

How about doing it right now?

Sam: I'll give it a try.

You sound just a trifle hesitant (Sam laughs) and that's fine; I just wanted to mention it. OK, here's what I want you to do. Imagine him here in the room, and think about that really bad situation. Can you put yourself into his body and feel what he's feeling—just as a way of understanding him. It's not that you should live your life this way, or anything else, it's just a way of gathering information about *his* sense of powerlessness, his sense of frustration and his limitations—that he doesn't have the love, or the wider scope, or whatever resources would have allowed him to handle it better. I really do believe that everybody always does the best they can. Sometimes it really sucks, but that's because all of us are limited, and some people are more limited than others, especially in certain situations.

Sam: Well, I literally think that in this situation . . . you probably would have had to be Jesus Christ himself to bring anything necessary to the situation.

So you're saying that this person would have had to be Christ himself in order to deal with it well. Close your eyes—

Sam: To the max, bring all those qualities—

Hush up. You have too many words. (Sam laughs) Close your eyes. Imagine him here and tell him, "You know, from my best estimation of the situation, you'd have had to be Jesus Christ to handle this well." . . .

And then try stepping into him. Feel what he's feeling, facing what he's facing, with his limitations or beliefs or skills or whatever, until you can feel full compassion for him....

How did that go?

Sam: It went quite wonderfully, but the amazing thing is that it almost feels like I inherited frozen balls.

Can you give them back? (Sam laughs.) Would you like to? Can you imagine saying, "These are yours! These aren't mine. Mine are warm!" (Sam laughs)

Sam: When I stepped into his body, I had the thought, "How could your balls *not* be frozen?"

OK. Try telling him, "I'd like to give you back your frozen balls; I've had them long enough." Give them back. (long pause)

Sam: I'm having a hard time being successful at that. I can go through imagining giving them back, or saying, "Here, take them," or "This is your thing, not my thing," but it doesn't work somehow. I've still got cold balls.

When you became him, you had this idea of, "Well, how could I be this person and *not* have frozen balls, right?"

Sam: Right.

And what's the connection between who he is and his frozen balls? How is it that frozen balls are an inevitable consequence of being that kind of person in this situation?

Sam: How do you want me to work with this? Do you want me to try to articulate some of that, or—

Well, you know, just in a few words. What's the connection between being this kind of person and having frozen balls?

Sam: Umm . . . that you're scared to death of what's going to happen to your wife, that you've had to give permission for her to have electroshock therapy, that she is probably—

So is this the sense of being powerless then?

Sam: Absolutely.

OK, that's all I was looking for. So he's faced with this really really tough situation. Here's the question for you. Realizing this really tough situation, where you would almost have to be Jesus Christ to deal with it, how could he maintain his warm balls? Because that's not an inevitable consequence. If a safe falls on you from the 14th floor, you might get crushed flat, but you don't have to get cold balls about it....

Let me try to put this another way, and see if it's of any use. When you're faced with a really really difficult situation, you can blame yourself for not being up to the challenge—

Sam: Right.

Or you can just say, "Hey, I'm a human being, I have my limitations, and I just can't deal with this." That maintains your own personal integrity, even when faced with a situation that's particularly difficult....

Another way of putting it might be just that you realize and acknowledge your own limitations, and some situations are just too much. That's a comment on the *situation*, not on *you* or your lack of manhood or anything like that....

Sam: I don't know if my father had *anybody* else in his life that he could have had as a friend to help him deal with that situation. I think he was isolated and terribly scared, and I have a hard time imagining how he could have kept his . . . manhood, or stayed true to himself, in that situa-

tion. I think he literally had to sacrifice himself, and to a certain degree, he continues to. And he sees no other way to deal with it.

That's part of his limitations.

Sam: That's part of his limitations, and I *desperately* wish he could have broken out, or could still break out of—And don't see how that might happen. If I could wish him one thing, I would wish him that... and somehow I got stuck with him in that.

How are your own balls now?

Sam: Yeah, well, obviously there's still some transference there. (laughing) They ain't thawed out all the way yet.

Well, you could always talk to him and say, "You know I want to take some of the cold off your balls." You just expressed a great wish that he would not have this limitation. Maybe you could show him how.

Sam: I actually do. I go back into the situation and I do what I need to do, what I want to do, I talk as I feel the need to talk.

OK. We might have to leave the cold balls for later. At one point, you had a bunch of images up here, and when you tried to move one of the really bad ones, was it the same one?

Sam: It's one that relates to it.... It isn't the original event, but is sort of that event made real instead of talking about it....

OK. If you think of that event now, is it the way that you'd like to do it in the future if you were ever faced with something like that?

Sam: Hmm. Yeah. It's interesting. I've got that color, and—

OK. I want you to bring that down over here to your left....

Sam: I can bring the image of that situation down, but it still feels like a little bit of a—it's not a thorn there, it's not like an ice cube there, but it's not quite integrated.

All right, then put it back. And just for curiosity, I'd like you to pick another one up there, maybe one of the ones that wasn't quite so bad, and first check and see if that one is positive. Does that represent how you'd like to respond if something like that happened in the future? (long pause)

Sam: Yeah. I've taken a relatively small, innocuous version of it, one that I've significantly transformed in my interactions with these people, my parents. It's definitely much easier to bring down, and integrate, it's already something that I have been able to shift in the real world to a large degree.

Great. Pick another one, and do the same.

Sam: There's not a whole lot left up there. Even the ones that are difficult, I'm just sort of bringing them to the edge of the purple glow and others sort of closer down.

OK, I want you to think about the way that we have worked here, and think about what additional resource you could use for the ones that are

kind of partly down. They're improved, but they're not quite there yet. What resource do you need to transform those all the way, so that they can comfortably come over here and be integrated into the purple glow?

Sam: We touched upon a lot of them. Compassion, or love, or even just what I would call "heart thinking," clarity of thinking, but it's warmed, it's alive, it pulsates, it moves. (Sam's voice is very expressive as he gestures in large flowing overlapping vertical circles with both arms.)

Well, the way you're waving your arms around like that looks great. It's warm, pulsating, outlining balls here, big warm balls. (Sam laughs.)

OK, close your eyes. Take that particularly tough one. Bring in this resource of warm, pulsating expansiveness, those big smooth gestures. See if you can transform it that last five or ten percent, or whatever. What would make it no longer a thorn or an ice cube when you bring it down into the purple glow? (long pause)

Sam: Boy, it's a whole lot closer. Now I have a feeling of cold and numbness here in my lower legs.

Maybe eventually you could just let it go right on down to your toenails, so you'd just have cold toenails. (Sam laughs.)

OK. The pulsating circles took it a little further, but there's still a little bit left. There's still something missing. Now, I want to stop and ask you a fairly simple question: "Are you an authoritarian?"...

Sam: I sure can be.

Well, you *have* been. You have the capacity, and I wouldn't want to take that away from you, because it might be useful sometime. But the images we've put over here in the purple glow have all been examples of mutual respect. Right?

Sam: Right, right.

So, as you think about yourself now, how would you describe yourself?

Sam: I think much more respectful and loving. I know I'm hedging a little.

Sure, and I think that's totally appropriate, because there is still a bit more that needs to be done before you can transform those last few images up there and bring them all the way down here. So I want you to be thinking about, "Well, what other resource can I add into those situations?" Or maybe you still need another ounce or two of compassion or of loving kindness, or whatever. I want to stop for now, and have you continue on your own.

(to the group) We got into quite a lot of change work, and it's easy to get immersed in that and lose sight of the larger outcome. So I want you to keep in mind that all this is directed toward creating that quality of mutual

respect. I think most of us can identify with the universal theme that Sam worked with, the two fundamental alternatives to dealing with difficult situations, authoritarian power and coercion, or mutual respect and compassion. Coercion is a very simple and quick way of solving problems, but it often creates more problems than it solves. Mutual respect is usually more complicated and slower, but it is much more likely to lead to solutions that are lasting. Do you have any questions for Sam?

Andy: Sam, you spoke of being "in the depths of depression" in one of those difficult situations, and you also mentioned that your mother had to have electroshock treatment, and I wondered if depression has been a problem for you?

Sam: Yes, I've had a lot of depression, over a considerable period of time.

I'd like to comment on that a bit, since you brought it up. Sam's purple glow resource was very large and inclusive, cosmic in scope, including all kinds of order. It is also very metaphorical, and lacking in specific detail. That makes it both very powerful, and also somewhat difficult to work with and change if you wanted to. When things go badly, it is quite likely that Sam will also think about that in a very global and metaphorical way, and that is a description of depression. If he does that, that representation will also be very powerful and difficult to change. Like anything else, very large generalizations can be useful or problematic, depending on the content and context.

Are there any other questions for Sam? ... OK, how about any questions for me?

Annie: I noticed that you didn't use a new template; you used the same purple glow and put the examples in with what was already there.

Yes, I wanted to follow his way of generalizing. He described "mutual respect" as being part of a cosmic order that is represented by the purple glow, rather than as a separate quality. Since it is an all-encompassing generalization, it *includes* mutual respect. If he had thought of mutual respect as a separate quality, I would have specified a new and separate template. I was deliberately ambiguous about that at first, to give him a choice, and then he definitely wanted to put it all together, so I followed that.

In general, I prefer not to work with a metaphoric template, because so much of the specific detail is lost in that kind of representation, and I think that is one reason why the demonstration was so long, and was a little short of complete integration. However, Sam's purple glow is a very large and fundamental part of him, and that means that it is also very powerful, so when integration is complete, it will have a very large effect on

him. There was also a lot of very difficult history involved in the quality that Sam wanted to transform, and that also made it take longer than usual.

Since I don't want you to think that it is always this difficult, I want to offer you a follow-up report from another seminar participant, who worked with a quality that was *much* easier to transform than Sam's.

I started with that I was a disorganized person. When I looked at what was common about all the examples that proved that I was disorganized, I realized that they all involved activities that I didn't want to do. So I was able to shift those out into a separate category. Then I became aware of a lot of examples where I actually was quite organized. It was very profound; I didn't need to do anything more—transform any examples or anything. And that was made possible by that idea of grouping and categorizing examples. I have gotten a lot more done since then, and there didn't seem to be an effort involved.

After doing that process, I had a sense of choice about what I do. Having a choice, then I'm just going to do things, as opposed to feeling that there are things I *need* to do but *don't want* to do. Another way of saying it is that my experience switched from "I *have* to, but I *don't want* to," to simply choosing. When I was in "have to, but don't want to," then I felt disorganized because I didn't get much done.

Now I want you to get together in pairs, and assist each other in transforming a negative quality into a positive one, using the outline on the next page. If you work with others as a therapist or counselor, pair up with someone else who also does, and take turns being therapist and client. If you would prefer to work by yourself, I still want you to find someone else to pair up with, both for sharing after you're done, and to have someone else available in case you get stuck and need some assistance.

If you keep your overall outcome in mind, you can vary the sequence when it seems appropriate for a particular person, as long as you keep moving toward the outcome of creating that positive quality. Not only will this be an exercise in integrating all that you have learned, it will also be an opportunity to use all the other change skills that you know. Take about 30 minutes for each round. Whether you finish or not, you will gain valuable experience in how to do this.

Exercise 12 Transforming a Negative Quality into a Positive

One. (pairs, 30 minutes each)

Think of an aspect of yourself that you *don't* like. You know you're "X" and you'd like to be the opposite—your *values* are clear.

1. Positive template. Elicit the structure/process that the person uses to represent a positive quality that they like. (What you have already been doing.)

2. Tune-up. Use all that you have learned to improve what they already do, to make their representation of this quality even better, by adding modalities, future examples, other perceptual positions, processing counterexamples, etc. (Again, you have already been doing this.)

3. Elicit the structure/process of the negative quality. How does this person represent the negatively-valued quality?

4. Congruence check. "Does any part of you have any objection to having the opposite of this quality as a positive part of your self-concept?" Satisfy any/all objections, through refraining, accessing resources, building behavioral competence, etc., before proceeding.

5. Examine representations in the database (or a group of them), to find if they actually represent a *different* quality that can be named appropriately, and separated from the original negative quality.

6. New positive quality. Take any positive examples and start assembling them into the same form as the tuned-up positive template. Then elicit additional examples, no matter how small or inconsequential they seem to the person: "When in your life were you even a little bit kind?"

7. Transforming counterexamples. Group and transform negative examples into positive examples, and add them into the database for the new positive quality.

8. Create a summary for the new quality. Review the database and carefully choose a summary for it that is appropriate for this new database.

9. Looking back. Looking back at your previous experience, what differences do you notice between your experience now and what you experienced before?

10. Testing. Are you_____?" Observe nonverbal responses.

11. Congruence check. Again check for congruence with the work that has been done. "Does any part of you have any objection to the changes that you have made?" Satisfy any/all objections.

* * * * *

Do you have any questions or observations about your experience?

Al: When I found and assembled positive examples, I found that in all of them there was someone present who had high expectations that I out-

performed, but in my counterexamples there was no one present with high expectations. So I just added those people into those situations in my imagination, so I can outperform in them, too.

That sounds pretty easy. So the presence of these other people with high expectations serves you as a resource. Keep in mind that many people would find that others' high expectations would make their performance *worse*, because they would become self-conscious, but if it works for you, wonderful.

Lou: I had a part that didn't have an objection to the positive quality, but it wanted to have the *right* to object in the future. That was OK with me, but it puzzled me at first, so I asked for its positive outcome. It didn't want me to be "Pollyanna" about that quality and go "overboard." Knowing that I have that part ready to warn me made me feel even more comfortable and solid about having that quality.

Terry: We did quite a lot of work with each other, and sometimes it was hard not to get lost in it, as one thing led to another. We didn't finish completely, but we made definite progress in building the new positive quality. It was like getting a house about half built—there is still work to be done, but I can see it starting to take shape, and it's clear what still remains to be done.

Great. As you saw with Sam, sometimes it takes some time to actually do all the change work, but as long as you can keep focused on what you want to accomplish, you'll eventually get there.

Ben: So far we have presupposed that someone recognizes that they have a quality that is a problem for them. What about the situation in which someone doesn't recognize a problem? For instance, they are always getting angry and blaming others, while others see them as always irritable and angry, and that they are creating their own misery?

Yes, that is often a problem. Basically, there are two paths. One is to use their own criteria to convince them that there is a problem, and then work with it. That is likely to be a lot of difficult work, because people often don't want to realize that, and they are likely to see it as a personal attack, and get defensive.

Another way is to figure out what they would need in order to be different, and find a rationale that they will accept to work with them to create that quality for them. In the example of anger and irritability, it could be very useful to teach someone how to take "other position" and become more compassionate about others' limitations. If you can find an acceptable rationale for teaching them the skills that underlie being compassionate, that will solve the problem. For instance you might tell them that learning how to understand other's limitations from the inside will help

them forecast difficulties so that they can be better prepared to deal with their incompetence, or some other description that fits their world-view and hooks their motivation.

Another quality of understanding that could be very useful is to assemble experiences that convince them that people always do the best they can. So if someone is behaving badly, it's just a matter of finding out what they need to *learn*. Or perhaps you can build some other understanding that would make it very unlikely that they would get angry. That way is a bit less direct, but also less likely to evoke opposition, as long as you can provide a frame of understanding that makes it attractive to them.

Summary

At this point you have learned how to characterize and change all the different aspects of identity by changing both the content and the processes that we all use to represent ourselves, and how to recategorize and transform counterexamples into examples. You have learned how to transform either an ambiguous, "not-self," or negative quality into a positive one. This gives you the power to literally recreate and transform yourself, one quality at a time. We have come to the end of what I can teach you about the structure of self-concept and how to change it. I may have missed a few fine points, and I may have misunderstood a few things, but I think it's pretty complete.

