



The Coping Series

**Resolving Old Bad Feelings
plus:
Resolving Bad Feelings Instantly**

Reference Book

By Ken Johnston

How To Be Happier

www.HowToBeHappier.com

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(Nobody likes to read this kind of stuff. We wish we didn't have to do it.)

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Resolve Old Bad Feelings — Overview

Note: This article was also a part of your Workbook.

Managing Our Thoughts

Welcome to modules revolving around a process for resolving old bad feelings. These modules are built on the principle that it isn't the people or events in our lives that make us troubled; it's our *thoughts* about those people or events that trouble us.

In other words, we can't avoid negative people or events in our lives; they are normal and to be expected. What we can do is *manage the way we think and feel* about those adversities so we can cope with them effectively.

If you suffer a loss, it is normal and right to suffer the pain of that loss. Sometimes those feelings overwhelm us, or keep us from coping or carrying on with our lives. If that happens it's important to regain control over our thoughts, feelings, and actions so we can bounce back from life's adversities and return some normalcy to our lives.

Learn a Calming Technique

The first module in the six-module series gives you a technique you can use anytime the feelings overwhelm you, or the thoughts race through your head. If you already have a calming skill or technique, you're free to use it. If you don't, we'll give you three you can use. One of them will be easier for you than the others, so you'll decide which one to use.

Listen to Your "Self-talk"

All of us have thoughts and judgments going through our minds. It is so normal and natural that you may be scarcely aware of it.

When you use one of the calming techniques, it's easier to notice the stream of thoughts that are flitting in and out of your mind (we call this "self-talk"). We help you become aware of those thoughts and notice what they are saying.

Some people find it difficult to listen to their thoughts without reacting and engaging with them ("looping"). We help you learn to listen to them and just notice them and then let them go.

When you can do this, we will ask you to write down your thoughts. We help you become like an observer of your own stream of self-talk. We ask you to write them down so you can examine them for certain helpful or hurtful patterns.

Identify Unanswerable Questions

We each have a wonderful capacity to think, recognize patterns, and figure things out. This thinking capacity is bound together with our question-answering ability. That means that we typically can answer only one question at a time.

For example, if I asked you to figure out how many miles you would drive if you went 35 miles an hour for 45 minutes, you would engage your thinking capacity and figure out the answer. But, until you had the answer, or gave up, you couldn't handle another question.

When we run into one of life's difficulties, we need our thinking capacity so we can cope. It's pretty easy to clog up our thinking capacity with questions that have no answers, but cause us to search for one.

So, if my company laid me off, but kept Murphy, I could clog up my thinking capacity by asking myself an unanswerable question like, "Why did they like Murphy better than they liked me?" This causes my mind to have to search for every possible thing I did wrong, or who I might have offended, or any possible weakness I have.

Or, if my partner wanted to split up, I could clog up my thinking by asking, "What's wrong with me?" or "Where did I go wrong?" Either question will send my mind on an endless chase for an answer that I'll never find, and each possibility that my mind brings up will be something that hurts.

So, we will help you identify unanswerable questions, and teach you how to keep questions out of your mind for which you have no answers. We'll also teach you to replace the useless and hurtful questions with productive questions that will help you get on with your life.

Replace thoughts or pictures created from hurtful imaginings

We all have wonderful and creative imaginations. We use our imaginations *well* when we use it to rehearse the future so we're confident that we will be prepared. We use our imaginations *well* when we imagine how great the movie will be, or the concert, or the ball game. We get the benefit of good feelings of anticipation.

We can also use our imaginations to hurt ourselves. We can imagine things that bring pain, stress, and anxiety.

For example, if my wife isn't home when I expected her, I can use my imagination to picture things that could explain her lateness. I could create a picture of her in a terrible automobile accident. I could imagine she's sick and dying in a hospital from a stroke or heart attack. I could imagine that she's in the arms of a lover.

Using my imagination in these hurtful ways can only make me anxious, worried, and hurt. If you discover some of these kinds of imaginings on your list of thoughts, we'll help you replace those with productive imaginings. For example, if my wife is late, I could imagine how happy she'll be when she comes home and discovers that I've fed the dog and started preparing dinner.

People with active imaginations have a wonderful capacity, and they should use it. We help them to use their imagination more positively and less hurtfully.

Let go of memories of past hurts

Some of us are haunted by memories of past events or people that have hurt us. It seems so easy to fix, if it isn't happening to you. If Sally still feels bitter about something her husband said to her a week ago, it's going to take a lot more than simply saying to her, "Get over it. It's history," or "Don't let yourself hurt today from the pains of yesterday."

I can say those things to Sally until I'm blue in the face, and Sally will still feel her pain.

We help Sally recognize the painful feeling immediately when she feels it, and teach her to ask four questions. Two things are happening when she does that. First, she is using her thinking capacities instead of reviewing her memories, so it stops the hurt. Second, one of the questions we teach her to ask is: "Is this (feeling) what I want for my life?" This question engages her thinking capacity to examine her goals for her life, to see if creating pain by nursing hurtful memories is what she wants for her life.

If Sally practices responding to the painful memories by asking the four questions, when she is ready Sally will say to herself, "Get over it. It's history. I don't want to hurt today by remembering the pains of yesterday."

When Sally says this to herself, she will truly be over it, and can get on with her life.

The benefit of having our hurtful thoughts down on paper is we can examine them for accuracy.

Check each thought for accuracy. Test each thought. Counter each catastrophic conclusion.

Some of us have a tendency to make "catastrophic" assessments. Catastrophic thoughts are hurtful and can be debilitating.

For example, Joe thinks, "I've been laid off. I'll never work again." When Joe checks his list for accuracy, the first thought passes the test. He has been laid off. The second thought — his catastrophic assessment, "I'll never work again," — is probably not accurate. Joe needs to use his thinking capacities and test his thought about never working again.

If Joe is 97 years old, his thought might be accurate. Maybe nobody would hire a 97-year old person. If Joe is educated, has a skill, and only 30 years old, then his thought about never working again may not be accurate.

We invite Joe to marshal evidence to counter his hurtful thought. We help Joe see that he is educated, skilled, and young. Each of these pieces of evidence suggests that Joe is very employable and will work again.

You'll learn to scan for words like "always," or "never," or "everybody," or "everything," as clues to thoughts that need to be made more accurate.

By the time you've reached this point, you've pruned your list of swirling thoughts. You've eliminated the unanswerable questions that clog your thinking. You've learned to use your imagination in positive ways, and not use it to hurt yourself. You've learned how to keep memories of past hurts from hurting you in the present. You've learned to test your hurtful thoughts for accuracy, and marshal evidence to dispute catastrophic thinking. So, we only have one thing more to teach. Whenever you experience a bad feeling, you'll learn to ask four questions, and make one of four choices.

Replace swirling, hurtful thoughts with productive questions

Any hurtful thoughts still on the list are to be taken one at a time through four questions.

1. What's happening?

This question asks you to consider your thinking. The usual answer is some variation of "I'm feeling a bad feeling."

2. How am I creating this feeling?

This question reminds you that it's your thoughts that create your feelings, and asks about the specific thought that brought on the bad feeling. Typical answers might be:

"I'm asking myself an unanswerable question." Or

"I'm imagining something terrible that scares me or makes me anxious." Or,

"I'm recalling something that happened in the past that produces bad feelings for me now." Or,

"I'm using catastrophic thinking and concluding that something is much worse than it really is."

3. Is this what I want for my life?

This question brings out your goals and choices for the future. It asks you if you want to produce bad feelings the way it's happening now.

Sometimes, the answer is yes.

"Yes, my dog died. I ache with the loss. That is an authentic feeling and while it is painful, I choose to always grieve with the loss of a loved one."

Usually, the answer is no.

"I don't want to create bad feelings for myself, if I can avoid it. What can I do to move closer to what I want for my life?"

The fourth question asks for a wise choice for handling the thought that brought up painful feelings.

4. How can I move toward what I want?

The wise choices for this question are Act, Ask, Accept, or Forgive.

Act when action is called for, or schedule an action.

If the adversity is something happening in the present, then action may be the best choice.

For example: Sara is thinking about her retirement savings, and worries, “Will I have enough money saved for my retirement?” This may be a stimulus to action. Sara might decide that she doesn’t have a good answer to the question, so she chooses to create a retirement budget to check her planning. If this isn’t a good moment to start, Sara can act by scheduling the time when she will create her budget. The worry will be resolved.

Ask, when asking is appropriate, or schedule negotiation.

When the wisest choice for a thought is to talk to someone else, then negotiation may be called for. Mary is undergoing divorce and has the thought that the children may be torn away from their grandparents. She can’t know the answer to that unless she talks to the grandparents. So, she can resolve the bad feeling by asking them.

Accept what can’t be changed.

Oftentimes, especially when thinking about something from the past, acting or asking won’t help. Sometimes the only wise option is to accept that “what is” is just the way it is, and nothing you can do or say will change it. When that is the case, it is usually the wisest choice to simply accept what can’t be changed, and get on with your life. It’s hardly ever useful to keep hurting yourself about something that is in the past. The expression, “It’s no use crying over spilled milk,” comes to mind.

Forgive anyone who has hurt you ... including yourself.

If there is no action that can be taken, no talking to be done, and you still can’t accept something that has been done and can’t be changed, then perhaps the only wise choice available is to forgive someone. Maybe, even yourself.

The End ... or The Beginning

We know that this is a powerful lot to learn. After the first pass through the course, many people just get the whole picture, without building the skills. So, we invite them back to the first module. Each time they come to a module for the second time, they are different from the person they were when they saw it for the first time. Everybody tells us that.

When the person reaches the end the second time, generally they’ve learned the skills but may not feel confident that they can continue to practice them forever more, in the future.

Obviously, it’s up to each person to decide, but many elect to go through the course a third time, this time practicing the skills so well they’ll be able to continue using them by themselves for the rest of their lives. Those who have gone through the third time tell us that each time through is different, because they are different.

Please begin the Coping Series with the Module: “Calm Your Mind”

Some of the Ways You Make Assessments

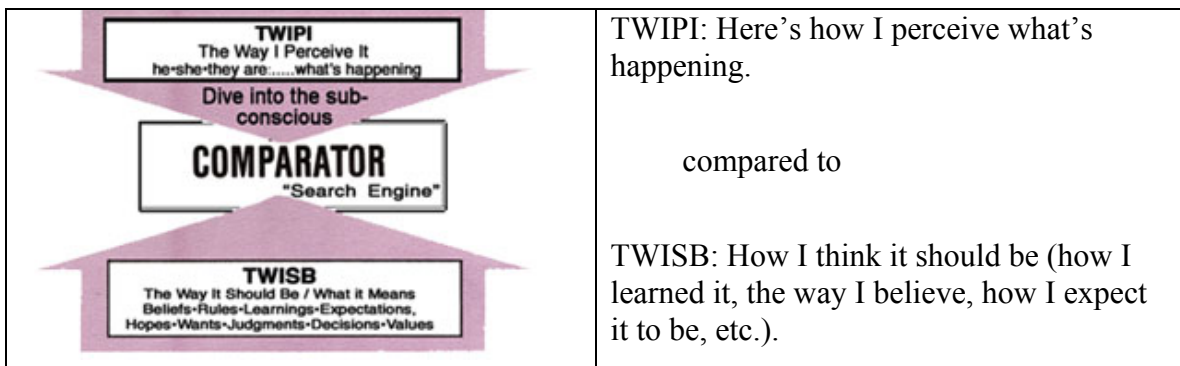
Note: The following was excerpted from the book "Sagery." It assumes that you've learned the whole Sage Model and, of course, you haven't. Even if you frustrate easily, or get confused, there is a lot here that will get you thinking about why you sometimes end up with bad feelings. (Refer to the full version of the Sage Model on page 56 if you wish.)

