

Pathwork™ Steps

The Meaning of the Ego and Its Transcendence 'Ego Tricks'

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 199

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Week 1: Ego as a Fragmented Piece of Consciousness

Week 2: Ego Tricks

Week 3: A Vicious Circle of Excuses

Week 4: Harmonious Movement Becomes Effortless

Week 1: Ego as a Fragmented Piece of Consciousness

Man's average state of mind is a fragmented piece of consciousness. In this fragmented state he is cut off from reality. He inevitably lives in fear and limitation.

Yet he believes that this is all there is to his life, and he frantically clutches at this limited, fragmented state. He stems against the natural inner movement of the soul to go beyond, to expand this limited state, because the split off ego consciousness fears that doing so will dissolve his life and annihilate his existence.

He ardently protects this limited state of consciousness, while it is this very limitation that creates fear and suffering. It is his task, in the cycle of incarnations, to reintegrate this split off ego consciousness and to regain forever wider and deeper portions of his real self, his cosmic existence with its unlimited, infinite possibilities for life experience, joy, and creation of the self.

Man believes this split off ego consciousness to be his real self. He identifies immediately with his brain, his outer intelligence, his will, his mind, all the faculties immediately available, not knowing that to whatever degree he possesses these, he has in the past made them available for himself with effort and overcoming.

For there **was** a state in which he possessed much less awareness, power to create, ability to experience joy. His consciousness was much more limited and confined. He had to use whatever consciousness he had to enlarge his faculties and to avail himself of as yet unused potentials and dormant possibilities. This must go on and on until there is no longer any split off fragment and until man has become one with ultimate reality and cosmic consciousness.

The processes of this enlargement of self, of making apparently foreign territory his own domain, are the pathwork, any valid pathwork.

Ego means fragmentation

It is the task of every entity who is caught in this fragmentation, and therefore in the cycle of being born and dying, to enlarge his field of operation, his perception, his awareness and his power to create. The difficulty of doing so is that **in the limited state of the ego separation, enlargement of the ego, contrary to reality, appears as an annihilation of the ego** -- that is, of man's very existence, of his sense of self.

There is another life beyond the ego state. This other life is reality and this reality is not to be feared. It is good, it is to be utterly trusted. There is ongoing life, self-awareness, and ever increasing joy. The limited ego state he so ardently protected is illusion, the illusion of death and aloneness.

Awareness has to be fought for. It does not come easily nor gratuitously. Remaining in the isolated ego state may appear safe and easy, but it leads to stagnation and death -- ever reoccurring death.

PL 199

The ego's main function is to deliberately seek contact with the greater self within. The ego cannot produce deep feelings and a deep flavor to living. Nor can it produce profound and creative wisdom.

The ego can only memorize, learn, collect other people's creative knowledge, repeat, and copy. It is equipped to remember, to sort out, to select, to make up the mind, to move toward a certain direction -- outwardly and in inner emphasis and approach. These are its functions.

But it is not its function to feel, to deeply experience, and to deeply know -- to be creative. ... In fact, the real self is effortless. Wherever it manifests, effort exists, but it is always effortless effort.

The Ego's Cooperation With or Obstruction To the Real Self PL 158

Actually the ego is a particle, an isolated aspect of the master intelligence, of the real, inner self. It is not different from it, only there is less of the real self in it. Since it is separated, disconnected, and limited, it is less reliable and secure than that from which it stems. But this does not mean that it needs to be annihilated. In actual fact, it will integrate with the real self so that there is one -- this "one" being fuller, better equipped, wiser, having more and better of all assets imaginable.

But the separated ego thinks this means its annihilation, its ceasing to exist. In its ignorant, limited way, it feels existence only as the separated being -- hence it pursues further separateness.

Since consciousness ignores the existence of the real self (even if it is accepted as a theory, its living reality must be doubted as long as personal misconceptions are not eliminated), it fears the very soul movement of letting go and relaxing of the tight hold that leads to the realization of the real self. This is the constant struggle of the ego until it ceases fighting against an opposite, through repeated recognition of a wider truth in every smallest personal issue.