Next I want to explore the *boundaries* of the self. Boundaries delineate the *extent* of our self-concept, and they have the function of *protecting* us from harm from outside the boundary. Understanding how we think of our boundaries allows us to make changes in how we represent them, and this can be *very* useful in changing how we experience being in the world, and our connections with other people and our surroundings.

13

Discovering and Changing Boundaries

External Boundaries

So far we have been working with the content and processes that we use to describe ourselves, the inner workings of our self-concept. Now I want to turn to a very different aspect, our *boundaries*, which define the *extent* of our self-concept. How far does your sense of self go, and what does it include?

Some people are described by psychiatrists as having "boundary problems," which can mean quite a few different things. Some people have boundaries that are so vague and changeable that they have difficulty knowing what their own needs and feelings are, and what belongs to someone else. A weak boundary can be a result of the person overusing "other position," becoming so identified with someone else's needs that they lose track of their own. They need to learn to be able to distinguish clearly between the two, and regain some kind of balance that respects both their own needs and the needs of others. Other people speak of being overwhelmed in the presence of others, and having difficulty in maintaining "their own space." Some people fear being lost or "engulfed" in an intimate relationship, and want to learn to be able to retain a strong sense of themselves.

A boundary that is too strong can result in someone feeling a great distance and separation from others, feeling alone, and having difficulty being intimate. A strong boundary can make it difficult for people in search of religious experience. They want to eliminate all sense of separation in order to reach a sense of connection with God, or the cosmos, oneness with everything.

Even when people have boundaries that are somewhere in between these extremes, the *characteristics* of the boundaries can still cause problems. A boundary can be too hard and brittle and likely to shatter, or so soft and flexible that it offers very little protection against intrusion.

Our experience of boundaries varies considerably with context. Two guys who wouldn't think of hugging each other are willing to do so vigorously if it is called a "wrestling match." The comfortable distance can shrink to zero with a spouse or a very close friend, and expand greatly with someone strange whom we consider a potential danger to us, particularly in a bad neighborhood or some other threatening context.

A good race car driver extends their tactile perceptions beyond the body to include the car they are driving. The car becomes an extension of their body, so that it is as if their fingers and toes can feel the texture and temperature of the track, and the sideways force of the tires in a turn. As a friend of mine who was a driver for many years said, "If you run over a dime, you want to know what year it was."

Our boundaries are also very dependent on our internal state. Try exploring what your boundaries are like when you are sick, and compare them with what they are like when you are particularly healthy and feel like Wonder Woman or Superman.

What you include inside your boundaries can also have a huge effect on you. Someone who identifies strongly with their thinking will be very argumentative, because that's a major part of their identity. Someone who identifies with their physical strength or sexuality will be more likely to defend that. If you identify with a football team, when they lose or win, it is as if you did. If someone identifies very strongly with their car or their country's flag, then if it is damaged, they are likely to react as if their own body were damaged, and get enraged and have to kill somebody. Someone else who didn't identify with the flag might just think, "What a waste of perfectly good cloth." Someone who becomes enraged when a flag is damaged is so lost in that experience of identification, they don't begin to imagine that there could be other choices, other ways of looking at that event and responding differently.

Most people identify fairly strongly with their immediate family members, usually less so with more distant ones, or other members of their ethnic group or country, etc. This kind of group identity can provide a comfortable cohesion and sense of who you are, but it can also be a divisive basis for disregarding or attacking anyone who is outside your boundary.

If you don't identify at all with another human being, that makes it very easy to mistreat or kill him. In every preparation for war, the enemy is always represented as *inhuman*, insane, evil, a caricature, a stupid animal

that can't be reasoned with, etc. If you think of the enemy as a human being like yourself, it is much harder to injure or kill them.

Many years ago, Edward T. Hall (15) pointed out that everyone has a "personal space" that can be observed as they interact with others, and that this is at least partly dependent on culture. In northern European countries, the comfortable distance for talking with a stranger is much larger than it is in middle eastern countries. If an Arab is talking with an Englishman at a party, it will look to an outside observer as if the Arab is chasing the Englishman around the room. As the Arab moves closer in order to be at what he considers a comfortable distance, he intrudes into the Englishman's personal space. So the Englishman becomes uncomfortable, and moves back a step or two to what he considers a comfortable distance. Then of course the Arab will move closer again, and so on.

What Hall and others did not go on to explore, is *how* we represent these boundaries in our minds, and how to adjust these representations so as to have additional choices in our responses and behavior.

Since again you will be exploring territory that is usually unconscious, an "as if" frame can be particularly useful in finding out what your boundaries are like. "If I had a boundary, what would it be like?" Try thinking of difficult or threatening situations in your life, and compare what you find there with other situations in which you feel capable and comfortable.

Before saying any more about boundaries, I want you to get into trios again. If you choose other people who seem very different than you, you will likely get more variation in what you find, and this will make it more interesting. Use the questions below as a guide to discovering how you represent the boundaries of your self.

Exercise 13-1 External Boundaries; Exploration/Discovery.

(trios, 15 minutes)

- Do you have a single boundary, or more than one?
- For each boundary, where is it, and what are its *characteristics*?
- What *modalities* and *submodalities* are used to represent this boundary?
- Is the boundary *analog* (varying over a range) or *digital* (on/off)? (It might have both analog and digital aspects, or it might be analog with respect to some events, and digital with respect to others.)
- What do you allow to pass through this boundary and what not?
- How does the boundary change in different *contexts*?
- What is the *positive function* of the boundary? Generally speaking, boundaries protect you from something. What, specifically, does it protect you from, how does it do it, and how well does it work?

- Are there any ways in which this boundary causes problems for you—are there any consequences that you don't like?

Begin by exploring your own boundary silently for 5 minutes. What does it look like, and sound like? If you reached out and touched it, what would it feel like? After noticing what your boundary is like, start experimenting with it. If your boundary is bright pink, try making it green or purple or some other color. Try changing the size, extent, or thickness of your boundary to find out how these modifications change your experience. If it is primarily visual, experiment with adding different sounds or textures, to discover if that adds or detracts from its function, etc.

Then take another 10 minutes to share what you have discovered with the others in your trio, and continue to experiment with changing your boundaries in various ways. If you've got a hard silver shell around you, and someone else has an energy field that's sort of warm and cushiony, try swapping. Experiment with how you can change how you see, hear and feel your boundary, and notice how these changes alter your experience.

* * * * *

Now I'd like to hear some examples of what you found in your exploration and experimentation. When people first start exploring something like boundaries they often think, "Well, I just made it up, it doesn't mean anything." But then when they try making changes in it, they usually find that it affects their experience in profound ways, and that's pretty convincing that even if they "made it up," there is *something* pretty real about it.

Alice: I grew up in Japan before moving to the US, and I find that my boundary is very different when I imagine being in the two countries. In Japan, it's much farther out, rigid, narrow and metallic, while in the US it's closer and much wider and softer, sort of like gray acoustic foam. It's much more comfortable for me to be in the US.

Sandy: In some contexts I saw an image of myself with a strip of rough hide, sort of like an armadillo, with a ridge of pointy protective structures that was part of my skin, on the front and back of my body coming up under my chin, and up and over the back of my head. That hide makes it hard for me to move, and it keeps me separate. It was kind of weird, but not too surprising. The me that had the hide looked back at me the observer, and asked, "Is this what you want for yourself?"

Al: I found that my boundary in front was much farther out than behind me, which makes sense, because my belly and face need protection more than my back. But what was really interesting is that on my right side it was about two arm lengths, but on the left it was only one arm length. So

it's more comfortable to have someone closer to me on my left side. Then Bill asked me "What if the person was the woman of your dreams," and the boundary instantly got larger and enveloped her.

Great. That sounds like a nice shift. Any transition like that can become automatic if you rehearse it consciously a few times, as long as it's congruent with your needs and values. If you live in an apartment in a big city, it makes sense to have your boundaries automatically extend just as you go out the front door, to help you be alert to any possible danger.

One way to describe a situation of intimacy and rapport is that there are no boundaries between you and that other person. Now that you know a little about your boundaries, you can deliberately use this information to gain rapport with someone. Many people teach how to match individual behaviors like breathing, posture and gestures, voice tone, etc. While that is useful, it can be pretty frustrating trying to keep track of all those separate behaviors consciously!

Rather than do that, you can simply open your boundary and expand it to gently and softly include someone else, or a group. When you do this, your attention will automatically and unconsciously focus on them, and most of your specific behaviors will tend to match them without having to think about it. That is a much more holistic way to get rapport, and one that takes a lot less of your conscious attention, leaving it free for other things.

Getting rapport in this way also tends to bypass the dualistic, and sometimes manipulative view, "I'm getting rapport with you," replacing it with a more balanced and unified sense of "We're in this together." So that's something you could experiment with sometime when you are with a group of people. Imagine opening your boundary enough to gently embrace one person at a time, and notice how that changes your response. You could also notice whether others respond differently when you do this.

Sam: Once I lived in a very small apartment, and I had to move, because it felt like my body was hitting the walls when I would move around, even though I wasn't actually touching the walls. When I think back to that time. I realize that my boundary was larger than the apartment, and if I could have adjusted my boundary to be smaller, it would have been OK.

Sure. For instance, you could imagine that you were hiding, and wanted to be as small and inconspicuous as possible, and that the apartment was a secret and safe place that snugly protected you. I knew a man from Australia who felt nauseous when he went to London. Then he realized that his boundaries were quite large, so people kept moving inside them. When he made his boundaries smaller, he was fine.

Many people have this kind of difficulty with automobile seat belts. The belt intrudes on their boundary, so they feel restricted by it, because

they can't move as freely as they are accustomed to. You can talk to them about how without a belt they will have the freedom to fly around in the car and get badly hurt if they are in an accident. Then you can ask them if they could imagine that the belt is embracing them gently and lovingly, protecting them by keeping them secure in one position in case of an accident.

Dave: I know a man who means well, but he comes into the group and gets so close to people that they are very uncomfortable. He hasn't got an idea in the world about what's going on, and no one will tell him about it. I've been trying to figure out what to do about it, because I don't think just telling him about it would do any good.

I suggest that you give him an *experience* of it first, by moving in so close to him that *he* gets uncomfortable and backs up. *Then* comment on it, and ask him to tell you what he experiences. Then you can tell him that this is what most people experience with him. Finally you can help him recalibrate to what is a comfortable distance for most people, so that he doesn't have to find out by trial and error.

Like anything else, once you are aware of these processes, you can use them positively. When Virginia Satir (8) did family therapy, she often used to deliberately put her face very close to the face of a family member in order to get their full attention, and interrupt their unuseful responses to other family members. When someone is really "in your face," it's very hard to pay attention to anything else, and in certain situations that can be very useful. Now I'd like to demonstrate with someone how to experiment with changing boundaries.

Demonstration: Changing an External Boundary

Sandy: I'd like some help with mine. I'd really don't like my armadillo hide, and I'd like to change it.

OK, great. I'd like you to think about the contexts that this boundary is useful in, and the kind of protection it gives you, and think about possible alternatives to the boundary that you have now....

Sandy: My first thought is, "Do I have to carry a big piece of steel around with me?" (She gestures holding something about two feet by three feet in front of her at arm's length.)

Usually when a boundary is as close to your body as that hide is, it has to be very strong and hard, because if something gets that close to you, then you really need good protection. But if the boundary is farther out, as you gestured when talking about the steel plate, it can give you more advance warning, so it doesn't have to be as hard. That is particularly true if it becomes a thicker boundary, and more analog, like an energy field that becomes weaker as it becomes more distant from your body....

Sandy: I can move it out (She gestures at arm's length.) and it kind of dissolves and changes form. It's still kind of hide-like, but it's more permeable, and if I need more protection, it can solidify. If I imagine someone's fist coming through it, then it stops before it gets to me. I had a lot of verbal abuse early on, and I think that's where that all comes from.

How about making the boundary particularly effective in diminishing or muffling loud sounds? . . .

Sandy: The part right in front of where my heart is really needs to be strong. That's where the quieting is really helpful, because when the words come through muffled, then I can still have my own feelings on the inside. That's great. That's really nice.

What color is the boundary now? . . .

Sandy: Hmnnn.... It's a shade of green that keeps slowly changing. It's kind of transparent and fog-like, like the air, about six inches thick, but I can solidify parts of it when I need to.

OK. Test it to make sure that you can do that. Think of some situation where you'd like that boundary to solidify and protect you....

Sandy: Yes, it solidifies only on the side where the danger is coming from.

Great. Now experiment with making it a different color.... (As she does this, Sandy's whole upper body rocks a little and her head nods.)

Sandy: I first tried purple, which was good, and then magenta, which was better. Then it became a brilliant magenta, with light streaming out of it. I like that a lot better.

OK. Test it again. Liking it is not necessarily a sign that it will work well. Think of a situation in which someone might yell at you, and find out how well the magenta protects you....

Sandy: Well, the thing that really changes is that instead of just absorbing the words and being defensive, I can determine what action to take. I can go, "This is hard for me to believe. It's time for me to have a word with this person. This doesn't work for me." That's much better.

Now I'd like you to imagine that you have the hide again, and see what happens....

Sandy: I just want to put it in a closet, and keep it, because it has a beauty of its own, but I don't really need that. It's really pretty when you look at it, but it's not comfortable. It really wasn't that efficient before. There were gaps where stuff was still coming in.

Thanks very much, Sandy. That's all I want to do for now. You can always experiment some more on your own, to see if you can find ways to improve it even more. There are lots of other possibilities in the visual and

kinesthetic system, and I didn't ask you to try anything with the sound your boundary could make. You could even experiment with how that boundary might taste or smell, and then try changing that.

Like our self-concept, and other things that we learn unconsciously, our boundaries tend to be a kind of hodgepodge of what others around us have done, and they can *always* be improved. My main goal in asking you to explore your boundaries is to give you ways that you can have more *choice* about your experience. Learning about your boundaries gives you more flexibility about what you do, where and when you do it, and with whom, and for what outcome.

Notice that boundaries are very metaphorical. I have no idea why a magenta boundary protects Sandy better than a green one, or why a transparent, fog-like boundary protects her better than an armadillo hide. That makes it a bit hard to predict how a change will affect someone, so you have to experiment and test. However, when you suggest experimenting, and offer a few examples, their unconscious mind will usually provide useful possibilities, and then you can test them and adjust them to be sure they work well.

Hopefully this demonstration has opened up a number of possibilities that you may not have thought of when you explored your boundaries in the first exercise. I'd like to offer you another opportunity to explore further, and experiment more with how to make useful changes.

Exercise 13-2 External Boundaries. Experimenting with Changes. (trios, 15 minutes)

Return to your trios, and again begin by taking about 5 minutes to experiment with changing your boundaries, particularly in situations that are difficult for you, or in which you would like to have additional choices. How could you change your boundaries in ways that would make those situations easier to deal with resourcefully?

Keep in mind the importance of preserving the positive protective *function* of the boundary, while you experiment with changing the *ways* that you represent a boundary, with a view toward improving how it works, and removing any undesirable consequences or side-effects.

When you find changes that are useful, future-pace them by imagining being in the kinds of contexts where you want to have them, as I demonstrated with Sandy. That is both a test of how well they work, as well as a way to connect any new change that works well with the contexts where you want it, so that it becomes an automatic response.

* * * * *

Is there anything you'd like to discuss from this exercise?

Eileen: I had a boundary that was very close and thin, kind of like mylar. When someone reached it, I reacted all at once, and pretty strongly. I wanted a boundary that was stronger, and that would give me more advance warning.

It's nice to have some advance warning. "Ohoh, things are getting a little strange here. I think maybe I'll back off a little bit" or "Maybe it's time to go home," or whatever. How did you change your boundary to make it stronger, and give you more advance warning?

