



EXERCISE 3: Releasing Fixed Attention

Some areas may be so fixed or emotionally charged that you cannot immediately extend attention to them (unconscious memories) or retract attention from them (danger). These situations are addressed and remedied in the creation exercises of Section II Avatar materials.

Repeatedly extending attention into and retracting attention from an area where attention is fixed will eventually recover the fixed attention from that area. Usually the recovery happens abruptly and is accompanied by one or more of the following results:

- a sudden insight into the area
- the appearance of a solution
- the disappearance of the area altogether
- relief from pain
- discharge of an upset or an emotional release
- discharge of a past trauma
- a change in viewpoint (a reordering of importance)

Objective: To desensitize sensitive areas by removing fixed attention.

Expected Results: Physical and emotional healing.

Instructions: Pick one of the events from Column 1 of your Burdens of Life Worksheet and alternate between the following:

- 1) describe what happened from beginning to end in detail, paying particular attention to any resistance, emotions, or pain connected with what happened, then
- 2) describe something in your surroundings until your attention frees up from what happened in the past. Repeat this process back and forth until one or more of the results occur.



3. Mastering Your Feelings About Your Abuser

Who are you really to the person who injured you? What do you think was going on in their mind? Are they not subject to the same conditions of old age, disease, loss, and death that afflict all creatures? Maybe you still harbor enough resentment toward them to find this a comforting thought, but the sobering reality is that you are in the same situation. You may think you know the cause of your suffering, but at very most, you know only a few links in the chain.

Beneath the anger and resentment directed toward your abuser is an unbearable sadness. Their actions have reminded you of all the negative actions in the world, including your own. They have brought suffering to your door. They have opened a crack of awareness on your own guilt. How do you close it off? By blaming them for your feelings. Blaming is a refusal to take responsibility for the fact that all humans inflict suffering, either consciously or unconsciously. Blaming is an excuse for not examining your own failures (column 4 on your Burdens of Life

Worksheet). Blaming grows from guilt. The hardest forgiveness to grant anyone is the forgiveness you secretly need to grant yourself.

Unawareness is the price we pay for pointing our finger in blame. This is the same unawareness that permits the insensitivity of our abusers. If they knew the suffering they were causing and the consequence of evil being drawn to evil, they would reform immediately and beg for forgiveness. But they don't know, and they protect themselves from this knowledge with unawareness—as do we.

What hurts us the most, after our own suffering of pain and loss is done, is the awareness of how deep and wide is the suffering of the world. Blaming is an expression of helplessness; it is an effort to focus on one event so the great sorrow afflicting all living things remains hidden. Not to see this great sorrow is the payoff for playing the victim/victimizer game. Too much awareness is a fear that both we and our victimizers share.

*If you hate a person,
you hate something in
him that is part of
yourself. What isn't a
part of ourselves
doesn't disturb us.
—Herman Hesse*

Is it not hypocrisy to honor the Buddha for bringing us the word lesson (an intellectual gift), life is suffering? Or to honor God for teaching us lessons through suffering? And then blame the idiot, perpetrator, abuser, betrayer, or victimizer who brings us the same gift as a world lesson (experiential)? Who is the better teacher? Should we bow to one and punish the other? Is it possible to conceive that all things are working out for the best? Is it possible to conceive that there is really nothing to condemn or forgive? Ever?

Mastering your feeling about your abuser is about compassion. This does not mean that you will not take strategic actions to protect yourself or others in the

future, but it does mean that you will not take angry or vengeful actions for events in the past. You give up all desire to harm him, or her, or them, for whatever reason. You interrupt the flow of suffering by accepting that an unwelcome change may have occurred to you, but you will accept and suffer it for the sake of the world and not inflict it on another.

Let vengeance go; let life-source handle it. You are not responsible for another's accountability. You forfeit the right of vengeance in favor of self-forgiveness, in favor of freedom from guilt, and in favor of the joy of reconstructing a satisfying, worthwhile life. It is a good deal!

If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we would find in each person's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

NOTES

Forgiveness is a personal event and does not necessarily include reconciliation or pardon. You may forgive someone without any desire to ever share time with him or her again.

Reconciliation is a transaction with another person. It has its own conditions of atonement and mediation and should not be confused with forgiveness. Pardon is different as well and is governed by legal authorities.

EXERCISE 4: Compassion Exercise

Honesty with yourself leads to compassion for others.

Objective: To increase the amount of compassion in the world.

Expected Result: A personal sense of peace.

Instructions: Pick a person from column 2 of your Burdens of Life Worksheet and run the following five steps on them. Repeat with each person named in column 2.

Step 1 With attention on the person, repeat to yourself: "Just like me, this person is seeking some happiness for his/her life."

Step 2 With attention on the person, repeat to yourself: "Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in his/her life."

Step 3 With attention on the person, repeat to yourself: "Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness, and despair."

Step 4 With attention on the person, repeat to yourself: "Just like me, this person is seeking to fulfill his/her needs."

Step 5 With attention on the person, repeat to yourself: "Just like me, this person is learning about life."

Love is an expression of the willingness to create space in which something is allowed to change.

—Harry Palmer, *Love Precious Humanity* (see order form insert)



4. Reconstruct Your Own Life

Reconstructing your own life means getting back on track or even setting a new direction.

Imagining something else relieves the misery of imagining what might have been. The best way to remove suffering from your life is to act with the intention to reduce the suffering of other sentient creatures. The final step of forgiveness is realizing that continuing the hurt costs far more than forgiving and moving on to a new day. It is better to focus on the future than the past.

It is better to focus on the future than the past.

One realization that you may want to carry with you is that since you have the choice of whether or not to forgive, you also have the choice of whether or not to take offense. Not choosing to be offended is proactive forgiveness. One of the beauties of forgiveness is that the more people in the past whom you forgive, the fewer

people there are in the present who seem offensive. Also releasing old injuries cuts down on the reactive dramas of life and leaves your attention free to concentrate on reconstructing the life you prefer.

The first and last person you need to forgive is yourself. It helps to remember that you always did, for one reason or another, what you felt you had to do at the time. Maybe you need to make amends, but it is up to you. Times change, and so have you.

If someone is trying to run a persistent guilt trip on you, or is playing the you-owe-me game, don't be offended; just send them a copy of this mini-course.



EXERCISE 5: Goal Setting

Objective: To determine Right-For-You Goals

Expected Result: A life plan that you can move forward with.

Instructions:

Step 1: Make a list of goals that you are already pursuing or have thought about pursuing.

(Use the list on p. 125 of *ReSurfacing* to stimulate goals.)

Step 2: Rate the goals (1 to 10) you are most interested in according to the following seven criteria. The goals with the highest scores are your Right-For-You goals.

1. The goal invites your attention and interest. Thinking about it renews your strength.

2. Pursuit of the goal produces something of value to you.

3. The goal offers benefits to others equal to your own.

4. The goal presents an opportunity for self development (greater competence, understanding, or responsibility).

5. The goal is in alignment with a broader group goal and a still broader humankind goal.

6. The goal allows personal creativity and some degree of self management.

7. The goal presents the opportunity for personal recognition and some receipt of others' admiration.

For the expanded version of this exercise see ReSurfacing, p. 125.