The Way I Perceive It vs. The Way It Should Be

You have a thought (TWIPI: The Way I Perceive It). In order to interpret the input, you compare it to your Storehouse of beliefs, rules, learnings, expectations, hopes, wants, fears, judgments, decisions, values, etc. As it passes through your Storehouse, you attempt to make sense of it by looking for a match with some prior experience. This input could be processed and interpreted based on any one of the items in your Storehouse.

So, more precisely, if the input was processed by a belief, then we could call it, "The Way I Believe it is." If by a learning, we could call it "The Way I have Learned it is." If by an expectation, we could call it, "The Way I Expect it to be," and so on. To keep it simple, all of them are called TWISB: The Way It Should Be (according to you).

Whatever comes up for you becomes your "TWISB" — "The Way It Should Be." You then end up with a feeling about that comparison: what I see is happening, versus the way it should be. Let's see how that works.

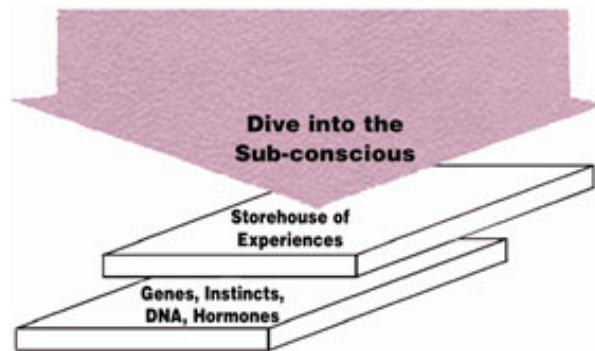


Notice that an input produces a thought (TWIPI). Your interpretation of the thought is made through your Storehouse of Experiences (TWISB), and then you get a feeling. Also notice that the feeling is created by comparison of your perception and something in your Storehouse. If they match, then there is a good feeling, and if they don't match, then there is a bad feeling.

There is no input that can *cause* good or bad feelings. The input can only produce a perception (TWIPI) and bring up something into the TWISB. Any feelings you have, either good or bad are produced by your TWIPI and your TWISB. Each person's feeling from the comparison of a perception and its interpretation, may be different.

The Storehouse

Now, let's go over some of the things that are in your Storehouse of past experiences. We will touch briefly on the kinds of things that are stored there, so you can begin to understand what comes up for you in your TWISB.



Beliefs

Your Storehouse contains all of the beliefs that you have chosen over your lifetime. While you might not be aware of it, you probably have many conflicting beliefs stored there. Since they only come up in your TWISB one at a time, you may not recognize that you have beliefs that conflict with each other, but you do.

You chose your beliefs. Everyone does. You choose a belief in response to a question you ask yourself. If you ask yourself a question for which there is no answer, you create a belief in order to answer the question. Or, sometimes you might ask someone else the question and accept that person's belief as your own. In any case, you either create your own beliefs or borrow them from someone else; in every case you choose to accept the belief.

The purpose of beliefs is to create comfortable feelings of being in control of your life, or, if you have assigned control of your life to some external force, then you choose beliefs to create feelings of being safe and secure and comfortable.

At this point it is enough to know that your Storehouse has lots of beliefs and sometimes they come up in your TWISB in response to an input.

Rules

Your Storehouse has all of the rules that you have chosen as guides for your life. You have a long list of what is right and what is wrong — for you. You may even hold a belief that your list of rules is right for other people as well as for you. You may even hold the belief that your rules are absolute and are really “right,” and not recognize that they are simply guidelines you have chosen for your life. In any case, you have many rules in your Storehouse that sometimes come up for you in your TWISB while processing an input.

Learnings

Throughout your life you have had experiences, and you have learned from them. These learnings are stored in your Storehouse and may come up in your TWISB as you process an input.

Many of the learnings are valid and appropriate. However, if you are like most people, many of the learnings are not valid and are hurtful because they are at the wrong Scope or Level.

It is unfortunate that young people haven’t been taught how to create wise learnings from their experiences, but they haven’t. So, they spend their lives learning wrong things from their experiences.

For example, a dog bit me when I was young. From that experience I made a wrong learning. Instead of learning that *some* dogs are dangerous, I concluded that *all* dogs are dangerous. Instead of learning that some dogs are dangerous in *certain situations*, I concluded that *all dogs are dangerous regardless of the situation*. Now, any fool can see that I had made a wrong learning, but it wasn’t for many years that I understood about learnings and how to make them at the right Scope and Level.

In any case, your Storehouse has a huge number of learnings — some valid and some not — which you use to guide you through life, and they come up to your TWISB from time to time as you process an input.

Expectations

Your Storehouse has a vast store of expectations that you have created for yourself. You create them based on past experiences, and you create them based on the previews of coming events that you construct for yourself.

Expectations have a lot of power to influence your experience of life. They can produce good feelings in bad situations, and bad feelings in good situations.

Wisdom suggests that it is best to have modest, or even no expectations, and to experience life as it is, rather than through your expectations of how it will be.

As simple as that sounds, it is not easy. Most people have expectations. From a practical standpoint, low expectations produce better results than high ones. Low expectations result in many pleasant surprises. High expectations result in frequent disappointments. Many people disagree with this concept and insist that high expectations are vital to achievement. That may be true, but they also create inner conflict and stress that can hurt you while you're trying to achieve your high expectations.

You will discover your expectations as you observe them come up in your TWISB as you process inputs.

Hopes

Your Storehouse also holds all of your hopes and dreams. These hopes and dreams have the power to motivate you toward what you want in life. If you use your hopes to motivate you to grow and achieve, then they are useful for you. If your hopes and dreams are not motivating you, then they may only serve as sources of dissatisfaction and disappointment and do not benefit you.

You will find them coming up in your TWISB as you process inputs.

Wants

As you go through life, you discover things that you want. These are stored in your Storehouse and come up for in your TWISB as you process inputs that match or don't match what you want.

Judgments

You store all of your prior judgments that you have made, and also judgments made by others whose judgments you value. These are all available as ready-made judgments that you may choose to use as you process the inputs in your life. By observing what comes up in your TWISB, you can become acquainted with the judgments that you have collected.

Your judgments tell you what is good and what is bad. You probably have accumulated a grand list that you can apply to events, things, and people.

Decisions

Every decision you have made in your life is stored in your Storehouse and every input that you process is interpreted in terms of those decisions. You can observe them as they come up in your TWISB in response to events in your life.

Values

The basic values that you hold to guide you in your life are stored in your Storehouse. Current inputs will be processed in terms of your values. If your values are important to you, they will come up frequently in your TWISB as you process the inputs in your life.

As you now know, you could evaluate any thought through the filter of a different piece in your storehouse of memories. You could assess a thought based on a belief, a rule, a value, etc.

What may not be so obvious is that each of the different ways you could assess a thought will produce a different assessment. So, any thought that is causing you pain, might be re-considered in terms of a different part of your storehouse.

For example: Your partner does or says something. If you assess it in terms of your needs or wants, you might find it unsatisfying ... you get a bad feeling. If you assess it in terms of your life's goals, or your values, you might find that your goal is a happy relationship, and your values tell you that you're an accepting and forgiving person, and you might feel no pain at all.

This is a clear and simple proof that outside events don't cause us pain or trauma. Pain and hurt come from the way we think about external events and how we evaluate them. Coping is a tool that allows us to modify the way we think and assess until they help us achieve our goals.

Please return to page 17 of your Workbook, to continue.

Ask the Four Questions

Note: This material was excerpted from the book "Sagery." It followed a detailed and complete explanation of the Sage Model, so it uses terms that you haven't yet learned. If you are aware of that, and can skip over unfamiliar terms, the material offers some excellent content. We left it in because some readers found it very valuable, while others found it somewhat difficult to plow through.

So, if you are uncomfortable with feelings of confusion, just skip it and go back to the practice (Workbook page 20). If you are comfortable with a little challenge, then read on. If you're not sure, just try a little and see how you feel. Just remember, it's extra, and you can learn coping with it. Also notice that you have already seen a copy of the Sage Model (page 56), and can use that as a reference.

Asking For What You Want

If you have learned how to accept what you cannot change, and to forgive yourself and others, then you will be able to ask for what you want.

If you have trouble asking for what you want, you most likely have some beliefs or expectations that are hurting you.

Example

Betty finds it difficult to ask for what she wants. Before she can even ask for what she wants, she rehearses in her mind what might happen. Her Constructor creates a scenario in which someone else refuses to cooperate. As she sees the mental picture of being refused, she gets a bad feeling. She fears rejection or refusal, so she won't risk being rejected or refused. So, she doesn't ask for what she wants.

The problem with not asking for what you want is that you may not get what you want. So, Betty has a dilemma of bad choices. She can choose between not getting what she wants, and the pain of being refused or rejected.

If you have the same difficulty that Betty does, then you can use your Sage Part to resolve it (in the book "Sagery" the Sage Part is that part of you that contains your innate wisdom; it is not emotional, nor influenced by past experiences). Your Sage breaks the situation into its component parts. The components are these:

- Something you want
- Something you fear that you are unwilling to accept (like rejection or refusal or obligation)

The thought occurs to you that you want something. Immediately, you process the thought. If you have some difficulty asking for what you want you will get a bad feeling. Your Sage comes on to handle the bad feeling, asks what you are feeling, asks how you are creating it, asks if that is what you want, and determines that you don't want that bad feeling. As your Sage discovers how you are creating the bad feeling, your Sage will first resolve the fear of the bad feeling, and then, if the wise choice is to ask for what you want, your Sage will choose it, and lo and behold, you will discover yourself asking for what you want.

Your Sage knows when to ask for what you want, and knows how to handle whatever happens. Only three things can happen:

- 1) You get what you ask for.
- 2) You get some of what you ask for.
- 3) You get refused or rejected.

The *chances are two out of three* that you will get a positive outcome, and your Sage knows how to accept the times that you don't.

In the future, notice the times when you don't ask for what you want. Then notice that those are times when you have a bad feeling and have not yet used your Sage to handle it. As soon as you use your Sage, you will find yourself able to ask for what you want (if your Sage decides that that is the best of the four Sage choices).

Accepting "What Is"

Your Sage is wise enough to know the importance of accepting what can't be changed. The key to serenity is the willingness to accept what is and what can't be changed. The first step in learning to accept what is and what can't be changed is to simply decide you want to do it.

So, do you want to accept what is and what can't be changed? If you do, then your Sage will handle it for you. Notice that "accept" is one of the Sage choices. Your Sage is already able to accept what is.

So, what is the problem? The problem comes about because your conscious mind and some other parts may not be willing or able to accept what is and what can't be changed. It is your conscious mind or TWISB messages or individual parts that won't accept what is.