Eileen: Instead of the thin mylar, I made it stronger and softer, widening it so that it was thicker, and physically took up more space.

OK, so instead of being a single little narrow border, it became wider, and reached out farther from your body. How did that serve to give you more advance warning?

Eileen: With a larger and broader "energy field," I didn't react as strongly. When someone reached the outer edge of it, I started to notice it a little. Then I'd react a little more if they got closer, and it wasn't a big surprise if they came closer and started to really intrude. And since the boundary was stronger, and I had more warning, I had more time to decide what I wanted to do, instead of just freaking out. I like that a lot better.

So that gave you more of a range of response, instead of the digital, all or none "freaking out" response. A digital response can be very useful in truly life-or-death situations, but in most ordinary situations, it can really get in your way. And did you try future-pacing it into future situations where that would be useful?

Eileen: Yes, I did. I felt a lot safer, and had a lot more choices that way, so I'm keeping it.

A boundary that is very close to your body gives you information about danger a little too late, so you have to respond defensively. It works much better to have some advance warning, so that you have more choices about your response. It's similar to driving a car kinesthetically. You could just close your eyes and cover your ears, and start driving. You'd find out about danger, but when you did, it would be a little too late.

One of the wonderful things about vision is that it provides information about events at a great distance. We can look up at the sky at night and see light from stars that are billions of light-years distant. Eyes give you long distance information, and that gives you lots of time to figure out what you want to do. Ears give you mid-distance information; you can hear events that are somewhat far away, but not nearly as far away as you can see something. Kinesthetics can only give you information about events that are *very* close. If there's any kind of threat, by the time you get

touched, it's *really* close already so you have to react very quickly, and most people also react very intensely.

Fred: I have always been distracted by noise. It is as if I had no boundary at all, and all that vibration was hitting my skin like raindrops. First I tried making my boundary into a partial sound shield, so that soft sounds could come through clearly, but loud sounds would be diminished. That made a big difference, but of course I'll have to test it in the real world to see if it works there. I also tried having no boundaries at all—imagining that the sound just went right through my body without affecting me at all, the way light waves go through glass. That seemed even easier, and I'm going to test that one, too.

Your experience points up something very interesting. Having "no boundaries" can refer to two *completely* different experiences. One is the one you described first, in which external events impinge on you in ways that you can't control, and you feel very vulnerable. For some people it's as if they had no skin at all, so they are completely at the mercy of the smallest events. A stony look can pierce their body like a dagger, and a harsh comment goes right into their heart, instead of into their ears. When someone has this kind of experience, it can be enormously useful to help them build boundaries in their mind, so that they have more control over what happens to them, and how they respond to events.

However, having "no boundaries" can also mean that you extend your boundaries farther to *include* "external events" as part of your identity, so that they are no longer "external," no longer foreign to you. When you think of the sound going right through you, that is a small example. The sound is no longer something outside yourself that you have to struggle with, it becomes part of what's inside you. When you accept it as part of you, you don't have to battle with it.

Sue: What about the kind of identification that parents sometimes have with children, in which the kid becomes an extension of the parent, and the parent becomes very attached to their successes or failures?

All of us include some external events inside our boundaries, while excluding others, and we respond differently to what we allow inside or keep outside. When someone identifies with someone else in that way, and lives through them, that is usually an indication of something lacking in their own sense of themselves. They might have some negative piece about not being important, or not being loved, etc., so they try to compensate for this by succeeding through someone else. Someone else's success becomes something that is desperately important for them, rather than just something that's nice if it happens.

This is an example of what Buddhists describe as being "attached" to

an outcome. Another common example is someone who is in love with someone who doesn't return the compliment. They desperately want to be with that person, thinking that if that happened, they would be supremely happy for the rest of their lives. Usually, of course, the "impossible love" wouldn't really solve all their problems; what they really need is some personal change work that would fill up the holes inside themselves, the internal lacks or negations that makes them so needy. Remember how dependent Peter was in regard to being loved, because he didn't have an internal knowing of that quality. Then after I helped him build a database for that quality, he wasn't needy, and he was able to *appreciate* his wife's affection so much more than before.

An old Buddhist practice is to deliberately identify with anything that is thought of as alienated, not part of you, to discover what that is like. This can reconnect you with whatever is seen as foreign and different, and is also a way of discovering more about yourself. This is a particularly useful way to become more aware of the "shadow" self that we have talked about, and I'd like to offer you a personal example of how to do this.

About a year ago, I was staying in a hotel room during a training, and I decided to turn on the TV and "channel surf." I generally don't watch TV at all, but I was tired, and I hadn't watched in years, so I decided to take a look. During the two hours that I watched, I saw about a dozen murders, one of which was my own, as the gun turned to point at me and then fired!

But what really disturbed me was a scene in which a young woman was tied up, completely helpless, being taunted and tortured by a man. That image haunted me, because I was so repulsed by it—a definite sign that I considered it "not me," alienated in the extreme.

So I decided to identify with the man whose behavior so repulsed me. When I entered into his experience, I began to think of a time when *I* had imagined torturing someone who was helpless—I didn't *do* it, but I sure *thought about it* in lurid detail! As I reviewed my *own* impulse to torture and taunt, I realized how it grew out of feeling *totally* impotent and helpless; torture seemed to be the *only* way that I could get some response out of that person. Getting that response would have given me at least a small sense of power and ability to influence others.

When I realized this part of my shadow self—accepting that I would also be capable of that awful behavior in certain circumstances—I could empathize with the inner experience of the man who was torturing. If I were in the presence of actual torture, I would still do all I could to stop it, but with a very different attitude, one of compassion and understanding, rather than rejection and condemnation. I'm also very sure that understanding would make it *more* likely that I could be effective in stopping the torture, not less.

Gestalt Therapy is based on this process of identifying with whatever has been alienated. The basic technique of becoming the person (or alienated impulse, or dream element) in the "empty chair" can be very useful in experiencing *both* sides of an inner conflict as parts of oneself and begin to communicate and problem-solve, instead of blaming and attacking what you don't identify with. Taking "other" position is also an example of this principle. Ghandi did this deliberately and extensively when dealing with the British in India, and other groups with whom he was working, in order to understand and acknowledge their views fully, while still pursuing his goals.

This process of identification is not restricted to human beings—you can identify with *anything* and become more whole. It is truly amazing what you can discover about yourself when you imagine being a stone, a leaf, a pen, or anything else in your surroundings that you don't usually think of as part of yourself.

I look out the window and see a leaf. "I am a leaf. I grew here in this place, I know not how, loving the warmth of the sun and the cool rain and the quiet nights. I am only here for a season; soon I will fall and become shelter and nourishment for the bugs on the moist ground, and sink into the earth, perhaps to become part of a leaf again someday." (It would take much too long to describe the tears that I experienced while doing this, but in shorthand, it is about the immediacy and transience of life, and that life is a brief gift not to be squandered.)

On a much larger scale, when a mystic expands his/her identity to include the entire universe to become "one with everything," and accepts it all, just as it is, "warts and all," then there is nothing to struggle against, because whatever happens, it is all part of "God's will," or the "natural unfolding of the universe." That is a very different meaning of having "no boundary," and the result is a very different way of being in the world, one that sages and mystics have spoken of for millennia. Understanding how our boundaries function can help us understand what these mystics meant by their words, and if someone is interested in attaining that kind of experience, adjusting boundaries provides one direct way to approach it.

Internal Boundaries

Next I'd like you to do the same kind of exploration for the space *inside* your body. Do you have any internal boundaries? If so, what do they separate, and what is the positive function of this separation? Again an "as if" frame can be helpful. "*If I had an internal boundary, where would it be, what would it be like, what would it divide, and what would its positive function be?*"

Body workers of all sorts often talk about working to eliminate "energy

blocks" in the body, areas where the natural integrated functioning is interrupted in some way. Blocks are shown by physical tensions, postural distortions, and areas where movements are interrupted and discontinuous, rather than smooth and flowing.

However, these body blocks are also evident in how people *think* of their bodies, and that can be in any or all of the three major modalities, visual, auditory or kinesthetic, and the smaller submodalities within them. This is a slightly different way of thinking about the changes that body workers have been working with for a long time. Since I'm not a body worker and I like to work with the mind, I want to offer you another way of achieving the same kinds of goals. Finding out about internal boundaries is another way to access this kind of information, and also a way to work to dissolve or change the blocks into something more useful.

Exercise 13-3 Internal Boundaries; Exploration/Discovery.

(trios, 15 minutes)

Begin by exploring your own internal experience silently for 5 minutes, using the same list of questions about boundaries that I offered you earlier. "If I had an *internal* boundary, where would it be, and what would it be like?" After you have learned about an internal boundary, notice what it protects you from, and any possible consequences, both positive and negative, that this might have for your psychological or physiological functioning and health.

Then share and compare experiences with the others in your trio, feeling free to keep to yourself anything that you consider too personal to share. Keeping in mind the protective function of your boundary, experiment with changing it to make it more effective, and to lessen any negative consequences. Try varying the submodality distinctions that you use to delineate boundaries, and try on each other's boundaries, to find out what might work better for you.

* * * * *

Again I'd like to gather some of your experiences, as a basis for discussion and generalization.

Dan: I found a sort of boundary where my arms meet my shoulders, a little feeling of looseness and disconnection there, as if there was a little airy space, as if my arms aren't completely attached. That was a bit puzzling at first, but when I thought about it, I realized that in difficult situations, my first impulse is to strike out at something with my fists. I think that boundary keeps that from happening, and gives me some control over

it by giving me time to come up with a more rational response. I often have tension in my shoulders, and I think that's where the hitting impulse gets stopped.

Ann: I found a hard shell around my heart, sort of like a large walnut shell only darker. It's pretty obvious what that is for, and I think of the people who speak of practices for "opening the heart." I tried cracking the shell, but that didn't work, so I guess I need to try something else.

I think a softer approach would likely work much better, particularly for a heart boundary. People have been speaking for years about "*break-throughs*" and "*shattering*" limiting beliefs. Those words presuppose overcoming a limitation or problem by brute force. When you respect the positive function of a boundary, then change comes through a gentle melting, dissolution, or changing of the barrier, rather than breaking through it.

Charles: I usually experience myself as "I think this," or "I am this," or "I feel that." So I was noticing the thoughts and sensations that were happening in succession, and then the thought arises, "Well, 'what if?' What would it be like if I am only the field in which these things arise, but I am not any one of those things in particular?" I was just noticing all these internal events as if they were external, and had nothing to do with me or my identity.

That's the essence of quite a few meditative practices, a way of *dis*-identifying from our experience and looking at our thoughts and feelings simply as interesting events, rather than being completely immersed in them and taking them for granted. It is a form of dissociation that can be a very useful first step toward examining your life, realizing that you have other choices, and then considering what you might rather do.

Earlier I spoke of how we all identify with external events. But we can also do the opposite, and *dis*identify with *internal* events. If we judge or condemn internal experiences of being dishonest, vengeful, sexual, or anything else that is in conflict with our values and self-concept, we may try to place a boundary between ourselves and these feelings or thoughts. We have already explored this earlier in the way people try to isolate and ignore counterexamples by separating them by location and modality, and how the "notself" functions.

Stan: I have a boundary right under my chin that separates my head from my body. I've spent most of my life being very very focused on the intellect, and being rational, and I have found that my body often responds in ways that don't seem to be rational. So I think this boundary is a way of disconnecting from my body's impulses.

That's a pretty common internal boundary. The body often "has its

own mind" and that can easily be seen as being in conflict with reason. Often someone who does this holds their head forward, as you do, "leading with the head." You see this in extreme form in some mathematicians, physicists, and others who spend much of their lives doing very mental kinds of work.

It may be useful to contrast the natural functional divisions in the body with the kinds of division that typically appear in mental boundaries. The heart is quite different than the brain, and this is reflected in their different structures and functions. It's nice to have teeth that are hard and sharp, because their function is to grind up food. It's nice to have skin that is soft and flexible, so that we have freedom of movement. Ideally all these parts work together in a functional whole.

The mental boundaries that people find are usually much cruder, and tend to divide different *parts* of the body, rather than different *functions*, forcing them to operate separately—isolating the head or the genitals or the breathing, etc. from the rest of the body. These boundaries often tend to block *everything, all the time*, rather than being selective, and used only when and where they are useful.

Demonstration: Changing an Internal Boundary

Now I'd like to demonstrate how to experiment with your internal boundaries to make them more effective in protecting you, and I think it might be interesting to continue with Sandy.

Sandy: I would like some help with mine. It's repulsive to me, and I just kind of shied away from it.

Great: When you find something inside that's repulsive, that means it has a lot of alienated resources that can become a valuable part of you when you re-own them. So the more you judge them as repulsive, the more there is to reclaim from the shadow. OK, Tell me what you found.

Sandy: It's strange; it feels kind of like this little metallic box inside my chest. (She gestures between her throat and diaphragm.) It kind of reminds me of a sarcophagus. (She gestures in a coffin shape.) It's kind of unpleasant.

And what does that protect you from? One way to find out is to lift the lid of that sarcophagus a little, to see what comes to your mind when that protection is reduced a little....

Sandy: It's kind of like the world at large . . . and all the weird crap. (Her voice breaks, and she cries a little.)

What's going on now?

Sandy: Just realizing. I don't know if it's like a . . . learned level of—it's more than suspicion, it's a general distrust.

Of anything in particular? Or just all the weird and ugly stuff in the world?

Sandy: I think it's mistrust of other people's intentions.

OK, I'd like you to experiment a little, just as you did earlier with your external boundary. Try changing that box in different ways. Change the color, what it's made of, make it larger, softer, more rounded shape, or bring it out closer to your skin, whatever you'd like to try....

Sandy: It just becomes sort of vapor-like, and it also has its own light, and it's like a big oval shape that moves and radiates out through my body. That makes more sense in a lot of ways.

Is that more comfortable? (She takes a deep breath.)

Sandy: Yeah, actually. It feels *really* different!

Stay with that experience for a little while, to savor it....

Sandy: It seems like it wants to expand to make an outline of my whole body on the inside of my skin.

Good. Try that out. These are all just things to experiment with, to see what works for you and what doesn't.

Sandy: It still seems like this is the area (She gestures toward her upper chest.) that needs to be protected the most.

OK, experiment some more. Let it expand to your skin, but make it different in your chest area; make it denser, or thicker, or more cohesive, or whatever would give you better protection in that area....

Sandy: Now it's more of a light form that radiates out through. It's interesting. It's just so different than before. And when I keep looking at it, it becomes like one of those mirrored balls that shoot light out at parties.

Is this the same magenta color that you had in your external boundary that you experimented with earlier? Or is it a different color?

Sandy: Well, at first it was like gray mist. Then it changed, and now it's pale golden light that radiates all through.

Now I want you to test. Think of the situations where you want to have this, and find out how well it works to protect you.

Sandy: Now it's more like— Now I don't have to worry about what others' intentions are too much, because I'll be able to perceive more clearly because I don't have to— You know how if you get into a loop of all the time going, "Oh, my God. What's that? What are they thinking?" then you can't really think about what *you're* perceiving. So now I'm free to have my own perceptions about situations.

That sounds good—and it probably feels better, too.

Sandy: Yeah, it does.

Now I want you to imagine having that sarcophagus in your chest again, the way it was before....

Sandy: It seems pretty useless and restrictive and invasive.

OK, thanks. That's all I want to do right now. You can experiment more on your own.

