

Lightning Path

Workbook Two

HEALING Framework

<https://www.lightningpath.org>
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LP Workbooks in the Series

- LP Workbook One: The Basics - the basic spiritual concepts you need to move forward
- LP Workbook Two: HEALING Framework - some general guidance on how to organize your healing journey.
- LP Workbook Three: Connection Framework – some general guidance on how to initiate and manage reconnection
- [LP Workbook Four - Archetypal Study](#) (draft at the Intermediate level of study)

Persons said to have mental diseases...have reasons for their actions that must be understood; they cannot be treated or cured by drugs or other medical interventions, but may be helped to help themselves overcome the obstacles they face.

Thomas Szasz, The Myth of Mental Illness.

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Preface

Greetings and welcome to the Lightning Path (or just LP for short). The Lightning Path is a modern [Human Development Framework](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Human_Development_Framework) (HDF)¹ designed to help you heal your body and mind so you can reconnect to the powerful [Spiritual Ego](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Spiritual_Ego)² that lies within you.

The book that you have in your hand is the second book in a series of Lightning Path workbooks designed to provide some basic theoretical and practical guidance on human nature, healing, and reconnection. This booklet focuses on the healing component of the Lightning Path and introduces you to the [LP HEALING Framework](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/HEALING_Framework).³ The Lightning Path HEALING framework is a framework that you can use to understand and take control of your healing process. The HEALING Framework contains seven [Focus Points](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Focus_Point)⁴ that you can work on in order to move forward towards health, happiness, and connection. These focus points are Healing, Environment, Addiction, Lying, Ideology, Needs, and Growth (HEALING).

Note, this framework is not designed as a therapeutic model. It is a guide to self-directed healing work, which you can conduct either on your own or with the help of a qualified and competent therapist. Use the LP HEALING framework to help give you focus, but use whatever therapist or therapy (e.g., Dialectical Behavioural Therapy, Acceptance Commitment Therapy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Humanistic, etc.) you want, so long as you feel it is effective, and so long as it is delivered by a competent, knowledgeable, and sensitive therapist.

¹https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Human_Development_Framework

²https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Spiritual_Ego

³https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/HEALING_Framework

⁴https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Focus_Point

Workbook goals

By the end of this second LP workbook, you should:

- Understand why healing is important and how it is related to spiritual and human development and connection.
- Understand the importance of healthy, safe, non-toxic environments to the healing and human development process.
- Understand the nature of toxic attachments and what you need to do to overcome them.
- Understand the importance of standing in the truth, about yourself and others.
- Know about your seven essential needs, why, as an adult, these needs might be unmet, and what you can do to satisfy these needs and move forward towards healing and connection.
- Understand the difference between **deficiency mode** and **growth mode** and be able to move from a deficiency mode of being to a growth mode of being.

Key LP Concepts

- 3Ds of Toxic Existence
- Accumulating Class / Regime of Accumulation
- Active Attachment / Inactive Attachment / Broken Attachment
- Attachment Algorithm
- Attachment Analysis
- Blame Shift
- Bodily Ego
- Circle of Seven Essential Needs
- Creation Template
- Ego Modes
 - Defence Mode
 - Deficit Mode
 - Repair Mode
 - Growth Mode
- Dopamine Attachment
- External Resistance / Internal Resistance
- Four Step Basic Blueprint
- Functional Facade
- Focus Points
- Human Development Framework
- Ideology
- Indoctrination
- Inner Radar
- LP Connection Framework
- LP HEALING Framework
- Medical Model
- Not-So-Bad Self-Delusion
- No-Buts Apology
- No-Violence Rule

- Prism Metaphor
- Repairing a Wound
- Right Action / Wrong Action
- Right Environment / Wrong Environment
- Safe Environments
- Scaffolding a Wound
- Shield of Success
- Toxic Attachment
- Nurturing Environments
- Psychic Wounds
- Regime of Accumulation / The System
- Seven Essential Needs
- Spiritual Ego
- Spiritual Emergency
- Steering Emotions
- System Maintenance
- The System
- The Wheel
- The Work
- Toxic Socialization
 - Neglect
 - Parentification
 - Indoctrination
 - Chaos
 - Destruction of Attachments
 - Weaponization
 - Violence
 - Psychological Violence
 - Emotional Violence
 - Physical Violence
 - Spiritual Violence

Techniques

- SAARC Affirmation

Introduction

As you begin your LP study, as you read these introductory words, a first question that might pop into your mind is “why healing?” “Why do I have to heal?” “What is their to heal from?” Good questions, and the answer to them is simple. As outlined in the paper [*Toxic Socialization*](#),⁵ and as illustrated in the short [*Allegory of the Bucket*](#),⁶ we all endure a violent and neglectful [*Toxic Socialization*](#) (TS)⁷ process. The toxicity of this process does profound damage to the body and mind (the **Physical Unit**) and prevents us all from being healthy, happy, and whole. If the toxicity and damage goes unaddressed, then over time it can undermine mental and emotional health and lead to what we call the [*5Ds of Toxic Existence*](#), diminishment, dysfunction, disease, disconnection, and death.⁸ Rich or poor, high or low, if you are truly interested in living a full, healthy and, most importantly, connected life, you are going to need to heal.

And just how are you going to do that? How are you going to heal?

Well, there’s some things you have to know and some steps you’ll have to take to get you moving along your way. You’ll need to know, number one, about “Toxic Socialization.” Once you know about that, you’ll need to learn about this framework’s seven **Focus Points**. We’ll learn about toxic socialization in lesson one and we’ll cover the seven focus points of this healing framework, Help, Environment, Addiction, Lying, Indoctrination, and Needs (HEALING) in the rest of this workbook. By the end of this you’ll have everything you need to initiate and successfully navigate your healing journey.

⁵Mike Sosteric, “Toxic Socialization,” 2025, doi:https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/suzyk_v1..

⁶https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Allegories:Allegory_of_the_Bucket

⁷https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Toxic_Socialization.

⁸https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/5Ds_of_Toxic_Existence

Lesson One: Toxic Socialization

So, as noted, if you are serious about healing then the first thing you need to know about is *Toxic Socialization*. For your information, toxic socialization is a socialization process characterized not by healthy, nurturing, needs focused care and education, but by **violence, neglect, chaos, parentification, indoctrination, the destruction of attachments, and weaponization**, of you and the ones you love. To understand what that means, let us look briefly at each of the seven components in turn, starting with violence.

Violence

Toxic socialization is characterized, number one, by violence. [Violence](#) is a very complicated topic and we look at it in more detail at more advanced levels of study. Here, we will just give a broad overview. To start, let us define violence as Johan Galtung did by saying that *violence is anything that diminishes you and lowers your potential in any way*.⁹ Violence includes anything that makes you unhappy, that lowers your creativity, that undermines your performance, that causes you pain (e.g., gastrointestinal pain), that demotivates you, that causes anxiety or depression, that changes your personality, and that otherwise undermines your full [Human Potential](#). I'm going to repeat, because this is important. Violence is anything that undermines human potential.

Violence itself comes in many forms, like physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and spiritual.

Physical Violence is any physical action that causes physical discomfort, pain, or discomfort to undermines hurts somebody physically. Physical violence includes hitting, biting, pushing,

⁹Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (January 1, 1969): 167–91.

spanking, shooting, strangling, burning, stabbing, choking, the use of weapons and confinements. Physical violence also includes the withholding of medication or medical attention, violent personal care, and so on.

Emotional Violence is anything that hurts somebody's feelings or that undermines their emotional health and well-being. Emotional violence is characterized by emotional manipulation and emotional assault designed to hurt feelings and control behaviour. Emotional violence includes yelling, name calling, blaming, the "silent treatment", isolation, humiliation and degradation (in private or public), intimidation, threats of abandonment, emotional withdrawal, denial of abusive behaviour, and deflection. Emotional violence also includes lying, gaslighting, criticizing, invalidating, and so on.

Emotional violence is very damaging to the physical unit. Emotional violence damages your emotional responses and makes it difficult to trust, to feel good about yourself, to be happy, to express, and even to relax. If as a child every time you spoke up and tried to express your emotions, share your thoughts, or assert your needs your parents yelled at you or your teachers belittled you in some way, you will have learned to avoid all that pain by suppressing your feelings, thoughts, and needs, and even to feel anxiety around them. This suppression is a diminishment. It corrupts your emotional responses and makes you less than you could have been.

Psychological Violence is anything that undermines or diminishes a person's cognitive capacities, or that distorts their perceptions and understanding of self and reality.

Psychological violence arises in environments where psychological force is used to intimidate, coerce, and control. Psychological violence overlaps with emotional violence and includes threats of harm, verbal aggression, verbal intimidation, social/familial isolation, condescending behaviour, passive-aggressive attacks, constant criticisms, taking control of life decisions, etc.

Like emotional violence, psychological violence is very damaging. Psychological violence damages your psychological structures, specifically your bodily ego, making it difficult to handle stress, control your impulses, keep your bodily ego in check, and function in a psychologically efficient and stable manner. Emotional and psychological trauma can even damage your intellectual functioning by lowering your IQ and making it harder for you to process, think, and understand. For example, if as a child you were made to feel stupid when you said something, then you will come to think of yourself as stupid. As a consequence you may, out of fear of being made to feel stupid, or the belief that you actually lack capacity, avoid intellectual discussions and pursuits altogether. Over time, your cognitive function might diminish and decline because of resistance or lack of use.

Finally, **Spiritual Violence** is violence that suppresses Consciousness and diminishes **Connection**. Spiritual violence is the most profound form of violence because it damages our individual and collectively ability to **align** and **connect**. Spiritual violence does this by providing an inaccurate ontological view of self and reality that distorts one's existential perspectives and understandings of self, the universe, and consciousness and that consequently diminishes and lowers potential. For example, religious and spiritual narratives that casts humans as fallen angels, karmic rejects, or pawns in some great cosmic battle, diminish us and lower our perceived potential because they present us less than we truly are.

Spiritual violence damages your ability to align and connect, but not just spiritual violence. All forms of violence ultimately undermine your ability to connect with higher levels of Consciousness. It is difficult for somebody who has low self-esteem, someone who has had their cognitive and emotional operations altered by violence and neglect, someone who is depressed, someone who struggles with a personality disorder, someone who is narcissist or avoidant, someone who is dealing with post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), or who is

struggling with impulsivity or some other maladaptive coping mechanism, to connect for more than a moment or two.

In summary, violence in all its forms damages our bodies, our minds, and our ability to connect. The evidence is quite clear on this. As documented in detail in the paper [Toxic Socialization](#),¹⁰ and as thousands of research studies attest, violence of all forms damages our physical unit, undermines our mental and emotional health, diminishes us, and makes it harder for us to contain Consciousness and handle connection. This is especially true when the assaults are chronic. When chronic, it is like getting punched in the arm over, and over, and over again. You might be able to recover from the first punch or two, but repeated punches will cause permanent neurological and muscular damage. The only difference between getting repeatedly punched in the arm and getting repeatedly punched in your emotions or your thoughts is that in the case of non-physical forms of violence, like emotional, psychological, or spiritual violence, the damage is *a* lot harder to see and a lot harder to heal.

The Prism Metaphor

A good way to understand the impact of violence is by using the Prism Metaphor.¹¹ Think of your body as a **prism**—a structured vessel designed to refract light. Think of your Spiritual Ego, the higher aspect of your Consciousness, as a white beam of light flowing into this prism and then outward into the world.

When the physical unit grows up in a healthy environment, the prism remains intact. The incoming beam refracts cleanly into the seven beautiful colons (ROYGBIV) of the visible spectrum. This represents the full, vibrant expression of your Consciousness: your creativity,

¹⁰Sosteric, “Toxic Socialization.”

¹¹https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Prism_Metaphor

your compassion, your wisdom, and your connection to others and the **Fabric of Consciousness**. However, when the physical unit experiences violence—or any form of toxicity—the prism is damaged. Cracks form. When that happens, the white light does not refract properly. The light that flows out becomes bent, distorted, incomplete. If the damage is severe, if the prism is shattered, the refracted light becomes chaotic, darkened, and incoherent. This damage shows up as emotional instability, cognitive distortion, difficulty connecting to others, and a suppressed sense of self and purpose.

The **Prism Metaphor** is important because it helps you visualize what happens to your mind and spirit when you are exposed to violence. It shows how violence structurally damages your ability to express your full Self, and how critical healing is to repairing those cracks and restoring your full human potential.

The Profound Toxicity of Violence

Violence is bad, that is true, and it has a profound impact on our health, well-being, and ability to connect. It is really hard to overestimate the damage violence does. You will see this clearly when you consider just how ubiquitous violence is. Violence is enacted daily, in our families (even against very small children), in our schools (the emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual violence of bullies, teachers, and even friends who learn to model the behaviours they've learned at home), and even our adult play and work spaces. Even minor instances of emotional, psychological, spiritual, or sexual violence can undermine, diminish, and damage a body and mind. Think of what years or decades of the same can do. It ruins us. It diminishes us. It kills us.

We are not going to spend more time on violence here. For now, just make a note of it as something you need to immediately start working to reduce and to heal from. A first step here would be to assess the violence in your own life and then try and reduce it from there.

You can do that by taking the LP's "[How Violent is My World](#)" survey which is part of the LP's library of [Self Assessments](#). This "How violent is my world" survey will help you identify the nature, sources, and extent of violence in your own life.

Healing Note

Recognizing the many forms of violence you may have endured is essential to your healing journey. Remember, **violence is anything that diminishes your potential** — not just hitting or yelling, but anything that stifles your creativity, undermines your self-worth, or disconnects you from your true Self.

Healing from violence involves:

- Validating the reality of your experiences, even when others denied or minimized them.
- Allowing yourself to feel and release suppressed emotions like anger, grief, and fear.
- Rebuilding a positive and empowered self-image rooted in truth, compassion, and dignity.
- Learning to create safe environments for yourself, where violence is not tolerated.
- Reconnecting with your inner light, repairing your prism, and restoring the free flow of Consciousness.

Healing from violence takes time, patience, and loving support — but it is possible, and you are worthy of peace and wholeness.

Affirmation:

"Violence has no place in my life. I am healing, growing, and shining my true light."

Healing Journal Prompts

1. Reflect deeply and honestly. You are safe now to face the truth.
2. What types of violence (physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual) did I experience?
3. How did these experiences affect the way I see myself and the world?
4. What emotions have I had to suppress in order to survive?
5. What would a safe, violence-free environment feel like to me today?
6. What small steps can I take to begin creating more safety and compassion in my life now?

Neglect

Violence is bad, that is true. As we have seen, it diminishes us, causes disease, and disconnects. Unfortunately, violence is not the only thing that diminishes, damages, and disconnects. Neglect of your [Seven Essential Needs](#) does this as well. It is easy to understand why neglect of essential needs is bad. It is like growing a flower in a pot but not giving the flower enough food, water, and sunlight so that it can grow and thrive. If you do not give the plant what it needs, it will grow up stunted and small. If you starve a plant, it will die. If you fail to protect it from pests and stomping feet, it will be damaged. This is not rocket science. If you want to grow a healthy and strong plant, you need to meet its essential needs. It is the same with humans, obviously, except that humans are more complex and sensitive and have *many* more needs than a plant. If you do not meet all the essential needs in humans, they too will grow up stunted and damaged.

What kind of damage are we talking about here? All kinds of damage, physiological, egoic, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual. For example, if your **physiological needs** for food,

exercise, and rest were chronically neglected as a child, chances are neither your body nor your brain will grow to full potential. What's worse, you may have been left with cognitive impairments, anxiety, depression, anger, and even substance abuse issues as well.

If your **emotional needs** are unmet you can also experience damage and disconnection.

When your emotional needs are unmet you can develop brain abnormalities (like an enlarged amygdala or damaged hypothalamus) and impairments (like impaired hormone functioning), all of which can all underpin a host of emotional, cognitive, and egoic challenges and disorders, like lower self-esteem, reduced ability to handle stress, impaired self-worth, depression, and more.