As you begin to shift control over to your Sage, you will discover an increased level of acceptance in the way you deal with people and events. When some other part is unwilling to accept something, you get a bad feeling. If your Sage is brought in to handle that feeling, then you will quickly resolve the bad feeling by accepting what is and what can't be changed.

Meta Beliefs

You will aid the process by adopting a new Meta *belief*, and a new *expectation*.

Here is the new Meta belief. (A Meta belief is a “belief about beliefs.”)

Read the statement, think about it, and see if you are willing to choose to believe it.

“I believe that I am wise to accept what is and what can’t be changed.”

That’s it! That’s all there is to it.

You now believe that it is wise for you to accept what can’t be changed. In effect, you have two beliefs that seem to conflict. One belief is that

1) your situation is unacceptable,

and the other belief is that

2) it is wise to accept what you can’t change.

The resolution is simple. Your Sage will help your other parts to understand that you are *not accepting what happened to you*. You are simply accepting that it *did* happen, and that you are not going to change that reality.

Both beliefs are still valid. You might say,

“Wait a minute, I could devote myself to stopping what happened to me so that it will never happen again.”

Perhaps so. However, the next question you might ask yourself is,

“Is that what I want for my life?”

If your answer is “yes,” then you may decide to dedicate your life to changing something that can be changed. But, if you are not willing to change your life mission, then you must accept that you can’t change “what is.”

That has been a long explanation of a simple idea. As soon as you adopt the Meta belief that you are wise to accept what is and what can’t be changed, then you and your Sage have the tools you need to resolve a number of painful difficulties.

What do you need to accept? You need to accept, “what is.” Here is a list of things that you will be wise to accept:

- how tall you are
- what color you are
- what race you are
- what kind of hair you have
- what country you were born in
- what kind of education you have had to date
- everything that has ever happened to you in the past
- everything that you have done in the past

- who and what your parents are
- whether the sun shines or whether it rains
- the recession or depression or inflation or deflation
- anything you haven't done in the past
- anything anyone else hasn't done in the past
- that there will be injustice in the world
- that there will be crime and criminals in the world
- that life isn't fair
- that no two people are equal
- that equality seldom exists in the world

Notice that everything on the list is something that you can't change. As you read the list, did you find yourself reacting strongly to any item? If so, then that is something that your Sage can help you with in the future.

You will have bad feelings if you choose *not to accept* what is. If what you want for your life is to create bad feelings about your experience of life, then you won't want to accept what is. If, on the other hand, what you want for your life is to achieve your goals and have peace of mind and happiness, then you would be wise to accept what is.

Remember the difference between accepting something you don't like, and accepting that it is something you can't change.

Expectations

Okay, enough on accepting "what is." Let's talk about adding a new Meta expectation (another expectation about expectations). Here is what I suggest you add:

"I expect that sometimes I won't get what I want, or want what I get."

If you adopt this expectation, you can use it to resolve bad feelings that come from not getting what you want or wanting what you get sometimes.

Then, when something occurs that gives you a bad feeling, your Sage can resolve that bad feeling by noticing that this occurrence was one of the occurrences that you expect to happen sometimes.

By combining the Meta belief and Meta expectation, you create the enviable ability to accept outcomes that other people get upset about.

Notice that getting upset about something you can't change is of no benefit to you (or anyone else). Accepting what is, allows you to free up your energy and motivation to use on the parts of your life that you can change.

What You Can Change

What you can change is anything you do in the future. As soon as you have done it, it becomes part of the things that you *can't* change. But, as long as it is in the future (and is possible to change), you can change it.

For example, you can't change your skin color, but you can change your hair color. You can't change your height, but you can change your weight. You can't change what someone else does in the future, but you can change what *you* do in the future. You can't change the fact that you haven't done something in the past, but you can do that thing in the future. You can't change that you haven't been the person you want to be in the past, but you can be what you want to be in the future.

So, wisdom dictates that you accept "what is." Serenity is the benefit you achieve. By not wasting your energy and emotions on what you can't change, you free up your energy and emotions for what you can change.

Forgiveness

You may hold the belief that there are some people or events that you can't forgive. If so, notice that this belief doesn't do what beliefs are supposed to do for you. The purpose of beliefs is to provide you good feelings. I propose a new Meta belief.

"I believe that I am being wise when I forgive."

Let me explain about forgiveness. Suppose that a drunk driver killed my mother. I can choose to forgive the person, or I can choose not to forgive the person. What happens in each case?

If I don't forgive the drunk driver, I never finish with the trauma of the accident. Every time something reminds me of my mother, I re-experience the pain of her death. At the same time, I re-experience my anger toward the driver. Until I forgive the driver, I will be experiencing anger and pain. My lack of forgiveness doesn't hurt the drunk driver; he has his own pain to handle. My lack of forgiveness hurts only me. By being unwilling to forgive, I create pain and anger in my life.

If I forgive the driver, I can accept that the accident happened. (Again, I am not accepting the accident; I am accepting that it happened.) After forgiving the driver, I can begin to think of my mother: all she meant to me, and did for me, and of all of the good times we shared. And because I forgave the driver, I don't find my thoughts of my mother focused primarily on her unfortunate death.

The payoff for forgiveness is that I am free to create my experience of my life with more loving thoughts, and fewer pained and angry thoughts. Your Sage understands these tradeoffs. Your Sage has been charged with the responsibility for creating the life for you that you want. If you want a happy, loving, satisfying life, then forgiveness is one of the prices you must pay to achieve it.

Think about someone you haven't forgiven. Notice there are two components to the thought. One is the painful experience, and the other is the blame that you focus on the person you haven't forgiven.

You have already learned the wisdom of accepting what you cannot change. Well, this is a place to start. Start by accepting that the bad experience has happened. Accept that, and half the pain goes away. Now, all that is left is the person on whom you are focusing blame. Accept that people will be fallible, or wicked sometimes. The person you haven't forgiven is simply an example of that. You can't change that, so accept it.

As you feel what it feels like to forgive someone whom you haven't yet forgiven, feel the sense of resolution and peace of mind that comes to you as you feel forgiveness. You can trade in the bad feelings you have been feeling for that sense of inner peace and harmony.

Forgiveness is not a high price to pay to achieve peace of mind.

Remember the words of the Sage:

"Failure to forgive is a form of self punishment," as well as

"I believe that I am wise when I forgive."

What Can't You Forgive?

Is there anything in your life that you have done or not done that you won't forgive? Some people have never forgiven themselves about past events in their lives and they carry around guilt and bad feelings. When your conscious mind is controlling things, then not forgiving seems to have value.

A person might say *"If I forgave myself for that, I might do it again sometime."* People who think like that are attempting to control their future actions by not forgiving themselves for their past actions. That may work, but it has a bad assumption built in. The bad assumption is that you cannot choose how you will act in the future, and you might do something terrible. Perhaps that may be true if you live at the conflict level and allow each part of you to behave as it wants without regard to your overall values.

Now you have chosen to use your Sage to guide you in your choices. Your Sage will not choose to do terrible things. Your Sage will choose to do what will get you what you want, while respecting your values. If you don't want to do terrible things, then your Sage will not choose to do things that you won't find acceptable.

As soon as you have practiced using your Sage sufficiently, so that it begins to become automatic for you, then you no longer need to protect you from yourself by being unwilling to forgive yourself. Remember:

"Failure to forgive is a form of self punishment."

You haven't chosen to create a life for yourself that is filled with self-punishment, have you? If you haven't, then decide to forgive yourself for whatever you have done in the

past. If you have some unfinished business to clean up, then clean it up so that you can finish off the past and get on to where you will live the rest of your life — the future.

How do you forgive yourself?

First, *decide* to forgive yourself. Choose it.

Then accept that you did what you did.

Then accept that you are fallible and human.

Accept what is and what can't be changed — both your actions and yourself.

Notice that as soon as you decide to forgive yourself, the pain begins to lessen. It will lessen and lessen and then disappear. Your Sage will see to it.

Note: Please return to the practice for "Ask the Four Questions" on page 19 of your Workbook.

Forgiveness

The nine steps are from “Forgive for Good” by Dr. Fred Luskin

- 1) Know exactly how you feel about what has happened, and be able to say what is not okay about the situation.
- 2) Make a commitment to yourself to do what you have to do to feel better. Forgiveness is for you and not for anyone else.
- 3) Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation with the person who upset you, nor condoning the action of that person. What you are after is to find peace.
- 4) Recognize that your primary stress is coming from the hurt feelings, thoughts, and physical upset that you are suffering now, not what hurt you earlier.
- 5) At the moment you feel upset, practice a simple stress management technique to soothe your body’s flight or fight response.
- 6) Give up expecting things from others or from life that they do not choose to give you.
- 7) Put your energy into looking for a way to get your positive goals met. Seek out new ways to get what you want.
- 8) Remember that a life well lived is your best revenge. You give power over you to the person who caused you pain, when you focus on your wounded feelings.
- 9) Add to your grievance story the heroic choice you have made to forgive.

More Forgiveness Quotes

Forgiveness does not change the past, but it enlarges the future.

If I forgive, I am free to create my experience of my life with more loving thoughts, and fewer pained and angry thoughts.

Forgiveness is a modest price to pay to achieve peace of mind.

If I can forgive others, I can forgive myself.

Don’t forgive someone because they deserve it; they may not. Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself.

Forgiveness does not change the past, but it enlarges the future.

Any man can seek revenge. It takes a king or prince to grant a pardon.

Forgiveness is a gift of great value, yet it costs nothing.

When a deep injury is done to us we will never recover until we forgive.

A good marriage is the union of two forgivers.

Forgiveness is a choice. Not a decision. It’s an act of will.

Don't wait to forgive until you feel like it. You may never feel like it. Feelings may take time to heal after the choice of forgiveness is made.

Forgiveness

If you have an interest in pursuing more about forgiveness, read, "Forgive for Good" by Dr. Fred Luskin. He offers nine steps toward resolving negative feelings toward others and forgiving them.

Please return to page 21 of your Workbook.

Resolve Bad Feelings Instantly

In the earlier coping modules you dealt with many (or all) of the old bad feelings you had accumulated. If all went well, you were able to clear them out. Now it's time to learn to cope with new difficulties, right when they occur.

Static Coping

We call the previous coping modules "Static Coping," because you took your thoughts and assessments out of your bank of memories and wrote them on paper, in order to resolve them.

You then edited, modified, and re-evaluated them in terms of reality, bias, or distortion.

Then, you asked the four questions, and chose how you would cope with the feeling.

In this module you'll learn how to cope dynamically. You'll use it in the future whenever bad feelings arise about any issue — right at the time it occurs.

Dynamic Coping

In "Dynamic Coping" you'll learn to ask the four questions and make a choice "on the fly," right at the moment you're experiencing the thought and feeling.

Some people have called this "coping at the speed of thought."

There are several major differences between the two processes, and you will continue to use both methods. They work differently, and they do slightly different things.