Follow-up

About a week later, Sandy sent me the following email:

I've had some interesting experiences in the last couple of days—today for example. Background: Annie, the 'office manager' where I work, is an ex-biker/drug addict. She has quite a rough personality, and uses a lot of profanity and even yells at people. I wondered if she would ever yell at me, and wondered what my response would be. So today, it was discovered that I had put an order in the hold file without putting a complete explanation in the client's record. When someone told me about it, I said, 'I can't believe I did THAT' in a semi-joking manner, but still taking care of the situation and following up, etc. So Annie yells across the office, 'Well, you fucking DID do it!' And so I took the order, walked across the room, stood in front of her desk and said really loudly and forcefully, 'I'm now making a public apology. I fucked this up and I'm NOT fucking perfect!' As I walked back to my desk, she yelled, 'I'm so disappointed. I thought you were perfect.' And I yelled back, 'Well, I'm fucking NOT!'

Ordinarily I would never have responded so congruently. I wasn't really upset, yet I felt compelled by some inner force to stand up for myself. I didn't get upset during or afterwards, as I would have in the past. I just continued on with my day as if my response to her was completely normal—even though I got interesting nonverbal reactions from the other employees, who have been mostly annoyed and terrorized by her for years. I was confident that I was responding appropriately, even though this was very out of character for me, especially in a work setting.

I have also been a lot more humorous and outgoing and engaging with the other employees, not worrying about what I would say, or about our age differences, etc. And they have responded in the same way to me.

I also called one of the people with whom I have habitual communication patterns that I don't like. I found it much easier to engage him in conversation, and I felt more comfortable and somehow more honest, where before it always felt like all the

information was coming from me and about me. So I think that boundary work did some really cool things.

Although Sandy had an internal boundary, it actually functioned more like an external boundary, because it protected her from something *outside* her. Just as external boundaries provide protection against external challenges, internal boundaries usually protect against internal challenges. This could be as simple as the pain and discomfort resulting from injury or disease, or the challenges might be internal urges that the person has difficulty dealing with—anger, excitement, sorrow, loving or sexual feelings, etc. Some people reject some internal responses, or certain functions or parts of their bodies. This is particularly likely when some part of the body is not functioning well, or is diseased, or when its function is in conflict with strong beliefs that the person has.

Of course, the distinction between internal and external challenge is a little artificial, because most of our internal responses are to external challenges. We can choose to have a boundary that protects us from the external challenge directly, or one that protects us from our internal response to the external challenge.

Our body positions and movements are not only in response to events, they are also powerful determinants of our experience. As an experiment, think of something really sad or depressing. After you are strongly experiencing those feelings, raise your arms over your head, and also raise your head and eyes to look in the same direction, and notice what happens to your feelings.... It's pretty hard to feel depressed in that position. It is no accident that revival preachers tell people to raise their eyes and arms to heaven when they want them to feel better about their sins and look to God for relief. This kind of impact is also reflected in common expressions, like "Things are looking up." "Raise your spirits," "Keep your chin up," etc. By holding your body in one position, you can restrict what you experience, but that rigidity disrupts flexible functioning. This can cause problems, because in order to function well, your body needs to be whole, not separated into parts.

Now that we have had a demonstration, some examples, and discussion, I'd like to offer you another opportunity to explore some more, and experiment further with how to make useful changes in your boundaries.

Exercise 13-4 Internal Boundaries. Experimenting with Changes. (trios, 15 minutes)

Return to your trios, and again begin by taking about 5 minutes to experiment with your internal boundaries even further, particularly in situa-

tions that are difficult or challenging for you, and in which you would like to have additional choices about how to respond.

Keep in mind the importance of preserving the positive function of an internal boundary, while you experiment with changing the *ways* that you represent the boundary. Find what you can do to improve how it works by preserving the positive function while removing any unpleasant or unuseful limitations, consequences, or side-effects. When you find changes that you like, future-pace them by imagining having them in the kinds of contexts where you want them. That is both a test of how well the change works, as well as a rehearsal that connects any new boundary that works well to the kinds of situation where you want to have it.

Then share and discuss what you have found with the others in your trio, and try out what others do, in order to broaden your range of experience of internal boundaries.

* * * * *

Is there anything that you'd like to report? Or any questions?

Terri: I had a sort of thing made of stone across my chest to suppress my breathing. I get anxious sometimes, and when I do, I start breathing fast, and then I try to stop my breathing as a way of getting control. But that tenses my diaphragm and my blood pressure rises, and then I get headaches.

So you had a boundary that feels like stone, and you recognize the connection between that and your blood pressure and headaches. That's an example of how a boundary's protective function can result in a physical problem. Did you try changing it to something more permeable, like sponge rubber, or something else softer?

Terri: Yes, I did. It seemed like the mass . . . the solid stone started to separate a little bit, until it became more like a net.

So it can still "catch you," so to speak, but it can allow some things to go through more. Great. Of course, another way to work with this would be to find out how you make yourself anxious in the first place, and change that, so that there would be no need to control your breathing.

Ann: I did some work with the "walnut shell" around my heart. I started by finding contexts in which the shell wasn't there, like with very small babies, and when I did that, a lot of tears came. I didn't understand that at first, but then I realized that it was just *so* nice to feel that heart connection, and that it was really important to me. Then when I experimented with other situations, I found that I had to separate being open-hearted from having to *do* anything as a result of that. I had so many meanings attached to it—that if I was open-hearted, I'd have to take care of them, or be with them forever, and so on. Now I realize that I can just be that way because

I like being connected with people, and not need to feel any obligation to them. I don't know if you can see it, but I feel transformed, and it's as if my heart is radiating warmth out into the world.

Thank you. You brought tears to my eyes, too. Many people don't express loving feelings because of the possible misunderstandings and consequences, so a lot of people could use that, and the world at large would benefit, too.

A lot of people have written about the "mind/body split," which is another way of describing an internal boundary. Right now take a few minutes to notice how you think about your mind and body right now....

Most of us usually think of our minds being located in the brain, right? And then there is the rest of the body that is separate from the mind, so the mind is smaller than the body. Now try dissolving that boundary, and think of your mind flowing out and extending throughout your whole body, into every cell, right out to your fingertips and your toes so that your mind becomes exactly as large as your body. As you do this, notice how that feels, and whether there might be some soft sound that accompanies this.....

Now touch something or someone nearby in this way.... That's a really nice feeling, isn't it? Mind and body are just different aspects of your whole functioning organism, and I'm sure you have all heard those kinds of *words* before. But what makes it really impact your experience is to *see, feel,* and *hear* your mind extending throughout your whole body. That's a way to actually put your mind/body thinking back together, and reunite them.

Most of us also think of the heart as occupying only a small part of the body, but you can also extend your heart out to your fingertips in the same way, to experience your heart/mind/body. Reach out and touch someone nearby, so that you can feel yourself touching them with your heart and mind as well as your body. Take a few minutes to experience what that is like, and then do the same in your imagination with at least one example of a difficult or stressful situation....

While most of us usually think of the mind as being smaller than the body, your mind is actually much *larger*. Your mind can include stars that are 13 billion light years distant, and it can be interesting to try extending your heart/mind/body identification far *beyond* your skin. We all do this to some extent, depending on what other people or things we include inside the boundaries of identity. But what if your heart/mind/body included *everything* that you experience, so that all of that is felt as being inside you and part of you? Imagine that your heart/mind/body is so large that the most distant stars are within your fingertips! Take a couple of minutes to experience what that is like....

This is the kind of experience that many mystics report, and I think it

has a real basis, because everything you experience *does* take place in your heart/mind/body, even when you think of it as occurring outside you. Let's follow Einstein, and try a little mind experiment. Imagine that an evil neurologist from the "dark side of the force" crept into your room last night while you were sleeping, anesthetized you, removed your brain, and put it into a nutrient solution and hooked up very sophisticated electrodes to all your sensory nerves, and then fed in all the detailed electrical inputs that exactly duplicated the experience of waking up and doing all the things you did today. How would you know the difference?

I assume that many of you have seen the movie "The Matrix," which is based on this realization that all our experiences actually take place within our brains, even when we think of them as external. There are even mathematicians who claim to have proved that any brain with sufficient complexity is unable to distinguish whether there's an "outside" or not. Our brains *only* get electrical signals from our senses, which we interpret to *create* our experience of external "reality."

This process usually works quite well, and presumably there *is* an external reality outside of ourselves. We see a glass of milk on the table and when we reach out to grasp it, we feel it, and if we lift it to our lips and drink, we are not surprised to find that it tastes like milk and nourishes us.

So although we all have experiences that we describe as "other," or "outside of us," or "external reality," *all* of that actually happens *inside* our brains, and is a part of us, despite the separation that we usually assume.

So in one sense, we are each isolated universes unto ourselves. But in another, we are all one. And this is not an either/or choice, but a "both/and." As many mystics have said, you are *already* one with the world; it's just a matter of realizing it. You all exist inside my brain and I exist in yours. You are all part of me, and I am a part of you. We are all connected together. As a friend of mine said once, "The human being has many bodies." That's a very different way of thinking, one that provides a very different and more unified perspective, and one that you might consider exploring, to find out where and when it could serve you. I have no idea whether it's "true" or not, but if taking that perspective could be a useful choice for you, why not try it to find out?

Summary

We have been exploring the characteristics of both your internal and external boundaries. We have played with a number of different changes—expanding the boundary so that it's farther away from your body to give you more warning of a possible intrusion, changing a digital, "all-or-none" boundary into a more *analog* one, adding or changing *modalities* and *sub-*

modalities so that it can better protect you from what is difficult by making it tougher, thicker, or more resilient, etc.

Learning how to change boundaries allows you to make them more useful and effective in their positive function of protecting you from harm, while reducing or eliminating troublesome consequences. By learning how to change your boundaries, you can find out how they can best protect you in troublesome contexts, and how they can melt away or expand in safe and intimate ones. Whenever you find a change that works well for you, you can *future-pace* that change into the kinds of contexts where it will be useful. By imagining being in those contexts with that changed boundary, that will connect the two, so that the protection will automatically be there without your having to think about it, as Sandy discovered.

Now that we have explored boundaries in some detail, I want to return to a topic that I mentioned at the beginning of this book as one of the important criteria for an effective self-concept—*connection*. Feeling disconnected from others results in many difficulties, not the least of which is self-importance, judging others, conflict, and violence. Because of this, I spoke about wanting your identity to connect you with your experience and your surroundings. In the next chapter I want to explore this topic of connection in greater detail.

14

Connecting with Others

One of the inevitable consequences of a boundary is that it tends to connect you with whatever is inside the boundary, and separate you from whatever is outside it. A very strong and impermeable boundary makes it very hard to even contact what is outside the boundary, much less feel connected with it, while not having a boundary allows you full contact with your surroundings.

An experience of disconnection is usually one in which there is some kind of difficulty or challenge—a problem or argument, dislike, anger, resentment, etc. Usually your boundaries are very prominent, and they are between you and what you are disconnected from.

Typically in an experience of connection your boundaries either become very tenuous, or even disappear, or they expand to include what you feel connected to, and usually you feel safe, comfortable, open, giving, loving, grateful, etc.

Next I want you to compare an experience of connection with one of disconnection. First think of an experience of being very connected with someone, and then think of an experience of being very *disconnected* from someone. I want you to choose people who are not present in the room for this, and it can be particularly useful to choose experiences of being connected and disconnected with the *same* person. At one time you felt very connected with someone, while at another time you felt very disconnected from them.

You could also do this exercise by choosing a larger scope, such as a group of people, or even the entire universe, as long as *both* the experience of connection and disconnection are at approximately the same size. How-

ever, I recommend that you do this first with an experience of being connected with or disconnected from one other person.

Rather than focus on the boundaries themselves, I want you to notice the differences in the *submodalities* that you use to represent these two experiences, and make a list of these differences.

Exercise 14-1 Connection and Disconnection (15 minutes)

Think of two experiences that you have had:

a. An experience of being very *connected* with someone else, in which your boundaries were faint, non-existent, or very large and inclusive.

b. An experience of being very *disconnected* from someone else, in which your boundaries were very evident and prominent.

Begin by taking about 5 minutes to silently compare how you represent these two different experiences, and then make a written list of the submodality differences between them. There will be lots of similarities, but what we are interested in are the differences. Make sure that you include submodalities in all three modalities (visual, auditory and kinesthetic).

* * * * *

Now I want to collect some of the submodality differences that you found, and make a group list. Some differences may be unique to you as an individual, but probably most of them will be ones that most of the rest of you would find familiar, or at least parallel to what you experienced, so that you can say, "Oh, yeah, that could fit for me, too." I'll be watching your nonverbal responses as we do this, and if someone mentions something that doesn't fit for most of you, we'll ignore it, and move on to another one.

Connection

bright
 associated
 whole body
 color
 open
 soft edges
 close
 movement
 quiet
 relaxed
 sound
 smooth
 feel large
 "This is great."

Disconnection

dark
 dissociated
 part body
 black/white
 closed
 hard edges
 distant
 stillness
 loud
 tense
 silent
 staccato
 feel small
 "This stinks."

We could go on to get more differences, but this is plenty for my purposes. I mentioned that an experience of disconnection is one in which there is usually some kind of problem, conflict, stress, or difficulty. In a difficult situation, you want to be as resourceful as possible, in order to deal with the real-world challenge that you face. Now I want you all to look at these two lists, and ask yourself the question, "Which of these two experiences is more *resourceful*?"...

Connection is much richer and more resourceful, with many more sub-modality distinctions, and much more information: color rather than black and white, movement rather than stillness, sound rather than silence, relaxation rather than tension, etc. Now isn't it interesting that in a situation of difficulty, where you need to cope with a challenge, and you want to have access to all your resources, you throw most of them away! It's as if an explorer started on a difficult expedition, but before he started, he threw away most of his supplies and equipment.

Given that there is some kind of problem to solve, wouldn't it be easier to solve it in the kind of state we have called "connection"? Yet what we all typically do in this kind of situation is to create an internal state that is impoverished. When you pull in your boundaries and tense up, you become smaller, less resourceful, less able to influence others and cope with any difficulty. It is no wonder that in this vastly simplified and information-poor environment, we usually feel stuck, and have difficulty finding solutions.

Our natural response is to separate and disconnect from a troubling experience, and a simple example is pain. When we feel pain, we usually try to get rid of it, avoid it, block it out, or eliminate it—often with drugs. With very strong pain, this may be a useful solution, at least temporarily. However, at least with minor or moderate pain, attempting to reject it can actually make it worse. When we resist or fight experience, we have a tendency to tense up our muscles against it. This muscular tension tightens the area that is painful, which usually increases the pain—as well as restricting the blood supply that is needed for healing, etc.

The next time you experience pain, instead of fighting or moving away from it, try *welcoming* it, as if it were a trusted friend with unpleasant, but important news. Try drawing it toward you, and actively bring it into your full awareness, so that you can savor the full experience in all its intricate sensory detail. What shape is it, and what are the edges of this shape like? What color is it? Is it heavy and dense, or light and airy, sharp or dull? How does it change as time passes? When pain is welcomed and accepted like this, it usually decreases substantially, because you are attending to the sensory stimulus in *all* modalities, rather than just the pain response. Then if

you change the submodalities you find, usually the pain diminishes further, and may even disappear entirely.

AI: One of the most widely-used NLP methods for resourcefully dealing with a problem is to dissociate from the problem state, and dissociation is also particularly useful in pain control. Yet dissociation is listed as one of aspects of disconnection, which you are describing as an *un*resourceful state. Can you comment on that?

Sure. The answer lies in *what* you are dissociating from. Let's take dissociation from a problem state first. When we separate ourselves from the feelings in a troublesome situation, that leaves only the visual and auditory aspects of it. This is very helpful whenever we are overwhelmed and paralyzed by bad feelings. Separating from these feelings is a very useful first step toward accessing resources, so that you can *associate* into more positive feelings, which can be useful in resolving the problem. However, if you were to dissociate from a resourceful state, you would lose the positive resourceful feelings of that state.