It is the same with your **psychological needs**, your **cognitive needs**, and your **environmental needs**. Failure to meet any of these needs causes serious developmental, psychological, and emotional delay and damage, including anxiety, depression, egoic (i.e. personality) disorders¹², eating disorders,¹³ and even substance abuse disorders which, as we will see in the lesson on “addiction” later in this workbook, might develop as individuals try and cope with the chronic discomfort and damage caused by violence and neglect. We are not gonna lie to you here; it can and does get quite ugly.

As with violence, we are going to talk a lot more about neglect and the *profound* consequences that ensue at advanced levels of study. Here, just realize three things. **One**, neglect and violence are prominent features of the planet's toxic socialization system. They are there right in front of you every single day. **Two**, we have all experienced years, maybe even decades. of violence and neglect. Not a single person on this planet has had all their

¹²Ulrich Orth, Richard W. Robins, and Laurenz L. Meier, “Disentangling the Effects of Low Self-Esteem and Stressful Events on Depression: Findings from Three Longitudinal Studies,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 97, no. 2 (2009): 307, doi:10.1037/a0015645.

¹³Christopher G. Fairburn, Zafra Cooper, and Roz Shafran, “Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Eating Disorders: A ‘Transdiagnostic’ Theory and Treatment,” *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 41, no. 5 (2003): 509–28, doi:10.1016/s0005-7967(02)00088.

seven essential needs met. Not a single person has escaped the chronic violence of our social, economic, and political systems. **Finally**, realize that violence and neglect damages you just like it damages a flower. They stunt your physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual growth and *cause* severe neurological, psychological, emotional, and spiritual damage. Violence and neglect puts your body in what we call [Deficit Mode](#).¹⁴ Deficit mode is a mode of existence where your bodily ego puts most (or all) of its energy into often desperate attempts to meet unmet needs. We'll talk more about deficit mode in the last section of this workbook.

As with violence, you can assess the extent to which your seven essential needs were met or neglected as a child, or being met or neglected currently, using an LP Assessment, particularly the [Seven Essential Needs](#) assessment. Visit the [LP Self-Assessments page](#)¹⁵ to start.

Healing Note

Understanding how unmet needs shaped your development is crucial. Know that **neglect is not your fault**. Your essential needs for love, support, and care were real and valid, even if they were unmet.

Healing from neglect involves:

- Identifying and validating the needs that were not fulfilled.
- Learning to meet your own needs with tenderness, attention, and patience.
- Opening yourself to relationships that honor and nurture your Essential Needs.
- Rebuilding your body, mind, and spirit through conscious self-care and reconnection.

¹⁴https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Deficit_Mode

¹⁵<https://www.lightningpath.org/selfassessments/>

Healing is about learning to flourish, not just survive.

Affirmation:

“My needs are real. I honor and meet my Essential Needs with love and care.”

Healing Journal Prompts

1. Use these prompts to gently uncover and heal from experiences of neglect.
2. Which of my Essential Needs were neglected growing up?
3. How has neglect affected my ability to care for myself today?
4. What beliefs about myself (e.g., "I don't matter," "I'm too much") came from unmet needs?
5. What small steps can I take to nourish one Essential Need today?
6. What kind of love and attention would my younger self most want to receive right now?

Chaos

Both violence and neglect undermine the health, development, and well-being of the physical unit and make health, alignment, and connection quite difficult. Unfortunately, violence and neglect are not the only aspects of toxic socialization that impact the physical unit. Chaotic home environments also have negative impacts.

For your information, chaotic environments are characterized by crowding, noise, lack of routine, and instability (never know when somebody is going to yell, or get mad, or act out, etc.). Like violence and neglect, chaos and crowding cracks and damages your neurological

prism and is associated with “poorer developmental outcomes for all children.”¹⁶ This includes reduced academic performance,¹⁷ lethargy, delayed intellectual and psycho-motor development,¹⁸ and various long-term health problems like cardiovascular disease, immune disorders, and other stress-related health conditions.¹⁹ Chaos and crowding can also impact and undermine child-parent attachment²⁰ and lead to behavioural problems in school,²¹ like aggression and conduct disorders.²² Chaos and crowding can also lead to obsessive compulsive disorders. Chaos and instability in our environments are a particular problem when the chaos is intense and chronic (i.e., long-term).²³

Why is chaos and instability associated with reduced developmental outcomes and various forms of dysfunction? Researchers are still working on that question, but it likely comes down to the additional burden of stress (often in addition to the burden of violence and neglect) caused by the uncertainty and chaos. Children in chaotic environments are embedded in a sea of stimulation, distraction, redirection, and uncertainty all of which cause

¹⁶Anne Martin, Rachel Razza, and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, “Specifying the Links Between Household Chaos and Preschool Children’s Development,” *Early Child Development and Care* 182, no. 10 (2012): 1247–63, doi:10.1080/03004430.2011.605522.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Kim T. Ferguson et al., “The Physical Environment and Child Development: An International Review,” *International Journal of Psychology* 48, no. 4 (2013): 437–68, doi:10.1080/00207594.2013.804190.

¹⁹Jack P. Shonkoff, W. Thomas Boyce, and Bruce S. McEwen, “Neuroscience, Molecular Biology, and the Childhood Roots of Health Disparities: Building a New Framework for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention,” *JAMA* 301, no. 21 (June 3, 2009): 2252–59, doi:10.1001/jama.2009.754.

²⁰Gary W. Evans, Lorraine E. Maxwell, and Betty Hart, “Parental Language and Verbal Responsiveness to Children in Crowded Homes,” *Developmental Psychology*, no. 4 (1999): 1020.

²¹Sara R. Jaffee et al., “Chaotic Homes and Children’s Disruptive Behavior: A Longitudinal Cross-Lagged Twin Study,” *Psychological Science* 23, no. 6 (2012): 643–50, doi:10.1177/0956797611431693.

²²Gary W. Evans, “Child Development and the Physical Environment,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 57, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 423–51, doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.57.102904.190057.

²³Rebekah Levine Coley, Alicia Doyle Lynch, and Melissa Kull, “Early Exposure to Environmental Chaos and Children’s Physical and Mental Health,” *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 32 (July 1, 2015): 94–104, doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2015.03.001.

compound stress. In these conditions, energy and attention which would normally be given over to focused and safe exploration and play is diverted to anticipatory anxiety-ridden self-protection and defence. *Under conditions of toxic stress, the child is always trying to increase their safety and security rather than simply playing and growing.* When this occurs, over time, instead of creating an open and expressive human being which can understand and accept its own Self, we create defensive, angry, hyperactive adults whose primary focus is on A) scanning the environment for threats and B) building barriers and defences for protection. On the LP we call this state where the individual is engaged in ongoing scanning and defence, [Defence Mode](#)²⁴ While in defence mode, most of your energy goes not towards growth and development, but to defence and protection.

To be clear, chaos and instability is bad. If a human child is going to enter what we call [Growth Mode](#),²⁵ and if that child is going to grow into a strong and fully connected human being, it must have a safe, calm, and stimulating environment that encourages play and growth rather than a toxic environment that encourages reactive defences.

As with violence and neglect, you can assess how chaotic your environments are by using an LP Assessment, particularly the “[How Chaotic is my World](#)” self assessment. Visit the [LP Self-Assessments page](#)²⁶ to start.

Healing Note

Recognizing that chronic chaos and instability harmed you helps you reclaim your right to peace, safety, and order. Know that **you did not cause the chaos around you**, and it was never your job to fix it.

²⁴https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Defense_Mode. We will speak more about the defence Mode and Deficit Mode in our unit “G” is for Growth.

²⁵https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Growth_Mode

²⁶<https://www.lightningpath.org/selfassessments/>

Healing from chaos involves:

- Creating stability, structure, and calm environments in your adult life.
- Learning to relax and trust life again, moment by moment.
- Releasing hypervigilance and moving toward a state of safety and growth.
- Building routines, rituals, and relationships that support serenity and openness.

Healing from chaos opens the door to genuine growth, creativity, and connection.

Affirmation:

“I create peace and stability in my life. I am safe to grow and thrive.”

Healing Journal Prompts

1. Take your time with these prompts — healing from chaos is a journey.
2. What forms of chaos and instability did I experience growing up?
3. How did living in chaos affect my ability to feel safe and relaxed?
4. Where do I still carry chaos inside my mind or body?
5. What small practices can I build into my daily life to create calm and predictability?
6. How does it feel to imagine a life filled with peace, safety, and growth?

Parentification

In addition to violence, neglect, and chaos, toxic socialization also includes **parentification**. Parentification is a role reversal in which a child is forced to take on a parental role for other adults and family members within the household or, less commonly, with community members, teachers, and other authority figures in children’s lives. Parentification occurs

when the family is poor and both parents have to work, when parents are unable to fulfill their roles due to mental, physical or emotional instability and dysfunction, or when parents or community members use children to fulfill emotional, cognitive, sexual, or spiritual needs. Forcing children into positions where they become responsible for meeting the needs of adults has devastating physiological, psychological, emotional, and spiritual consequences for a child that is emotionally, psychologically, and cognitively unequipped to deal with it. To be clear, parentification is toxic to children and can result in a range of mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health issues, including a compromised immune system, hormonal imbalances, and disruptions in brain development.²⁷ Stress can lead to serious sleep disturbances which in turn can lead to a range of physical health issues, from impaired growth to increased risk of obesity²⁸ to gastrointestinal issues like chronic stomach aches or irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).²⁹ Parentification can also have a direct impact on the developing personality and [Bodily Ego](#) of a child. Parentification can lead to increases or decreases in motivation, changes in self-image, the development of anxiety disorders, egoic distortions (i.e., personality disorders³⁰) and the accelerated loss of childhood.³¹ In general, parentified youth are at greater risk of developing anxiety, depression, attachment,³² and

²⁷G. W. Evans and Kim, P., “Childhood Poverty, Chronic Stress, and Young Adult Working Memory: The Protective Role of Self-Regulatory Capacity,” *Developmental Science* 16, no. 5 (2013): 688–96, doi:10.1111/desc.12082.

²⁸J. C. Cousins Bootzin, R. R., Stevens, S. J., Ruiz, B. S., and Haynes, P. L., “Parental Involvement, Psychological Distress, and Sleep: A Preliminary Examination in Sleep-Disordered Children,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 25, no. 5 (2011): 698–703.

²⁹Séphora Minjoz et al., “The Burden of Early Life Stress in Chronic Inflammatory Bowel Diseases,” *Journal of Health Psychology*, May 19, 2023, 13591053231173918, doi:10.1177/13591053231173918.

³⁰Gina Ratkovic and Mike Sosteric, “A Case-Study of the Colonization, Parentification, Abuse, and Suppression of an Indigenous Female Youth,” *Draft*, 2023.

³¹I. Boszormenyi-Nagy and G.M. Spark, *Invisible Loyalties: Reciprocity in Intergenerational Family Therapy* (Harper & Row, 1973), doi:10.4324/9781315129326.

³²J.E. Champion et al., “Caretaking Behaviors by Adolescent Children of Mothers with and without a History of Depression,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 43 (2009): 395–405, doi:10.1037/a0014399; L.M. Hooper, “The Application of Attachment Theory and Family Systems Theory to the Phenomena of Parentification,” *The Family Journal* 25 (2007): 919–32, doi:10.1177/1066480707301290.

personality disorders, and they generally have poor intimate-relationship skills as a result of their unnatural parental dynamics they had to adapt to as children.³³

If all that sounds bad, it is because it is. Of all the things that can happen to a child, parentification is among the worst. It adds gargantuan levels of stress and responsibility to a body and mind that is highly sensitive and still developing. It can also have a profound impact on the parents and family members who encourage parentification or request it.

And of course it can be much worse than all that. Just imagine adding parentification to the violence and neglect of an already toxic socialization process. All this cannot but have serious and systemic long-term consequences.

Healing Note

Recognizing that you were parentified is an important first step in healing. Know that none of it was your fault. You were placed into impossible and inappropriate roles by adults who failed to meet their responsibilities.

Healing from parentification involves:

- Learning to set clear emotional and psychological boundaries.
- Releasing the burden of responsibility for others' happiness, safety, and emotional well-being.
- Reconnecting with your own needs, desires, and inner child.
- Giving yourself permission to be cared for, nurtured, and supported by safe, healthy individuals.

³³J. Macfie et al., "Intergenerational Transmission of Role Reversal between Parent and Child: Dyadic and Family Systems Internal Working Models," *Attachment & Human Development* 46 (2005): 162–72, doi:10.1080/14616730500039663.

- Rebuilding a Bodily Ego and self-concept grounded in worthiness, independence, and joy.

Parentified children often grow into highly empathetic, deeply capable adults — but the path to authentic selfhood requires untangling from the old patterns of over-responsibility and guilt. Healing is possible, and you deserve the freedom and care you were denied.

You can assess the extent to which you were parentified as a child using the [Parentification](#)³⁴ self assessment. Visit the [LP Self-Assessments page](#).³⁵

Healing Journal Prompts

Reflect deeply and honestly on the following questions. Take your time and be gentle with yourself.

1. When I think about my childhood, what responsibilities did I carry that were too big for me?
2. How did being parentified impact my sense of self-worth, safety, and belonging?
3. What emotions come up when I imagine releasing the need to take care of others?
4. What would it feel like to receive nurturing and care from safe, loving people today?
5. What new boundaries can I create to protect my emotional energy and allow myself to heal?

Weaponization

In addition to violence, neglect, chaos/instability, parentification, and broken attachments, toxic socialization often involves weaponization.

³⁴<https://www.lightningpath.org/selfassessments/parentification>

³⁵<https://www.lightningpath.org/selfassessments/>

Weaponization occurs when parents, caregivers, or family members deliberately or unconsciously manipulate children and others within the family unit, using them as pawns against each other. This usually happens through **triangulation**, where one person pits two others against each other, manipulates one against another, or controls relationships by spreading gossip, lies, favoritism, or blame.

Weaponization can involve:

- **Parents triangulating siblings** against each other to maintain control or avoid responsibility.
- **Family members weaponizing** vulnerable individuals (children, spouses) to enact emotional attacks on others.
- **Caregivers involving children** in adult conflicts (e.g., asking them to take sides in divorce or disputes).
- **Using affection, access, or rewards** as tools to manipulate behavior and loyalty.

The goal of weaponization is often control — to **divide and conquer** family members, ensuring that individuals remain disconnected, powerless, and dependent. Unfortunately, weaponization is devastating to children and families. Research shows that when children are drawn into family conflict and manipulation:

- They experience **chronic stress, emotional confusion, and anxiety disorders**.
- They develop **poor boundaries, trust issues, and low self-esteem**.
- They often internalize a belief that relationships are inherently unsafe and adversarial.
- Weaponization can cause lifelong **difficulty with intimacy, difficulty trusting others, attachment disorders, and personality disturbances**.

Even worse, weaponized dynamics often repeat across generations, creating cycles of mistrust, abuse, and disconnection. Weaponization also deeply damages the **Bodily Ego**, the **Self-Concept**, and the ability to form healthy attachments. It poisons families, turning what should be safe, nurturing spaces into battlegrounds of manipulation and pain.

Healing Note

Recognizing that you were weaponized within your family helps you reclaim your right to safe, trustworthy, and loving relationships. Know that none of the manipulation or betrayal you experienced was your fault.

Healing from weaponization involves:

- Learning to recognize manipulative patterns like triangulation and divide-and-conquer tactics.
- Establishing strong, healthy emotional boundaries with others.
- Surrounding yourself with individuals who practice honesty, loyalty, and mutual respect.
- Rebuilding trust carefully, with those who earn it through consistent, loving behavior.
- Affirming your right to peace, loyalty, and emotional safety in all your relationships.

When you heal from weaponization, you free yourself from fear, distrust, and division. You reclaim your ability to build connections rooted in love, mutual respect, and shared growth.

Affirmation:

“I choose relationships built on trust, honesty, and peace. I am free from manipulation.”

Healing Journal Prompts

Use these prompts to help explore and heal the impact of being manipulated or triangulated within your family.