Major Differences Between Static and Dynamic Coping

In Static Coping ...	In Dynamic coping ...
<p><i>... you're dealing with your thoughts from a different level.</i></p> <p>You're distancing yourself from your thoughts by bringing back your memory of them, and writing them down. The bad feelings are less powerful when you are staring at them on paper than when you are feeling them swirl through your mind.</p>	<p><i>... you're dealing with your immediate thought and your assessment of it.</i></p> <p>You are at the same level as the thought, and it has more power to produce bad feelings. So, there is more emotion involved, and less time for reason and wisdom to come to your aid.</p>
<p><i>... you have time to look at your thoughts and assessments.</i></p> <p>You can apply judgment to them, and modify them to make them more reasonable. You can eliminate the unanswerable questions that clog up your thinking processes.</p>	<p><i>... you have less time to look at your thoughts and assessments.</i></p> <p>It is awkward to pause, put the person you're dealing with "on hold," and modify the thought or assessment easily, using wisdom and reason.</p>
<p><i>... you have time to think and answer the second question:</i></p> <p>"How am I creating this thought?" (or "What assessment am I using?")</p>	<p><i>... you don't have time to puzzle through the Sage Model ...</i></p> <p>... and see that you're giving something too much importance, or using a hurtful scope, or using the wrong part. So, you skip the second question. If you resolve the bad feeling successfully, you won't need to answer the second question at all.</p>
<p><i>... you're dealing with your memory of thoughts and assessments ...</i></p> <p>... rather than inputs coming from your senses in the here and now. Memories are sometimes distorted, especially memories of thoughts and assessments that produce bad feelings. Also, it's likely that you looped on those bad feelings, distorted them, and made extreme assessments.</p>	<p><i>... you'll gradually learn to catch the thought and assessment after one or two loops.</i></p> <p>The thoughts will have fewer loops to become distorted, and so the assessments will probably be less extreme.</p>

When do you use Static Coping, and when do you use Dynamic?

The goal is to practice Dynamic Coping until you catch virtually every bad feeling, and resolve it before it has time to store in your memory bank and become an 'accumulated' bad feeling. If you don't catch it right away, you'll have to go back to the Static Coping process at some point in time.

Example:

Let's take the example of Sally the neatnik, and Walter the slob.

Before she knew anything about coping or how to stop fighting over irresolvable issues, Sally had accumulated a ton of bad feelings about what a 'slob' Walter was. After learning about irresolvable issues, she worked hard to see it as an irresolvable issue. However, she still had some resentful feelings. She felt angry. Down deep she felt he was doing it on purpose. She didn't want to clean up after him anymore. She often had the thought, "I'm his wife, not his mother."

When Sally learned Static Coping, she put all her thoughts down on paper, along with her assessments. She gained some distance from the thoughts by seeing them on paper. She had plenty of time to ask the four questions. She modified the thoughts to make them more reasonable. She modified her assessments to make them less extreme. She realized she was giving the issue much more *importance* than it deserved. She considered Walter's lack of neatness in a larger *scope* and realized that when she considered everything he did and said, his lack of neatness was trivial compared to what he brought to their marriage, and what he meant to her.

She changed her *time perspective* and saw that over a lifetime of living together and caring for each other — with all the joys and sadnesses that a lifetime would bring — the neatness issue was but a blip.

She examined her assessments and found them pretty extreme. Walter wasn't doing anything to hurt her. He wasn't being passive-aggressive. Walter was just being Walter, the man she loved.

When Sally was through with her Static Coping with Walter's lack of neatness, the bad feelings melted away, and anytime she remembered one of them, she immediately squelched the bad feeling by remembering that she had chosen to accept Walter and his lack of neatness ... just the way he was.

History was no longer affecting her feelings for him, but she still had to deal with his lack of neatness in the future.

The Value of Dynamic Coping

When Sally learned Dynamic Coping, she was able to immediately dismiss any current bad feeling she would get if she picked up a glass, or dirty sock that was Walter's.

The value of Dynamic Coping is that it can resolve any bad feeling before it has a chance to accumulate into a memory with bad feelings attached.

Three Useful Concepts

We're not going to use the Sage Model in Dynamic Coping. It's useful to recall, however, the three things the Sage Model clearly shows about your responsibility for your own thoughts and feelings:

1. You create your own feelings — good or bad

Most people think that people or events cause their feelings, but they don't! Feelings are created inside the mind by the way you process and interpret inputs from people and events in your life. You may have little control over the people or those events, but you can have almost total control over the way you experience and assess them.

2. You choose your own strategies

Some of the current strategies you choose get you what you want. But others don't. In Dynamic Coping, you'll use the same "Four Choices," you used in Static Coping. You'll choose whether to act, ask, accept or forgive, while considering your goals for your life. By making your choice in terms of what you want for your life, you can be sure you'll always choose a productive strategy.

3. You create your own internal conflict and tension

The most common inner conflict is among the parts within your mind. Different parts want different things. If they don't get their needs met, they can fight and argue — right inside your head. It's called "self-talk." Talk, talk, and more talk.

One part of you may need to work, for example, while another part needs to be with your partner. The parts can fight each other, or undermine each other, or manipulate each other, until you — the whole you — feels really stressed out and aren't happy no matter what you do.

If you can remember these concepts, you'll find it relatively simple to learn Dynamic Coping ... and resolve bad feelings at the speed of thought.

The Four Questions – Minus one

You probably remember the four questions to ask yourself anytime you are thinking about something that hurts or feels bad.

1. What's Happening?

When you are using Dynamic Coping, the goal is just to catch yourself at the beginning of a bad feeling. You can use the phrase “What’s happening?” or make up one of your own, such as “Oh, Oh, here I go,” or “I’m doing it again,” etc.

~~2. How am I creating this bad feeling?~~

We cross off this question. With Dynamic Coping you’ll skip this question because you won’t have time to puzzle through the Sage Model the way you did in Static Coping. As long as you have accepted the idea that you create your own feelings, choose your own strategies, and create your own inner conflicts, you don’t need to know how that’s happening. Move immediately from catching yourself creating a bad feeling to the next question.

3. Is this feeling (I’m creating) what I want for my life?

Some bad feelings are normal, healthy, and natural. For example, a friend dies. You want to feel the loss. You want to grieve. You’ll want to cope with the loss, but you don’t want to extinguish authentic human feelings.

Most of the time, however, your answer to that question will be “no.” For example, the answer to “Is this what I want for my life?” is “No. The anger I’m feeling at the moment at my partner is *not* what I want for my life.”

The magic and power of this question keeps you regularly in touch with your life goals and what kind of life you want for yourself. It also makes sure the choices you make support your getting what you want in your life.

So, with Dynamic Coping you’ll typically go right from recognizing that you’re creating a bad feeling, through “No, I don’t want to feel this way,” on to the four choices.

4. How can I move toward what I want in my life?

This question prompts you to look at the four wise choices and choose the one that will best move you toward what you want for your life. If you limit your choices to just these four, you can be assured of making a wise choice. (There are probably a million other things you could do in response to your bad feeling, but most of them would be unwise, and would not take you closer to your life’s goals.)

The Four Wise Choices

The four wise choices are Act, Ask, Accept, and Forgive.

Act: “Is there something I can do?”

You will choose to ACT when some action is useful, productive, and will take you closer to your goals.

Ask: “Can I negotiate a solution that would be a win-win?”

You will choose to ASK when discussion or negotiation will have a good chance to bring you closer to what you want in your life. If you and your partner have productive ‘issue’ discussions that begin in a good place and end in a good place, and are often productive, you’ll choose to ASK frequently. If, however, you and your partner have not yet mastered productive ‘issue’ discussions, you might ASK less often.

Accept: “Shall I just accept what’s happening and move on?”

You will choose ACCEPT, when acting and asking wouldn’t give you a good outcome. Your partner has opinions or actions that may drive you nuts, so your differences are very likely to be irresolvable. ACCEPT that that’s the way your partner is — especially when you consider this a tiny issue in the context of all the great things you appreciate about your partner. Accepting what you can’t change is wise.

Forgive: “Do I need to forgive the person, or myself, and move on?”

If you find something you can’t accept, then FORGIVE. Forgiveness is wise, and lots of forgiveness is very useful in making a relationship harmonious. Remember, “Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself.”

Summary

This process of coping dynamically breaks the loop of thoughts that produce bad feelings. It moves you away from an emotional mode into a reasoning mode in which you ask and answer questions.

Anytime you have a bad feeling about your partner or your relationship, practice asking the four questions, and answering them in turn.

The fourth question is the heart of Dynamic Coping. You learn to make one of four wise choices.

- If acting is useful, you'll take action.
- If asking, discussing, or negotiating is the wisest course, you'll ask.
- If neither action nor asking will resolve the issue, you'll wisely accept what is.
- If forgiveness is called for, you'll forgive yourself or the person you thought caused you pain.

These questions, answers, and choices are not automatic for most of us. They require practice, patience, and forbearance. They will, however, lead you always to the wisest choice for you, based on what you want for your life.

If one of the things you want in your life is a relationship that lasts, these coping strategies will assure that you do your part to secure your loving relationship.

Please continue with the next article, “Assigning Motives.”

Assigning Motives

Note: I saw the following story on a marriage support group. It's a clear example of making negative assessments of innocent acts.

One way to ruin a relationship is to assign motives to innocent acts

In this case study, the husband had a habit that bothered his wife. He walked through doors and left them open. He opened cabinets, took what he needed and left the door open. The same with drawers.

The husband was a wonderful man in all other regards, but this one lapse bothered his wife.

Most of the respondents in this marriage support group told of someone in their lives with similar annoying habits. Some ventured the husband might have ADD.

You've been learning about coping with an annoyance like this using the four questions, and four choices. So you know that the instant the wife felt a bad feeling about closing an open drawer, or cabinet, she should ask the four questions, and make one of the four choices: Act, Ask, Accept, Forgive.

The wife had *asked* many times, but the husband was unable to always change the annoying behavior. The right solution to maintain a happy relationship is to *accept*, and if she has accumulated prior bad feelings, to *forgive*.

This woman hadn't learned about coping, so she brought her problem to the support group. Many people gave her good advice. (Good, because it would keep the relationship happy, and it agreed with my advice.)

One person, however, wrote the following:

"Kitchen cabinets always being left open? And having to close them constantly all day long just because my loved one was too lazy to take a split second and do it himself? I'm sorry, I would have a very hard time not viewing this as inconsiderate behavior (at best) and passive-aggressive behavior (at worst)."

This lady's assessment of her thought about doors being left open was that her husband was being ... at best ... inconsiderate. And, at worst, displaying passive-aggressive behavior towards the wife.

In other words, she was assessing the thought in terms of negative messages the husband was giving the wife. She imputed a motive to an innocent act.

She labeled the act as inconsiderate or even hostile towards the wife.

This is such a great example of a truly hurtful assessment, I had to bring it to your attention. Pay attention to your assessments. If they are negative, are you imputing (inventing, imagining, assigning) motives to an innocent act?

Oh, I thought to myself. I wouldn't want to be living with a person who imagined motives that aren't there. This habit is very troubling.

That husband is wandering around in his own world, his thoughts "who knows where." And she interprets his innocent (but potentially annoying) acts as being hostile to her.

This is a great example of a perfect recipe for relationship trouble.

Of course, if she took the dynamic coping module, she'd have learned to instantly ask the four questions, immediately accept and forgive, and the harmless act would have to power to disturb her.

Somebody get that lady to relationship-insurance.com.

Please continue with the practice on page 24 of the Workbook.