Now let's take the usefulness of dissociation in pain control. First I want to point out that dissociation is very different from the fighting and tensing up against the pain that I was talking about. When you resist pain, you remain associated, and your attention stays focused on the pain. Dissociation is useful in pain control in the same way that it is useful in other unpleasant states. In both dissociation and effective pain control the attention is focused *elsewhere*, so the pain tends to be bypassed and ignored. When you focus your attention on the sensory qualities of the pain—the shape, color, texture, etc., rather than the pain response, this is an example of shifting attention away from the pain.

Many of you are familiar with the general submodalities pattern called "Mapping Across," in which you keep the content of a problem situation and the actual events the same, but change all the submodalities to those of an appropriate resource state. That pattern has many specific and powerful applications, such as the Grief Resolution, (2, Ch. 11) Shame Resolution, (2, Ch. 14) and Forgiveness patterns (4, 7). Given the wide usefulness of this pattern, there is every reason to expect that it would have equally useful results when applied to your experience of disconnection. What I would like you to do next is to experience mapping across your disconnection into connection. However, often there are objections to this, so I want to set a few frames of understanding, and then ask for any other objections you might have to doing this, so that I can do my best to satisfy them.

First, I want to make a clear distinction between your internal world and the external world. Your experience of disconnection exists in your mind, and it is in this *internal* world that I am asking you to experiment

with transforming disconnection into connection. I am *not* asking you to change how you interact with that other person in external reality. It may be that in the external world it would be very unwise to be connected with that person, although I will argue that point later. My goal is a much more modest one, to heal the disconnection that exists in your own neurology.

Remember that I specified in the last exercise that you choose someone who was *not* present in the room. I would like you to think about some of the ramifications of that. Let's say that you are angry at the person that you felt disconnected from. Since that person is not in the room at this moment, your representation of that other person clearly exists *only* in your mind. Your image may be an accurate representation of how that other person behaved unpleasantly at some other time, but at this moment, it exists independently in your mind, and occupies a part of your neurology. So one part of your mind is taken up by this image, and you experience this image as separate and disconnected from yourself.

Then another part of your mind is occupied with being angry at this image in your mind, and this is also usually experienced as something choiceless and automatic, beyond your control. "He makes me angry." Since the neurology that is occupied by both sides of this internal conflict is no longer available to you, you have fewer resources to deal with the actual external problem situation. Can you think of a time when you were so upset internally that you couldn't begin to cope with a fairly simple external problem?

That's like a country that is faced with some kind of external threat. If it is divided internally by some kind of civil or economic conflict, it has fewer resources to devote to the external problem. There are lots of historical examples of a country not being able to deal with an external challenge because of internal conflict. There is even a war motto, "Divide and conquer," that expresses this situation. When you heal an internal conflict and dissolve an internal boundary, that makes more resources available to deal with any actual external difficulties.

Typically someone who is angry a lot, who has separated from many parts of himself, becomes more and more fearful and preoccupied with his inner struggles with these alienated tormentors. And the more scared and helpless he becomes, the more he will try to separate himself from the threats he perceives everywhere, in a downward spiral that ends in isolation. A paranoid may say he's Christ or Joan of Arc, but this extreme egotism is a sham, a fragile cover-up for actually feeling very small and helpless inside.

I'm really not at all sure that I know what enlightenment is, but I'm *very* sure that it isn't paranoia, and that it is much more likely to be the *opposite* of paranoia. Enlightened mystics are usually described as being peo-

ple who were completely undefensive, impossible to anger, and completely accepting of those who were very different from themselves. This is certainly true of the only mystic I have had the privilege of knowing well.

Another concern that many people have about mapping across from disconnection to connection is that they might make a change that was unwelcome, and they are afraid that it might "stick," like the mother's warning about making a funny face. I can assure you that if this experiment turns out to be unsatisfactory for you in any way, you can always easily return everything to what it was like when you started. I can also tell you from my experience that unpleasantness is very rare, and if it does occur, I invite you to ask me over to see if I can find a way to make it easy and comfortable for you. Do you have any other concerns about doing this mapping across of disconnection into connection?

Ann: If I felt connected, I don't think I could trust that person.

When you change your feelings of connection in regard to someone, that doesn't mean that your knowledge and wisdom has to vanish. You still have the choice to not trust them. Experiencing connection doesn't mean that you have to loan them money, or like them, or confront them, or *anything* else. It *only* means that you would stay connected and resourceful with that person—and have *more* choices about how you interact with them, not fewer.

While we're on the topic of trust, I'd like to mention a couple of understandings that a lot of people could use. The first one is that although a trusting relationship is wonderful, sensible trust is based on your own *experience* of someone, or on information from someone else that you already have good reason to trust. Simply trusting someone without any evidence of their trustworthiness may feel good, but it's foolish, and can get you into a lot of trouble.

The second is that for many people trust is a *huge* generalization, one that needs to be broken down into smaller pieces. Trust *whom*, to do *what*, specifically, *when*, and *where*? You can trust some people with your feelings, or your wife, but not with your car or your money—and vice versa. I once offered to loan a new friend my car, based on my appraisal of his overall capability and honesty, but then he told me that he didn't know how to drive a car! I could trust his intent, but not his ability.

Amy: I feel disconnected from my brother, who abuses his kids. When I have tried to intervene in the past, he has abused me too. I'm concerned about the kids, and I'd like to be able to change his behavior toward them.

Remember that what I'm proposing in this exercise is *only* to heal your internal disconnection, without regard to anything you might do with the external situation. However, since you want to change the external situa-

tion, let's explore that a bit. When you feel disconnected, you are likely to act like a superior critic or judge, and most people don't respond very well to that. If you were to feel connected with your brother, I think it is likely that you would be coming from a position of caring, and feeling compassion for *him* as well as for his children, and I think that would have a much better chance of reaching him in some way, and having an impact on his behavior. However, you know him much better than I do. Which do you think would be more likely to get a better response from him, disconnection or connection?

Amy: I think connection would probably get a better response. But I still worry about being hurt by him.

OK, and that worry may be very realistic concern. Again I want to ask you if you think you would be safer in a state of disconnection or connection?

Amy: Probably connection.

Nothing works all the time. But if you do want to try to reach him in order to change the situation with his kids, I think that a state of connection is much more likely to get a good response from him than disconnection. And to be safe, I suggest that if you try this, you have someone along with you who can protect you, and prevent your brother from harming you.

Usually people have reported that they learned a great deal from this experience of mapping across. Most people have also found a partial, or sometimes even a complete resolution of the challenge that they faced in the situation of disconnection. Many also find that when their inner disconnection is healed, this also has a very useful impact on their actual interaction with the other person in the real world. They find themselves spontaneously interacting with the other person in a much more resourceful way, and often the other person responds more positively as a result of this. Now I'd like you to try this. Call me over if you have an objection that we haven't discussed. Work primarily by yourself, assisting each other as needed.

Exercise 14-2 "Mapping Across" from Disconnection to Connection (trios, 15 minutes)

1. Content of Disconnection. Start with your experience of disconnection from the previous exercise, and keep the *content* the same—the people, the context, and the actual events that happened.

2. Mapping Across. Using the list of submodality differences that you made, *transform the submodalities* of your experience of disconnection to connection. Change dark to bright, dissociated to associated, etc. until the *content of disconnection* is completely represented in the *submodalities of connection*. When you start changing submodalities, you may find that a

particular change is difficult or uncomfortable. If so, simply back up, and move on to the next submodality shift. Usually another sequence will be much easier, and a change that was previously uncomfortable becomes comfortable later, after other changes have already been made.

3. Experiencing the New Connection. Stay with this experience for a while, to find out what you can learn from experiencing this problem with a richer and more resourceful representation. If you like the results of this experiment, future-pace this into the next likely encounter with this kind of situation.

* * * * *

Do you have anything that you'd like to share from this exercise?

Mary: I found that including the other person inside my boundary automatically changed all the other submodalities to those of connection.

Alice: Instead of just thinking of the person in that one situation, I found myself having lots of memories of positive experiences with them, so my sense of them became more whole, and I could see many sides to them. Since I could see the problem situation in the perspective of other more positive situations, that was much more balanced and comfortable for me.

Sam: It was very enlightening—in several meanings of that word. What changed the most for me was that my experience opened up and started moving, and images started coming. I started to think of other things that I could do differently in the future in that kind of situation.

Charles: I took your idea that, "OK there's nothing out there," that literally if I'm angry or upset or disconnected, I'm disconnected from a piece of myself, so I can put myself together, in my way. And as I was working on that, suddenly the thought came up, "My God, if I succeed in doing this, a lot of the defensive behaviors that I've been doing for an awfully long time are no longer going to be necessary." And then another part came up and said, "But I *like* doing some of those behaviors!" So that brought up some enjoyably perplexing problems. Now I've got to decide whether I want to do that or not. Before, I didn't have a choice, it was just an automatic response.

One of the major presuppositions in NLP is that *Choice is always better than no choice*, and that is a particularly nice choice to have. *Choosing* to do something is a lot different from being *driven* to do the same thing. If you simply enjoy doing something, why not? If you decide to continue some of those behaviors, I'd be willing to bet that they will be a lot more fun for you, now that the "having to" do them is gone, and I predict that their impact on others will also be much more positive.

Sue: I picked two situations with the same person, my mom—one in

which I felt very threatened, and one in which I felt totally safe. Then when I mapped over, I had tremendous compassion, and it just wasn't a problem any more. I had always wondered why sometimes communication with her was great and sometimes it wasn't. Sometimes I was connected and sometimes I wasn't. When I took "other" position, it diffused everything. Starting out dissociated is like being in a war zone. When someone else does that with me, I'm annoyed with them for pushing me away. But when they connect with me, I feel honored and validated, and disagreements are minimized.

Fred: I have a relationship that I have been trying to disconnect from. But when I got into disconnection, all my resources went to hell, and I was dealing with it poorly. Now I can see that what I need to do is to stay *connected* in order to disconnect from her. That may sound strange, but I know it's true.

Sally: When I did this with a specific experience, it transformed that experience. Then I thought about all the other situations that would be useful for, and where I wanted this new response to be a part of me. So I used what we learned earlier to build the quality of connection as a part of my self-concept by creating a new template, transforming counterexamples, and so on. Now I'm someone who connects with others, whether it's pleasant or not.

Jack: After doing the mapping across, when I imagined talking to the person in a future situation, I noticed that my voice tone was different. It was softer, and slower, and I felt more comfortable. I don't know how much difference that will make in his response in a real encounter with him, but it sure feels better for me now.

In this exercise I asked you to draw a distinction between what you do inside and what you do outside. However, that distinction is artificial. When you gain greater internal integration, that will *always* change your external behavior in useful ways, and when you behave differently with someone else, that will often result in a change in *their* response. I want you all to notice how the mapping across that you have done has changed how you respond and behave, and at least consider whether your new responses would also be useful in interacting with that person in the outside world. You could even test, in small ways that are safe for you, to find out to what extent your new responses work well in coping with the actual external situations that used to be a difficult challenge for you.

This exercise runs very counter to most of our western European culture, in which we have a tendency to rationalize and justify anger and prejudice, and reject and attack the object of anger or frustration. However, in

the teachings of many mystics and saints you often find that they strongly advocate staying connected with your enemies, and finding some way of making friends with them. "The best way to destroy an enemy is to make him into a friend." Most of you are probably familiar with Christ's teachings in regard to forgiveness and "turning the other cheek," and the same kind of teachings exist in other religions. They knew that the kind of union with all that they were advocating was impossible as long as someone is divided internally.

When people kill other people, it is usually in anger or rage, and that involves disconnection and rejection. If you stay connected with the other person's humanity, then if you decided in a certain situation that you needed to kill someone else to protect yourself or someone else, it would be with a sense of *enormous* sadness that this was necessary. That would make it much less likely that someone would kill. It is too easy to kill out of anger, disconnection and rejection, and I would like to make it as difficult as possible. If you need to kill, it should be with great sorrow, and never in anger. Anger separates, while sorrow maintains a connection.

"Anger" is only one letter short of "danger." While the harm that anger and violence often does to others is pretty obvious, the harm that anger does to the person who is angry is not so widely recognized—and I don't mean just the high blood pressure and other physiological effects, but the psychological consequences.

In many Native American traditions, you find that it is imperative that when you take the life of an animal, you do it with great respect, and sadness, and explain to its spirit that you did this in order to feed or protect yourself and your family. They apparently knew somehow that if they took life in anger or in sport that the "spirit of the animal" would come back to haunt them and harm them, because of the lack of connection and respect.

Even in the *Star Wars* series, which is one of our most popular current mythic icons, there is this underlying presupposition, although it is easy to lose track of it amongst all the slaughter and destruction. The message is that anger and hate will turn the life force against itself, and become the dark side of the force. In the second movie, *The Empire Strikes Back*, Yoda, a sort of future Zen master, is teaching Luke the Jedi ways:

Yoda: A Jedi's strength *flows* from the force. But beware of the dark side—anger, fear, aggression—the *dark* side of the force are they, easily they flow, ready to join you in a fight. Once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny, *consume* you it will, as it did Obi Wan's apprentice (Darth Vader). A Jedi uses the force for knowledge and defense, never for attack.

Luke: There's something not right here. I feel *cold*. *Death*.

Yoda: That place is strong with the dark side of the force. A domain of evil it is. And you must go.

Luke: What's in there?

Yoda: Only what you take with you. (Luke starts to put on his weapons belt.) Your weapons; you will not need them.

Luke puts on his weapons and lowers himself into a sort of cave in the jungle swamp. He encounters a vision of Darth Vader, draws his light saber, fights him, and cuts off his head. Then when he cuts open Vader's helmet, he finds his own dead face inside. In his anger, he has killed himself.

In the third film, *Return of the Jedi*, The emperor and Darth Vader capture Luke, and the Emperor taunts him with his defeat, and says to him, "*Gooooo*. I can feel your anger. I am defenseless. Take your weapon. Strike me down with all of your hatred, and your journey toward the dark side will be complete."

But Luke eventually refuses to give in to hatred, and when the Emperor attempts to kill him, it is not hate, but his father's (Darth Vader's) love for him that saves him.

So there is an additional message here—that no matter how far into the dark side someone goes, there is still a kernel of love that can be redeeming.

Of course that's just a movie; how about something more practical? In the Asian martial arts, such as T'ai Chi, Aikido and Karate, the fundamental principle is to stay *connected* with the destructive force that is attacking you, and then rather than opposing it directly, use this connection to change the direction of the force. In hand-to-hand combat, this approach is *very* practical, using minimal force for maximum result.

But even more interesting to me is the use of this principle at the mental level, so that the conflict never even reaches the physical level. For many years I have been collecting reports of how people avoided being raped, mugged or assaulted by staying connected with their assailant, and using a sort of "mental Aikido" to find a way to utilize the situation.

One woman was sitting on a fire escape at a summer party, cooling off and having a smoke, when she felt something on her shoulder. She looked over and saw a man's penis there. She said casually, as if musing to herself, "Hmmm, that looks like a penis, only smaller," and the guy vanished.

A woman was in bed one night, when suddenly there was a man on top of her. She reached over to the night stand, picked up a quarter and offered it to him, saying, "Excuse me, would you please call the police; there's a strange man in my bed," and he left.

A college student was in his dorm room, studying hard before finals,

when the door opened and another student came into his room, and said in a dull voice, "I'm going to shoot you." The student who was studying was totally exasperated at this interruption of his studying, and said in a loud voice, "Look, I'm studying for finals; I have no time for this kind of nonsense; go shoot someone else," and turned back to his books. The guy with the gun said, "Oh, OK." and left. About a minute later there was a shot from the next room.

