

It is of course, not possible to write notes on all the issues that arise in all the groups, but the following is a summary and teaching on some of the general themes that arise. Because we are all One, our issues and experiences are all exactly the same, just slightly different depending on the unique experiences of our lives. When we are in our ego state, we believe we are only unique in our suffering. One of the values of group is that we realize that our experience is universal and that there is not one person that has ever lived that has not had to deal with the issues of fear and shame, anger and guilt, defense and reaction – the only difference is the unique little cluster of ways in which we protect ourselves from feeling vulnerable in our suffering and this is what we call our ego personality.

The most common experience for all of you is firstly that each of you has an innate yearning to be free of suffering together with the immense courage and risk taking of being vulnerable in a group of people in a way that you have never probably been before in your life. This is loving step you have taken on your own behalf, as hard as it might be for you, because, now, what will bubble up is all that you have tried to keep hidden behind and beneath the ego personality. And that is your shame, fear, anger, hatred, spite, meanness, judgementalism all covered over by the ego personality's protective tactics of putting a brave, happy, nice, "spiritual," and civilized face on top of the suffering.



It is an amazing act of vulnerability and courage to take off the mask, or have the mask be challenged, or in some cases, have what is under the mask exposed. And each one of you has done enough work in your lives, that it is time.... It is time to learn to suffer – to feel the shame of your young self, the vulnerability and to authentically and lovingly be present to this suffering without defense – either running, attacking, avoiding, arguing – but to sit in your chair and learn to love and accept that which is exposed.

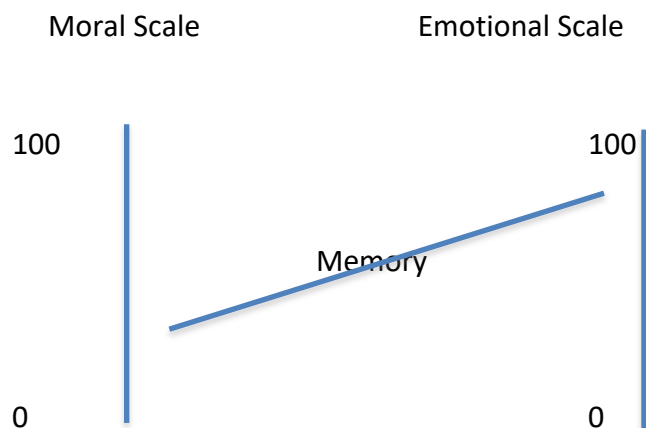
What helps in this process? A good deal of humor about your condition is a pre-requisite. I loved what Anthony de Mello once said, "You are a silly ass, and I am a silly ass. Isn't that marvelous?" Yes – it is marvelous! We are all caught in the illusion, the lie of our worthlessness, our lack of importance, our badness, our worthlessness, our stupidity, our unlovability – what silly asses we are! This is not to minimize the tremendous pain of feeling the shame of these messages and beliefs we received as young, unaware little souls – but to continue in the illusion of this, does make you a silly ass! One of the hallmarks of someone that is moving out of shame, is a certain perspective that has some distance that adds humor to the experience. There is a lightness – you do not take yourself so seriously anymore. You do not stay stuck in the self-absorbed place of self-pity and self-righteousness. You are no longer righteously indignant at every perceived slight. There is no one that has not suffered, that does not suffer, to one degree or another.

And yet, there is a stage at which we all have to be handled with kid gloves because the pain is still so raw, so intense and so big. And that is okay too, as long as we recognize that this is our issue and do not run, attack, blame or project, but recognize the pain and stay with it lovingly. In this way we start expanding, relaxing, opening to a vaster realm of consciousness. A teaspoon of salt in a small glass of water is bitter indeed, but a teaspoon in a lake of consciousness barely registers. This is how we measure our progress. The teaspoon of salt is

the same. The only difference is our own expanding consciousness. The work is always ours to do.

How do we assess, in the beginning, if our reaction is based on a memory state of shame or fear?

We discussed in many of the groups a simple inner assessment of considering on a scale of 1 – 100 what the “crime” is that someone else committed against you that evoked an emotional and defensive reaction. 100 being genocide. Usually you will easily see that some current experience registers very low on the moral scale. Then assess another inner scale of emotional reactivity to the “crime.” It will register a lot higher. The difference between the two numbers indicates that the inner reaction is the activation of a memory state of a small child – in other words it is the experience of salt in a glass of water, not the lake you are today.



This is not to say that the current slight is not real – but until you see it through the lens of compassion for the memory state it evoked in you, you will not respond to either yourself or the other with any semblance of kindness, compassion or care – no matter what words you use. See if you can find an example this week to work with internally. I am sure all of you will be able to find some emotional reactivity in response to something says or does, this week!

Until we can face and feel the suffering of our young wounded soul with compassion – i.e. suffer it fully without collapsing into it in despair, or fighting against in some defensive fight/flight patterning – you will never be able to do it for another. It will be **FAKE**. This is a fundamental law of the universe.

The work of group is to learn to be fully **AUTHENTIC**, to whatever arises within, no matter the stage or state in which we find ourselves. This journey is not linear. The mark of progress is authenticity and awareness, not some standard of perfection of what an enlightened person looks like. **Enlightenment is bringing conscious awareness to everything within and without. Conscious awareness is Loving awareness.**

A Road Map of Questions to Gain Awareness

MOTIVATION

You can tell the man who rings true from the man who rings false, not by his deeds alone, but also his desires -Democritus

Why am I doing this? Because I need approval, affirmation, acceptance?

Am I afraid of your disapproval, your rejection?

Am I scared to feel the humiliation and shame of your criticism and judgment?

Do I fear anger and conflict / failure?

Why am I so afraid to feel shame?

Why do I feel fear / shame?

Where did I first learn to feel shame?

Do I feel a sense of worth and pride in thinking about doing this for you?

Why?

Am I feeling loving or am I feeling important and good about myself?

What is the difference?

Am I considering what is in my best interests?

Your best interests?

Is it really in my / your best interests to do this?

(Add your own introspective questions)

BEHAVIOR

Integrity means a willingness not to violate one's identity - Erich Fromm – (Meaning True identity, not false identity)

Am I speaking truth - **my** feelings, thoughts, wants?

Am I being indirect? Am I blaming, projecting, defending, rationalizing, caretaking?

Am I being assertive? Passive Aggressive?

Am I setting good limits?

Do I have good boundaries?

Am I being a victim / perpetrator? Fighting/Fleeing? Aggressing/Passive?

Am I promoting self reliance or dependency in the other?

Am I controlling the situation, my own fear of shame or the other person?

What are all my options

(Add your own introspective questions)

CONSEQUENCE

A thing is right if it tends to preserve the stability, integrity and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong if it tends otherwise. - Aldo Leopold

What are the possible consequences of my decisions to myself and others?

How will I feel?

How will the other person feel?

How might this add to another person's awareness, and my/other's self empowerment?

(Add your own introspective questions)