**Transcriptions of the
Audio-visual Programs**

Calm Your Mind

In this module, you'll learn about two things: some calming techniques that you can use anytime you have a bad feeling, and, you'll learn about the wisest part of you — the part we call the Sage-part. Let's go see your Sage-part, and how you can use it to make wise choices.

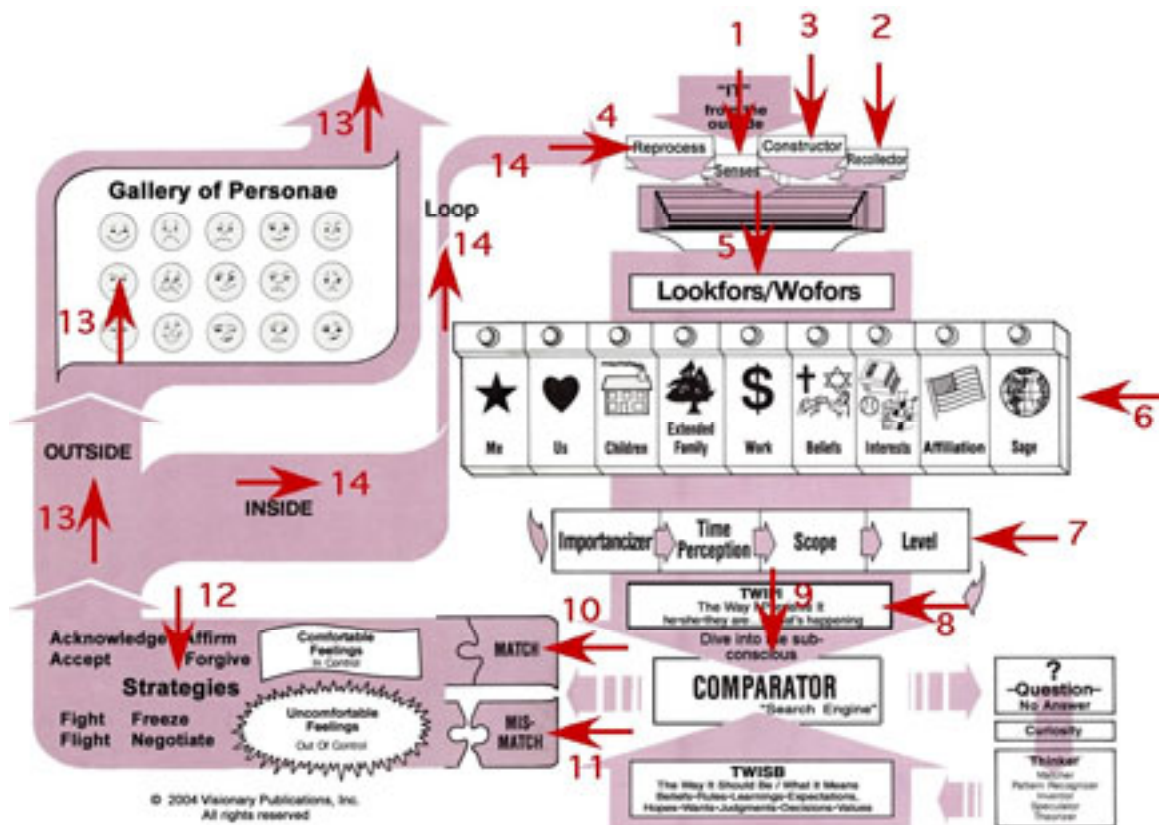
This is the Sage Model, a map that makes it easier to follow the flow of a thought through your mind.

One nice thing about the Sage model is that you don't have to learn it or understand it in order to use it. We'll show you a few things now, and you can learn other, deeper, features of the model, only as you need them.

For right now, let's skim quickly over the model to see how a thought is formed, and introduce you to your nine parts.

The Model

Note: There is a full-page model at the end of this text (without the numbers) that you can use to follow along, if you wish.



Parts of the Map

Start at the top of the map. It shows that:

(1) SENSES — a thought can come from any of four sources. Your senses — that is your eyes, ears, touch, taste, etc. — bring you inputs from the world outside of your mind. You'll see or hear things that might give rise to a thought.

(2) RECOLLECTOR — Or, you can have a thought from your memory of anything in the past.

(3) CONSTRUCTOR — Or a thought could come from your imagination about something in the future.

(4) REPROCESSOR — Or, you could be mulling over a thought you've just had.

However it comes in, the thought can't be understood until it has been processed or assessed.

(5) LOOKFORS/WOFORS — The mind adds a few elements to the thought,

(6) PARTS — hands it over to one of your nine parts — usually the one that's most interested in it — and that part

(7) IMPORTANCIZER, TIME PERCEPTION, SCOPE, LEVEL — adds its particular point of view

(8) TWIPI (The Way I Perceive It) — and it ends up here as a thought.

(9) COMPARATOR — The thought then dives into your unconscious mind to be evaluated.

(10) MATCH — If your thought is okay with you, you have a match.

(11) MIS-MATCH — If, on the other hand, the thought is “not the way it should be” for you, you have a mismatch and a bad feeling.

(12) You then choose a strategy for that feeling

(13) PERSONNAE — to choose a persona and go out and respond to the world, or,

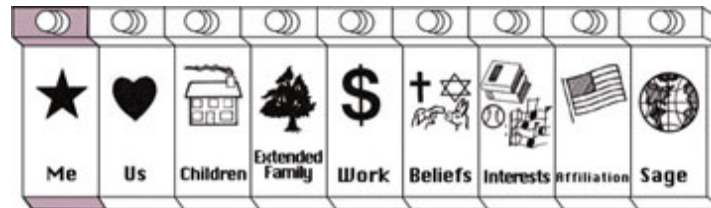
(14) INSIDE — you stay inside and reprocess the thought AND the assessment.

(14) We call that looping.

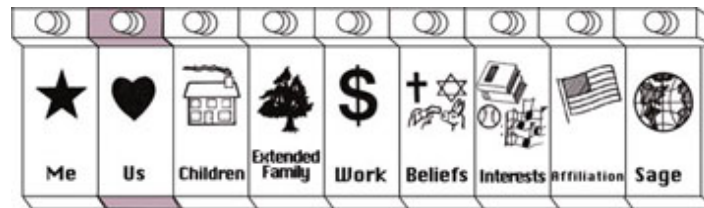
Okay, that's a pretty fast run through. In this part of the module we'll concentrate on your parts — the nine parts of you that deal with different aspects of your life and reflect different needs.

Your Parts

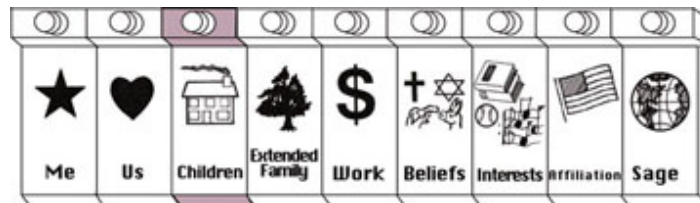
Each part has a different need and priority. Your Me-part is the part concerned with you. Its job is to get your physical needs met, to keep you safe and alive, and its priority is just you. This part is self-centered and focuses almost exclusively on you and your needs.



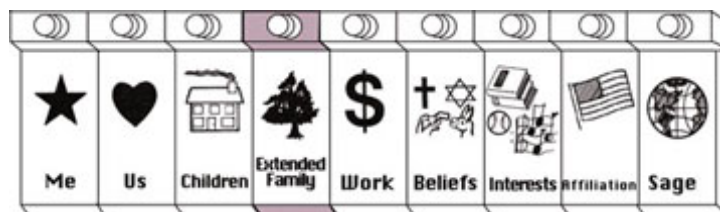
This is your Relationship-part. It needs a significant other to bond to and it'll put the needs of the significant other over your own needs.



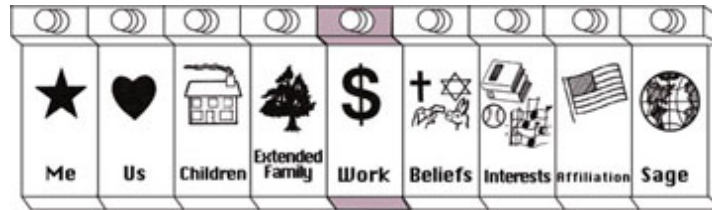
This is your Children-part. It wants and needs children and it will put the interests of your child above your own.



This is your Extended-family-part. It honors your parents. It really feels that blood is thicker than water, so it will sometimes put the needs of an elderly parent, or sibling ahead of your own needs.



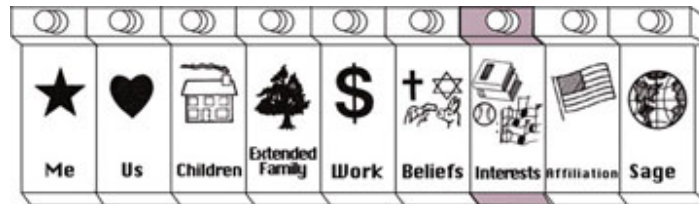
This is your Work-part. It needs achievement, accomplishment. It needs to contribute. This part can sometimes put the needs of work above your other needs.



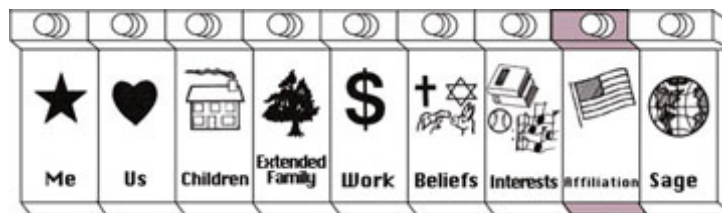
This is your Beliefs-part. It honors your beliefs and sometimes puts the need to honor your beliefs above all other interests.



This is your Interests-part. It's curious and wants to learn. It may, from time to time, care more about whatever it's learning than the needs of your other parts.

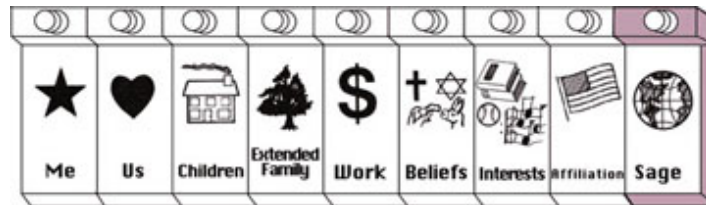


This is your Affiliation-part. It needs friends, groups to join, communities to be part of, a nation to serve and it can put the needs of the group ahead of your own.



Your Sage Part

This is your Sage-part, your wisest part. The Sage-part loves beauty, all mankind, wants justice, fairness and more. This is the part we want you to get to know now.



This is the part you want to have available to handle adversity, or any bad feeling. Your Sage-part will help you through any bad feeling, help you straighten out your thoughts and set goals for the future and help you make wise choices for productive solutions to your problems. But all that is ahead of you. First you need to find and use your Sage-part.

Your Sage-part cares equally about all of the needs of all of your other parts. There are two traits of the Sage-part that will help you identify it.

First, the Sage-part will only deal with this moment — the present — so, it doesn't handle memories, or imaginings, only in the here and now. So, in order to find your Sage-part, you need to get into the here and now. That's why it's useful to have a calming technique. Any calming technique brings you into the moment: the here and now.