An attendant in a mental hospital was grabbed from behind in a choke hold by a patient who was not only much stronger, but who had a lot of martial arts training. The attendant knew that struggling to release himself would be useless, so just as he began to lose consciousness, he reached up and lovingly stroked the patient's arm around his neck. The patient stopped choking him because, as he said later, "That was just too weird, so I had to stop and figure out what was going on."

A woman who was being held hostage by a man with a shotgun at her throat kept telling him jokes, "Have you heard the one about the—" After about an hour of this, he released her unharmed.

Another woman was walking down the street in a rough neighborhood late at night, when she noticed a man who seemed to be following her. She crossed the street, and he followed her. She speeded up her walking and he did, too. She was starting to get a little worried, so she turned around and walked up to him and said, "Excuse me, I'm feeling scared. Would you escort me home?" The man held out his arm and escorted her home. She found out later that he had gone on to rape someone else later that evening.

When many people hear these stories, they think that this kind of response would be very hard to come up with on the spot. Certainly these people were unusually creative. While it may be difficult to come up with a creative response on the spot, it is possible to plan ahead for likely possibilities and future-pace your responses to them, so that they are automatic.

One woman who had a job that required her to walk home late at night through a rough neighborhood always made special preparations before leaving work. First she put half of her hair in a pony tail sticking straight up from one side of her head, and the rest of it in another pony tail sticking out horizontally on the other side. Then she painted her mouth in a very exaggerated "cupid's bow" smile with bright green lipstick. Finally, she put a couple of alka-seltzer tablets in the palm of her hand. When a man approached her suspiciously, she would turn to face him, and smile broadly, with wide open eyes, which was usually enough to discourage him. On the one occasion when that didn't work, she put the tablets in her mouth and started foaming, and he ran away.

If you examine these examples for what they have in common, there

are some interesting lessons. One is that rather than run away or separate from the situation, they stayed *connected* with the difficulty, and maintained a relationship. Nothing works all the time; I'm sure that there are people who tried this kind of approach without the same success. But staying connected retains access to all your resources, and gives you an *opportunity* to have an impact on someone else in a threatening situation.

Another common element in all these examples is that they all refused to accept the frame or context that they were presented with, and instead created a *new* frame that was more to their liking. They each created a context that was much better than the one that they found themselves in, and acted within that frame in a way that drew the other person into the new frame, eliciting a different response. This was a constant theme in Virginia Satir's very successful work with families. "Anybody on the outside of me is someone whom I can respond to, but they are never the definers of me, unless I have handed over my charge of myself to them." In order to offer a new and better frame, these people needed to have all their internal resources available to them, and not be embroiled in the internal turmoil that is always a part of fear or anger, which makes people weak and vulnerable.

It can be useful to consider the opposite situation. Can you all think of a time in your life when your external reality was rather pleasant, perhaps even particularly wonderful, but you couldn't enjoy it because you were so embroiled in some internal turmoil? Certainly paranoia is an example of someone who is having a very bad time, often despite the attempts of people around them to help them enjoy life. If you don't make peace with your internal divisions, you're going to have an unpleasant time, whether or not you solve external problems, and this is also a fundamental message in many spiritual traditions. "The kingdom of heaven is within you," is not just an abstract metaphor, it's a very direct statement about where the solution lies.

Sue: You have been talking about the problems caused by internal representations that are involved in conflicts. Could you say a little about positive ones?

Sure. When you make peace with a problem representation, it turns into a positive one, which becomes an additional resource that is a part of you. When you love someone, your internal representation of that person enriches you, and becomes part of the internal world that you carry with you everywhere. But you gain much more than just taking in something wonderful from outside. You also discover *yourself* in all the wonderful responses that *you* are capable of. You discover yourself as you relate to that other person. If they had never come into your life, you might never have known about your own ability to care, and appreciate, and whatever else you discovered

about yourself in that relationship. Every time you take in something wonderful from outside yourself that is beautiful and true, you also discover more about yourself, and you become greater than you were. The more you have inside, the more you can appreciate what is outside.

A small child hasn't had time to accumulate many experiences, and while they have a wonderful simplicity and innocence, they simply don't have the experience to really appreciate finer discriminations. For a small child, any candy will do, as long as it's full of sugar. Only later can they really appreciate the flavor of real maple sugar or the delicate tastes and textures of other treats, as their internal world of experience gradually becomes enriched. And the same is true of appreciation of art, music, or any other more complex experience.

What kind of internal world do you carry around with you? What experiences have you furnished your mind with? Some people collect resentments, disasters, and other unpleasant memories and then live with them. Imagine what it would be like to put photos and paintings of unpleasant events all over the walls of your home and office, where you would see them and respond to them every day. That would be pretty awful, yet that is what many people do in their minds—and unlike their homes or offices, they can't escape from that. I recently saw a quote from Carrie Fisher that says it well: "Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die."

Rather than that, why not furnish your mind with powerful experiences? Striking beauty, deep gratitude, gentle love, lasting pleasure, shared humor, unswerving loyalty, incredible courage, profound wisdom, the kind of connection that brings tears....

I am not talking about denying the manifold horrors of man's inhumanity and stupidity, but those can be kept at a distance, out of the home that you live in, your mind.

How about building in yourself a personal quality of being *determined* to live in a mind filled with beauty, truth, and pleasure, and begin, *now*, to *collect experiences that nourish you and assemble them*, just as you do for any other quality in yourself? I think that would be one of the most profoundly useful ways that you could use what you have learned here to make your life better.

Closing

I have been modeling self-concept off and on for over 12 years now, and I have finally come to the point where I think I have done a fairly complete job of outlining at least most of the major aspects of the many ways that people can think of themselves. What you have learned here is a comprehensive set of practical processes and understandings that can be used to transform your self by adjusting and changing any quality of your self-concept. Some of these processes are relatively new, and some new facets of this material emerged even during the final editing of this book. So undoubtedly there are additional distinctions that I have missed, and still lie waiting to be noticed and described by someone else. Nevertheless, this is a useful practical map that can be used to strengthen and change your self-concept.

The question now is, "How can you know when to use all these different methods? When is it most useful to make a self-concept level change?" Each chapter has some specific indications for the applications of the material in that chapter, but I would like to make some overall comments that might be helpful.

Whenever someone is talking about themselves, or problems that they are having, they are making statements about how they think of themselves. So you could use a self-concept intervention for any problem that a person talks about having. However, if someone says, "I can't spell," or "I want to be able to make 'small talk,'" or "I have a phobia," they are clearly talking about a specific problem or skill that occurs in a limited context.

Whenever someone has a problem that is limited to a particular con-

text or a particular task, it is usually much more efficient to use older and simpler methods to resolve it with a contextualized behavioral change. They are asking for a specific change, and often that is all they need. Specific changes are much easier to make, since they are much less likely to interfere with the rest of the person's living, so there will usually be very few objections to satisfy.

Years ago, I knew a trainer whose solution for nearly every problem was to elicit self-confidence and combine it with the problem state. But if you use a self-concept intervention for a specific skill such as spelling, it's pretty unlikely that it would affect their ability to spell well, so they will probably still be a bad speller when you are done! All the self-confidence in the world won't make a bad speller into a good one if they haven't learned how to spell. They may feel fine about being a bad speller, which is a certain kind of improvement, because at least now they won't feel bad about it.

However, that is not what they asked for, and not what they really need. They still won't be able to spell well, and the harmful consequences that they will have to deal with in an employment application will still be the same. Self-confidence can modify *how* you do a specific skill, but it can't create it. And if they now have lots of self-confidence, they will likely be amazed (and perhaps even outraged) when someone else points out that they are misspelling words. Some "solutions" are actually problems in disguise!

When someone talks explicitly about themselves in a very generalized way, particularly if they say or imply "always" or "everywhere" (or "never" or "nowhere") that is a good indication that they would benefit from a change in self-concept, since that change will go with them always and everywhere. Statements like, "I'm an awful person," "I'm a failure," "I don't deserve to be happy," or "I can't have a good relationship," are pretty obvious indications that a change in self-concept would be very useful. So at a very crude level you could ask yourself, "Is this person saying 'I *have* a problem,' or 'I *am* a problem'?" When they are saying I *am* a problem, then self-concept work is clearly appropriate.

If someone is having great difficulties in most areas of their life, it is likely that self-concept-level interventions will be very useful. But even if someone is overall very capable and successful, as Peter was in the Building Self-concept demonstration, they may benefit from a self-concept intervention if the specific problem is clearly one that goes across time and space. Peter evidently had all the specific skills for being lovable, so the change in self-concept was all it took to make that evident in his behavior. On the other hand, someone could have a very strong and well-developed quality of thinking of himself as being lovable, yet be missing some specific skills (rapport, sensitivity, gentleness, compassion, etc.) that would

make a *huge* difference in how that quality is actually manifested and received by others.

The swish pattern, which creates a quality of self-concept, can be used for fairly simple habits like nail biting, as well as changing behaviors like smoking or losing weight which are often considerably more complex. So you could use a self-concept intervention for nearly anything, and it is really up to you whether you think that someone could benefit from a limited behavioral change or a more extensive change in self-concept, or perhaps both.

When someone talks about always *doing* something that doesn't work for them, or often *having* a problem, and you think that the opposite of that would be a useful thing for them to think of themselves as *being*, you can always bridge from the doing or having to *being* different, as you explore a desired positive outcome. "You have spoken to me about frequently judging others and the kinds of difficulties that result from that. So it sounds like you would like to be an accepting person, someone who has respect for all the different ways of being in the world, while also fully respecting your own likes and dislikes. Does becoming someone like that seem to you like a useful goal?"

I have been teaching you how to change self-concept in a very conscious, explicit, and detailed way, because I wanted you to thoroughly experience and understand all the different aspects of how your self-concept works. However, now that you have this detailed understanding, those of you who want to offer these understandings to others don't need to use quite such detail, or be as obvious, as long as you carefully track someone's nonverbal responses as well as their verbal ones. Keep in mind that we have been exploring aspects of our lives that are completely unconscious for most people. Once you have practiced these skills, you'll be able to do a lot in a casual conversation, and the other person will have only the vaguest idea of what's going on.

"Give me one example of how you have been kind in the past." "How many different ways do you have of being kind, with different people and in different situations?" "Is it easiest for you to think of all those different ways gathered together all at once, like a kind of collage, or one after another, like a rapid slide show?" "Can you picture times in the future when you fully expect to be kind?" "If you were to be kind to someone in a new and different way that you've never tried before, what would that be like?" "I wonder if you can think of times when you were kind for a very short time, and also times when your kindness lasted over an extended period of time?" "When you think of examples of what it means to be kind, do you think of how other people have acted in a kind way, or are your examples

of times when you were kind?" "If you think of a time when you were kind to someone, can you imagine what it would be like to step into their body and feel what it's like to be that other person receiving your kindness?" "What do you experience when you think of times when you weren't kind?" "Pick one of those times, and tell me what you'd like to do instead the next time a situation like that happens." "Can you see yourself responding in that way next time?" "That will be yet another example of how kind you are, won't it?" And of course you can ask the same kinds of questions about their boundaries and connection.

When you do that, I hope it will be totally clear to *you* what you're doing, but to someone without your knowledge, your questions and your nonverbal gestures will be just part of an interesting conversation, which they may not even connect with the positive changes that they experience as a result.

Benediction

At this time I'd like you to relax a little bit, and take some time to gently review the experiences that you've had—everything that you have seen and heard and felt while reading this book, and doing the exercises in it. As you reflect on the journey you have taken across that endless landscape inside your mind, to the foundations of your being and self-concept, the root and wellspring of who you are, I want you to think about the changes that you have already experienced. I want to invite both your conscious mind and your unconscious mind to participate fully in this review, because there are probably many things that your unconscious mind has learned that your conscious mind may not have even noticed yet.

When you begin to build a new foundation of understanding, it is a lot like building a house. At the very beginning, all you have is a set of plans, which are confusing little marks on paper that don't seem to mean a thing. A little later you might have a hole in the ground, some concrete, and some stacks of boards, nails, and other materials. If you were teaching someone how to build a house, it would make sense to first provide an image of what the finished house will look like, and then to teach them all the small parts of building a house—how to measure and cut boards, and drive nails, how to leave openings for windows and doors, and all the other skills that are needed to gradually put all those materials together into something that will be a comfortable place to live.

Milton Erickson often used to introduce people to hypnosis by reminding them of what it was like when they first learned the alphabet in grade school, sitting in those hard little desks in rows. Not even really knowing what letters are, seeing them up above the blackboard, or posted all around

the room. Wondering why there are capital letters and small letters, and why some of them look so different from each other, even though it's the "same" letter, while other letters that are "different" look so much the same. "Is a b an upside down p, or a backwards d—or is it an upside down *and* backwards q? Why doesn't a w actually sound like a double u? If a 'silent e' is silent, why isn't it also invisible?"

When you were learning these letters, and later learning how to put them together into words, and later sentences, you had no idea that you were laying the foundation for a skill that would later become totally unconscious, an ability that would literally open up entirely new worlds for you, allowing you to enter the minds of people from thousands of years ago, or thousands of miles distant, or from entirely different surroundings, cultures or occupations, providing you with a breadth of experience that otherwise would have been forever inaccessible to you.

When you learn a new set of skills, such as driving a car, you often feel very awkward at first, and it requires almost all your conscious attention. But as you practiced, and became more and more skilled, the task gradually slipped into the background of your attention, freeing your conscious mind for other matters, until now driving is usually almost entirely unconscious. You slip behind the wheel, and drive skillfully to your destination, unconsciously responding to the signals and intersections, the passing traffic, and all the other events that you need to pay attention to in order to drive safely, while consciously your mind may be occupied by talking with companions, or planning your day. Driving only needs your conscious attention in a sudden emergency, or in unusual road conditions, or if you are driving an unfamiliar car, or finding a new address in a strange city. And even then, most of the basic skills of driving *still* remain unconscious.

If you drift back in time to the beginning of this book, and think about everything that has happened since then, I want you to recall your state of mind when I first asked you to turn inward and find out how you unconsciously represent a quality that you know is true of you. Many of you were probably uncertain or confused about what I meant then, but if I asked you to do it now, you would be able to do a very thorough job quickly and easily, and that is only one small indication of all that you have learned.

Because of the inevitable awkwardness of the early stages of learning, some people avoid practicing new things, because it makes them uncomfortable, forgetting the old saying that, "If something is worth doing, it's worth doing badly at first." If you need a reminder of how true this is, think of your first kiss, or your first fumbling experience of sex. If the awkwardness of early learning and practicing still makes you uncomfortable, you can remind yourself that you are someone who can keep your long-

term goals in mind, and that you have the persistence and tenacity to continue through temporary discomfort because of the wonderful benefits that lie ahead. And if by chance tenacity is not yet part of your self-concept, you now know exactly how to build that quality for yourself in a way that is lasting and powerfully effective, by thinking of times when you have been tenacious, and assembling those experiences in that unique way that is powerful and convincing to you.

I also want you to take some time to create a bridge between the experiences that you have had with this book, and the future that stretches out invitingly before you. You have already experienced the positive impacts that the processes that you have learned here can make in your life—making your self-concept more stable, yet more open to feedback and change, making your life a lot more fun, and interesting, and enjoyable. But I also want you to realize that what we have done here is just a beginning, an introduction, and that it will be up to you to commit yourself to continue the process of making full use of all that you have learned, so that you and your friends use this knowledge to make your lives into all that you can become.

I think that part of this journey that we are all on is finding out what it means to be a human being. A few hundred years ago, in traditional societies, they *knew* what a human being was, and very few ever questioned the old accepted truths. Change was very slow, so there were few challenges to what everyone believed. The bow and arrow were first invented between 30,000 and 11,000 years ago, yet in all that time there were only a small handful of innovations in how the bow was constructed. Living in those times, you could live out your whole lifespan and very few changes would occur. You could know who you were, and not much would happen to challenge that or change it.