The real self cannot manifest as long as involved personal inner difficulties and problems are not straightened out. But the process of doing this and the beginning of the first inklings of self-realization often overlap; the one furthers the other.

Unity and Duality Pl 143

<https://www.janrigsby.org/files/PDF/143%20UnityDuality%202019.pdf>

Exercise 1: Death as an Analogy for Transcendence

The Ego sees transcendence as a form of death = entering into the unknown, feeling that one will not emerge exactly the same, wondering 'who / what will I become if I release who I am / what I represent today?'

Recall a time in your life where you felt challenged regarding your sense of identity; marriage, parenthood, career change, a significant loss. See if you can recall having moved through some or all of the 5 stages of grief that Kubler-Ross identified (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%BCbler-Ross_model or chart attached)

Daily Review PL 28

<http://www.janrigsby.org/files/PDF/028-DailyReview-Suggestions.pdf>

Keep a record of incidents that disturb you. Focusing upon subtleties may help us from becoming distracted by exaggerating or over-dramatizing a situation. Notice feelings of discomfort, where your suspect you may be uninformed, ignorant, unprepared, or unaware. See if you can relate with the sub-topics.

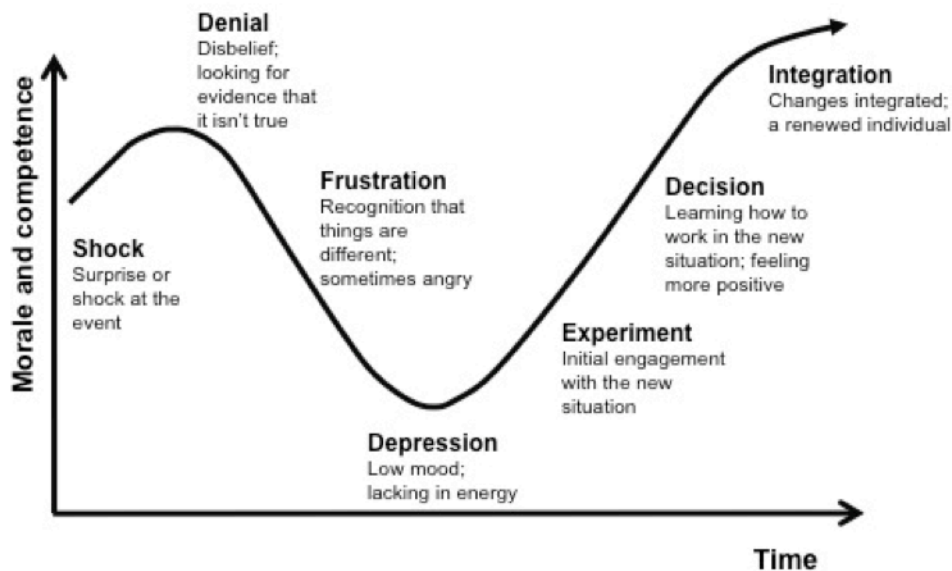
All you need is a ½ page of lined paper per day. Create 4 columns. At some point during each day, jot down brief notes about each incident (limit:10 per day). Eventually, this can become a thought process. The Guide refers to Daily Review as 'spiritual hygiene'.

1. Two to three words to identify each incident (no details)
2. What feelings or emotional reactions came up
3. The judgments or conclusions you came to at the time

At the end of each week, read through your entries and complete the last column:

4. What do you notice today that you did not notice at the time? Are there patterns?
5. Using your preferred form of meditation (sitting, walking, or while doing 'mindless' chores) reflect upon your early childhood experiences and how they relate.