The second trait that will help you identify your Sage-part, is that your Sage-part is the only part that listens to the other parts. It's good at listening, and it doesn't react to the other parts, or get feelings from the thoughts being handled by the other parts. So, you're going to use your Sage-part's ability to listen without 'looping,' which means processing a thought over and over and getting caught up in the bad feelings.

Calming Techniques

Sometimes, when your thoughts race and you find yourself looping on a thought, and having a bad feeling, you need to have access to your innate wisdom, your Sage-part. One way to do that is to use a calming technique, like yoga, or meditation, however in the real world it's hard to interrupt your life in the middle to go and do yoga or meditate. One old standby that will make you more adaptable and able to bounce back from conflict or adversity is the ability to pause, count to ten, and then proceed wisely. So, counting to ten is a wonderful thing to do. You probably already knew that, or maybe you already do it. We'll offer three other calming techniques that you can try out to see if you like any one of these better. Here are three calming techniques you might try out in the practice that follows.

Deep Breathing

The first is simply focusing your mind on your own deep breathing. Breathe deeply and slowly; fill your lungs with air, as though from the bottom of the lungs. While you're breathing slowly and deeply watch your chest rise. Feel the breath come in and go out. Focus your awareness on your breathing and your thoughts will have no room in your mind to flow. If thoughts come, let them go and become aware again of your breathing.

Feeling Your Finger Pulse

Another technique you might try is holding your finger and feeling your pulse. Use one hand to gently hold a finger on your other hand. Start with that finger, and feel the pulse in it. Count ten pulses. Be aware of each pulse then move to another finger. Focus your attention on feeling the pulse, this moment, being in the present.

Feel a Part of Your Body

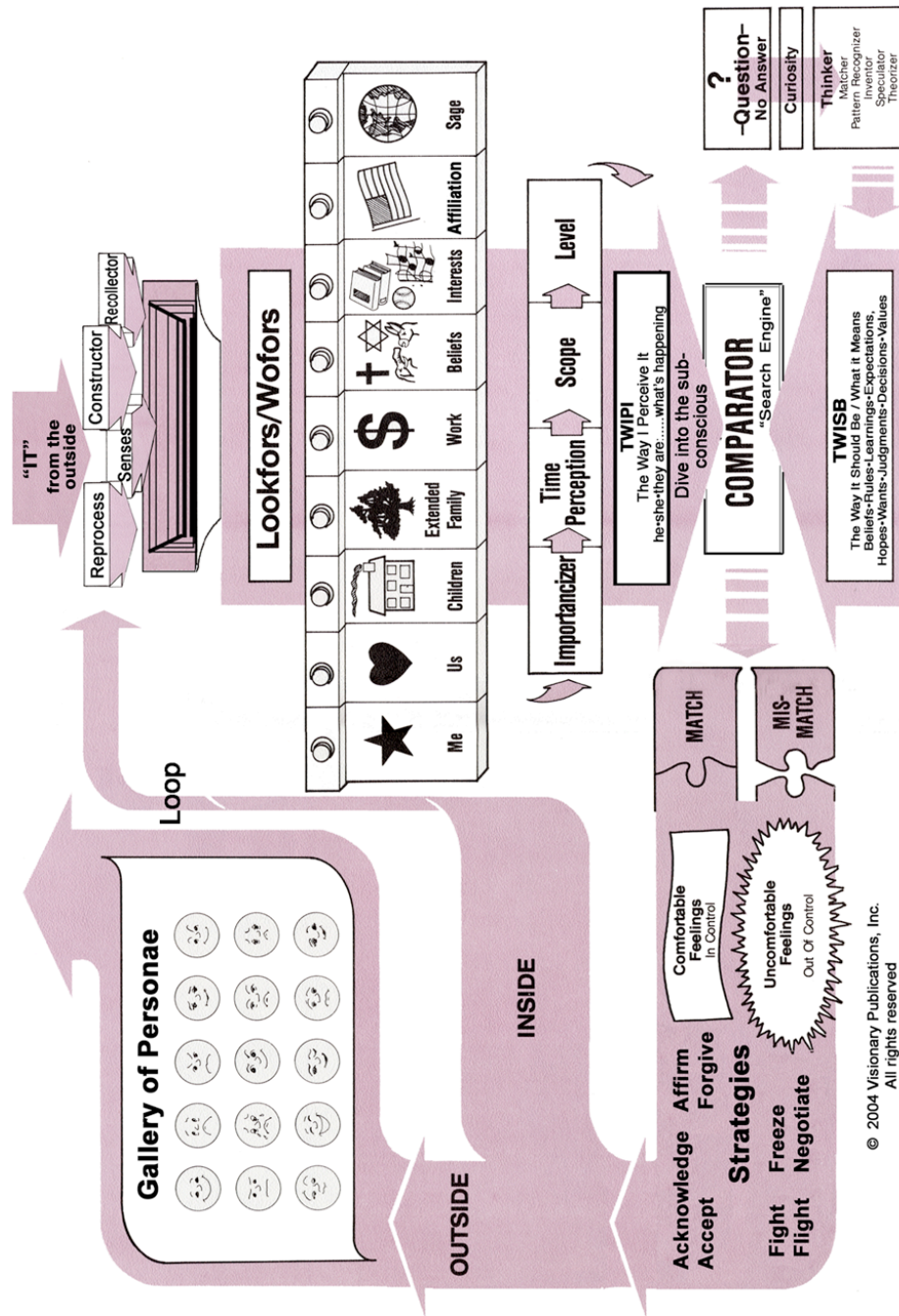
One more technique you might try is to feel some part of your body. If your foot is on the floor, feel the floor beneath your foot. Feel how your foot feels on the floor. If you're sitting feel the feeling in your seat where you're touching the chair. Maybe feel your arms resting on the arms of the chair. Whatever that feeling is that you've chosen, focus on that feeling. Stay aware of that feeling. If thoughts come just let them go and refocus on that feeling.

Find a Calming Technique That You Like

During the practice, you'll try out the possible calming techniques, until you pick the one you like best. Then, using that calming technique to get into this moment, the here and now, listen to your thoughts. If you have a thought, and if you get caught up in it, that isn't your Sage-part. It's probably the part that was handling that thought. You'll know when you've found your Sage-part, because you'll be able to listen — almost like an outside observer — to your thoughts, just noticing a thought, and observing as it flows on through your mind, and another thought takes its place. When that's happening, you've found your Sage-part; you're using your wisest part.

Some people are lucky enough to find their Sage-part right away. For other people, it takes a little practice. We don't know why, that's just the way it is. Once you're able to observe two or three thoughts in a row, without getting caught up in any of them, come back and start the next module. Whether it's easy or hard right now doesn't seem to matter. You'll get it with a little practice. If you don't get it easily, it doesn't mean anything. Just go on to the next module and you'll practice again following that.

Please continue with the practices on page 8 of your Workbook, where you practice calming your mind.

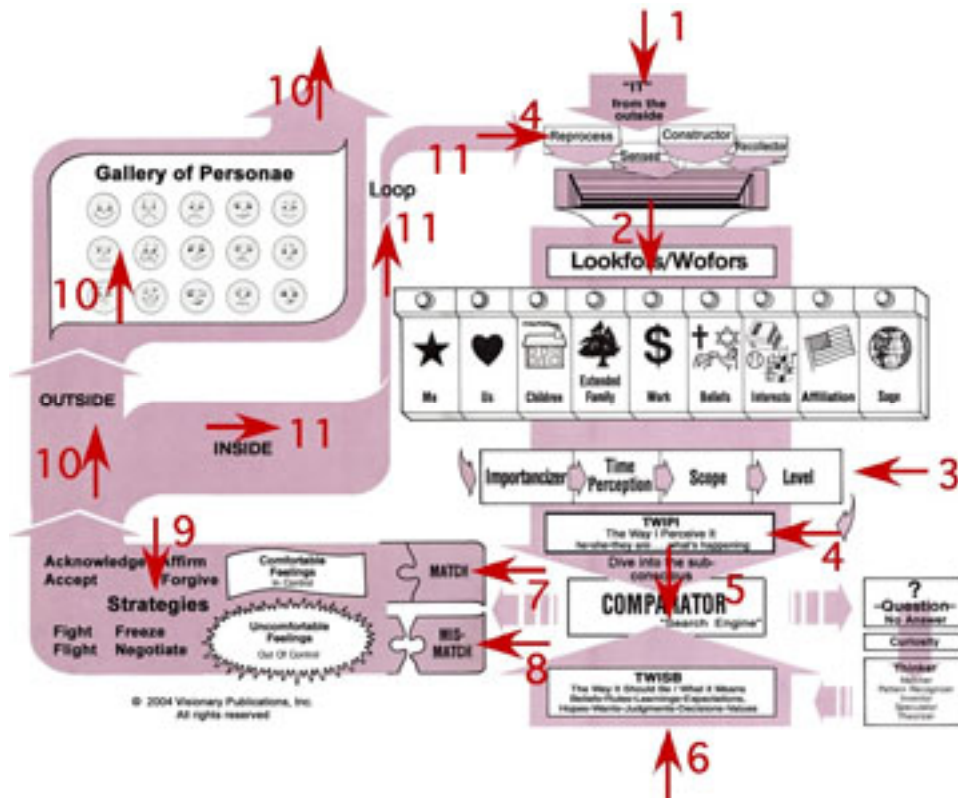


Write Down Your Thoughts

This module is about writing down your thoughts, while not getting caught up in them. You'll practice the skills of calming and listening to your thoughts. You'll get better acquainted with your Sage part. You'll begin to gain confidence that your wisest part will be available to step in and help you anytime you become aware of a bad feeling.

We want you to notice something interesting. We want you to be aware of how you're feeling while you're learning this material. Are you feeling any positive feelings? Are you curious? Are you hopeful? If you are, that's good. Your Sage-part is also paying attention and learning along with the rest of your parts. Your Sage-part may even interrupt a thought that's looping, and get you back on track. So, some of the teaching we will do for your Sage-part, will help you as you work towards being happier.

In the practice, you'll be recording your thoughts, so that you can work through them and change any thoughts or assessments that aren't bringing you what you want in life. We'll show you a little bit more about your mental program, and mine, and everybody else's, because we all have similar mental processes.



The top section on the map is the perception section.

- (1) This is where something enters the mind,
 - (2) a part takes it,
 - (3) processes it,
 - (4) and you have a thought. On the Sage model we call it your TWIPI, which stands for “The Way I perceive it.” For simplicity we’ll just call this a thought.
 - (5) The thought then goes to your comparator. It’s evaluated based on your lifetime of learning and experience.
 - (6) After this evaluation, you have an assessment, or what’s called on our map the TWISB, which is simply The Way It Should Be— according to you.
- If your assessment matched your thought,
- (7) you get a comfortable feeling. If there was a mismatch
 - (8) you get an uncomfortable feeling. Anytime you’re hurting you definitely have mismatches.

Based on your feeling

- (9) you’ll pick a strategy
 - (10) and respond to the outside world
 - (11) or stay inside. We call it looping, and reprocess. If you reprocess, notice that what you’re reprocessing is not only the thought, but also the assessment, the feeling, and your strategy. So each time you reprocess, you’re reprocessing more information in that loop.
- If your feeling is a bad feeling, each time the package comes around again you could feel worse and worse. As a rule of thumb, it’s wise to interrupt any loop that hurts, and it is valuable to savor any loop that produces good feelings.