Now, however, changes happen so fast that we can't begin to keep track of it all, much less adapt to it well. There have been hundreds, perhaps thousands, of changes in the design of the bow in the last 50 years. The rapid pace of change continues to accelerate, and this speed is full of danger as well as opportunity. A traditional culture that has remained essentially unchanged for hundreds or thousands of years may have some very beautiful and wonderful aspects, but when it is faced with rapid change, it usually becomes disorganized and shatters.

Although our own culture is showing plenty of signs of strain, so far we have managed to adjust to change, though often reluctantly. A scant hundred years ago, when my father was a young man, women in the US were the property of their husbands or fathers, and not allowed to vote—and there are plenty of places on earth where that is still true. Although we

certainly have a long way to go, we are gradually making progress in looking beyond ethnic, racial, gender, and class stereotypes, seeing all people as deserving of equal respect and rights, and that each of us can contribute something to the journey of self-discovery that humanity has only recently begun.

What does it mean to be a human being, free of all those old dogmas and destructive stereotypes, all those cultural assumptions that no one used to question? I don't think any of us really has a clue about what humanity can become, but it is very clear that we are a species in a *very* rapid process of transition.

The destination of this journey, or our ability to reach it, may be in question, but that is true of all journeys, and particularly beginning ones. I hope that what we have explored together in this book can play a small part in helping us find out who we are and what we are capable of, and I hope that you will join me in these first fumbling attempts at this process of discovery, in whatever way seems appropriate to you.

And as you take these ideas out into the world, and listen to people as they talk about themselves, and about their skills and problems, you can enjoy thinking about how you might assist them in experiencing themselves and their qualities in more useful ways. There is a lot of need in the world for what you have learned here, unlimited opportunities for you to improve the lives of others, and hopefully for some of you to earn some money as you do it. I wish you a pleasant journey in the weeks, months, and years to come. There is literally a wealth of opportunity to make use of these understandings to help people become who they'd like to be.

Postscript

Martin Fischer has been quoted as saying, "A conclusion is the place where you got tired of thinking." In the same way, a book is the place where someone got tired of writing and editing. I'm sure that parts of this book could be more clearly written, there are undoubtedly some omissions, and perhaps even some mistakes. Certainly that has been true of every book I have read. Although the methods presented here are always open to question, they are practical ways to rapidly help people improve their lives by changing how they think of themselves. These processes have been tested in the crucible of repeated experimentation and observation. Everything can always be improved, and this book and the processes in it are no exception. I invite you to find even better ways to use, expand, and revise the understandings and processes presented here.

Appendix

Perspective Patterns

Introduction

One way to describe most unhappiness is that we develop "tunnel vision," narrowly focusing in on a problem while ignoring everything else that surrounds it. We also tend to take problem experiences out of the flow of time, isolating them from what preceded and followed them. While this concentration can be useful in order to study a situation to see what can be done, a narrow view often leaves out the very information that we need in order to start moving toward a solution. To see a problem "in perspective" means to see it in *relation* to something else, and the same thing is true of our thinking about ourselves.

There are many, many ways to gain perspective. Simply expanding your field of vision to include much more of what is happening simultaneously in the moment gives a perspective that is literally *wider* and *broader* in scope, the "big picture" that includes much more information. Typically when a problem is seen within a larger context, it appears smaller and easier to solve, and the additional information included may provide a basis for a solution. Expanding the frame in this way is the most common pattern in most cartoons. Usually a series of small frames sets up a puzzling or confusing situation, and then a larger frame at the end includes something new that resolves the puzzle and makes sense out of it, changing the meaning. Sometimes the last frame simply draws attention to something that was already in the earlier frames, but was easy to overlook and ignore.

Since the frames in a cartoon typically indicate a time sequence, this example introduces the other way that we can increase scope, by turning a

still picture into a sequential movie that shows a situation changing over a period of time. Expanding scope in either space, time, or both, is a simple, yet very powerful intervention that is an important part of many effective change patterns.

Simple dissociation, stepping out of a problem context, allows you to see yourself in relation to your surroundings. This gives you a *different* outside perspective, the perceptual position of a curious, and perhaps compassionate, but otherwise emotionally uninvolved observer. Taking on the perceptual position of another person in the same context provides yet another perspective, with different information.

Seeing two events that are separated in time in relation to each other creates another kind of perspective. Whenever we endure something unpleasant in order to move toward a desirable future, we are seeing how the present activity relates to our future outcome, providing a sequential perspective. This kind of perspective utilizes two representations that are connected simultaneously in our experience, yet which remain separate from each other in different time frames. People who overuse food, drugs and other forms of instant pleasure typically do not view their present behavior in relation to its long-term consequences. They can be taught to take a "longer view" to help them avoid experiences that may be pleasant, but which have later unpleasant consequences. The same kind of perspective can help them stick with tasks that are not inherently pleasant, but are useful in reaching pleasant goals.

Of course, in many contexts it can be very useful to have a narrow perspective, concentrating your attention and deliberately deleting other concerns, events, and information. Whenever you want to focus attention on a single task, or the simple enjoyment of life's pleasures, a broader perspective would only detract from your experience. All skills are useful in certain times and places, and *every* skill becomes a limitation if we lose the choice to use it or not in a particular situation.

John McWhirter has characterized the general form of a simultaneous perspective that is the basis for a healthy self-concept, a pattern that has many other useful applications.

Visual Perspective Pattern

I would like to demonstrate this pattern in the visual system with someone who has an image that still troubles you in some way. I don't need to know anything about the content; you can keep that to yourself. (Mike comes up.) So, Mike, you have an image that when you think about it, it still bothers you, right? Try it right now, just to check to be sure it still bothers you.... (Mike's breathing becomes shallower, and his body becomes still.)

Mike: Yeah. Not a lot, but it still does.

OK, take that picture and just set it aside somewhere. Now I want you to think of four resource experiences, one at a time, perhaps ones that you think might be particularly useful in relation to that image that still bothers you. And I'd like your unconscious mind to participate fully in this selection process. I want you to develop an image for each of these four resources, one that fully represents each of them. Let me know when you have those four images.... (Mike nods.)

Now I want you to take these four images, and make each of them about 18" high, and 18" wide, and then place them together so that you can see all four pictures at once in a large collage about three feet in front of you. Some people like to imagine that they put Velcro on the back of the images so when they place them they can hear that little sound that Velcro makes when it sticks, and know that they will stay put. When you have all four up there together, it will be a little harder to see the details of what's in each one, but you'll still know what's there. Take whatever time you need to set that up, and let me know when it's ready.... (Mike nods.)

Great. Now keeping this collage intact, I want you to take that image that we started with that still bothered you, and place it right in the middle of that collage, so that it covers up just the inner corners of those four resource pictures where they meet in the center of the collage. You may want to adjust the size of that troubling image a bit so that it lies flat and becomes part of the collage, leaving most of those four resource pictures visible. Then notice how you respond to that troublesome image in the context of those four resources....

Mike: It takes the "juice" out of it.

So there's less feeling response to it, is that right? (Yes.) So that is a decrease in the *intensity*, the amount of the feeling. Does it also change the *quality*, the *kind* of response you have, in any way?

Mike: Well, I guess the quality of my response is more one of understanding, rather than reaction.

When you have understanding, that often leads to some kind of potential solution, so that you can see a path out of it.

Mike: Oh yeah. I was already working on solutions. What was bothering me was the strength of my reaction to it.

So now you feel a more comfortable response to it. Is that going to make finding a solution easier? (Yeah.)

Do you have any questions you'd like to ask Mike? And Mike, of course you have the choice to not answer any questions that you'd prefer not to.

Ann: You said you were already working on a solution to this situation?

Mike: Yes, I was working on a solution; I knew there was a solution

to the problem. What I was uncomfortable about was that my reaction to the situation kind of set off a bell. "Why am I having such a strong reaction to this? Clearly I can work out a solution, but what else is going on?"

Fred: Did you access four different experiences, or four different states of mind?

Mike: I had images of four different experiences that I'd had before.

Fred, I think your question is really for me, and it's an opportunity to make a point that I think is very important in all our work. The way I think of it, the images *result* in what you might call a state of mind. If I ask you to access a state of mind, for instance "excitement," how do you go about doing that? Most people will spontaneously think of a specific experience that they respond to with a specific kind of excitement. The word "excitement" is a fairly general term that could apply to a wide variety of different feelings in different situations. A lot of therapies and other personal change methods stay in the realm of these more general terms, and that makes it very hard to elicit the specific responses that will actually result in behavioral change. When you talk in general terms, the result is general understandings that usually don't result in an actual change in response. So-called "intellectual understanding" is one example of this.

Let's take a very simple example. I want you all to salivate now, just by focusing your attention on your mouth.... That's pretty hard for most people, because "salivation" is just a word, so you don't get a very strong response. Salivating becomes much easier if you vividly imagine cutting open a bright yellow lemon with a sharp knife, seeing the glistening surface of the cut lemon with some drops of lemon juice dripping, and then imagine bringing one half of the lemon up to your mouth and squeezing some of the juice into your mouth and tasting it. That's using very concrete imagery to elicit what is usually a very unconscious response, which you don't get just by saying "salivate." Likewise, the process of setting up the visual perspective pattern is a mostly conscious process, but the response you get is unconscious and spontaneous.

Sally: Mike, did the submodalities of the problem image change?

Mike: Yes. It got dimmer, and less colorful—overall less intense.

Good question. What we have done here is one very simple way to teach the use of simultaneous perspective in the visual system, by assembling different experiences and putting them together in a particular way. Thanks, Mike. Here's an outline of this very simple process.

Visual Perspective Exercise Outline (pairs, 15 minutes total)

1. Remember a troubling image, test to be sure it is still troublesome, and notice your response to it.

2. Identify four specific relevant positive resource experiences and get an image for each.

3. Create a large collage out of these four images, about 3' high, 3' wide, and 3' away from you.

4. Place the troubling image in the center of this, so that it overlaps just the inner corners of the four resource images and lies flat, becoming part of the collage.

5. Notice how your response changes, in both quantity and quality. If your response doesn't change, back up in the process and get different resources, or make other adjustments. Switch roles and then share and discuss your experiences.

The most common problem that some people encounter in doing this is that the troublesome picture becomes so large that it covers up the resources. The easiest way to avoid this is to gesture with both hands as you give instructions to your partner, first larger to indicate the size of the collage, and then much smaller to indicate the size of the problem image. Even then, sometimes the problem image becomes too large, and in that case you just stop them, back up the process and explain that the problem image needs to be smaller.

Another problem can arise if the problem image doesn't lie flat against the collage and become part of it. If the problem image remains separate from the resource images, it is likely to be seen *in contrast* to them, rather than together with them and as a part of them. This contrast usually *emphasizes* the problem even more, and increases the "tunnel vision" experience rather than decreasing it.

Finally, it's possible that the resources that you chose are inappropriate, so you can try choosing different resources.

Al: I was wondering about having more than four pictures.

Four is just a convenient number that usually works well. One woman who did this spontaneously had about eight pictures, like the petals of a large flower. The troublesome image then became the center of the flower. Most people think of pictures being rectangular, but there's nothing sacred about the shape, either. You could have circles or ovals, or round-cornered rectangles. You could also have them spread out top-to-bottom, or sideways in a long row.

I once saw a TV program in which Brian Weiss worked with a woman who had a phobia, using a process called "past-lives regression." After she was done, you could tell from her nonverbal response that she still had her phobia, but it *didn't matter* as much to her, because now she saw her present life as one small part of a long string of lives—many lives before, and many others to come. She gestured with her hands and arms to show this long string of lives. In the perspective of that long string of lives, her present life seemed

very small, and the problems that she had in this life were even smaller. Personally, I have great doubts about the reality of past lives, and I'd rather just cure the phobia. However, it's an interesting example of using this kind of perspective pattern to change someone's response in a useful way. There are many ways to create this kind of perspective, but they all use the same principles. The key thing is to connect all the images together in the same location and plane.

Ben: You asked Mike to pick images, but you weren't specific about whether they were to be still images or movies.

It doesn't really matter, unless it matters to the person—and then they are likely to just go ahead and use whatever they prefer. The word "image" or "picture" allows them to get a visual representation in whatever way is easiest for them. If you ask for details, you often find that people have what first appears to be a still image, but it is one that can easily be expanded into a filmstrip or a movie. The still picture is a sort of summary or icon for all the information that is in the full movie.

Fred: You asked Mike to choose resources that were related to the problem image. Is that always a good idea?

I think it's usually a good idea, because the word "resource" is a very general term that can refer to a very wide range of experiences. We all have a great many resource experiences, and some are wonderful resources for one kind of problem or skill, and no use at all for another. A great resource for doing mathematics is not likely to be much use for skiing, and vice versa, so it's helpful to have a way to be selective.

On the other hand, someone may be thinking of a problem in such a narrow way that they will consciously discard resources that could be very useful. When you're inside a box, it can be very hard to think outside the box. Sometimes a far-out, totally "unlikely" resource is exactly what is needed to counteract the tunnel vision that automatically excludes it. One reason for asking his unconscious mind to participate fully in the selection process is so that his conscious mind can be prepared for the possibility that his unconscious will think of resources that his conscious mind might otherwise reject as inappropriate. Sometimes it can even be useful to ask the person to think of resources that are very *unrelated* to the problem image. With someone with a very contrary and overactive conscious mind, you could even ask them to select resources that they think *couldn't* possibly be useful.

Now I want you to pair up and assist each other in doing this. Take about five minutes each way, and another five to discuss what you experienced—fifteen or twenty minutes total.

* * * * *

Auditory Perspective Pattern

Next I'd like to demonstrate this perspective pattern in the auditory system, using a troubling voice instead of an image. Again, I don't need to know any content. It can be your own voice, or someone else's voice, or it could even be a sound that has no words with it. (Tim comes up.) Tim, I want you to listen to that voice, and verify that it still makes you uncomfortable....

Tim: (looking up and then down left and frowning) Yes, it sure does.

It looks like you get a picture first before you get the voice. Is that right? (Yes.) That's fine, we can still use the voice. Is this your voice or someone else's? (It's my voice.) OK, so you're talking to yourself. Where do you hear the voice?

Tim: Behind my head, to the right a little.

OK. Now just let that voice go to wherever voices go when you're not listening to them, and think of four times in your life when your own voice served as a strong resource to you. (If Tim had someone else's voice troubling him, rather than his own, I would ask for four resource voices that belong to someone else.) Think of them one by one and listen to what each one has to say, and the tonality, until you have four of them.... (Tim nods.) Now position those four voices around your head, more or less evenly spaced, wherever seems appropriate to you—perhaps one in front, one in back, and one on either side. Just as with the visual pattern, when you have those four voices talking all at once, it will be harder to hear the details of what they are saying, but you can still hear the tonalities, and know the general nature of what they are saying. Let me know when that is set up, with all four voices talking at once.... (Tim nods.) OK. Now bring that troubling voice back in to join the other four, and listen to all five at once.... Does that change your response to that voice?

Tim: It's farther away now, and not as loud. I feel better; it's easier to listen to it. I can hear some of what it's saying as useful information, while before I was just noticing my bad feelings.

OK. Great. Does anyone have any questions for Tim?

Tess: Were you able to understand what the five voices were saying when they were all talking at once?

Tim: No. I knew they were there, and I could pick out bits and pieces, and the meaning was there, but I couldn't really hear all five voices at once.

That's typical, and it's important to warn people about this, or they may worry that they are doing the process wrong. A woman who was born blind and only got her sight when she was about 30 could keep track of eight different conversations at once, as if she had an eight-track tape recorder. But very few people can do that, and it's not necessary for this pattern to work.