The Kübler-Ross change curve



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%BCbler-Ross_model

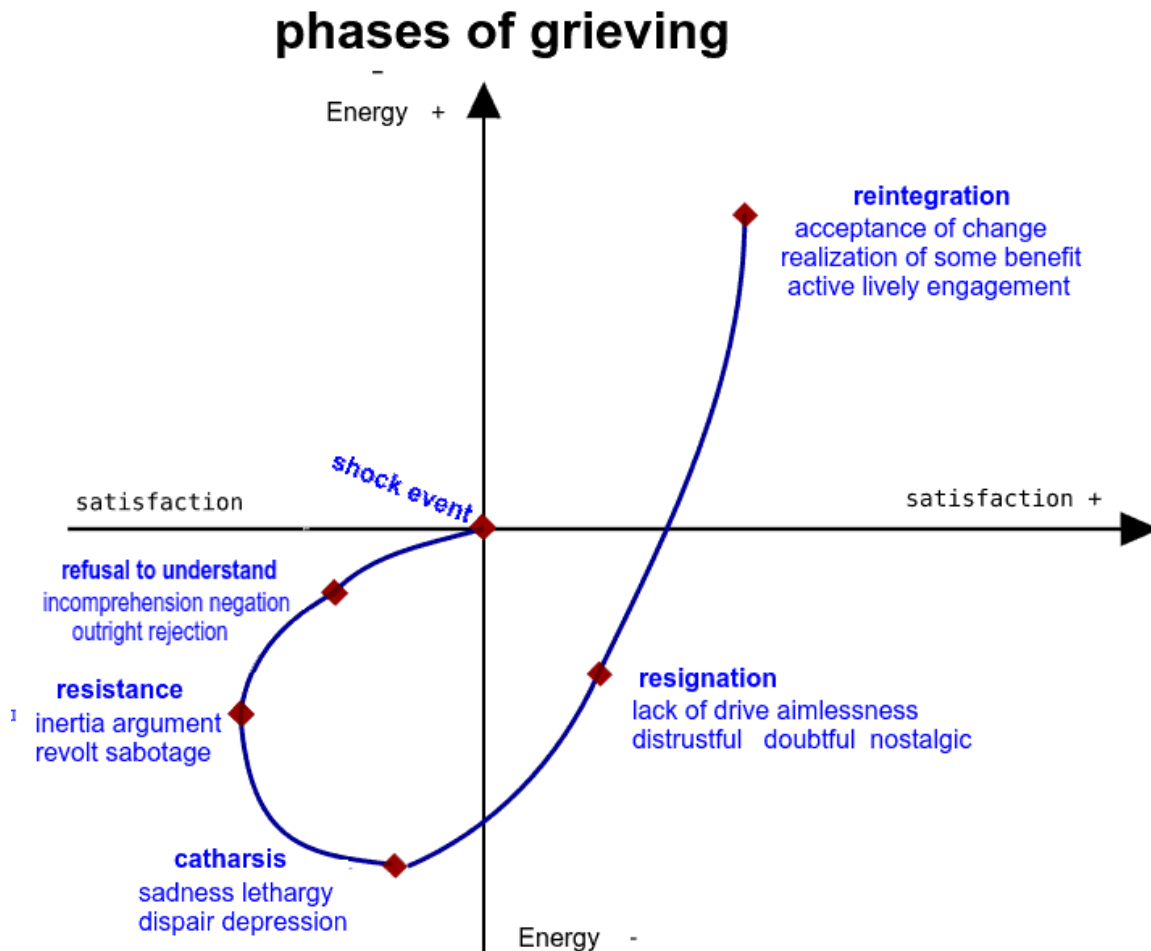
Week 2: Tricks of the Ego

The ego uses any number of tricks in order to maintain its separated, limited state and in order to prevent moving beyond it.

Tricks of the ego are every conceivable negativity known to mankind: any fault, any violation of integrity, truth, love, and divine law. Since all these negativities and faults, as I have often pointed out, can be summed up in the triad of pride, self-will, and fear [Ref: PL 30].

The fear of the ego to lose its present state of existence, i.e., its self-awareness, is so great that it displaces the instinct of self-preservation. [Ref: PL 85 & 86] The ego uses this instinct in the battle to preserve its present awareness.