The Practices

In the practice, you’ll get into the present using your favorite calming technique. You’ll listen to your thoughts and then let them flow one by one — just like before — but this time, you’ll write them down. Try not to edit. Let each thought come. Write down everything that comes into your mind. You’ll see and hear every kind of thought come by. These could even be pictures, or sounds. You’ll write down thoughts and questions, assessments, feelings, even strategies — anything that comes up for you. Keep going until you start to feel like you’re repeating. You can add to the list any time in the future, so don’t worry about getting every last thought. Make your list as long as you can — actually, the more the better — but be aware: you might be simply having one set of thoughts over and over again. When you’re done we’ll show you how to work with the thoughts that you’re having.

Go ahead now and write down your thoughts. Take all the time you need. Don’t skip this practice, because you’ll use this list in the modules that follow.

Please return to page 10 of your Workbook to continue the Practice.

Cross Off Unanswerable Questions

You'll learn to identify any unanswerable questions that can clog your mental program. In specific you're going to learn about the "why" questions and how they really clog the question-answering program.

A thought enters the mind.

You recognize it as a question.

A productive question will produce a good answer, something gets answered or accomplished and you move toward your goals.

However, bad questions are the source of much of our emotional pain.

Bad questions are those that jam your mental program, because they're unanswerable. Now, how does that happen?

Looking for an Answer

You know the power of curiosity. Try to remember a situation where you've been asked a question, and you couldn't think of the answer right away, like, "Who starred in that movie?"

If you make the answer important enough it can bother you until you remember. Well, that's the exact same process that a "why" question evokes.

"Why" questions are often unanswerable. Or worse yet, they have a thousand equally possible answers. In attempting to answer a "why" question, your question handling process gets clogged. Here are some examples of questions that are unanswerable:

"Why did they lay me off and keep Murphy?"

"Why did she leave me?"

"Why doesn't she love me?"

"Why did he die?"

If the question implies something bad about you, you'll search and you'll search through all of your human weaknesses, each time hurting yourself more and more.

Since you can always come up with different possibilities — all of which hurt — the looping continues. The mind doesn't like to stop until the question is answered. And: these questions are unanswerable — at least, you don't have the answer.

Let's take, the example "Why doesn't she love me?" Somehow you've framed a question for which you don't have the answer. Maybe — just maybe — she knows. But, you don't. Yet, if you ask yourself that question, your thinking processes start scanning every possible reason why "she" doesn't love you.

Your mind will explore endlessly things like:

“Maybe it’s because I was a poor partner for her,”

“Maybe it’s because I didn’t do all the things she wanted me to,”

“Maybe it’s because I said that her brother was an idiot.”

Your mind can keep this up all day, or many days in a row. And, every possible answer is some possible flaw or weakness in you. Wow! What a way to torture yourself.

Hey! Bad news! Even she probably doesn’t know why she doesn’t love you. She might reach for a reason and give you one, but for example, if I don’t love Agnes, I can’t tell you with any validity, why I don’t love Agnes. I just don’t. So, maybe even she doesn’t know why she doesn’t love you. But, for darn sure, you don’t have an answer. So, don’t clog up your mental machinery with questions that you don’t have an answer for. If you want to clog up your mind with unanswerable questions, make sure they’re positive questions, like:

“Why did she find me attractive in the first place?”

“What did she like best about me?”

Then, at least, you’re wasting your thinking processes on a job that will bring answers that produce good feelings.

“Maybe it was my wit.”

“Maybe my charm.”

“Maybe my charisma.”

And so on.

Tommy

As parents, it’s easy to make mistakes like this as well. Timmy throws a ball in the house and breaks a lamp. Mother comes in and asks,

“Why would you throw a ball in the house?”

Timmy is instantly stuck. He knows when he threw the ball. He knows where he threw the ball. He knows how he threw the ball. But, he has no way of knowing “Why he threw the ball.” He could guess,

“Maybe because I’m only 6?” Or,

“Or Because I’m an active little boy?” Or,

“Maybe because I had too early toilet training?”

The reality is, he doesn’t know. So, don’t ask why questions of yourself or anyone else.

“Why Me?” — the World’s Worst Question

If there is such a thing as the world’s worst why question, “Why me?” has to be it. There’s no answer. It is unanswerable.

“Why” questions jam the program and you loop to find the un-findable. The same curiosity that bugged you about the movie star will make you even buggier when you’re going through adversity. Because you’re hurting you give the question lots of importance, and your question-handling program tries to find an answer.

When you’re facing some adversity, you need to protect yourself from unnecessary pain. Your personal difficulty is painful enough. You can’t let your mental processes hurt you more. So, just don’t allow any questions that are unanswerable.

“Could I have saved him?”

That’s the kind of question you can use. Keep it very simple. Only allow questions that you know the answers to, or questions whose answers you can easily find.

In the practice you’ll use the list of thoughts you wrote. Look for any questions. If you don’t know the answers for those questions, scratch them, and don’t allow them back in your mind. Anytime a “why” question or any other unanswerable question comes up for you: as soon as your Sage recognizes that you’re hurting, your Sage will examine your thoughts and remove the unanswerable questions. Your Sage might decide:

“I’m not going to waste time on questions that are unanswerable.”

Or,

“I have no way to know that, and it would hurt me to try to answer it.”

Good questions are like:

“What can I do right now to get on with my life?”

Or,

“What can I do to stop looping on this thought?”

Keep those good questions.

In the practice, use your list. Identify and cross off any unanswerable questions.

Please continue with the practice on page 16 of your Workbook, where you cross off unanswerable questions.

Re-evaluate Your Assessments

Let's talk about how you evaluate your thoughts. You've already learned something about how thoughts and questions get created. And you've learned that thoughts get evaluated, and that's how feelings are produced. Now we're going to look more closely at the process of evaluation, or assessing your thoughts.

How do you tell the difference between a thought and the assessment of a thought? It's helpful to think of it like this.

A **thought** is the answer to 'what's happening?'

Answers could be things like,

"I have a sliver in my thumb."

An **assessment** is the answers to 'so what?' or 'what does that mean to me?'

An assessment might be,

"I'm going to die."

That's a pretty silly example: "I have a sliver; I'm going to die." That example shows that a person can make extreme assessments of fairly trivial events. At the end of this module, you're going to re-examine each of your thoughts and assessments and to see how reasonable they are.

You'll ask your wisest part — your Sage-part — to check out your program and see if extremes, or distortions are among the thoughts that you wrote. Here are some examples of extreme assessments:

Sally's thought:

"Sarah didn't wave when I saw her today"

Sally's assessment:

"Sarah is mad at me."

Joe's thought:

"I was laid off from work last week."

Joe's assessment:

"My life is ruined."

Extreme Thoughts

Some thoughts can be extreme, as well. For example, Joe might have this thought,

"I have to lose 50 pounds before I can interview for a new job."

His assessment of that thought might be,

"It's hopeless, I can't lose 50 pounds. I can't do it."

In this example, Joe's thought is blocking him from doing what he needs to do: which is to get a new job. His thought is distorted, and with his assessment of it he feels hopeless and helpless. His Sage-part would see that he could start controlling his weight while he interviews. His excess weight won't help him, but it won't stop him from finding work.

Accurate Thoughts; Reasonable Assessments

In the practice, you're going to look at each thought and assessment on your list, and ask your Sage-part to check each thought for accuracy, and each assessment for reasonableness. If you're seeing mental images of hurtful things, your Sage-part can change the pictures so they're accurate and reasonable, as well.

Accurate thoughts and reasonable assessments can still hurt and cause pain, but at least you know they're valid and you aren't hurting because of extremes or distortions.

Molly

Let's examine Molly's thoughts and assessments after she had a fender-bender. She had the thought,

"What a stupid thing to do."

Her assessment was,

"We could have been killed."

That assessment produces fear and anxiety, and her Sage-part found that it was distorted and extreme. She had the question,

"Why couldn't I have avoided the accident?"

Her assessment was

"I must be a terrible driver."

That assessment creates the feeling of inadequacy and is more extreme than reasonable. Molly's question:

"Why couldn't I have avoided the accident?"

and her assessment,

"I'm a terrible driver,"

left her feeling inadequate.

You've already learned that you could treat the question as a hurtful question, and decide: "let's just not ask it."

But, you could also examine the assessment, to see if it's reasonable. "I'm a terrible driver," is a harsh judgment and pretty extreme.

The Practice

In the practice, you'll go over your list of thoughts once more. This time you'll ask your Sage to examine each thought for accuracy, and each assessment of those thoughts for reasonableness.

For any thought or assessment on your list that might be extreme or distorted or too harsh, just put a note beside it:

- "extreme,"
- "distorted," or
- "harsh."

We'll give you some new tools in the next two modules to use productive questions and a process for disputing extreme, or distorted, or negative thoughts that are causing you pain.

You're ready to proceed to the practices, where you'll take your thoughts, and assessments and look at each one.

Please continue with the practices on page 17 of your Workbook, where you'll re-evaluate your assessments.

Ask the Four Questions

You've come a long way. You've learned a calming technique. You've learned to listen to your thoughts and write them down. You've learned to eliminate hurtful questions that have no answers, and to challenge distorted thoughts and extreme assessments.

Now we get to the good stuff. The next step is to use your thinking capabilities for productive questions. This is valuable, because while you're using your program productively for dealing with problems you face, the thoughts can't loop and hurt. So, we suggest that every time you feel the pain of a bad feeling — as quickly as you realize it — you ask each of the four questions and choose one of four Sage choices.

The First Sage Question

Up until now, we've suggested that when you have a painful thought, you just let it pass. That's not easy. It takes a lot of concentration and psychic energy. You'll find this is a whole lot easier, if when you have a bad feeling you ask the first Sage question,

“What's happening?”

Very quickly you'll realize,

“I'm having a bad feeling.”

The Second Sage Question

The second Sage question is,

“How am I creating this feeling?”

This question asks your thinking processes to check and see what's going on. For example, you might find:

“I'm trying to answer an unanswerable question.” Or,

“I'm looping on a hurtful memory.” Or,

“I'm looping on a frightening image of the future.” Or,

“I had this thought, and I made a negative assessment, so I got a bad feeling.”

Do you see what you're going to do here? You're replacing a hurtful mental process that brings you pain, with a productive question that asks you to examine what's going on in your mind that's bringing you bad feelings.

You've come a long way. You've learned a calming technique. You've learned to listen to your thoughts and write them down. You've learned to eliminate hurtful questions that have no answers, and to challenge distorted thoughts and extreme assessments.

Now we get to the good stuff. The next step is to use your thinking capabilities for productive questions. This is valuable, because while you're using your program productively for dealing with problems you face, the thoughts can't loop and hurt. So, we suggest that every time you feel the pain of a bad feeling — as quickly as you realize it — you ask each of the four questions and choose one of four Sage choices.

The Third Question

The third Sage question is:

“Is this feeling what I want for my life?”