Tim: When I had the four resource voices talking at once, I felt like I was sitting in a big, comfortable overstuffed easy chair, as if the voices were literally supporting me.

That's a nice spontaneous synesthesia. Here's an outline of this process.

Auditory Perspective Pattern Exercise Outline

(pairs, 15 minutes total)

1. Think of a troubling voice, and notice your response. Notice the location of the voice, and whether it's your own voice or someone else's. Then set that voice aside.

2. Find four resource voices, one by one, and listen to each one, both the tonality and the words. (If the problem voice is another person's the resource voices should also be someone else's, and if the problem voice is your voice, the resource voices should also be yours.)

3. Arrange these voices around your head so that you can hear all four talking at once. It will be harder to hear the details when they are all talking.

4. Bring the troubling voice in, and listen to all five talking at once. Notice how your response changes in both intensity and quality.

Sue: Why do you have the voices around the head?

Nearly everyone experiences a troublesome voice somewhere around their head, or inside it. If they have a voice somewhere else, it probably doesn't bother them very much, and you can all try a little experiment to demonstrate this. Think of a troublesome or critical voice, either your own, or someone else's.... Is there anyone who has a voice that isn't inside, or near your head? No. Now try listening to that same voice, but coming from your left elbow.... Now listen to it coming from your right heel.... Location is very important for all our experiences, and particularly so for voices.

Doing this kind of location shift alone can be very useful as a quick demonstration of the importance of location, or as a temporary intervention in a crisis, but usually it won't last unless it is combined with some other process that fully respects the positive function or outcome of the troublesome voice. When Tim heard his troubling voice in combination with the resource voices, it spontaneously moved farther away and became softer. That made it easier for Tim to listen to it and appreciate what it had to tell him. That kind of shift in response to another change is much more likely to last.

Now I want you all to pair up and assist each other in doing this. It will only take you about five minutes to do it each way, and then you can take another five minutes to share what you experienced with your partner.

* * * * *

Kinesthetic Perspective Pattern

Doing McWhirter's perspective pattern in the kinesthetic system is a little trickier, for two quite different reasons. The first reason is that most of us are much more familiar with working in the visual and auditory systems, making changes in our images, voices and sounds.

The second reason is that when we speak of kinesthetic feelings, usually we mean feelings of pleasantness or unpleasantness, liking or disliking something, etc. These are the *evaluative* feelings that are *about* some other experience. While these feelings are extremely important in deciding what kinds of experiences we want to have more of or less of, they are not appropriate for the perspective pattern.

The feelings that *are* appropriate for the perspective pattern are the feelings *of* the experience of doing something. When you are doing any activity you have a great many tactile feelings from the sensory nerves in your skin, which give you a wealth of information about your immediate environment as you contact it. If you are swimming, for instance, you can feel the temperature and movement of the air and water in relation to your body, as well as any objects you may be contacting.

You can also feel many other "proprioceptive" sensations from the nerves in your muscles and joints that tell you how your body is positioned and moving, including muscular tension or relaxation, etc. All these feelings give you specific sensory information about the position and movements of your own body and about the world immediately around you.

You may also have *evaluative* feelings *about* your sensory feelings, just as you can have evaluative feelings about something that you see, or hear, or taste, or smell. You may like the temperature of the water, or not like the way your body moves as you swim, etc. These are evaluative feelings *about* the data feelings. These two different kinds of feelings are easily confused, because they are both felt in our bodies. The evaluative feelings are usually felt mostly along the midline of the front of the chest and abdomen, although very strong evaluative feelings may be felt throughout the body.

When I demonstrated this perspective pattern in the visual and auditory systems, I asked for an image or voice that the person was troubled by. The troubled feelings are always evaluative feelings of not liking the image or voice. Similarly, when we use the perspective pattern in the kinesthetic system, what we want is a set of kinesthetic tactile and proprioceptive feelings that the person also has a troubling evaluative feeling about. So for instance perhaps someone isn't satisfied with how they feel as they swim, or play golf, or play a piano, or any other physical activity. The perspective

pattern in the kinesthetic system is particularly useful in improving any sport, motor skill, or other kinesthetic performance. Is there someone who would like to experience this?

Bill: I'm not satisfied with the way I play basketball.

Great. First I want you to reexperience what it's like to play basketball, and it can be very useful to chunk it down to one specific element of the game, such as free throws, or dribbling. After you have done the pattern with one element it will be easy to go on to do the same with other elements of the game. You don't have to actually dribble or shoot baskets, but I suggest that you stand up, so that your whole body is free to move slightly as you review what you feel as you play basketball. I also want you to check to be sure that you still feel some dissatisfaction with it....

Bill: Overall I enjoy playing basketball, or I wouldn't do it. But there are also some places where it's not smooth, where I feel kind of kinked up and everything momentarily slows down. I don't like those, and I usually mess up right then, or soon afterward.

OK. Now set aside that experience of playing basketball for a moment, and think of four physical activities that could serve as resources, one at a time. Since you described the problem as a kinkiness or lack of smoothness, I suggest that you pick four activities that you can do particularly smoothly. And since basketball is a whole-body activity, be sure that each resource is also something that your whole body is involved in. As you select each resource activity, take a little time to reexperience how it feels to do it. Let me know when you have four.... (Bill nods.)

OK, now I want you to do something that will probably feel a bit strange. Imagine that you divide your body into four quadrants with a horizontal line at about your waist and another vertical line down your middle. Then access the four resources one by one, and feel each resource in one of those four quadrants of your body. Just as with the visual and auditory patterns, it will be a little difficult to feel the details of each when you are feeling all four at once. Let me know when you have all four.... (Bill nods.)

Now, keeping the feelings of those four different resources, imagine that you are playing basketball, using your whole body. After a little while, allow those resources to move into other parts of your body and blend together. Take a little time to experience what that is like....

Bill: That's really interesting, and very nice, but I think it's going to be a little hard to describe. When you first told me to have all four resources in different parts of my body, I felt really strange and disjointed. But when I imagined playing basketball, the different resource feelings sort of flowed into each other, and into playing basketball. It gave me a real muscle sense of playing much more fluidly, and smoothing out those kinky places.

Sue: I was wondering if you'd be willing to tell us what the four resource activities were?

Bill: Sure. Skiing, giving a massage, driving a car on a winding road, and swimming in the ocean.

Ann: Steve, in the visual pattern you had the problem experience overlap only part of the resources. In this kinesthetic one, all the resources were in different parts of the body, while the problem activity was whole-body, which means that the resources were completely overlapped by the problem activity. Can you talk about that?

That's a great question, and the simplest answer is that I can't think of a better way to do it when the problem activity is a whole-body one. If it were part-body, you could do it in a way that is more similar to how we did it in the visual system. It's particularly important to have only a partial overlap in the visual system, because if it overlaps completely, you can't see the resources at all, so it's impossible to integrate them with the problem. In the auditory system, when you have all the voices going at once, they actually overlap completely, but you can still hear them all; the overlapping doesn't make the resource voices disappear, unless the problem voice were so loud that it drowned out the resources.

It's very useful to take some time to practice taking an event or pattern in one modality and then transform it into an analogous experience in another modality. How could we do a visual perspective pattern that was analogous to the situation in the auditory or kinesthetic system? . . .

Bill: Well, I'm thinking about my experience with the kinesthetic pattern. It was sort of as if I could feel one set of feelings *through* the other. If I take that into the visual system, it would be like seeing one picture through another, as if they were both partly transparent.

Exactly. If we did the visual pattern with transparent pictures we could cover the resources with the problem image completely, and they would still show through. However, many people associate transparency with unreality, and if so, that would weaken the resources. Partial overlapping works fine in the visual system, so I suggest that you simply do it that way.

Transparency is a very useful submodality that most people don't use. It's particularly useful for imagining the insides of things in three dimensions, like a CAT Scan. A geologist can use transparency to look at a hillside, and imagine how all the rock and soil layers probably look, and a good surgeon can visualize the organs inside someone's body.

Transparency can also be used to integrate visual images by superimposing them and then allowing them to gradually blend into one image. For instance, you can make a transparent image of a problem, and then set it aside temporarily while you make a much larger transparency that repre-

sents your entire life. Then superimpose the smaller problem transparency over the transparency that represents your whole life and allow them to blend together into a single image. That uses transparency, together with a much larger scope of your whole life to give a different kind of new perspective. It can be very useful to take a single submodality shift like this—opaque to transparent—and play with it to find out how you could use it with patterns that you already know.

I have presented this pattern in each of the three major modalities. Do you think that you could do the same pattern while mixing modalities? For instance could you use visual resources for a problem voice? Or kinesthetic resources for a problem image? . . .

Tom: When I'm balancing my checkbook, I hear the sounds of the wind in the pines, or the sound of a stream to motivate me to do it, because it reminds me of how I eventually get to enjoy some of the money.

That's a great way to motivate you, and it does utilize perspective, in one of the ways that I mentioned earlier. But if those sounds are motivating, I predict that they are in a different location, and don't actually integrate into the task of doing your checkbook. For motivation, you want the two experiences to be related, yet *separated* in space and time, as if saying, "Do *this*, and you get to do *that*."

For the integration that occurs with McWhirter's pattern, both representations need to be in the same modality. If you want to add or subtract decimals and fractions, you have to change one of them into the other in order to do it. Sometimes the person will spontaneously be able to make the necessary adjustments, but it's not wise to count on it, and more often you will get something other than what you intend. However, you can integrate one image with sound with another image with sound, because then the two images can integrate and the two sounds can also integrate.

McWhirter's perspective pattern joins a group of different events together into a *collection* of experience that results in a broader understanding or generalization. When I asked for four resource experiences, the word "resource" is already a generalization about a group of specific events that are similar in some way. When they are combined with the problem experience, they both enrich each other to form a new generalization.

Beliefs

One particularly interesting place to use the understandings provided by this perspective pattern is with the generalizations that are usually called "limiting beliefs," particularly when these beliefs are about yourself. When you have a limiting belief, there are several possibilities:

- 1. The belief may be based on only one unresourceful experience,**

with no positive experiences joined with it to provide a useful perspective. This is what many people *assume* when they do "Reimprinting" or "Change Personal History," or some other remedial change work on a single difficult past experience.

2. There is a group of unresourceful experiences. While it is possible to have a single difficult experience, most difficulties repeat, and usually the most intense one becomes a sort of "magnet" that gathers other similar experiences to form a group that is the basis for a very *unuseful* perspective, and this is what is often called a "negative" or limiting belief. Doing change work on a single experience will work well only if it is done on the *most intense* example of a group of experiences, because then the change will usually generalize to the rest of the group automatically.

3. The belief may be based on a group of unresourceful experiences, combined with only one or a few resourceful ones. The positive ones are just not powerful enough or numerous enough to provide a balanced perspective. In this case it can be useful to transform unresourceful ones, and also to remember, elicit, or create additional positive examples, so that the overall meaning of the generalization becomes more positive and useful.

4. The belief may have a mix of unresourceful and resourceful experiences that provide an ambiguous perspective. This is very similar to the previous situation, so again it is useful to transform unresourceful examples and generate additional positive ones so that the generalization becomes unambiguously positive.

For simplicity, I have presented McWhirter's perspective pattern in the context of a single problem experience, accessing a number of resources that provide a wider scope, and more information. This establishes a new context for the problem experience, creating a useful new perspective that provides a new meaning. However, usually a problem experience is part of a *group* of experiences that is the basis for a limiting belief, and then you need to work with the whole group in order to change it. The easiest way to do this is to explicitly group the similar experiences, and then transform the most intense one, because that change will usually transfer to the less intense ones.

This kind of perspective pattern underlies *all* the generalizations you make, both about the world and about yourself, so this pattern presents some of the fundamental properties of how we form *all* beliefs. Now that you have been sensitized to this process, you will probably find it (or the need for it) almost everywhere you look.

About the Author

Steve Andreas (originally John O. Stevens) received a Bachelor's degree in chemistry from Caltech in 1957, and a Master's degree in Psychology from Brandeis University in 1961, where he studied with Abraham Maslow. He has been exploring how people change ever since, starting with Carl Rogers. Then he learned Gestalt Therapy from Fritz Perls, and combined Gestalt with teaching psychology and social science at Diablo Valley College, California, for seven years. Out of this came his book of Gestalt awareness experiments, *Awareness: exploring, experimenting, experiencing* (1970).

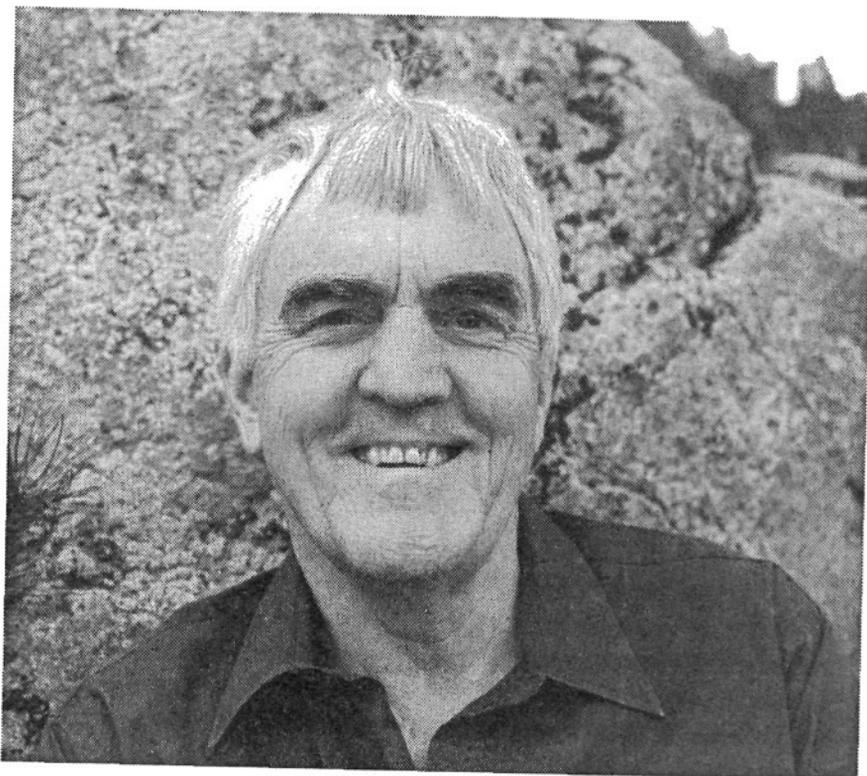
He and his wife Connirae were introduced to Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) in 1977, and have been learning, training, researching, and developing NLP patterns ever since. They co-founded NLP Comprehensive, an international training organization which became a model for providing in-depth quality NLP trainings with attention to honoring the individual and respect for personal ecology. They also wrote extensive training manuals for NLP Practitioner, Master Practitioner, and Trainer Trainings used by other trainers and institutes around the world.

Steve is the author of *Virginia Satir: the Patterns of Her Magic* (1991), and *Is There Life Before Death* (an anthology, 1995). He and Connirae are co-authors of *Heart of the Mind* (1989) and *Change Your Mind—and Keep the Change* (1987). Steve is editor or co-editor of a number of books by the original co-developers of NLP, Richard Bandler and John Grinder: *Frogs into Princes* (1979), *Trance-formations* (1981), *Reframing* (1981), and *Using Your Brain for a CHANGE* (1985). Steve has written numerous articles and

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This book is the culmination of over 12 years of exploring and modeling how people create and change their ideas about themselves. It joins a number of other patterns that he and Connirae have developed, including rapid methods for Forgiveness, Grief Resolution, Timelines (how people represent time), Changing the Hierarchy of Criteria, A Strategy for Responding to Criticism, Eye Movement Integration, and Shame Resolution.

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