The entire topic of negative intentionality [Ref: PL 197] we have recently explored is part and parcel of ego-trickery to preserve the limited present state. Whatever the specific negative intentionality may be, it always indicates spite -- hence self-will, which always blurs the real view and falsifies the situation, so that all desirable life experience is denied.



By Bertrand GRONDIN <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=64179142>

Pride

Fear always blinds and distorts truth and reality. Thus the ego maintains itself with pride. It maintains its separate state by creating an unreal, artificial conflict between the self and others. These attitudes are pridefully put into the service of maintaining the separated state of the ego. It is always *"I versus you,"* and this inevitably creates a spirit of one-upmanship.

All measuring, comparing, competing, striving to up others makes the confinement of separation even tighter and increases the illusion that this pitiful existence is all there is to life.

Also, man's prevalent tendency to live for the sake of appearance, rather than for the sake of truth, for the sake of his real feelings and interests goes under the same category of pride. The illusion of the separated ego state is so strong at this point that it seems more important to man to create an impression than to even consider what a tragic, wasteful sacrifice he makes for an entirely imaginary gain that can never, never be made.

All attitudes of mask and defense, of pretense and false shame (shame of exposure, embarrassment about real feelings and one's inner reality regarding the spiritual self) belong to the category of pride; they are tricks of the ego to maintain its limited state. Pride and fear must necessarily be coupled to self-will, just as self-will must be present where either of the other two dominates. Every one of these aspects harbors the other two as well.

Exercise 2a: Ego Tricks of Pride (Refer to 'Ego Tricks' chart on following page)

For several days, use your Daily Review to list any expressions of Pride i.e. *"I am better than you," "I am more than you," or "I must prove to the world how admirable, that is, better than others, I am," "I must outdo others," "I must not be worse than others," "My interests counteract those of others, and vice versa"*

Self-Will

Under self-will belong all aspects of stubbornness, resistance, spite, defiance, rigidity. All these attitudes connote a stiffening up against change -- this is against expanding into new spiritual territory. The trick of the ego is to make this appear as desirable and to make open, flexible movement appear threatening and/or humiliating. But on a deeper level it is the ego's trick to remain in the isolated, separated status quo position.

Exercise 2b: Ego Tricks of Self-Will For several days, use your Daily Review to list any feelings of Self-Will i.e. any sense of *"I will stay where and as I am."*

Fear

Fear exists not only in preventing the going beyond the limited, confused state, per se; the trick of the ego is to make this move appear threatening and life-annihilating. This prevents the joyousness, peace, and freedom of the cosmic reality to be gained when the present state is expanded.

Exercise 2c: Ego Tricks of Fear For several days, use your Daily Review to list any feelings of Fear i.e. *worry, anxiety, apprehension, distrust or suspicion.*

TRICKS OF THE EGO PL 199

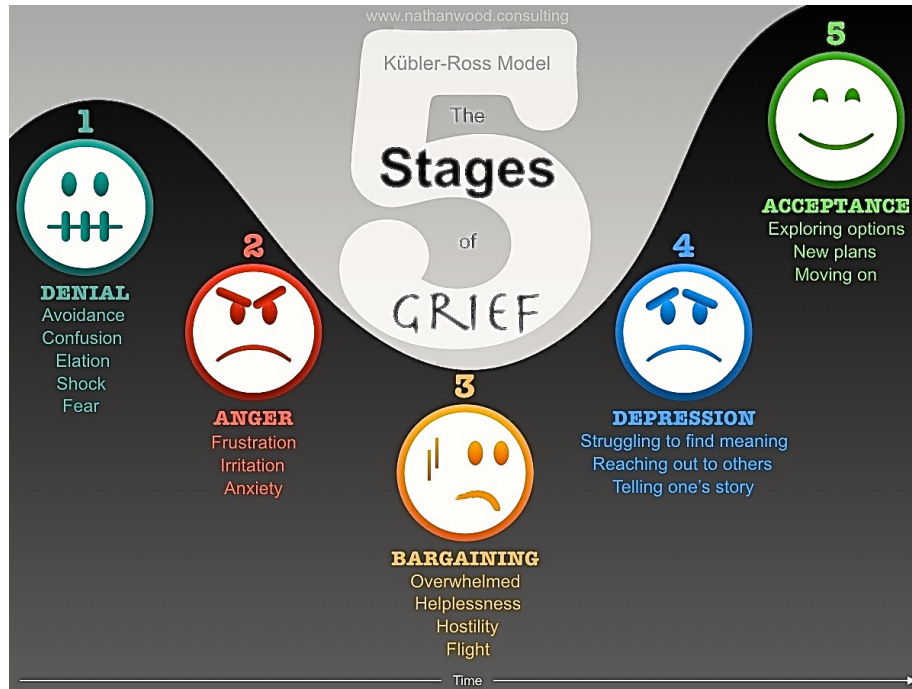
Worksheet by Andi Kiva for the Pathwork Teachers Helper Database ©2003