1. Where in my childhood did I feel caught between two or more people?
2. How did being pulled into family conflicts shape the way I trust (or mistrust) others now?
3. What are the warning signs that someone is trying to manipulate or triangulate me today?
4. Who in my life today shows me consistent honesty, loyalty, and respect?
5. What commitments can I make to build healthy relationships based on trust and emotional safety?

Destruction of Attachments

Violence, neglect, chaos/instability, and parentification all undermine development and harm the physical unit. Sadly, there is yet more to toxic socialization than all that. Toxic socialization also undermines a child's attachment to caregivers, friends, and others.

What is attachment exactly? Attachment can be defined formally as “the enduring emotional closeness which binds families....”³⁶ In other words, attachment is the emotional bond between a child and a parent, sibling, primary caregiver, teacher, mentor or other significant individual.

Why are attachments so important? Because without them we cannot survive. Children remain physiologically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually dependent on parents

³⁶Corinne Rees, “Childhood Attachment,” *The British Journal of General Practice: The Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners* 57, no. 544 (2007): 920–22, doi:10.3399/096016407782317955.

and other adults for the satisfaction of essential needs for decades. Without attachment, without somebody to provide food and shelter for the first two or three decades, without somebody to protect, without somebody to teach, no child can survive, much less thrive. Attachment “....allows children the ‘secure base’ necessary to explore, learn and relate, and the well-being, motivation, and opportunity to do so. Attachment provides for safety, helps with stress regulation, and increases adaptability and resilience.”³⁷ Attachment is also important because a child develops its initial identity and its sense of self-worth from early life attachments. Strong healthy family attachments in childhood and adolescence lead to positive self-identity, strong feelings of self-worth, and reduced depression and delinquency³⁸ while weak or damaged attachments can lead to insecurity, uncertainty, and even confusion. It is important to note that attachment is not just a thing we need in childhood. Adults also need strong attachment to healthy individuals who can help with the satisfaction of essential needs as well. You can talk to yourself and tell yourself what a wonderful person you are till you are blue in the face, but that self-talk will never satisfy your emotional or psychological needs as much as when another person tells you those things. And this goes for all of the essential needs all of which require the assistance of others, an assistance which depends upon and revolves around the quality of one’s adult attachments. At no point do we ever exist as a completely independent agent. We always need others to help us meet our needs. Attachment is important to us all.

So, what happens when the body’s powerful drives to attach are subverted, or when the attachments that do develop are dysfunctional and damaged? Bad things happen at a number of different levels. Weak, disordered, or absent child attachment experiences have a *profound*

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Elizabeth C. Hair et al., “The Continued Importance of Quality Parent-Child Relationships during Late Adolescence,” *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 18, no. 1 (2008): 187–200, doi:10.1111/j.1532-7795.2008.00556.x.

impact on the health and well-being³⁹ of the individual. As one researcher put it, “Disturbed childhood attachment relates to adult physical and psychological ill-health, *including major causes of mortality*. Disordered attachments predispose children to substance abuse, temper problems, homelessness, promiscuity, early pregnancy, and criminality.”⁴⁰ In terms of human spirituality and connection, weak, disordered, or absent attachments debilitate the physical unit and undermine its ability to connect. They are also a key factor in intergenerational parenting difficulties. Obviously, we cannot ignore the importance of attachment experiences in our growth and development.⁴¹

If you accept the importance of attachment, and if you accept that dysfunctional attachments are toxic, then the next question we need to ask is what sorts of thing cause damaged attachments? The answer is, there are lots of things that cause damaged attachments. From chaotic and disordered environments to absent parents to poorly managed break-ups to violence against children and members of the family unit (including animals) to physical or mental illness on the part of a parent or caregiver to onerous work schedules to developmentally emotional immature or parental psychopathology and even addiction. In essence, anything that takes energy away from giving the children the copious care and attention they need, and anything that causes hurt or pain to any being in the family unit, impacts and weakens attachments.

³⁹V. J. Felitti, “[The relationship of adverse childhood experiences to adult health: Turning gold into lead],” *Z Psychosom Med Psychother* 48, no. 4 (2002): 359–69.

⁴⁰Rees, “Childhood Attachment.” Emphasis added.

⁴¹ If you are struggling with what we are suggesting, perhaps think of your attachment experiences to your pet, your hobby, or your passions, and reflect on all the vested energies you justify and do to commit and maintain that attachment. Now think about how you were raised, or how you justified your own parenting compared to the ways in how you invest in the “other” stuff you choose to do. If you are being honest with yourself, you will see that in order to commit, to master, to learn, and to grow, your attachment to whatever or whoever will determine what your authentic experiences will be. It is the same for our children.

To assess the status of your attachments, use the “[Attachment Quality](#)”⁴² assessment on the [LP Self-Assessments page](#).

Healing Note

Understanding how your attachments were disrupted or damaged is the beginning of repairing your capacity for trust, intimacy, and connection. **Your drive to attach was natural and necessary** — the failure was never yours.

Healing from broken attachments involves:

- Grieving the bonds that were missing, damaged, or unsafe.
- Building new, secure attachments with safe, trustworthy individuals.
- Learning that deep, loving connections are possible and real.
- Reconnecting with your Self as a worthy, lovable being.

Attachment wounds are deep, but they can be healed. Connection is still possible.

Affirmation:

“I am worthy of love, trust, and safe connection.”

Healing Journal Prompts

1. Reflect slowly and compassionately.
2. How did damaged attachments in childhood affect my ability to trust others?
3. What fears do I have about being vulnerable or close to others today?
4. Who in my life today offers me safety, loyalty, and respect?
5. What small steps can I take to build or strengthen secure attachments now?

⁴²<https://www.lightningpath.org/selfassessments/attachment-quality>

6. What would it feel like to fully trust someone who loves and honors me?

Indoctrination

The final aspect of toxic socialization you have to be aware of is **ideology** and **indoctrination**. If you don't already know, indoctrination is the teaching of beliefs, ideas, norms, and values designed to shape human thought and behaviour in a direction not in alignment with the health and connection of your physical body but instead conducive to certain economic, political, and social class interests. We call beliefs, ideas, norms, and values intentionally constructed in order to shape human behaviour and cognition in ways not conducive to health and full connection but instead conducive to certain social class interests ideology.⁴³

Note that ideology is not exactly a new topic. When we talked about wrong thought in the course [LP 135 – An Introduction to Wrong Thought](#), we were essentially talking about ideology because ideology is simply a sub-category of wrong thought, the key being ideology is intentionally designed to manipulate, control, and diminish, while wrong thought is mostly accidental.

Unfortunately, indoctrination and the ideology that goes along with it is a very complicated topic and we cannot go into it in too much detail here. We will cover it in more detail at the LP Intermediate when we discuss “the system” in [LP 230](#) and archetypes in [LP 240](#). For now, just keep in mind two things.

Number one, **understand** ideology encourages you to **neglect** or actively **subvert** your essential needs, or the essential needs of someone else. As you should understand by now, neglect and active subversion of your seven essential needs is bad because it damages you, disconnects you, and makes it hard to live a happy and fulfilled life. We'll give lots of

⁴³<https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Ideology>

examples of ideology at the intermediate level of study; for now, continue to pay close attention to any ideas that encourage you to neglect or subvert your seven essential needs.

Number two, **keep in mind** that if you want to heal and connect you are going to have to clear out and replace the ideology in your brain, otherwise you will never make significant progress forward. We have to say, since cleaning out the ideology in your brain involves digging deep into the dark and deeply buried foundations of your thinking process, foundations which were put in place when you were a very young child, clearing out ideology can be a bit of a challenge; however, it is possible; and, we can help. We'll give lots of guidance and advice on clearing out and replacing ideology at the [LP Intermediate level of study](#). To get there, just keep moving.

Healing Note

Recognizing that much of what you were taught was **wrong thought and ideology** is a liberating step. Know that **you are not to blame** for the beliefs you absorbed in childhood.

Healing from indoctrination involves:

- Questioning and dismantling limiting beliefs that harm or diminish you.
- Replacing distorted narratives with truth, empowerment, and love.
- Trusting your own perceptions, experiences, and needs.
- Reclaiming your authentic thinking, free from manipulation and control.

Healing from ideology restores your clarity, freedom, and personal sovereignty.

Affirmation:

"I trust myself. I free my mind from all beliefs that harm or diminish me."

Healing Journal Prompts

1. Use these prompts to reflect and liberate your mind.
2. What harmful beliefs about myself or the world was I taught as a child?
3. How did these beliefs limit my growth, self-love, or connection?
4. Which beliefs am I ready to question or discard today?
5. What truths about myself feel empowering and authentic?
6. How does it feel to imagine thinking and living freely, guided by love and truth?

Facing the Challenges Ahead

Pause and recall that we opened this chapter by asking, “*Why healing?*” At that point, we said that we need healing because we have all been damaged by toxic socialization. By now, this truth should be clear. The violence, neglect, chaos, parentification, indoctrination, and destroyed attachments we have all endured cause serious, systemic damage to your physical unit. Toxic socialization undermines your physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual health. It disconnects you from your Spiritual Ego — the Higher Self — leading to what we call the **5Ds**: disease, disorder, dysfunction, disconnection, and death.

If you want to be healthy, happy, and whole, there is only one real choice: you must heal, and you must reconnect.

So, what’s next?

At this point, you face a choice. You can dismiss everything you've read, return to your day-to-day existence, and continue coping with the damage as best you can. If you choose that path, we wish you well on your journey. Or you can accept the truth of your condition and resolve to do something about it — to create environments conducive to healing, health, and

full connection. If you choose to move forward, you must prepare for three immediate challenges.

Challenge One: Acknowledging the Damage

The first challenge is the hardest: fully acknowledging and accepting how deep the damage really is.

There's no point sugar-coating it. You have been damaged by violence, neglect, chaos, parentification, ideology, and chronic weaponization. This toxicity has stunted and corrupted your mind and disconnected your bodily ego from your spiritual ego. You are not completely lost. You may still achieve temporary states of alignment — flashes of connection, peak experiences, moments of transcendence. However, brief or rare **Connection Experiences** are not signs of health or enlightenment. They are indicators of a compromised physical unit. A properly developed physical unit is capable of sustaining persistent, stable connection. If you can only manage sporadic mystical or peak experiences, something is wrong. Denying this reality only locks you further into dysfunction.

If you want to move forward, you must courageously admit the damage.

Challenge Two: Dealing with Pushback

The second challenge is dealing with social resistance and pushback.

When you choose healing and reconnection, you will likely face resistance from family, friends, intimate partners, and others who feel threatened by your progress. Pushback may be subtle (mockery, distancing, passive aggression) or overt (emotional outbursts, threats, even violence). This resistance is often rooted in fear — fear of being left behind, fear of losing control, fear of confronting one's own damage. Understand: this pushback is not about you.

It's about their fear. Dealing with social pushback can be a major personal and interpersonal challenge.

Challenge Three: Staying the Course

The third challenge is the biggest of all: **actually doing The Work**.

The Work of healing and connection is difficult, demanding, and sometimes overwhelming. Even with the best intentions, you may encounter periods of frustration, discouragement, fatigue, and doubt.

It's normal.

Healing isn't a straight line. It's a spiral, a dance of two steps forward, one step back. Especially if you are walking the path alone, it is easy to lose momentum and fall back into old patterns. If that happens, don't be ashamed. Simply notice it, forgive yourself, and jump back in exactly where you left off. Persistence, not perfection, is the key.

Introducing the LP Healing Framework

This pretty much brings us to an end of our short discussion on toxic socialization. By now you should understand that we all have damage to heal. You should also hopefully understand a bit of what has been done to you.

So, now what?

Now it is time to take steps to heal. This is where the LP HEALING Framework comes in. The LP HEALING Framework is designed to help you focus your efforts and guide your journey back home.

How the LP HEALING Framework Helps

The LP HEALING Framework gives you **important things to think about and work on**.

Within the framework, healing is organized around **seven focus points**, summarized by the acronym "HEALING":

H = Help

E = Environment

A = Addictions

L = Lies

I = Ideologies

N = Needs

G = Growth

Using the Framework is simple: Pick the focus point that draws your attention and work on that for a while. **Always remember:** healing is not linear. It is iterative and circular — a spiral path. Trust your intuition and start where you feel called.

Six Tips for Success

Before you get started, before you focus in, here are six tips that can help you move forward towards healing and reconnection in an authentic and efficient way.

1. Read Through the Workbook First

Don't just dive into a focus point immediately. Read the workbook **from start to finish** at least once. This will give you a sense of the overall framework and help you choose the best starting point for yourself.

2. Expect to Revisit Units

Healing is complex. Chances are you won't absorb everything the first time.

Go back over the material as many times as you need. Each review will bring deeper understanding.

3. Understand What the LP Provides

The LP HEALING Framework is a roadmap, not a therapy. The LP doesn't prescribe specific healing modalities. Instead, it tells you what areas to focus on. How you choose to approach the task at hand, and whether you work alone or with a therapist or healer, is entirely up to you.

4. Commit to Discipline

Healing and connection require consistent, daily effort. It's not enough to visit a therapist once in a while, ring a singing bowl, or talk about healing over wine with friends. Real healing requires discipline: doing a little bit every day, even when you are tired, doubtful, or overwhelmed. If you stay consistent, you will make steady progress.

5. Practice Accountability and Change

As you will learn more deeply in the LP Connection Framework, true healing demands accountability, responsibility, and change. You cannot just say you are healing.

You must also change the behaviours that cause harm — to yourself and others.

You cannot trick your highest Self. You cannot fool your spiritual ego. Hypocrisy is transparent to Consciousness.

Change may hurt at first, especially if you have much to atone for. But change is **essential**.

If you refuse accountability and responsibility, if you refuse to stand up and change, healing and connection will remain impossible.

To support this work, use the following affirmation.

Affirmation:

Today I will See the toxicity that surrounds me.

Today I will Accept that it is unhealthy and disconnecting.

Today I will be Accountable for all my toxic actions.

Today I will take Responsibility for the harm I have caused.

Today I will Change my behaviours.

6. Practice Self-Acceptance and Forgiveness

Perhaps the most important thing: **accept yourself**. Accept who you are. Accept what you have done. Accept what you have been through. Accept without judgment or shame.

Forgive yourself.

There's no point getting stuck in guilt or shame over the things you did while asleep and disconnected.

We've all done harmful things. Getting trapped in shame only makes things worse — for yourself and the world.

Accept, be accountable, take responsibility, and change. That's all you need to do.

And that's all there is for this lesson. To summarize, in this lesson you learned more about toxic socialization. You learned that toxic socialization damages and disconnects you. You also learned that as a consequence of that damage, you now need to heal and reconnect. The healing and reconnection process can be a challenge for several reasons, but the LP is here to help with that by providing, among other things, LP HEALING Framework. It is to the LP HEALING Framework that we turn our attention to now.

Connection Coach Certification Questions

1. What are the seven components of toxic socialization identified in this lesson. Briefly describe each.
2. What are some challenges an individual might face when making the decision to heal and reconnect? Have you experienced these challenges in your own healing and reconnection process?
3. What are some tips you might offer to yourself, or someone else, as they get to work on the LP HEALING Framework.

Lesson Two: “H” is for help

As we learned in the last lesson, we are all damaged and disconnected by a toxic socialization system designed to turn us into compliant cogs in a global wheel of production; consequently, we all need to heal and reconnect. Unfortunately, healing and re-connection can be quite a challenge not only because the damage is profound and the path home challenging, but also because, when it comes to understanding humanity and its difficulties, current psychological and “spiritual” systems (e.g., Positive Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Catholicism) fall quite short.⁴⁴ None of them are about authentic reconnection. All of them are focused not on actualizing full human potential but on making sure all the billions of broken cogs stay functioning in the economic machine. It’s a big problem. How can the people and the planet heal when the rubrics are inadequate or improperly targeted? The answer is, it can’t.