Some bad feelings, like grief from a loss of a loved one are authentic feelings. As painful as they are, we all need to live through the time that it takes to heal from loss. We don't need to make the loss greater by asking hurtful questions, or distorting our thoughts or assessments. Also some bad feelings are valid and useful because they can lead us to take action that will be productive. In Molly's case she might find the feeling of anxiety over the possible increase in her insurance premiums to be productive. It might stimulate her to get quotes from other companies. But she wouldn't find it productive to become paralyzed over the feeling and do nothing.

Your Sage-part will be examining this bad feeling to see if it's useful and productive and will lead you to take action to get on with your life. Or whether this bad feeling is simply unproductive, hurtful, damaging, and possibly even debilitating.

The Fourth Question:

The fourth Sage Question is:

“How can I move toward what I want in my life?”

With this question, your Sage part is asking you to examine what you want for your life — in the future — and to choose a productive step you can take toward getting on with that life.

Sage Choices for the Fourth Question

The Sage choices for the fourth question are:

ACT: Can I take productive ACTION? If action won't help, next,

ASK: Can I productively ASK or negotiate for something I want or need? If acting or asking won't help: Then, Do I need to

ACCEPT something that is, and can't be changed? And last,

FORGIVE: Do I need to FORGIVE myself or someone else so I can get on with my life?

The important thing to notice at this point is that your Sage-part will wisely use your question processing ability, that is, your thinking part, to replace hurtful and unproductive thoughts with productive thoughts and questions.

First Choice: ACT

The first choice for the question,

“How can I move toward what I want in my life?” is:

ACT. When ACTions will move you toward what you want in your life then, choose ACTION. For example, Molly might get other insurance quotes, or if she thought her driving skills could use some help, she could attend a class.

Second Choice: ASK

The second choice is ASK. If Asking will move you toward what you want in your life, then Ask or negotiate. Molly might choose to ask her husband to give her his thoughts about her driving. Whatever the result, she’s dealing with each issue that troubles her and doing her best to cope with it.

Third Choice: ACCEPT

If Action or Asking aren’t good options, then the Sage choice is to Accept that “what is, is.” Molly had the accident. She can worry, cry, and ask “what if” questions, but finally she’s going to have to simply accept that she did indeed have the accident. Railing against what is can only bring more pain.

If her insurance premiums go up, so be it. If acting and asking are not answers for her, she’ll be wise to accept it, and get on with her life.

Fourth Choice: FORGIVE

Even after accepting that “what is, is,” Molly will need to take the final Sage choice and forgive herself — for her own sake — to get on with her life. Her Sage-part will tell her that it is wise to forgive.

“Failure to forgive is the severest form of self-punishment.”

Keeping her bad feelings alive, and stoking them or nursing them will only hurt Molly. So, the final step in the set of wise choices is to forgive anyone who has hurt you, and forgive yourself for anything you’ve done to another that brings you feelings of shame or embarrassment.

The Practices

In the practice, take each of the remaining thoughts or assessments that bring you discomfort or bad feelings, and ask the four questions ... leading to the four Sage choices. Make the wisest choice for each remaining items on your list, and put it next to that item. We don’t expect you to be able to do each of the wise choices yet. You may not be ready to take the ACTION that you need to take.

Or, you may find that you’re not ready to ASK or negotiate for what you need or want. And, if you’re suffering an uncomfortable situation, you may not be able to leap immediately to ACCEPT those things that you can’t yet accept. And, if the hurt is very fresh, FORGIVENESS can be difficult.

As you use the four questions again and again, you'll find that everything gets easier, and wise coping becomes more comfortable. And, until you have more practice and experience with the four questions, it's normal that you still might not yet be able to accept or forgive those things that you can't change. Practice will lead to mastery.

You've come a long way.

You really have come a long way. You now have unclogged your thinking processes. You've cleared up any distortions that might have been part of your thinking, and you at least know what you'll do, when you're ready. In any adversity, or when feeling bad feelings, you'll finally accept what is and what can't or won't be changed. May you move smoothly and quickly toward acceptance.

If your adversity was a loss, then you'll make your grief briefer and free of any unnecessary pain. Finally, you've noted those people whom you need to forgive, when you decide to clear up old hurts. And if you've been hurt by someone, then you know that you've got some forgiving to do.

In the practice, look at the remaining thoughts or assessments that still bring you pain, and ask the four Sage questions, and choose one or more of the Sage options.

Please continue with the practices on page 19 of your Workbook, where you practice asking the four questions.

Keep Your Productive Questions

At this point you have almost all of the tools you need to deal with any painful thought, and deal with it wisely. Any time you have a bad feeling, just ask the four questions:

What's happening?

How am I creating this feeling?

Is this what I want for my life?

How can I move toward what I want for my life?

Then select one of the four wise choices:

- 1) Act,
- 2) Ask,
- 3) Accept,
- 4) Forgive.

Let's expand on the four choices.

Asking the Four Questions Leads to ASK

We'll start with the unanswerable questions that can clog your mind. You may have noticed a bad feeling that's brought on by these "why?" kind of questions. You've learned to replace them with four productive questions. By the very act of asking yourself those four questions, you've stopped asking the hurtful "why?" question, and are instead asking productive questions. So, once having decided to move toward what you want for your life, you have four choices. Of the four choices you have already selected to ACT, by the simple ACTION you've taken to replace the "why?" kind of questions with more productive questions.

Constructed Images

Did you ever get your mind clogged with constructed images that have never happened? Sometimes our mind makes us feel pain by using imagination to create pictures of events that aren't happening, haven't happened, and won't happen. Fred made himself miserable by imagining that his wife was not faithful to him. It wasn't so, but his mind constructed images so real that he thought it must be so.

When Fred asked the four Sage questions, he saw that he was creating feelings of jealousy by imagining scenes that weren't happening. He decided he didn't want his life filled with jealousy, so he ASKed his imagination to construct images of his wife thinking about him and smiling lovingly. He found that worked for him. You might say he was still overly using his imagination, but it was now giving him pictures that brought good feelings.

If you find yourself haunted by an overly-active imagination, you can still do what we learned earlier: keep switching to sensory inputs, to stay in the here and now, or you can recall memories of good times you've had in the past. In any case, if the painful images reappear, you can always repeat the four questions and make a choice, to make them disappear.

Acceptance

Sally was bitter long after her divorce, feeling angry and hurt by her ex-husband. When she asked herself the four questions, she realized that a life of bitterness was not what she wanted. She couldn't think of any action to take, or anything to ask. So, she decided to simply ACCEPT that the marriage was over.

Forgiveness

Sally also realized that she had to FORGIVE her husband for what he had done to her, before she could be free of the pain and bitterness. It wasn't easy for Sally to forgive the man who she thought had ruined her life, but when she read the forgiveness quotes she found one that worked for her. There are a number of thoughts that can help you forgive, if you decide to forgive. We'll list several in the practice. The one that helped Sally let go of her bitterness and forgive her ex, was the one that says: "Failure to forgive is the severest form of self-punishment" and she also liked, "Don't forgive people because they deserve it. They may not. Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself."

From that time on, anytime the old bad feelings reappeared, Sally would quickly go through the four questions, and immediately remind herself of her choice to forgive. It didn't take long before all the old pains stopped resurfacing.

Dispute Inaccurate Thoughts and Unreasonable Assessments

Sometimes our list of thoughts contains thoughts that simply aren't accurate.

They may be too hopeless, like Joe's thought when he was laid off,

"I'll never get another job."

Or they could be too broad, like Joe's thought,

"The layoff will ruin my life."

Or, taken too personally, Molly's thought, after the accident:

"I must be a bad driver."

It's important to dispute thoughts that may be inaccurate, or exaggerated. The goal of making the thoughts accurate is to keep from letting inaccurate thoughts hurt you. So, collect evidence against harsh judgments or judgments that are too broad, or those that span time like "forever."

When Joe examines his conclusions he will see that he has exaggerated the impact of the current job loss.

“The layoff will change my life, but it won’t ruin it. It wasn’t my fault. I got laid off along with many others. Of course I’ll get another job.”

Joe’s task is to change his point of view so that he can go on with a productive and positive job search.

Molly disputed her conclusion that she wasn’t a good driver.

“Wait a minute, I’ve got a really good driving record. This was my very first accident.”

Molly’s task isn’t to find herself without a role in the accident, but to find evidence that balances the severe judgment she made, that somehow she might not be a good driver.

The Practices

In the practice, you’ll examine your list for hurting thoughts that are not accurate. When you feel the hurt, ask the four questions. When you decide you don’t want your thoughts to hurt you any more, the fourth question offers you the choices. You can take ACTION to make your thoughts more accurate by searching the evidence that proves or disproves the thought. Collect the evidence and dispute any inaccurate thoughts in order to make them more accurate.

Words to Avoid

As you look at your list of thoughts, look for words like “always” or “never.” Look for exaggerations of time in the future, like “forever.” Look for words that suggest distortions in scope like, “nobody” or “everybody.” And look for imperatives like “must,” “have to,” “can’t.” Your goal is to make sure that any remaining hurtful thoughts on your list are accurate.

You now have the tools you need to resolve any painful thoughts on your list. You may simply have noted what you’re going to do for each thought — ACT or ASK — when you’re ready. You may still need to accept or forgive. Just remember that you may be one of the people you need to forgive.

If you’ve successfully resolved all of the painful thoughts on your list, you’re done. You’re done when everything left on your list of thoughts is accurate, and you’ve committed to accept what can’t be changed, and forgive anyone who has hurt you.

Repeat if You Need To

If you’re all done now, just know these programs will be here if any hurtful thoughts continue, or if a new set of bad feelings begins. Come back any time. If you’re finished, notice this. If you’ve suffered a serious loss, your grief can go on until you reach acceptance. So, you still may hurt, but notice that you’re now fully able to cope. You’re able to clear your mind, decide what must be done, and start doing it. That’s coping. That’s getting on with your life.

If you experience a new adversity in the future, and feel that you need help to work through it, we'll be here for you. The important thing to take with you is the four Sage questions, and four Sage choices. Those will get you through any size bad feeling, from the little twinges that come from things like remembering you haven't called someone you love recently, or the big hurts that come when you have a major trauma or loss in your life.

May you go forward to a happier, more engaged and meaningful life. We wish you a happier and more joyful life in the future.

In the practice, look for the "words to avoid" to be sure anything remaining on your list is accurate. The practice also has a list of resources you can use to expand your ability to accept or forgive, if that's an issue for you.

If you have an interest in pursuing more about forgiveness, read, "Forgive for Good" by Dr. Fred Luskin. He offers nine steps toward resolving negative feelings toward others and forgiving them.

Please continue with the practices on page 22 of your Workbook, where you keep your productive questions.

Troubleshooting

1. **Program is skipping or won't play:** Turn off all programs except the program you are presently using to view this page, in order to free up as much random access memory as possible. These audio-visual modules consume a lot of your computer capacity. Try again.

2. **You're not sure about the Flash movie-viewing program:** You will need the free MacroMedia Flash to view the audio-visual modules. If you're not sure you have it, download and install it.

(http://www.macromedia.com/shockwave/download/download.cgi?P1_Prod_Version=ShockwaveFlash)

3. **You still can't get it to work:** If you're unable to view it, or prefer not to view the course via the audio-visual module, please feel free to read the transcription.

If you have further technical difficulties, email her at shannon@relationship-insurance.com.