*The tricks of the ego are every conceivable negativity known to mankind:
any fault, any violation of integrity, truth, love and divine law.
They can be summed up in the triad of **PRIDE, SELF-WILL and FEAR***

PRIDE Creating artificial conflict between self and others. Better/worse than	Maintaining a separate state by the trick of creating an “I versus you” and a spirit of one-upmanship. “I’m better than you, I must outdo you”, etc. creating separateness
PRIDE Living for the sake of appearances	Trick is in believing its more important to create an impression, and appearance, rather than rely on truth, real feelings and interests.
PRIDE Shame of exposing real feelings and spiritual self	Ego trick to maintain the limited state by creating attitude of pretense, false shame of exposure, mask, embarrassment.
SELF-WILL Stubbornness, resistance, spite, defiance, rigidity	These cause stiffening up against change. Stating “I will stay where and as I am”. Trick is to make this rigidity desirable and to make open, flexible movement appear threatening or humiliating.
SELF-WILL Negative intentionality	Whatever the negative intentionality is, it indicates spite which always blurs the real view and falsifies the situation so that all desirable life experience is denied
FEAR / SELF-WILL Laziness, tiredness, passivity	Trick is to make it appear as if movement was undesirable and exhausting. In actuality, the stagnation is more exhausting as its holding back the natural inclination towards growth.
FEAR Instinct of self-preservation is displaced	The FEAR of losing ones present state of awareness, the ego trick displaces the instinct of self-preservation, using it in the battle to preserve the present awareness
FEAR Worry, anxiety and apprehension	Trick of the ego is in making movement appear threatening.
FEAR Distrust and suspicion	Ego trick that creates suspicion and lack of trust, creating wish to remain unmoving and in present limited state.
Creating fear of positive states	Ego trick of maintaining “safety” by denying pleasure, bliss, joy, expansion, creative movement, etc. Ego creates fear of these states.
Inattentiveness, lack of concentration, abstractedness, absent-mindedness	Trick is to deny the one pointed focus necessary for the ego to transcend itself.

“Make the ego flexible, teach it, bend it, change it, make it receptive and vibrant by IDENTIFYING and ABANDONING the TRICKS. The searchlight must be ruthlessly turned onto the little self. Use the healthy part of the ego to shed light on the unhealthy part. Then transcendence takes place in the safest possible way”. PL 199

Week 3: A Vicious Circle of Excuses



Kubler-Ross Five Stages of Grief as a Vicious Circle. Acceptance = Exit Point

The ego assumes a preposterous and paradoxical position. It is intrinsically unhappy just because of its finiteness, or what seems finiteness in this present limited state.

1. Denial: It is self-evident that the ego can only see what is within its range, within its present scope of awareness, within its present field of operation.

2. Anger: What it sees is, to varying degrees, limited and falsified.

3. Bargaining: Hence it sees and experiences finiteness, the disconnected, meaningless universe in which the little ego is powerless and senselessly suffering. This perception of life can only alter to the exact degree as the ego overcomes the temptation to stay put.