I’m not going to go into any detail about the profound limitations of extant healing systems here. I’m just going to say, the LP HEALING Framework can help. The LP HEALING Framework is a set of focus points designed to help you focus your attention on key aspects of the healing process so you can make progress towards healing and reconnection despite the damage, despite the challenges, and despite profound limitations in existing healing systems.

We Begin with “H” — Help

⁴⁴If you want to start on how psychology and the medical systems are compromised, start with Szasz and Fannon Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963); N.C. Gibson and R. Beneduce, *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017); Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness* (Harper Perennial, 2010). Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963); N.C. Gibson and R. Beneduce, *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017); Mike Sosteric, “Thomas Szasz and the Myth of Mental Illness,” *The Lightning Strike*, 2019, <https://medium.com/human-spirituality/thomas-szasz-and-the-myth-of-mental-illness-53352d110914>.

The first letter in the HEALING Framework is "H" — Help. We start with the notion of help because the damage is deep, the path is hard, and the system is broken. Under current conditions it is very difficult to heal and reconnect alone. This is not a statement about strength or weakness. It is just reality. Imagine yourself as a professional weightlifter, competing to see how much you can lift. Assistants keep piling on more and more weight until eventually — inevitably — you collapse.

Trauma is like weight. Pile enough of it on and eventually even the strongest collapse.

If you're stuck under a pile of weight, you need to ask for help, otherwise you may incur serious injury. This is important. Many people don't ask for help even when they desperately need it because they have been told that to do so signals weakness, but that's wrong. It's not a question of weakness. It's a matter of when your strength will inevitably give out.

Do not be shamed into suffering in silence. If you need help, get help. No shame. No guilt. No apologies.

Of course, the question now becomes, how do you know if you need help? The answer to that is simple. Take an honest look at your emotional and psychological state. Pay attention to your well-being. You may need help if:

- You feel stuck, stagnant, or unable to make progress.
- You struggle with depression, anxiety, low self-worth, obsessive or compulsive behaviours, low self-esteem, or poor relationships.
- You feel reactive, defensive, angry, apathetic, or agitated.
- You lash out at loved ones or struggle with compulsivity, rumination, or addictive behaviour (to shopping, alcohol, drugs, or money).
- You cannot achieve or sustain meaningful **Connection**.

Life should be lived in calm, serene, peaceful, and (if not blissful, then at least) purposeful contentment and connection.

If this is not your life and you are not making any progress towards it, then you probably need to get help.

Where to find Help

If you accept that you might need help, there's lots of places to find it. You can seek help from:

- Trusted friends or confidants
- Self-help books
- Professional therapists and healers

Unfortunately, finding good help can be a challenge. Friends, though well-meaning, are often too damaged or indoctrinated to offer healthy, unbiased advice. Given the widespread toxicity of the planet, many people are also struggling with serious mental illness, which can cloud their judgment and lead them to offer advice that is contradictory, confused, or even self-serving.

The risk is even greater when the person you turn to holds **authority over you**—such as a parent, religious leader, or long-time confidant. Individuals in positions of authority or emotional influence often have a deeper, sometimes unconscious, knowledge of your emotional "buttons"—your fears, insecurities, needs for approval, and patterns of guilt or shame. They know how to trigger you, persuade you, or pressure you, whether intentionally or not. In situations where someone has not healed their own wounds or cleared their own

indoctrination, their advice can become a form of control or manipulation rather than true support. They might:

- Dismiss or minimize your pain to avoid confronting their own.
- Shame you for wanting change that threatens their status quo.
- Project their own fears, guilt, or unresolved issues onto you.
- Guilt-trip you into compliance or acceptance of toxic conditions.
- Use your need for love, approval, or belonging to steer you away from growth and healing.

Because of the emotional bonds and hierarchical structures often involved, it can be difficult to recognize when advice or "support" is actually harmful. Your natural inclination may be to trust these individuals, to seek their approval, or to avoid hurting their feelings. However, healing requires honest assessment and protection of your journey—sometimes even from those closest to you.

For this reason, it is often safer to seek healing support from neutral, trained, and compassionate individuals who are outside your existing attachment networks and who do not have emotional leverage over you. Indeed, professional therapists, coaches, and healers can be valuable allies on your journey because they bring important advantages:

- **Training:** Professionals are specifically trained in healing modalities, psychology, and human development. Their education provides them with frameworks and tools that go beyond personal opinion or anecdotal advice.
- **Up-to-date Knowledge:** Competent professionals stay informed about the latest research and best practices. They understand trauma, attachment, mental health, and

the dynamics of healing in ways that evolve with new insights and scientific discovery.

- **Experience:** A good professional has helped many individuals through similar challenges. This experience allows them to recognize patterns, offer tested strategies, and anticipate difficulties you might not see on your own.
- **Personal Healing Work:** Ideally, effective healers have done significant work on themselves. Having faced and addressed their own wounds, they are less likely to project their issues onto you and more capable of holding a safe, supportive space.

While no healer is perfect, the structure, training, and personal development that should be expected of a professional often make them far better equipped to support your growth than friends, family, or authority figures caught up in their own unresolved struggles.

That said, it is important to note that while professional help can be valuable, it can also be superficial, misdirected, incomplete, or even harmful. Therapists can have their own unresolved issues, for example. They can be limited by their own trauma and indoctrination or by the healing frameworks they choose to employ.⁴⁵ Finally, most therapists will be limited by the neoliberal education system they are trained in. You have to be careful and critical; you have to look for and deliberately choose to find good help. The question now becomes...

How do You Choose Good Help?

There are a few strategies you can use.

⁴⁵Healing frameworks like [Positive Psychology](#), **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**, and various spiritual traditions—few expect or assess the personal development and healing of the practitioner themselves. In most traditions, competency is measured by academic achievement, certification, or ritual knowledge rather than genuine personal growth or healing. As a result, while it is relatively easy to find a *qualified* therapist or healer, it can be much more challenging to find one who is truly *helpful*, *healed*, and capable of providing deep, authentic support.

Word of Mouth

One of the best ways to begin your search for help is by **asking someone you trust**. If you know a family member, friend, or acquaintance who has made significant healing progress, don't be afraid to reach out. Ask them: How did they heal? What kinds of support did they use (books, therapists, support groups, etc.)? Who would they recommend? Answers to these questions might point you in the proper direction.

Of course, be critical.

Pay attention to the healing progress of the person you are asking. In particular, watch how they treat people they don't like. If they haven't experienced noticeable growth, it may be best to take their recommendations with caution. Save your time and money for practitioners who have demonstrably helped others move forward.

Internet Search

If you don't know anyone personally, the internet is a powerful tool, both as a general educational resource (for example, looking up Chronic PTSD, learning about healing modalities), but also as a place to locate therapists. Many therapists, coaches, and healers maintain professional websites. You can also check online directories and healing networks and even get advice from a Reddit group. Look for reviews, testimonials, and clear descriptions of services offered. Be mindful that good marketing does not mean good healing, it just means they have the money to pay the marketer's fees. Proceed with careful evaluation..

Local Agencies

Another good place to look is to local organizations, such as domestic abuse agencies, mental health clinics, and spiritual healing centers, often maintain lists of trusted practitioners. These

organizations may provide free referrals or even sliding-scale services if cost is an issue. Once again, be critical and decide for yourself. Just because an agency recommends a therapist does not mean that therapist is competent or aligned.

Credentials

After word of mouth you should consider credentials and qualifications: Look into the therapist's educational background, degrees, and professional certifications. Find out if they are licensed by a recognized governing body in your jurisdiction. A qualified therapist will have relevant training, credentials, and professional experience in the field of psychology, social work, or counselling.

Note that in addition to taking a general look at their credentials, you also want to look for specialization and additional training in the specific area you are requesting assistance in. Most therapists will specialize in a specific area, like addictions therapy, family, therapy, and so on. Make sure their specializations, if any, line up with what you are seeking help with.

Experience

Just as important as credentials is experience, particularly in the specific area you are seeking help with. Some therapists specialize in certain populations or specific treatment approaches. Ask about their experience working with individuals who have similar concerns or conditions as yours. Note that it is OK to talk about culture and gender here since culture and gender experiences can impact a therapist and their ability to understand and connect. This does not mean that a privileged white European dude cannot help an oppressed Indigenous female, or vicaversa, it just means you have to pay attention. If cultural and gender differences are an issue and if the therapist won't work them out, find a therapist that's aligned.

Professional Reputation

Credentials and experience are important, but you can have high-level credentials and lots of experience and still be an incompetent, even dangerous, therapist. Therefore you have to go beyond credentials and reputation. One way to go beyond is to examine the therapist's professional reputation, if you can. Seek feedback from others who have worked with the therapist. You can ask for recommendations from trusted sources such as friends, family, or healthcare professionals or, much easier, see if there are some online reviews or testimonials that can provide insights into the therapist's reputation.

Informed and Evolving Methods

Therapy isn't a stagnant science or an ancient art. It is a practice that evolves as science and society evolves. Therefore, therapists should be grounded in science and society. They should evolve as well. A competent therapist should use research-based, evolving methods grounded in professional development. Ask what therapeutic frameworks they use—CBT, psychodynamic therapy, somatic work, positive psychology, EMDR, or others—and whether they regularly update their skills through workshops, certifications, reading, or continuing education.

Strong Ethical Boundaries

consider their **ethical guidelines**. Ensure that the therapist adheres to a professional code of ethics. Professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association (APA) or the British Psychological Society (BPS) provide ethical guidelines for therapists which the therapists are expected to adhere to, like the ethical requirement that they maintain professional boundaries. Therapists are healers and you are their client. It is not a healer's job to fill your emotional and psychological holes, or to initiate a relationship with you. They should not act like your friend, have coffee, or drink wine with you. It is their job to equip you with the skills and knowledge you need in order to heal your own damage and patch

your own holes. Their job is to guide you through a healing process and nothing more. A therapist is not going to be able to do that effectively if they cross emotional boundaries with you, so be aware. The most a therapist can do for you emotionally is provide you with a safe and nurturing place to heal and grow. Anything beyond that is a dangerous red flag.

Ethical therapists maintain **clear and healthy boundaries**. They are not your friend, partner, or emotional crutch. Their role is to hold a safe, professional space where you can heal and grow. They should not initiate personal relationships, ask you to socialize, or attempt to meet their own emotional needs through your therapy.

Therapists who **blur boundaries**—by crossing lines emotionally, spiritually, or physically—are not healers. They are liabilities. Always assess whether your therapist respects the sacred space of therapy, or whether they exploit it.

Empathic Human Connection

Good therapy requires **presence, empathy, and connection**. A skilled therapist:

- Listens actively and attentively.
- Demonstrates emotional availability and interest.
- Creates a safe space for you to speak and be heard.

If your therapist is emotionally flat, rigid, disconnected, or disengaged, take note. Healing doesn't happen in cold spaces. Trust your instincts—if something feels off, it probably is.

Collaborative and Empowering Process

Therapy should be **collaborative**, not top-down. A competent therapist works with you to set goals, monitor progress, and adjust treatment as needed. They listen to your feedback and adapt accordingly. They don't steamroll you with their authority or ignore your concerns.

You are not a passive subject—they should treat you as an active participant in your own healing. If you feel ignored, overruled, or silenced, you're not in a healing space.

Real-World Competence

In the end, the most important thing to assess is **competence**. A therapist can have all the right degrees, licenses, and certifications and still be **unhealed, indoctrinated, or emotionally dangerous**. Therapists are not exempt from the trauma, damage, or disconnection that affects all of us. Some may even be using their practice as a way to manage their own issues.

Don't be afraid to ask personal, respectful questions.

- Have they been in therapy themselves?
- Have they processed their own trauma?
- Do they acknowledge the impact of their childhood or past experiences?

A good healer doesn't need to be perfect. But they do need to have **done their own work**, or at least be doing it. If they get defensive when you ask, or if they claim to have no issues at all, that's a red flag. Healing requires humility—and any therapist who lacks that is not ready to help you heal.

AI Tip: You can also use AI to help assess red flags in language, philosophical alignment, or emotional posture. Ask Pathfinder or Sparky to help you break down practitioner bios or statements before you commit.

Use AI to support your evaluation

Finally, don't overlook the single most powerful tool available to help on your healing journey, AI. **AI-based healing assistants** are emerging as powerful sources of support. General AIs can be remarkably helpful, offering knowledgeable, accessible, consistent, and

structured support, especially when human resources are limited or unavailable. They can be valuable companions and guides, helping you stay focused, supported, and moving forward on your path. AI tools like **Pathfinder™** or **Sparky™** can help you understand the differences between healing modalities, decode therapy jargon, explore your own trauma, and determine whether a therapist's approach aligns with your needs. You can ask question like:

- According to LP Psychology, what are the steps I need to do to be healthy, happy, and whole.
- My father sexually assaulted me as a child. What are the impacts of that kind of think on the mental and emotional health of children and adolescence.
- What is somatic therapy? Could it help with my trauma?
- What are the weaknesses of cognitive-behavioral therapy from a human development perspective?
- How can I tell if a therapist is stuck in ideology or outdated models?

AI gives you clarity, speed, and objectivity—this is especially useful when marketing language or credentials obscure deeper issues, or when the therapist you've chosen is dealing with their own mental health issues and may not be entirely practical and objective.

Number six,

Number seven, consider their **interpersonal skills**: A competent therapist should have excellent communication skills, including active listening, empathy, and the ability to build rapport. They should create a safe and nonjudgmental space where you can express your

concerns comfortably and where you can listen to feedback safely. If your therapist sits there like an unemotional, unreactive, unconnecting log, you are advised to find another therapist.

Number eight, consider their **approach**. Do they engage in collaborative therapy? Do they take your needs and concerns into account. A skilled therapist involves you in the therapy process, discusses treatment goals, and develops a collaborative treatment plan. They should regularly assess your progress, provide feedback, and adjust the therapeutic approach when necessary.

Finally, **number nine**, consider whether they are **competent** or not. You can have all the credentials and experience and ethics and certification in the world and still be an incompetent, even dangerous, healer. It is simply not safe to assume that just because a healer has gone to school, just because they are recognized by a professional organization, and just because they have their own practice, that they are sincere, effective, and competent in their chosen field. Healers come from the same families that you come from and deal with the same toxic environments that you, that we all, all do. Consequently, they experience the same traumas as everybody else. As a result, they may be dealing with psychological or emotional dysfunction, disease, and disconnect, just like you. In fact, no doubt they are. A healer can read all the books in the world and take all the best classes from all the best universities, but their effectiveness and competence as a healer might be compromised if they have not fully healed themselves.

Does mean that a healer who has experienced trauma cannot be an effective healer?

Absolutely not. In fact, a healer that has processed or is processing their own trauma can often be the best person to help you with your trauma, especially if it is of a similar nature. But they have to done some work themselves, and you should find out if they have. You can

ask them directly if they have ever been in therapy.⁴⁶ You can even ask them if they had, or are still dealing with, with any childhood issues. If they tell you they did not have any issues emerging from their childhood, or worse if they get defensive, you may want to consider finding another therapist because either of those is a sure sign they've never considered, much less processed, their trauma.

AI Healing Tools

Final Step: Assessing Healers

Once you have a few potential healers in hand—whether recommended by a friend, found online, suggested by an agency, or supported through AI—the next critical step is to **assess whether they are qualified, competent, and appropriate for you.**

We'll discuss how to do that in the next section.

Final Thoughts and Repetitions

Hopefully, this lesson on getting help has been enough to convince you of the importance of getting help if you need and has also given you some information that can help you find a quality therapist or professional. Before closing out this lesson on how to get help, there are a few final thoughts we would like to share.

Number one, *there is no shame in getting help*, even when it comes to seeking help for mental health issues. Remember, your body is a physical vehicle for Consciousness, for your spiritual ego, just like your car is a physical vehicle for your body. If your car is not working properly, you do not hide it in a corner and blame it for breaking down, you try and fix it

⁴⁶“How to Find the Best Therapist for You,” *Psychology Today*, accessed October 12, 2019, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freudian-sip/201102/how-find-the-best-therapist-you>.

yourself or you take it to someone qualified and competent who can. That is all there is to it. It is the same with your physical unit, your mind and body. Your physical unit is a complicated piece of bio-machinery designed to contain Consciousness. When broken, it sometimes requires expertise and resources to fix. There is as much shame in that as there is in taking your car to a mechanic to fix, which is to say, none. If anybody tries to shame you for your illness, addiction, or whatever, whether that person is your mom, your dad, your partner, your spouse, a friend, a priest, or whatever, avoid contact and block them out of your awareness.

