

# FREEDOM

## THE HUMAN CONDITION

A legacy of the effects of oppression has been passed down through the generations. Humanity has adapted to these harsh conditions by developing a mechanism for mental, emotional and sometimes physical survival. The adaptive, self-protective mechanism is the development and fusion with a pseudo-self: a cluster of beliefs and mental and tricks used to attain the illusion of approval and acceptance by others. Self-deception is the collection of psychological defense mechanisms that allow one to cling to the pseudo-self despite lack of evidence or in the face of outright contradictory evidence. Social interactions are based on a tacit agreement to preserve one another's most vital illusions by refraining from confronting them and by playing along with the dramas, thereby strengthening their believability and, in our minds, justifying them. The net result is to strengthen the togetherness bond and to reinforce the illusion of acceptance and approval at the expense of the development of the true self, true individuality. All thoughts, emotions, and behavior flow from perception; therefore all transformation is aimed at transforming one's perception as shaped by social conditioning.

## RECOGNIZING THE EFFECTS OF OPPRESSION ON ONESELF

1. One must persuade one's own mind, heart and body of the truth of the human condition, the value of the Teachings and the hidden Reality to which they point.
  - a. One must systematically read the works of the masters of the Ancient Traditions and attempt to grasp the Reality which they describe, knowing that it is impossible to do so with the mind and imagination without the relevant experience.
  - b. One must verify the wisdom thereby discovered by systematically experimenting with alternate frames of reference and disrupting habitual ways of thinking and doing over a wide range of activities.
  - c. One must develop one's own system of principles and values, aims and vision based on personal verifications of the ancient teachings.
2. One must seek out the knowledge and experiences that will bring all one's parts into alignment with the Vision of Freedom:
  - a. The mind must be persuaded of the truth of one's imprisonment/enslavement by social conditioning and the value of teachings to break free.
  - b. The psyche needs to be persuaded that drama is junk food and self-doubt is disheartening; while aspiration and wish are Soul food and empowering.
  - c. The body needs to be persuaded that laziness and carelessness spoils it; while quality, attentive craftsmanship feeds it.
  - d. One thereby develops a strong WISH that becomes NEED as one is persuaded of one's imprisonment/enslavement and one DESIRES FREEDOM because one understands that without freedom there is no LIFE.
3. One must learn to recognize how all mechanisms that operate to reduce one's **EXPERIENCE** of anxiety actually serve to increase its **POWER**. All of them are the effects of self-deception:
  - a. Blame, rage
  - b. Deny, ignore, dismiss, devalue
  - c. Justify, rationalize
  - d. Gossip, dramatize
  - e. Rebel against or comply with social conditioning
  - f. Assume an authoritative attitude by adhering to strong opinions, beliefs and convictions
  - g. Hero/superior or sinner/inferior
  - h. Abandon aims, goals, dreams, vision
  - i. Avoid challenges, discomfort, and psychological pain
  - j. Social isolation or merge with others

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## THE JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION

4. One must learn how to temporarily suspend one's cherished opinions, beliefs, convictions and description of reality for the purpose of learning a new frame of reference, thereby transforming one's perception. In order to learn something new, one must:
  - a. Be willing to risk what one perceives as one's sanity, security and stability.
  - b. Be willing to tolerate ambiguity, confusion, doubt and unknowing.
  - c. Be willing to refrain from agreeing, disagreeing, indulging in confusion or obsessing over endless questions, all methods of avoiding listening with the heart.
  - d. Be willing to risk welcoming and seeking out challenges to one's self-picture and worldview while refraining from defending oneself.
  - e. Be willing to risk destabilizing one's beliefs by actively trying on and "defending" opposing viewpoints as if they were one's own.
  - f. Be willing to strive to refrain from expressing one's opinions and emotions and refrain from acting them out, thereby containing the energy for self-observation and self-inquiry.
5. One must learn how to develop the capacity to process incoming impressions through a descriptive, objective frame of reference rather than one that is evaluative, judgmental.
  - a. Speak of personal viewpoints rather than promoting one's opinions as facts.
  - b. Speak of personal preferences rather than promoting one's judgments as reality.
  - c. Regard oneself and others through compassionate forgiveness rather than moralistic pronouncements of self-worth based on inhumane standards.
  - d. Acknowledge multiple viewpoints, options, and relative truths at any moment.
  - e. Recognize cognitive distortions and refrain from making leaps of abstraction and unquestioned assumptions.
6. One must be able to discriminate between anxiety-driven thoughts and justifications and principle-directed thoughts and strategies.
7. One must be willing and able to tolerate anxious thoughts and emotions while simultaneously choosing a line of action strategically aligned with one's vision, values and principles.
8. One must be willing and able to tolerate dissenting opinions and disapproval while simultaneously choosing to act in alignment with one's vision, values and principles, remaining in compassionate contact with the dissenters.
9. One must be willing and able to refrain from arguing with Reality; approaching each moment with friendly inquiry instead.

## THE ROLE OF A MENTOR

1. Provide you with a strategic list of source materials for study.
2. Mirror your potential by modeling:
  - a. Striving for freedom above all else
  - b. Depolarized, objective thinking
  - c. Tolerance for anxiety, disapproval, ambiguity and unknowing
  - d. Risk-taking for sanity's sake
  - e. Strategic, principled living
  - f. Practice compassion, respect, patience and kindness toward oneself and others
  - g. Practice egalitarian relationships
3. Design exercises, workshops, intensives, and group work to provide you with clarifying experiences.
4. Answer questions and facilitate discussions from experiential wisdom that arise from meeting one's challenges.
5. Train individuals or groups in spiritual practices that aid in reestablishing conditions conducive to growth and harmony.