4. Depression: But the paradoxical position of the ego state is to fight for remaining in the very state that is often unbearably lonely, fearful, and meaningless. Unfathomable death, at the end of each living period, is terrifying, and although it is possible to escape from and deny this terror, it cannot be dissolved as long as the ego remains in its present narrow confines. Sooner or later everyone is faced with this terrifying illusory end, both with his own and with that of others.

But even if this terror is not acute and man escapes from it, it remains a gnawing force in his soul, a force that must always exist until the ego gives up its resisting position. In spite of the extremely uncomfortable and undesirable position of the limited, confined ego, it clings to the very condition and to the very state that makes true vision beyond the imaginary line of demarcation impossible. This is the sickness of the ego state and the perversion of it -- to cling to the very thing it battles against.

On this path, you must be concerned with and grope for an understanding of how to transcend this ego state, and what it really means.

5. Acceptance: Every step forward on the path reveals new vistas which are very real, much more real than the previous state that you thought was the ultimate reality. Every step of the way, this newly gained reality opens life wider and fuller for you. The result is more joy, more peace, more consciousness, more understanding of the beautiful deep meaning of life, more creativity, and more intrinsic knowledge of life's eternity versus the illusion of death, the illusion of finiteness.

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Exercise 3a: Find your vicious circle

What do you grieve? Youthful ideals? Lack of full partnership with others? Dreams of success and fame? Grief can become a way of not actually letting go. See if you can track how you have handled disappointments in the past, using the stages outlined above.

PL 50 Vicious Circle Study Guide: <http://www.janrigsby.org/files/PDF/050-PRS21-VCircle-StudyGuide.pdf>

The Spiritual Task of the Ego

Every one of these steps could only have been won by a tremendous amount of investment on your part. He who still wants indulgence and easy, cheap results can never, never gain this new state. He will look wistfully beyond, yet doubt that anything else could exist that would warrant the effort and the lowering of his pride.

This doubt becomes then the excuse for the status quo that is artificially maintained. This is the sin against life, defeating life's natural movement toward evolution and unification.

Discipline, courage, humility, and the ability to commit yourself -- these are not attitudes you do **not** possess, my friends. Everyone of you possesses every conceivable attribute in the universe. The question is only, do you wish to avail yourself of these potentialities within you, or do you wish to claim that you do not possess them and that someone has to magically "give" them to you?

You often have the misplaced and confused ideas that self-discipline hampers your freedom, and, conversely, that the free person does not discipline himself. Nothing could be further from the truth. Freedom, in its real sense, is unthinkable without discipline. And, conversely, the person who indulges himself and who rejects discipline is unavoidably dependent, weak, powerless, and consequently afraid. He lacks freedom.

Freedom can only be gained to the degree one uses voluntary self-discipline -- uses it for his own sake and not in order to appease and to appear good in the eyes of others. Every expansion must be fought for with self-discipline, by overcoming the imbedded resistance against expansion. The discipline must be used for stringent recognition of the ego-tricks and against giving in to them. This expansion is always a step beyond a known territory.

Every incarnation, on whatever level this may pertain, requires the entity to increase the scope of his "field of operation," to widen the fences around the fragmented ego, to bring in more reality from the world beyond the illusory confinement. Indirectly this applies to all levels.

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The ego's first task is to accept the difficulties of the learning process

Even the most mundane, outer, physical, and intellectual knowledge and skills to be acquired increase in some way the present scope of operation and life experience and thus indirectly contribute to the total task of self-transcendence. The acquisition of new knowledge and skills also demands the cultivation of some of the attitudes necessary for self-transcendence. And every bit of new knowledge or a new skill, in one way or another, yields, directly or indirectly, more spiritual power and awareness, more experience of joy and realization of your own adequacy and potentiality.