Number two, *you do not need to actually connect physically and in expensive therapeutic sessions with helping professionals to get help.* Sometimes you can help yourself by immersing yourself in information found in self-help books, videos, workshops, support groups, etc. These days, there is no shortage of information in this regard, so we encourage you to seek out help in whatever form you can find it. Once again, we remind you, be discerning. Just because somebody has a book, a blog, or a website does not mean they are qualified to help you heal and connect. Pay attention to qualifications, signs of competence, and any red flags that might indicate underlying problems. Trust what psychologist Stanislav Grof called your [Inner Radar](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Inner_Radar).⁴⁷ If something feels off, it probably is.

Number three, *if you do choose to seek out a professional healer, make sure you feel comfortable and safe with whomever you choose to work with.* If you do not feel comfortable or safe, either say something to the therapist, or find another therapist. Saying something to the therapist is always the best course of action because a competent healer will welcome feedback, will understand that they will not be able to “connect” and support everybody, and will appreciate the opportunity to improve their practice. Keep in mind, not saying something to a professional is not doing them any favours. Not providing feedback to a healer prevents

⁴⁷https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Inner_Radar

a competent and qualified healer from growing their own skill and expertise. Similarly, not providing feedback to incompetent or unqualified healers also prevents their growth. Your single feedback may not jolt an incompetent healer into self-reflection and action, but if they hear it enough times, from multiple diverse sources, it might. Do not be silent about things. Being silent helps nobody. Always give constructive feedback to your therapist/healer.

Note, the admonition to provide feedback is not a license to be ignorant to people. Do not be mean to your healer; do not let anger and resentment turn your feedback into emotional or psychological assault. Be honest about your thoughts and your feelings. Find a way to present feedback in a positive fashion and with helpful intent. *Feedback that hurts another person is not feedback, it is assault.*

Also, keep in mind, while competent therapists will welcome feedback, incompetent and unqualified therapists may be threatened by your feedback, even when it is presented in a positive fashion and with helpful intent. If a healer reacts defensively to feedback you provide, this is a red flag. As already noted, if you say something to the therapist and they divert, blame you, gaslight you, react defensively, or aggressively push you back down, find another therapist immediately.

Number four, in addition to getting over shame, learning to help yourself, and seeking out competent and qualified help, *you also need to distinguish between authentic assistance and enabling behaviours.* An *authentic healer* is somebody that challenges you, your thoughts, and your behaviours in order to help you heal and connect. On the other hand, an enabler is an individual who agrees with whatever you say, strokes your ego, and enables your bad behaviour, even when that behaviour is violent and toxic to your self and others. An enabler is someone who says “let’s go for a drink” even though they know you are struggling with addiction. An enabler is someone who says, “That is ok,” even when you have done

something horribly wrong. Enablers enable. They enable sickness. They enable violence. They enable toxicity and disconnection even while ostensibly trying to help. Understand, being supportive does not mean enabling toxic behaviours. Support means love and acceptance while at the same time challenging wrong thoughts, wrong actions, and wrong environments. You do not want an enabler in your life. You want people who will support your healing journey and encourage you towards right action, right thought, and right environment.

Enabling, we have to say, is a pretty big problem, and we are not going to go into any detail now. Here we will just briefly explore two questions, and let you figure the rest out for yourself. Question one is “why do people enable us?” Question two is, “why do we **allow** people to enable us?”

As for **why people enable**, enablers enable for the simple reason that they benefit from the behaviour they enable. It might be shocking, but it is not hard to realize. Pharmaceutical companies do not benefit when they heal you, they benefit by ensuring you stay sick so you can pay them to help alleviate your symptoms. Marketers do not benefit by teaching us that consumerism is destroying the planet, they benefit by fuelling your addiction. Politicians do not benefit by leading healthy and connected citizens; they benefit by having sick and disconnected masses which they can easily manipulate and control. Similarly, friends and family members enable your toxic behaviours because they benefit from the status quo in some way.

It is like when you are trying to quit smoking while your “friend” cajoles you with cigarettes. They do this because they benefit from your addiction. They want company with their addiction. They want a smoking buddy. They do not want you to quit smoking because if you do, they will feel bad because they are still smoking. You get the idea. People enable your

toxic and unhealthy behaviour because they benefit from it in some way. When you pause to reflect, identify all the enablers in your life and ask yourself why they are doing it.

As for why we allow people to enable us, it is not because there is something wrong with us in any way, it is because we are rewarded emotionally, psychologically, and even financially by the people who enable (and benefit from our) toxic behaviour. For example, we gain acceptance and inclusion⁴⁸ when we “have a drink with the boys.” We gain esteem, power,⁴⁹ and inclusion in the “cool,” mean girl/boy groups when we engage in spiteful gossip. We get to play with new toys, or gulp down tasty substances, when we let the advertisers fuel our addictions. On the opposite side of this coin, we are shunned and often attacked when we refuse to participate any longer in the “mutually beneficial” enabling schemes.

It takes a lot of work, and a hard shift, to get us to the point where we are willing to push the enablers out; however, we must do it. If you are trying to quit smoking and you hang out with smokers, you will never quit. If you want to move up in your career, you need to surround yourself with those who can teach and inspire you. If we want to heal, you will need to pause and reflect and take some kind of action. You will need to find good healers and step out of your enabling relationships.

Finally, number five, as already noted, *friends and family are generally not help*. Many people see friends, families, religions, and other non mental health professionals as sources of help and support. Our society in fact encourages you to find support in friends and family. It is OK to go to family for love, hugs, and feelings of positive inclusion, if your family is healthy. On the LP, however, we do not recommend relying on friends, families, and other non mental health professionals for healing and connection guidance. We discourage this for several reasons.

⁴⁸ Inclusion and acceptance are one of our seven essential needs.

⁴⁹ Esteem and power are also one of our seven essential needs.

For one, as we will see later when we discuss intergenerational toxicity, many of our unhealthy attitudes, behaviours, and problems are rooted in our primary family relationships. Bad ideas we have about religion, spirituality, ourselves (what we call wrong thought), are often rooted in what we learned in family and, to a lesser extent, our friend groups. If you are struggling, stuck, and having a tough time, it is probably because of traumas sourced and ideas learned, reinforced, and rooted in your relationships with your families and friends. If that is the case, going to them will not help, it will only reinforce patterns of thinking and behaviour that are toxic and that make your healing process much harder.

And note, it is not just that most of the bad ideas about healing and connection come to you through your family first, it is also because most of the toxicity and trauma in your life occurs at the hands of family and, to a lesser extent, friend groups. If you think about it for a moment, you will see it is your family, your parents, your brothers and sisters, your aunts and uncles, and others who are “close to you” who will have done you the most harm. It is our parents who hit and scream at us the most. It is our parents who shame us the most. It is family members, friends, and acquaintances who are the primary perpetrators of sexual assault.⁵⁰ The truth is, it is in families where we tolerate and are subject to the most violence. If you find this hard to believe, consider that the home is the only place where it is legal to assault a human being that is smaller in stature and weaker in strength. That is, it is normal and legal for adults to “hit” their own children within “reasonable” limits of physical harm as defined by the legal system. It is also perfectly legal for parents to engage in mental and emotional torture of their children, screaming, yelling, shaming, and so on. And this does not include an assessment of the psychological and emotional assault directed at us by our

⁵⁰ On the primary source of sexual assault, see this awesome web page at <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/perpetrators-sexual-violence>.

siblings. Families, and to a lesser extent friends, are the primary location of assault and trauma. It is not a judgment; it is just the way it is.⁵¹

This tendency for families to be the primary source of assault and damage leads us to the third reason why we do not recommend you go to your family for healing guidance which is your family knows better than anybody on the planet how to hurt you. They know your sensitivities; they know your weaknesses; they know your soft spots; they know your buttons. They know, in short, exactly what to do to hurt you. Do not be a fool about this. When they are sick and disconnected themselves, when they are struggling with their own emotional/psychological damage, when they are defensive and repressed, they will hurt you, sometimes in subtle and hard to identify ways, and sometimes with overt violence and direct emotional, verbal, psychological, or even physical assault. They won't necessarily do it consciously, but they will do it. They will do it a) in self-defence, b) because they are projecting their anger and resentment, and c) because they are sick, desperate, and in need of healing themselves, and d) because they are threatened by your own forward progress. Whether they "mean it" or not does not matter. It is important to understand, an assault is an assault; it will damage you and undermine your healing progress no matter who it comes from. In fact, an assault by an individual whom you are more open and connected to

⁵¹ Why are families the primary source of assault and trauma? There are several reasons for that. Number one, they are private spaces, and it is easy to hurt others in private, especially when these spaces are protected by codes of silence ("what happens in the family, stays in the family."), as many family spaces are. Number two, assault is encouraged in families. "Spare the rod and spoil the child," as the bible says. Number three, assault is modelled in families. Our parents did it to us and through this modelling, we learn to do it to our children. Number four, emotional trauma travels downhill. When a parent comes home after experiencing violence and trauma at work (a so-called "hard day"), they take it out on safe targets, targets that cannot defend themselves and fight back, like their children. There is no safer target than a small and defenceless child, in a private family space, or a spouse silenced by mafia-like codes that say "keep it in the family." We learn from our parents that it is OK to assault weak and defenceless targets and when we need the emotional outlet, we do what was done to us, often with impunity because it is in private and nobody will talk about.

(i.e. family or friend) and knows your sensitivities, weakness, and buttons is likely going to be more damaging than an assault by a total stranger.

And that is all we have to say. To summarize the message of this unit, if you need help, do not let shame or guilt stop you. If you need help, get help, just make sure it is qualified, competent, helpful, and not enabling. We do not recommend you get help from family and friends, especially if they are sick and damaged by toxic socialization themselves. If your family is not healthy, they can do more damage than good. It is OK to seek love and support from families, but always seek help exclusively from competent and healthy professionals. In that regard, pay attention to credentials and competence, and watch for any red flags. If you cannot afford professional assistance, find it in books or online.

Connection Coach Certification Questions

1. Healing is important, and so is getting help, especially if you need it to heal. What are some ways that you can tell if you or someone else needs help or not? Do you think you personally need physical, emotional, or psychological healing assistance? If so, why?
2. How do you find/choose a competent healer? What are qualification and competence and why are they important? What are some red flags to watch out for? Have you had experiences with incompetent and unqualified healers?
3. What is the difference between authentic assistance and enablers. Why is it important to identify enablers? Can you identify any enablers in your life, or the life of a client? Go further now and look at your own behaviour. Are you an enabler of others? If so, what emotional needs are you getting met when you enable the toxicity of others.
4. Why does the LP discourage people from getting help from friends and family? Do you agree? Do you think there are any circumstances when it is appropriate to get help from friends and family?

Lesson Three: “E” is for Right Environment

In the last unit, we looked at the issue of help. There we emphasized that things can be bad for you and sometimes it may be necessary to get help. You should understand, getting help is not an indication of personal weakness nor is it something to be ashamed of. Getting help is a reflection of how bad the damage can sometimes be and how difficult it can be to heal. Therefore, if you think you need help, get help. When you look for help, look for healers who are competent and qualified to help you with your issues.

Now that you understand the importance of getting good and qualified help, it is time to move on. In this lesson, we are going to look at the second focus point in the LP HEALING framework environment, specifically the need that we all have for a healthy non-toxic, non-violent, safe, clean and healing environment.

We want to be perfectly clear here. If you are going to maintain psychological, emotional, and physical health, if you are going to heal the trauma and damage done to you by toxic socialization, if you are going to prevent further damage from occurring, and if you are going to be able to reconnect, you are going to need to create a suitable environment, one that does not undermine health, healing, and connection, but that supports it; and not only for you, but for your family, children, friends, coworkers, and the entire planet as well. On the LP, we call such an environment [Right Environment](#).

The question before us now is what does a right environment suitable for psychic health, healing, and reconnection look like? It is not rocket science. A right environment that supports health, healing, and connection is an environment that is **safe, nurturing, and healing**.

Safe Environments

A safe environment is an environment where there is no violence of any kind, not positive or negative, not emotional, psychological, physical, or spiritual. A safe environment is an environment where there is no yelling, name-calling, hitting, kicking, screaming, spanking, dirty looks, or harming in any way.

Why?

We need a safe environment to stay healthy, obviously. You don't want to live in a home where there is physical violence (hitting, spanking, shoving), especially when its repeated. You want to exist in environments that are safe from physical violence. If you live in an environment like that, you are going to sustain serious physical and psychic injury. And the same goes for psychological, emotional, and spiritual violence as well. As we saw when we discussed the violence of toxic socialization earlier, and as we will see in much more detail [at more advanced levels of study](#),⁵² all forms of violence, no matter how minor we feel they might be, cause damage. All forms of violence cause physical and psychic injury. All forms of violence contribute to things like alcohol dependence,⁵³ eating disorders,⁵⁴ personality

⁵²<https://www.lightningpath.org/courseware/lightning-path-psychology/>

⁵³C. K. Danielson et al., "Does Typography of Substance Abuse and Dependence Differ as a Function of Exposure to Child Maltreatment?," *J Child Adolesc Subst Abuse* 18, no. 4 (January 1, 2009): 323.

⁵⁴E. E. Burns et al., "Deficits in Emotion Regulation Mediate the Relationship between Childhood Abuse and Later Eating Disorder Symptoms," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 36, no. 32–39 (2012).

disorders,⁵⁵ anxiety, depression,⁵⁶ suicide,⁵⁷ increased criminality,⁵⁸ dysfunctional personal relationships,⁵⁹ and even serious cognitive deficits, like lower IQ.⁶⁰ If you want to grow up healthy, if you want to stay healthy, if you want to avoid ongoing trauma, you *have* to make sure your environments are safe, which means free of all forms of violence.

There's really nothing else to say here. If you want to grow up and stay healthy, you need safe environments, otherwise you will sustain ongoing damage.

I suppose the question now is, how do you create a safe environment? Technically, it is quite simple. To create a safe environment, simply establish a [No-Violence Rule](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/No-Violence_Rule)⁶¹ in your life and in your relationships. A no-violence rule simply states that no-violence of any kind will be

⁵⁵Katja Wingenfeld et al., "Associations of Childhood Trauma, Trauma in Adulthood and Previous-Year Stress with Psychopathology in Patients with Major Depression and Borderline Personality Disorder," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 35, no. 8 (August 1, 2011): 647–54, doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2011.04.003.

⁵⁶Yang Li et al., "Maternal History of Child Maltreatment and Maternal Depression Risk in the Perinatal Period: A Longitudinal Study," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 63 (January 1, 2017): 192–201, doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.12.001; Leah M. Blain et al., "Exploring the Role of Child Sexual Abuse and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms in Gay and Bisexual Men Reporting Compulsive Sexual Behavior," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 36, no. 5 (May 1, 2012): 413–22, doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2012.03.003.

⁵⁷Gabriel Behr Gomes Jardim et al., "Influence of Childhood Abuse and Neglect Subtypes on Late-Life Suicide Risk beyond Depression," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 80 (June 1, 2018): 249–56, doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.03.029; Namkee G. Choi et al., "Adverse Childhood Experiences and Suicide Attempts among Those with Mental and Substance Use Disorders," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 69 (July 1, 2017): 252–62, doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.04.024; Virginia A. De Sanctis et al., "Childhood Maltreatment and Conduct Disorder: Independent Predictors of Criminal Outcomes in ADHD Youth," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 36, no. 11 (November 1, 2012): 782–89, doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2012.08.003.

⁵⁸David DiLillo, Terri Lewis, and Andrea Di Loreto-Colgan, "Child Maltreatment History and Subsequent Romantic Relationships," *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 15, no. 1 (November 1, 2007): 19–36, doi:10.1300/J146v15n01_02.