To acquire new knowledge or skills on whatever level always means overcoming laziness, the temptation to succumb to the line of least resistance. It means self-discipline; it often means hard work (the more desirable the new aspect of life is, the more real and durable, the more investment of work is necessary), trial and error, the ability to convert a failure into success. It means perseverance, patience, faith; it means overcoming fear until the new thing becomes one's own, natural "possession," until it becomes part of the personality, a "second nature," as the saying goes.

The ego's task is always first to accept the difficulties, the hardship, the overcoming, the learning process. Only when the ego has learned the more mechanical aspects of the venture can the influx of the spiritual self make the new acquisitions a spontaneous, living, effortless experience. Ego means effort; spiritual self means effortlessness. However, this desirable effortlessness is not given by magic, for this would mean that the ego is not being transcended, but avoided. The ego must change its own lazy, resistant attitudes in order to transcend itself and become compatible to unify with the cosmic, greater self. The ego must lay the arduous ground work until the real self can come through. This can be noted in every activity or skill. First there is always effort. It becomes pleasurable only when it seems, and actually is, "happening through you."

If it is a manual task, the manual rules have to be learned until they become part of the ego. If it is a mental task, mental knowledge has to be painstakingly acquired first through often quite mechanical processes. Then the new knowledge will become the person's own, and the spirit can use this newly acquired expansion with its accompanying wider vision, knowledge, skill, energy, and accomplishment, to play creatively. An artist who wants to by-pass the effortfulness of learning the ground rules can never unfold his real creative ability, no matter how real it may initially be. These creative abilities will wither because he wants to cheat life.

The influx and the inspiration of the spiritual self are blocked off to the degree the ego is blindly involved in its laziness, pride, self-will, fear, negativity, wish to cheat life, tendency to escape, etc. But when these tendencies are being honestly recognized and gradually given up, the influx of the world of eternal truth, love, and beauty becomes possible. So what comes first is always the arduousness of making the ego flexible; teaching it, bending and changing it; making it receptive and vibrant; letting new life energy and creative flow come through to it **by identifying and abandoning its tricks**. Whether it be a new knowledge, a new skill, a new attitude toward life and the universe, this changing of the ego always means that a new territory has become your own.

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Exercise 3b: What are you willing to actually do?

Find a frequently used / useful Ego Trick from the Week 2 chart.

Consider giving it up for one week. Notice any feelings, protests, excuses.

Try giving it up for one full day. Notice what might be required to give it up for a longer period of time. Are you willing to put in the effort to re-educate and re-train the Ego?

Week 4: Spiritual Movement is Effortless

He who withers in the narrow confines of his present state because he feels this is safe and thereby eliminates the need for effort and investment, truly withers away. He does not permit life to regenerate him, which can only happen when inner movement exists. It always seems at first frightening to go beyond the present ego-confines. New land is unaccustomed, foreign, unknown. Man wants to avoid the unknown and rather cower in fear of it than have the courage for making it known, making it his own. To make the unknown known, outside as well as inside, that is the beauty of the spiritual path.

The ego is under the illusion that to stay in the stagnant, narrow confines of the already known territory (regardless of how much wider it may be compared to the territory of others, it is still narrower as compared to one's potentials and the waiting task) is easy, relaxing, restful, effortless. To get yourself up by your bootstraps and moving beyond seems terribly tiresome.

This feeling is an illusion because the stagnant state is really a manifestation of contraction, and contraction is by no means relaxing and restful although it may seem so to the confused mind because of its immobility.

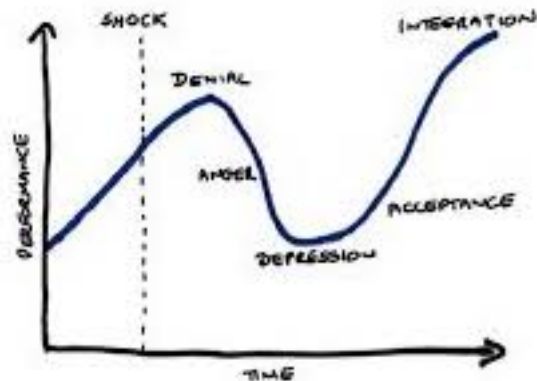
But true restfulness is always alive and moving -- effortless moving! And this is impossible in a state of contraction. You can verify this by looking around you: the people who do least are always most tired. And the people who do most are always most energized, restful, and relaxed (provided that their activity does not serve as an escape from the self).

Harmonious movement is not tiring or exhausting. The first manifestations may indeed give such symptoms to you, because to go from an unmoving state to a moving state -- on whatever level -- *requires at first the acceptance of temporary effort with self-discipline, faith, courage, and humility until the effort becomes effortless.*

Spiritual movement is effortless.

By spiritual movement I mean the movement of ultimate reality, of the totally unified entity. The stagnant state of nonmovement is really very effortful because stagnation requires an enormous amount of (often unconscious) effort in order to sustain the resistance against the natural inclination of the soul to follow its destiny. This unconscious effort then makes itself known as tiredness, exhaustion, weakness, which furnish the excuse to remain even more in the status quo. **The ego uses as tricks the results of its own errors.**

You know that all life is movement and movement is not effortful when the entity is in harmony with his life. The moving part of you is also the aware part. That part is capable of recognizing the meaning of the resistance to movement. That part can meditate in the way I just explained: on seeking a deeper understanding of your task in life; on the meaning of your life in the light of this lecture. You will find greater motivation to request guidance so that the stagnating part in you will yield to the moving part. Little by little you will energize the contracted consciousness that has separated itself from the whole.



The ego must be healthy in order to transcend itself

As I speak of ego, I do not wish to convey that the ego as such is to be totally negated, denied, and insulted. The ego is a part of divine consciousness and holds all aspects of the greater self from which it has separated itself, even if they are distorted and misused. The basic energy and consciousness of the ego is made of the same substance with which you ultimately unite once again.

The ego must be healthy in order to transcend itself, in order to venture beyond its present confines and make known and your own the as yet unknown spiritual land, knowledge, experience, creative potentialities. In order to do this, the ego must adopt attitudes that are compatible with its original nature.

All the tricks of the ego, all the negativity and the evil that are imbedded strictly in the ego, have to be recognized for what they are with a very incisive, sharp self-honesty. The indulgence of denial, of glossing over, of rationalization and projection must be given up. The searchlight must be ruthlessly turned onto the little self.

Only when you can put the strong light of truth -- with your ego consciousness -- on other aspects of your ego consciousness can these other aspects adopt healthy and truthful attitudes. Then the ego gradually becomes healthy, and only the healthy ego can transcend itself and unify with the of course always healthy divine consciousness.

The weak, sick, distorted ego very often wants to give itself up just because it cannot bear itself any longer. The burden of itself is too heavy. Then various forms of ego-escape, such as drugs or other means of false ego transcendence, are being adopted. But such ego transcendence is highly dangerous and is just a variation of insanity. For insanity itself is the attempt of the ego to lose or transcend itself because it can no longer bear itself. In all these false and dangerous attempts, the entity always seeks to avoid effort, pain, inconvenience, and those aspects of life with which it does not agree or which it does not understand. It seeks cheating short cuts which can never work and which require a very high price. The subsequent reaction of the entity may be to hold on even tighter to the immobile, rigid state, perhaps for many incarnations, thus making healthy ego transcendence as impossible as the false one.

The only way is to use the healthy part of the ego to shed light on the sick part, to use the honest part of the ego to shed light on the dishonest part. Then ego transcendence takes place in the safest possible way. With this new safety, a sense of eternity is being created in the self: the deepest feeling, knowledge, and experience of life's continuum grows and thereby an enormous amount of pain and fear are automatically eliminated.

But this cannot come cheaply. It requires every investment and commitment on your part. And he who does it genuinely must reap the fruits in a most concrete and tangible way. The greater your efforts become, the more of a spiritual force you lawfully elicit and make your own. Every step of truth and good will activate automatically and inexorably the powerful and creative spiritual force within and around you.

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