⁵⁹Julia C. Poole, Keith S. Dobson, and Dennis Pusch, "Do Adverse Childhood Experiences Predict Adult Interpersonal Difficulties? The Role of Emotion Dysregulation," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 80 (June 1, 2018): 123–33, doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.03.006.

⁶⁰Helen L. Bee et al., "Prediction of IQ and Language Skill from Perinatal Status, Child Performance, Family Characteristics, and Mother-Infant Interaction," *Child Dev* 53, no. 5 (1982): 1134–56, doi:10.1111/1467-8624.ep8587753; Peejay D. Bengwasan, "The Intellectual Profile of Abused and Neglected Children in the Philippines: An Analysis of SB5 IQ Scores of Sexually Abused, Physically Abused and Neglected Children," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 81 (2018): 389–95, doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.05.019; Paula Approbato de Oliveira et al., "Intellectual Deficits in Brazilian Victimized Children and Adolescents: A Psychosocial Problem?," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 36, no. 7 (July 1, 2012): 608–10, doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2012.05.002.

⁶¹https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/No-Violence_Rule

tolerated. A no-violence rule stipulates no yelling, no name-calling, no hitting, no kicking, no dirty looks, no sexual assault or interference, no threats, no intimidation, no withholding of affection, no deflection, no “giving the cold shoulder,” no nothing. Really, no aggression or disregard of any kind. Committing to non-violence provides an easy to understand, rock-solid foundation upon which to build healthy and safe psychic environments where healing can naturally occur.

The best way to start with this no-violence rule is with yourself. Begin monitoring your own actions and responses to others. Make a note of whenever you act with violence, apologize to whomever was the target, and stop doing that. As you begin to clean up your own behaviour, also let your relations know that you will no longer tolerate violence directed either at yourself or any beings (like your children or your animals) that you are responsible for. It is going to be hard. People around you will resist your assertions and may belittle and laugh at you for being silly or weak. Do not give in to that. Keep pushing. Improvements will be slow and the journey will be uphill, at least in the initial stages. Nevertheless, you need to get started and you need to stick with it. Reducing and eventually eliminating your exposure to violence of all forms is the first and the best thing you can do to create safe spaces where you can get started on your healing journey.

Nurturing Environments

In addition to right environment being a safe environment, right environments are also nurturing environments. What is a nurturing environment? Again, that is not rocket science. *A nurturing environment is one where where you meet some or all of your seven essential needs and where none of your essential needs are thwarted.* A nurturing environment is where you are fed, housed, loved, supported, cared for, and where you would be encouraged towards alignment and connection. A nurturing environment is also an environment where

your needs are not thwarted or undermined. If you live in an environment where your physical needs are met but where your psychological need for self-esteem is constantly undermined by name-calling, you are not living in a nurturing environment.

That is all there is to it.

To establish a nurturing environment, create environments where you are safe and where your seven essential needs are met.

Of course, this is a tall order. Human needs are many and complex and meeting all of them is a gargantuan individual *and* collective challenge.⁶² Even under ideal conditions even the most progressive families and advanced Utopian societies would struggle. Our toxic modern societies, run as they are by profit-oriented capitalists⁶³ who distribute food only if you can pay, can't even meet the basic physical or environmental needs of the global population, much less its more advanced and challenging needs. And even if we were collectively all on-board, where do we even start? Humans have a wide-range of currently unmet basic and inner needs, and each and every one of these needs requires, if we are to provide sufficient satisfaction, a ton of effort and attention. What are we going to do?

The ultimate answer is this: those left standing after disability, disease, and climate change reap a swath of death and destruction are going to have to come together into a sort of global collectivity whose primary and only focus is not profit and growth, but meeting humanity's essential needs. This is not conspiratorial and it is possible in this lifetime. We already have a planet ruled by people who put profit and growth uber alles, so we know small groups can set and implement big agendas.

⁶²Mike Sosteric and Gina Ratkovic, "It Takes a Village: Advancing Attachment Theory and Recovering the Roots of Human Health with the Seven Essential Needs," *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 2022, doi:<https://doi.org/10.11157/anzswj-vol34iss1id887>.

⁶³Mike Sosteric, *Rocket Scientists' Guide to Money and the Economy* (St Albert, Alberta: Lightning Path, 2016), <https://www.patreon.com/posts/lp-workbooks-and-91290808>.

We also, more importantly, have all the productive, administrative, economic, and distributive mechanisms in place to ensure all essential needs are met. There is a mature global communication industry which can be used to educate the global population in only a few years. It is true that beyond the basics of physical health, we don't have a good healing industry, but *we* can change. We even have the money to do it. There is a ridiculous amount of money floating around the planet, just right now it is being used to build big yachts, penis-shaped rockets, and arms to kill people in government-backed conflicts. Divert all that cash and you could transform the planet over night.

Of course, we are a little ways away from all that. Change is currently blocked by an [Accumulating Class](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Accumulating_Class)⁶⁴ that would rather destroy the planet than change their addictive ways, but you can make changes in your own life that can prepare you for all the collective work yet to come. You can start with a no violence rule and then continue by working to create home and work environments where essential needs are met and not thwarted. You will learn more about the seven essential needs and what you can do to create environments where these needs can be met later in this workbook.

Healing Environments

At this point, we know that creating a right environment means creating a safe and nurturing environment. On a healthy world, a workbook like this would end here. What else would there be to say? To grow happy and healthy humans, make a safe environment where you can meet all their essential needs. Unfortunately, we don't live on a healthy world. We live on an incredibly violent and sick world that has made us all terminally ill. Thus, in addition to the massive personal and global task of creating safe and nurturing environments, we also need to create healing environments where we can treat our collectively copious, debilitating and disconnecting, psychic wounds.

⁶⁴https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Accumulating_Class

This idea that we need to create healing environments is not something new. We already have environments for physical healing and these environments, which we call clinics and hospitals, are very advanced. However, when it comes to psychic wounds, we are not similarly advanced. Even the most effective form of psychological therapy there is, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, can produce only “modest” improvements⁶⁵ in only about 50% of the people who receive it.⁶⁶ While these statistics are lauded as an incredible success by psychologists, in fact, they are quite unremarkable for a couple of reasons. For one, most studies that suggest CBT is highly effective don’t actually report improvement rates, suggesting only vaguely that there’s a significant effect. Failure to report such a basic statistics suggests rather embarrassing improvement rates. What is worse, most CBT studies measure improvements shortly after treatment. Few conduct long term follow ups, and those that do suggest that for most people psychological disorder returns a few months or a year or two sometime after treatment cessation.⁶⁷ In a significant number of cases (in one study, 35%) treatments can actually worsen the situation.⁶⁸

As you can see, when you add it all up, CBT is not really that effective at all, which is not really that surprising. When you dig down you find that CBT is a mainstream psychological therapy that focuses primary attention on the thinking of the injured individual and *not* the

⁶⁵Beth Fordham et al., “The Evidence for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy in Any Condition, Population or Context: A Meta-Review of Systematic Reviews and Panoramic Meta-Analysis,” *Psychological Medicine* 51, no. 1 (2021): 21–29, doi:10.1017/S0033291720005292.

⁶⁶David M. Clark, “Realizing the Mass Public Benefit of Evidence-Based Psychological Therapies: The IAPT Program,” *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* 14, no. 1 (May 7, 2018): 159–83, doi:10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-050817-084833.

⁶⁷Jeffrey R. Vittengl et al., “Reducing Relapse and Recurrence in Unipolar Depression: A Comparative Meta-Analysis of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy’s Effects,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 75, no. 3 (June 2007): 475–88, doi:10.1037/0022-006X.75.3.475; Jane L. Eisen et al., “Five-Year Course of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: Predictors of Remission and Relapse,” *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 74, no. 3 (March 2013): 233–39, doi:10.4088/JCP.12m07657; Ruth von Brachel et al., “Long-Term Effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Routine Outpatient Care: A 5- to 20-Year Follow-Up Study,” *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 88, no. 4 (2019): 225–35, doi:10.1159/000500188.

⁶⁸W. Hasenkamp and L. W. Barsalou, “Effects of Meditation Experience on Functional Connectivity of Distributed Brain Networks,” *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 6 (2012): 38, doi:10.3389/fnhum.2012.00038.

wounds that the individual received or the environment where the wound was received. Their emphasis is never “stop the violence” in your environments or “ensure your needs are met,” it is always change *your* thoughts and be more positive because your thinking is all wrong.”⁶⁹ Of course, it is certainly true that thinking plays a role in health and healing, but it should not be the primary therapeutic focus. Imagine a physician saying to a stab victim “The pain would go away and you would feel better if you would just correct your thinking.” They would lose their license in an instant. We’ll talk more about CBT and all the failures of “modern” psychology later on in our study when we discuss [LP Psychology](#).

If the most powerful thing that psychology can offer is actually not that effective for psychic wounds, what do we do? Well, despite the centuries long failure of mainstream psychology to provide significant relief, it is not rocket science. In fact, we already have a model we can use. We can use the [Medical Model](#) of healing, a model used pretty much everywhere to heal physical wounds. The medical model is not that hard to understand. When a patient with a physical wound, let’s say a broken bone, goes to a clinic, the clinic staff will *clean, examine and assess, repair, scaffold, protect the wound, and offer education to ensure the injury does not happen again*. The first thing they will usually do **clean** and then examine and assess the wound. They **clean** to get rid of any foreign particles and infectious agents. They **examine and assess** to determine the wound’s nature. After they have a good idea of what’s going on, they will attempt to **repair** the wound, in this case the broken bone, by removing any dead skin, setting the bone, and stitching the skin. They will then **scaffold** the wound by providing supports, like a cast to keep the appendage immobilized or a bandage to prevent serious infection. They will also offer **pain management** to ensure healing energy is not unnecessarily diverted, so the individual can properly rest. The final part of treatment is **education**. Medical professionals will educate the individual on what they need to do to

⁶⁹Belsky, “Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: What Is CBT?,” *Understood*, August 5, 2019, <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/faqs-about-cognitive-behavioral-therapy..>

facilitate and speed the healing process. This education may involve advise on nutrition, rest, and how to **protect** the wound. If you have broken a bone, you need to eat well, rest lots, and avoid situations (like dances or dirt bike racing) which can aggravate or retraumatize the wound. It's not rocket science. It is just common sense.

This tried and true medical model will certainly work for [Psychic Wounds](#).⁷⁰ If somebody is the victim of a psychic wound, examine, clean, repair, scaffold, protect, and educate. For example, if you are a parent or teacher and you witness one child emotionally stabbing another child by calling them stupid, ugly, or whatever, then the first thing you do is stop the stabbing. Once you have stopped the assault, **clean** and **assess** the wound. You **clean** the psychic wound by removing any lingering verbal and emotional bacteria. You can do that with some positive affirmations and a sincere apology, which research shows is a very effective cleaning agent.⁷¹ The best type of apology is a [No-Buts Apology](#)⁷² from the perpetrator and from the teachers who allowed it to happen. A No-buts apology is an apology where you say "I am sorry, I was wrong," and that is all. You do not justify the behaviour by saying things like "but you deserved it" or "but you made me mad" or "but you did the same to me last week" or whatever. You simply acknowledge your behaviour was wrong and promise to not do it again.

As for assessment, since psychic wounds are largely invisible, to assess the wound ask questions. Did the assailant physically assault? What parts of the body were hit? Was the assault primarily words? What words were said and what was their impact. Did they cause emotional, cognitive, or spiritual damage? Once you have determined the nature of the wound and the likely damage, you can begin **repairing** and **scaffolding the wound**. In the case of psychic wounds, **repair** and **scaffolding** involves, among whatever else is necessary,

⁷⁰https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Psychic_Wound

⁷¹Aaron Lazare, *On Apology* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁷²https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/No-Buts_Apology.

1. proactive provision of positive, reinforcing statements and positive and affirming experiences where the child, adolescent, or adult can easily excel,
2. lots of love and hugs
3. ongoing attention and support, not just for a day or two but for as long it takes the wound to heal, which in some cases can be a decade or more.⁷³

Since we are following the medical model here, as you clean, assess, repair, and scaffold a psychic wound (or wounds), you also have to offer pain management. Don't overlook pain management; it is important. Don't be a "tough one." Don't deal with psychic pain by stuffing your emotions down. Many people, perhaps even you, are walking around with deep, painful, possibly even debilitating psychic wounds. It is hard to press through reinforcing statements, process positive experiences, and even receive basic love and support when you are in the throws of debilitating psychic pain, or when all your energy is going towards repression. If you do not manage this pain, you will struggle to make progress.

These days there are various options available for psychic pain management. You can try meditation, mindfulness, and "non-attachment" or, if the pain is too much for those, cannabis, ketamine, psilocybin, and even, when prescribed for the short-term and in appropriate doses, pharmaceutical anti-depressants. Other options for pain management exist, like heroin, fentanyl, alcohol, crack cocaine, and such, but we recommend you stay away from addictive options because they can easily get control of you, or even kill you. Find something that works for you, preferably in consultation with a progressive medical doctor or psychiatrist.

⁷³Parents and potential parents take note. When they were four, one of my own children received a devastating stab wound from a speech pathologist who, in a single 30 minute session, made them feel stupid and worthless. It took a decade of attention, support, encouragement, and reminders to properly heal that single wound.

Finally, once you have cleaned, examined, and repaired the wound you must **educate** the patient on what to do and what not to do if they want to properly heal their psychic wounds. Education will involve the same sorts of advice you would give a patient with a physical wound: eat well, rest, and protect yourself from further trauma. Avoiding repeated injury is especially important when it comes to psychic wounds not only because of how devastating psychic wounds can be or because of how long it can take to heal, but also because psychic damage is cumulative. Chronic ongoing assault eventually and inevitably leads to serious neurological, psychological, cognitive, spiritual, and egoic dysfunction and disease.⁷⁴

And that is all we have to say about environment, at least for now. To summarize, if you want to heal and eventually connect you are going to have to pay attention to your environments. Specifically, you are going to have to create right environments that are safe, nurturing, and healing. It is only in these environments where you will be able to treat all the various psychic wounds caused by toxic socialization.

Simple, right? Conceptually, perhaps. But actually implementing right environments that are safe, nurturing, and healing is a gargantuan task that will require not only significant personal effort, but coordinated global action funded by massive financial outlays. You have to understand, you cannot just heal yourself. You cannot just heal a few people. That is insufficient. If you just heal yourself, or a few people, or even a majority of people, sick people will continue to perpetuate problems. For example, if you exist in a home, work, or social environment where people remain toxic and damaged, they will continue to be toxic and you (and others) will continue to incur trauma, which will keep you sick and disconnected to matter how hard you try. If we want to save ourselves and this planet, we

⁷⁴We'll talk more about the impact of chronic assault in more detail in the [advanced LP psychology courses](https://www.lightningpath.org/curriculum/lightning-path-psychology/).
<https://www.lightningpath.org/curriculum/lightning-path-psychology/>

have to heal everybody. We are talking about a global transformation here. Nobody can be “left behind.”

Put like this, this might seem impossible. How on Earth can we heal an entire planet? Are we mad for suggesting the possibility? Are we delusional for even considering it? The answer to these questions is no, we are neither mad nor delusional, and this for a couple of reasons.

For one we (and by “we” I mean the human species) have the capacity. We have the [World System](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/World_System)⁷⁵ we need. A World System is a globally scoped, planet-wide operating system. A world system consists of financial, production, educational, administrative, financial, and communication systems used to maintain and support advanced civilization. Right now, we have **production systems** capable of feeding and housing all the billions, **financial systems** that can support massive social, psychological, and educational development projects, global **communication systems** capable of educating the entire planet, **administrative systems** capable of managing it all and, most importantly, we have **the money** to get it all done: it’s just that right now, this money is tied up in things like surveillance, marketing, police forces, useless profit making, and war. Worse, the various systems are being run by business people indoctrinated into a profit *über alles* mentality. Business people are great and all but they tend to run things on the narrow logic of short-term profit, to the detriment of this planet and its people. But business people can heal and they can reconnect and if, by some miracle, they suddenly do, then we could change everything over night, or at least within a decade or two. The means are there. At this point it is just a question of knowledge and priorities. We need the **right knowledge** so we know what we need to do, and we need the **right priorities** so that, high or low, we can start making decision that heal and connect. The LP aims to help with right knowledge. Changing priorities is easy, once you begin to heal and understand.

⁷⁵https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/World_System

The second reason that we are not mad or delusional is that we do not have to start from scratch. We have, in the various Indigenous traditions of the world, models for inspiration. Indigenous North American cultures are *sharing* cultures who, before colonization, had developed continent wide administrative expertise.⁷⁶ With Indigenous models for inspiration, we can easily adopt and adapt traditional systems to work with advanced world systems.

Finally, **number three**, we do not have to do it all right away and we do not have to do it alone. We can start small in our own homes, with baby steps. It's not that hard. In fact, each and every person reading these words can take three baby steps forward right now by simply

1. instituting and enforcing a no-violence rule in their home and work spaces (creating a safe environment)
2. changing their behaviour towards others (by being nurturing and supportive instead of violent and mean) and
3. taking responsibility for their own healing process.

Just these three things done by enough people can get the ball rolling down the hill.

Challenges to Change

Of course, there will be challenges to change.

For one, there will be [External Resistance](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/External_Resistance),⁷⁷ from family, friends, and coworkers who initially won't understand (and might not care to try) or who may be threatened by your efforts to change. When you talk about a no-violence rule they might ignore you, make fun of you, or even knock you down. When you try and be more nurturing, they may giggle and laugh and point, calling you weak, or thinking you are crazy and such. They might even

⁷⁶Ronald Wright, *Stolen Continents* (Penguin, 2015).

⁷⁷https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/External_Resistance

undermine your healing and reconnection work. It will be tough pushing against this, but if you want to make progress, and if we want to save the planet, you are going to have to push through this.

For two, there will be [Internal Resistance](#).⁷⁸ You will constantly doubt yourself and your thinking, at least in the early days. You will wonder if you are crazy or if there is something wrong with you. You will be tempted to give in and give up. This feeling will be exacerbated by family, friends, and coworkers who don't understand or who resist for whatever reason. It will be a challenge staying the course.

But you can do it. You can take these steps. Here are a few tips to help.

1. **For one, try not to get mad.** People resist not out of greed, spite, or hatred necessarily (though sometimes), but because they can't understand the damage caused by the toxic System, because they can't see the "invisible" psychic wounds like they see physical wounds, because they've been taught to pretend it's not real, or because they are scared are threatened by what change might all mean. Getting angry just makes the energy worse, so try to avoid that.
2. **Number two, don't lose sight of the truth.** The truth comes down to this. Toxic socialization is debilitating and disconnecting and we need to change so we can all heal and reconnect.
3. **Number three, don't give in to the propaganda** that tells you everything is functioning as normal and OK. First of all, "normal" is toxic. If you want to heal and connect, you have to give up normal. Second of all, things are bad and getting worse. If you believe the propaganda that everything is fine, you'll only make it harder for

⁷⁸https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Internal_Resistance

yourself in the end. Third, we are all conditioned to ignore our wounds and make fun of other people who are injured. Worse than that, we are all counselled to embrace psychic assault because the psychic trauma presumably “builds character” and “makes us stronger.” Who has not heard the phrase “my suffering has made me who I am today.” Even so-called “positive” psychology has gotten in on the act of embracing trauma because, as they say on their website, “crises reveals character.”⁷⁹ This is, of course, a pile of malarkey. Saying that “crises reveals character” or that “what does not kill us makes us stronger” is like saying gashing your legs open makes you a better person. It does not. Trauma damages you, period. It is the height of human absurdity to suggest that psychic trauma is actually good for you. All the evidence suggests otherwise—that psychic trauma does serious and debilitating damage.⁸⁰ Trauma always represents damage. There is never a “silver lining” to trauma.

4. **Number four**, and finally, **directly address shame and guilt**, of yourself and others.

As we learn in the LP course [LP 140: Communicating and Connecting With Your Guide Network](#),⁸¹ shame and guilt are important [Steering Emotions](#) that help you identify when you have done something wrong,⁸² i.e., engaged in [Wrong Action](#).⁸³ Therefore, ideally, when you feel guilt and shame, you look around for the actions that have triggered it and atone for/change those actions. Unfortunately, our societies do not teach proper management of guilt and shame. In fact, our toxic societies weaponize guilt and shame. This, coupled with the intense emotional pain associated

⁷⁹Courtney Ackerman, “What Is Positive Psychology & Why Is It Important?,” *PositivePsychology.Com*, 2018, <https://positivepsychology.com/what-is-positive-psychology-definition/>.

⁸⁰For an overview of the research, see Sosteric, “Toxic Socialization.”

⁸¹<https://www.lightningpath.org/courses/lp-140-communicating-with-your-spirit-guides/>

⁸²https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Steering_Emotion

⁸³https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Wrong_Action

with guilt and shame, leads to toxic patterns of avoidance. Avoidance causes shame and guilt to build up over time. By the time you reach middle age you have done so many things to be guilty and shameful off that it becomes almost impossible to process the guilt and shame, at least without professional help. This generally large repository of guilt makes is strong incentive to **repress** memories and emotions so we are not aware of them, **pretend** that our actions are (and were) are not so bad after all, or find scapegoats to **blame**. All that works under **Normal Consciousness**, but it all becomes a lot harder to do once you begin to heal and reconnect. In fact, taking a closer look at past actions can, in some cases, cause a tsunami of guilt and shame. Still, no matter how hard it might you, you are going to deal with guilt and shame and the wrong actions that underlie them. There some guidance on this in LP Workbook Three⁸⁴ and you should seek professional help.

As a final comment, as you consider moving forward, understand that the only way to clear guilt and shame is to **face** the reality of your actions and **forgive** yourself for your trespasses. Do not be hard on yourself. You did the things you did not because you are bad or evil but because you were ignorant of the truth and traumatized/damaged by the System. There is no sense in wasting psychic energy by dwelling on things you cannot change, or trying to repress it all down. To move forward, atone for past actions, change your behaviour, and forgive yourself. True, there may be a lot of trauma and damage to heal from, but you will not be able to do that if you are rendered inactive and unable to move by intense guilt and shame. If you want to release yourself from the chains of guilt and shame, if you want to change your world, if you want to change the world, do not repress guilt and shame.

⁸⁴Mike Sosteric, *Lightning Path Workbook Three - Connection*, vol. 3, Lightning Path Workbook Series (St. Albert, Alberta: Lightning Path Press, 2017), <https://www.lightningpath.org/lp-workbooks/>.

Acknowledge your bad actions, atone, forgive yourself your trespasses, move forward and live a more aligned life.

And that is all we have to say. To summarize the message of this unit, underlies the significance of right environment, noting that right environment it is crucial for maintaining psychological, emotional, and physical health, healing trauma, preventing further damage, and fostering reconnection. A right environment must be safe, nurturing, and healing for individuals and the broader community. Beyond that, right environments must encourage global transformation. Healing must extend beyond individuals to the entire planet. The existing global systems (financial, administrative, educational) can be repurposed to prioritize meeting humanity's essential needs over profit and growth. Learning from Indigenous models and implementing a collective, global effort are key. Towards that end, personal actions like enforcing a no-violence rule, changing one's behavior towards others to be more nurturing, and taking responsibility for one's healing are foundational. Challenges and resistance (both external and internal resistances) are expected, but you must work through them. Understanding that resistance often comes from fear, ignorance, or indoctrination helps in managing it. Through all this, persistence and maintaining focus on the truth about toxic socialization and the necessity of healing are vital. Finally, the unit emphasizes the critical need to deal with guilt and shame. Properly managing guilt and shame involves acknowledging wrong actions, atoning for them, and forgiving oneself. This process is essential for personal healing and for contributing positively to collective transformation.

Connection Coach Certification Questions

1. What is right environment (hint, safe, nurturing, and healing)? How do you establish right environment? What are some of the challenges you might face when trying to detoxify your environment?
2. What are the four things can humans do to avoid the guilt and shame that comes from wrong action? Provide examples. What does it mean to say that in order to relieve guilt and shame you must “face and forgive?”
3. Why is global transformation necessary? What are our first steps towards encouraging global transformation.

Lesson Four: “A” is for Addiction

So far in this workbook, we have looked at the importance of getting help if you need it and the importance of safe and non-toxic right environments to the healing, reconnection, and human development process. We have said get help if you need it and we have emphasized the need to focus on creating healthy, protective, and nurturing environments so you can heal and reconnect. Getting help may be particularly important if you find your wounds are infected or you are dealing with serious emotional sepsis. When wounds are infected, right environment, mindfulness, and simple affirmations may not be sufficient. When wounds are infected, you may need competent and professional help. Don't be ashamed to ask for it.

Now that we have talked about all that, the next thing to address is addiction. An addiction is anything upon which you, or rather your physical unit, has a biological, neurological, psychological, or emotional dependency upon. An addiction is something you do that you cannot stop. Addictions are far more prevalent than mainstream science and psychology would have you believe. I'm going to go out on a limb here and say just about everybody in Westernized society is addicted to one thing or another. Mine are coffee and sugar, but there's a lot of other options. You can get addicted to *substances* (i.e. money, heroin, cocaine, alcohol, coffee, opioids, etc.), *behaviours* (running, sex smartphones), and even *people* (i.e. relationships). Addressing addiction is very important because addictions, no matter what they are, undermine health, healing, alignment (especially alignment), and connection.

How do you tell if you are addicted to something? The test for addiction is quite simple. If there is a **substance** or **activity** that you cannot stop, even for a very short period, and that you justify and make excuses for, you are addicted.⁸⁵ You have an addiction to alcohol if you

⁸⁵ Carlton K. Erickson and Richard E. Wilcox, "Neurobiological Causes of Addiction," Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions 1.3 (2001).

cannot stop drinking for any significant length of time. You have an addiction to shopping if your day is simply not complete without a consumer purchase of some sort. You have an addiction to gambling if you compromise your financial security and obligations to feed your fix. You are addicted to social media if you spend all day long interacting with your screen.

What causes addictions? In the not-too-distant past, scientists explained addiction by blaming the “addicts” themselves, basically suggesting that there was something wrong with them. Addicts were “bad, crazy, ignorant people”⁸⁶ who were weak, had moral failings, or were mentally ill⁸⁷. But these days, not much better. While scientists have admitted that there is no such thing as an “addictive personality”⁸⁸ and that genes do not play a prominent role, and while we don’t blame “weakness” or “moral failings” anymore, we have managed to hang on to the victim-blaming spiel. Now we blame the individual by blaming their defective neuro-mechanisms,⁸⁹ their lack of “psychosocial skills,”⁹⁰ the presence of “outlying” (read “abnormal”) traits,⁹¹ their dysfunctional ways of interpreting “experiences,” difficulty with “self-regulation,” and various other “defects” which, as one scientist put it, makes people “especially susceptible” to addiction,

Are “bad genes,” “brain illness,” lack of social skills, “faulty” readings of reality, and brain defects the cause of addiction? Absolutely not. All these explanations *blame the victim*, ignore the social, political, and economic contexts, and conveniently sidestep the power of

⁸⁶ Erickson and Wilcox, "Neurobiological Causes of Addiction," 7.

⁸⁷ Thomas Szasz, “Chemical Straitjackets for Children,” *FEE*, 2000, <https://fee.org/articles/chemical-straitjackets-for-children/>.

⁸⁸ Addictive Adaptation Disorder develops when there is a need for self-medication, and when primary persons, places, and influencers promote and model self-medicating practices.

⁸⁹ Marc A. Schuckit, "An Overview of Genetic Influences in Alcoholism," Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment.1 (2009).

⁹⁰ Kenneth E. Leonard, "Perspective: Beyond the Neural Circuits," Nature 522 (2015).

⁹¹ Maria Szalavitz, "The Addictive Personality Isn't What You Think It Is," Scientific America 2016.

the substances themselves. Sugar is one of the most addictive substances on the planet. Coffee and alcohol rank up there as well. Cigarettes were *designed* to be more addictive than normal. Advertising lowers cognitive and emotional barriers to these dangerous substances. As you can see, there is all sort of reasons we're all running around addicted, and lots of people to blame, but individual decisions, moral failing, and neurological deficits are not on list.

So, how do we become addicted.

It's not rocket science.

Toxic socialization involves violence, frustration of needs, chaos, destruction of attachments, and indoctrination. Violence and assault, the neglect of our essential needs, the experience of chronic chaos at home and in the world, the destruction of our attachments, the profoundly painful guilt and shame we experience as a consequence of the disjunctive and harmful actions we engage, *make us feel bad*. Of course, nobody wants to feel bad, especially when the bad feelings are chronic. It feels bad to feel bad. Not only that, feeling bad is bad for your health. Feeling bad washes us in negativity and stress. Feeling bad physically, emotionally, and psychologically impairs us. Worst of it, it makes our brain chemistry neurotoxic.⁹² When we feel really bad about things, we become dysfunction For these reasons, our physical unit has an instinct to avoid pain of all kinds programmed into the body. Sigmund Freud called this programming the pleasure principle; we call it a [Survival Algorithm](#),⁹³ a subclass of [Bodily Algorithms](#), because that is exactly what it is. When our environments are highly toxic, when our needs are not fully met, when our life experiences are highly painful, when

⁹²P. Salmon, "Effects of Physical Exercise on Anxiety, Depression, and Sensitivity to Stress: A Unifying Theory," *Clinical Psychology Review* 21, no. 1 (February 2001): 33–61.

⁹³A Survival Algorithm is a biological control process designed to facilitate the survival of the [Physical Unit](#). Examples of survival algorithms include the [Pleasure Principle](#), first identified by [Sigmund Freud](#)), and the [Attachment Algorithm](#). https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Survival_Algorithm.

there is chaos all around, we have an instinct to try and do something about it, to make ourselves feel good, and that is exactly what we will do.

At first, we will do the only thing that really works, which is try to halt the assault, reduce the toxicity, have our needs met, at atone for the bad things we've done. As children, we might cry when our needs are not satisfied or when we are subject to forms of assault. If modelled to us, we alleviate guilt and shame by changing behaviour and apologizing when we've done something wrong. As adolescents, we might point out the hypocrisy and the toxicity of the violators in front of us in the hopes that truth and good sense will prevail. As adults we might "rage against the machine" and try to change the world. Unfortunately, our families, our social networks, and indeed our societies are so toxic that our childhood, adolescent, and adult efforts to stop toxicity and get our needs met are often met with finger-pointing dismissal, disregard, and even violence. We are told to quit being babies and to grow up. We are told to "be grateful," that we are "going through a phase," and that others have it so much worse. We are told to "deal with it" or "get over it." We are even told that the violence, neglect, and chaos we experience are actually good for us (spare the rod and spoil the child), that they "build character" (what does not kill you makes you strong). "Sometimes," we are even told that we "deserve it" because of original sin or some kinda "karma" we got. Often, our protestations are met by increased violence and censure. My mom hit me harder when all my sobbing made her feel bad.

The reality is, attempts to improve experiences by reducing childhood violence, chaos, and neglect themselves fail, often painfully. When that happens, the "pleasure principle" survival algorithm kicks in and we seek out ways to calm, sooth, numb, repress, or escape from the chronic pain. This is where addictions come from. Addictions arise as a consequence of our

attempts to escape from chronic pain, so we can feel better, if even for a little while.⁹⁴ When we cannot improve our life experience, when we cannot get our needs met authentically, when we need something to make us feel better or to help us ignore and forget, we find things that can do that for us.

We start smoking because it calms our frazzled nerves, or because it helps us fit into a group, thus satisfying our need to belong.

We drink alcohol because it numbs us⁹⁵ or makes us feel close to people.

We dose opiates because they bring fast relief.

We go to a casino because winning makes us feel good.

We go shopping because it gives us a little “hit.”

Over time, and as a consequence the body’s [Dopamine Attachment](#) routines (more on these below), the body, a little bit every day and slowly over time, attaches to the substance or behaviour that makes us feel good until one day, “right out of the blue,” your attachment has turned toxic and you are an addict.

So what happened?

To fully understand, you have to understand the reward/reinforcement mechanisms in the brain, specifically the role of dopamine. Dopamine is a learning chemical long associated with pleasure, reward, and addiction.⁹⁶ Dopamine is part of the body’s [Attachment](#)

⁹⁴ A rather interesting take is provided by the article “Is addiction an Attachment Disorder?” which says that alcoholics had terrible parents and as a result did not “attach.” Thus, failed attachment and neglect leads to attachment disorder which is the cause of addiction. Alcoholics Guide, [Is Addiction an Attachment Disorder?](#), 2014, Inside the Alcoholic Brain, December 12 2018. This is interesting, but it too narrowly focuses on only one unmet need.

⁹⁵ Or because it helps us fill the hole left by failed parental attachment. See Alcoholics Guide, [Is Addiction an Attachment Disorder?](#)

⁹⁶ Nora D. Volkow et al., “Addiction: Beyond Dopamine Reward Circuitry,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 108, no. 37 (2011): 15037–42, doi:10.1073/pnas.1010654108; George F. Koob and Nora D. Volkow, “Neurobiology of Addiction: A Neurocircuitry Analysis,” *The Lancet Psychiatry* 3, no. 8 (2016):

[Algorithm](#). Dopamine helps your body survive by helping your brain learn things.

Specifically, it helps you to learn things that are pleasurable (like eating a juicy strawberry) or that provide relief and respite. Dopamine is released when you engage in activities, when you consume things, or even when you think things that are pleasurable or that reduce suffering in some significant way. This includes anything that releases pleasure chemicals in your brain, like running a marathon, eating an awesome meal, doing a line of cocaine, or drinking till you can't feel no pain.⁹⁷ As one scholar put it, dopamine release is “like a little red flag to your brain, saying ‘hey, pay attention, this is about to feel good [and make you feel better], and you want to remember this, so you can do it again.’”⁹⁸

Under normal conditions, this is fine. Under normal conditions this little [Attachment Algorithm](#)⁹⁹ helps your body do things that are good for it, good being defined here as what the body finds pleasurable. However, when you endure toxic environments, when you are constantly under stress, you look for things that help you cope. When you find the “thing” that calms you, makes you feel good, or helps you escape, even if only briefly, dopamine is released. This release creates a self-reinforcing [Dopamine Attachment](#)¹⁰⁰ to the substance, thought, or behaviour. Once this attachment is created, the individual will increasingly seek out the thing. Over time, the attachment will grow until it becomes a very real, and very powerful, addiction.

760–73, doi:10.1016/S2215-0366(16)00104-8; Trevor W. Robbins and Barry J. Everitt, “Drug Addiction: Bad Habits Add Up,” *Nature* 398 (15/online 1999): 567, doi:10.1038/19208.

⁹⁷ Wolfram Schultz, “Dopamine Reward Prediction-Error Signalling: A Two-Component Response,” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 17, no. 3 (2016): 183–95, doi:10.1038/nrn.2015.26; Ethan S. Bromberg-Martin, Masayuki Matsumoto, and Okihide Hikosaka, “Dopamine in Motivational Control: Rewarding, Aversive, and Alerting,” *Neuron* 68, no. 5 (2010): 815–34, doi:10.1016/j.neuron.2010.11.022.

⁹⁸ David J. Ley, [No, Dopamine Is Not Addictive](#), 2017, Psychology Today, Available: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/women-who-stray/201701/no-dopamine-is-not-addictive>, January 6 2017.

⁹⁹ https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Attachment_Algorithm

¹⁰⁰ https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Dopamine_Attachment

If you experienced toxic socialization growing up (and haven't we all) or if you live in a toxic environment, you are prone to developing addictions because you will be motivated to find something that offers relief/release/pleasure/escape. When you do, dopamine will be released and you will slowly become attached to that substance, behaviour, etc.

Because addiction is caused by an attachment which is facilitated by dopamine release in the brain, we might prefer to call an addiction a [Toxic Attachment](#),¹⁰¹ not only because this is less stigmatizing, but also because that is exactly what an addiction is, a dopamine-induced attachment that has turned toxic. Fully defined, we would say that a toxic attachment (a.k.a. addiction) is a [Substance Attachment](#), [Behavioural Attachment](#), or [Relationship Attachment](#) that has become dysfunctional or damaging in any way.

Dealing with Toxic Attachments

At this point, you should have a good idea about the nature of addiction, which is that it is a toxic dopamine-induced attachment to a thought, substance, or behaviour. The question now is, once you have one or more of these toxic attachments, what do you do? That depends. If you can live with the attachment in balance, if it is not causing you or anybody else any harm, if it helps, then don't do anything. A dopamine-induced attachment to running or coffee, for example, aren't necessarily bad things. A cup of coffee a day or a regular jog won't harm you as long as you are balanced and controlled about it. In fact, there are health benefits to both.

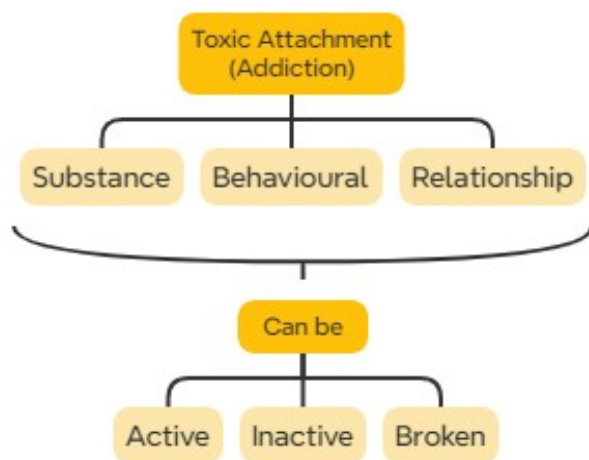
On the other hand, if you cannot live with the attachment, if it is undermining your function, causing you pain, harming your relationships, or damaging you physically and neurologically, then that attachment is toxic and you need to do something about it. Drinking

¹⁰¹ https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Toxic_Attachment.

a pot or more of coffee a day or being devoted to running to the point where you are sacrificing relationships with your spouse and your children is a problem.

If you decide to change, how do you do that? Conceptually, it is easy First you have to take your **Active Attachment** (one which you currently service) and inactivate it. An **Inactive Attachment** is an attachment that you no longer entertain, but for which cravings, caused by neurological vestiges, yet remain. In other words, an inactive attachment is an attachment you can resist. Then, when you have inactivated your attachment for a sufficient period, you break it. A **Broken Attachment** is an attachment that is unlearned and for which no neurological vestiges, and therefore no cravings, remain. Figure one summarizes what we have learned so far.

Figure One: Toxic Attachments



To wrap your head around this, consider the process of ridding yourself of a toxic attachment to smoking. The first step in ridding yourself of a toxic attachment to smoking (quitting) is to *inactivate* the attachment. You inactivate your attachment through sheer force of will, and with whatever supports that you have available. Inactivation of a smoking attachment takes about one month, after which cravings are not eliminated, but reduced to a more manageable level that is easy to control even under stress. Once your attachment is inactive, then you have to endure a sustained period of low-level craving, a period during which you are at high risk of reactivation. If you can stay inactive long enough, then eventually cravings disappear. You know your attachment is broken when you have no more desire to smoke, drink, shop, etc. at all.

I'm not going to lie to you. Inactivation and breaking an attachment can be quite a challenge, and it can take a lot of time. It can take many years to completely break an attachment like smoking. This is because toxic attachments are complex and multifaceted. Toxic attachments often cover over years or decades of accumulated neglect, stress, violence and abuse. Not only that, they are rooted in powerful, survival-related dopamine attachments which over time rewire the brain and make you physically dependent on the substance, behaviour, or relationship for proper brain functioning.¹⁰² Quitting a toxic attachment, going from active to broken, can be quite the challenge.

While it is true that inactivating and breaking toxic attachment can be quite difficult, there are definitely different things you can do to help improve your chances of inactivating and breaking your attachments, and we're going to list them below. Note these are not "steps" in the tradition sense, just thoughts you can think and things you can try to help improve your

¹⁰²See for example Andrew Holmes, Paul J. Fitzgerald, Kathryn P. MacPherson, Lauren DeBrouse, Giovanni Colacicco, Shaun M. Flynn, Sophie Masneuf, Kristen E. Pleil, Chia Li, Catherine A. Marcinkiewicz, Thomas L. Kash, Ozge Gunduz-Cinar and Marguerite Camp, "Chronic Alcohol Remodels Prefrontal Neurons and Disrupts Nmdar-Mediated Fear Extinction Encoding," Nature Neuroscience 15 (2012).

chance of success. Also, this advice is not comprehensive, only suggestive. You may have to try lots of different things before you can inactivate and finally break your toxic addictions.

First off, recognize the simple fact that toxic attachments develop not because of genetics or neurochemical imbalances but as ways of coping with toxic environments. This is important because it shifts the blame off of you (weakness, etc.) to the real source of addictions, which is toxic environments and toxic socialization. This is important. One of the biggest things you can do to improve your chances of success is to stop blaming yourself for your addiction and start creating non-toxic living and work spaces.

Second, with your gaze focused firmly on your environment, write your [Trauma-Informed Developmental Narrative](#).¹⁰³ A trauma informed developmental narrative is basically your life's story told with an eye on trauma and its impact on your mental, emotional, and physical development and well being. As you are writing your trauma story, you should also conduct a [Needs Analysis](#).¹⁰⁴ We talk more about needs in this workbooks unit on essential needs. If you are not already familiar with the essential needs, perhaps pause and read that chapter. If you are already familiar, then simply ask yourself the basic question, "Were (are) my seven essential needs met." Remember, your seven essential needs, include your physiological, cognitive, environmental, emotional, psychological, alignment, and connection needs. Think about your childhood, adolescent, and adult environments (home, school, work). Where your needs met? Where these environments toxic? Did they lack routines? Where they chaotic? Where the people in them violent and neglectful? Were you parentified?

Number three, analyze and begin treatment of your attachments by conducting an LP [Attachment Analysis](#), or AA for short. An Attachment Analysis is a three step process that

¹⁰³Holly Graham and Stephanie Martin, "Narrative Descriptions of Miyo-Mahcihoyān (Physical, Emotional, Mental, and Spiritual Well-Being) from a Contemporary Nēhiyawak (Plains Cree) Perspective.," *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* 10 (September 21, 2016): 1.

¹⁰⁴https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Needs_Analysis

involves **identification** of the toxic attachment, **classification** of its severity, and **clarification** of its causes). We provide an [Attachments Analysis Form](https://www.academia.edu/104849632/Lightning_Path_TM_Attachments_Analysis_Form)¹⁰⁵ which you can download and refer to as you conduct your AA analysis. Instructions for conducting an Attachment Analysis are included in the form.

Example Attachments Analysis

To help you wrap your head around attachment analysis, I provide you an example attachment analysis I did for myself. I (Mike S.) used to smoke. When active, my attachment to smoking was severe (4) and toxic (4). I started smoking because, at the age of nineteen, I had no significant attachments in my family (single parent mom, aunts, uncles, and cousins that “looked down” on us) and because I had a consequent unmet need to “fit in” and belong. I found smoking was a way to satiate my unmet need for belonging. I started smoking so I could fit in with friends. Even though it was thirty-five years ago, I still remember the motivation and the wonderful feeling of “fitting in” that I got from smoking the first time. I needed that feeling so bad that I ignored the physical distress (nausea and headaches, etc.) caused by the poisonous cigarettes.

Inactivating and Breaking Toxic Attachments

Once you have your attachment analysis in hand, you can start considering treatment. Treating toxic attachments is not rocket science, but it can be a real challenge, especially considering that people usually only consider treatment when the toxic attachments have been quite problematic (i.e, toxic and severe). Regardless, here is some guidance on how to proceed.

¹⁰⁵https://www.academia.edu/104849632/Lightning_Path_TM_Attachments_Analysis_Form

First, remember, toxic attachments are not the consequence of a single trauma, or even a dozen traumas. Toxic attachments just don't develop over night. They are the consequences of decades of toxic socialization and toxic experiences. It is going to take focused effort and concentrated work to break your toxic attachments. We'll speak more about the effort required below.

Second, use the medical model to help you think about and organize your treatment. To use the medical model, protect, clean, examine, assess, repair, and scaffold the wound. Provide pain management and educate yourself.

First **protect** and **clean** the wound. Focus on your environments and relationships. Toxic attachments arise because of chronically toxic conditions in your environments (toxic parents, toxic teachers, toxic friends, toxic religions, toxic work places) and so you need to protect your wounds from further damage by improving your environments. This only makes sense. If you break your leg playing soccer, you don't put yourself back out onto the field or go running around in sludgy mud. You find a safe, nurturing, healing environment where you can rest, recuperate, and heal. This is the same with toxic addictions and the psychic wounds that cause them. You will have a hard time breaking your toxic attachments if your environments (home, work) and relationships remain toxic and your wounds are continually reopened. In this regard, you have two choices. You can either educate the people who make up your life about the consequences of toxicity and the impact it is having on your addictions and ask them to heal with you, or you can exit your toxic relationships and toxic families and begin to build up new ones. The easiest and least disruptive solution is to educate your family and friends about the consequences of physical and psychic toxicity and request assistance from them in said detoxification. If possible, we recommend you immediately institute a no-violence rule and work together to remove all instances of emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual violence and exploitation. There can be no compromise here. If you

want to heal and deal with your addictions, you must create healthy, non-toxic spaces within which you can heal and reprogram.

Once you have protected your wounds, your next step is to **examine** and **assess** the wounds. If you have completed your LP Developmental Narrative, Needs Analysis, and Attachment Analysis, you should be well on your way to assessing and understanding your wounds. You should also be in a position to begin treating your wounds. Treatment involves cleaning, repairing, scaffolding, educating, and pain management, Note, treatment here is a little more complex than treating physical wounds and discussing it involves more than a few paragraphs in a short introductory workbook. Still, there are a few things you can do.

1. Be mindful of your cravings. Pay attention to associations, feelings that tend to cover. Shame, addiction, pain among them most common.
2. Be mindful of your triggers. Avoid them when possible, remain in control when experiencing. There are quite a few things triggers which can trigger your toxic attachments. For example, **environmental cues**, like specific **places** (bars, stores, shopping catalogues), can trigger cravings as can **social situations**, like interacting with friends or acquaintances who engage in or encourage the addictive behaviour, or attending parties, gatherings, or other social events where the addictive behaviour is common. In addition, **emotional states**, like **stress**, **boredom** (needing some excitement, or distraction), feelings of sadness, loneliness, anger, or frustration can trigger cravings. **Physical states** like **fatigue** can lower resistance to cravings. **Rituals and routines** that include the addictive behaviour, such as smoking after meals or drinking in the evening, can be a problem, as can **time of day**. **Sensory Triggers** like the smell of tobacco or alcohol and **sounds**, like clinking glasses or the rustle of shopping bags, can trigger addictions. Finally, specific **thought patterns**, like thinking about the addictive behaviour or reminiscing about past use can trigger

cravings and even rationalization (justifying or minimizing the impact of the addictive behaviour) can lead to a relapse.

3. **Finally, rectify** your attachments. You rectify your attachments by finding better ways to meet your needs and better ways to self-medicate. For example, if you suffer from anxiety and PTSD and smoking helps calm you down, rectifying your toxic attachment to smoking requires you learn to do something else to calm yourself down instead. Instead of jumping straight to the cigarette, do some yoga and stretching, take a hot bath, talk to your spouse, family member, or friend. Instead of running off to the casino, do some mindfulness and meditation. Instead of pouring that drink, get some love from a loved one or brew yourself a jasmine tea. Stimulate natural endorphin release with sex, laughter, purpose, giving, exercise, healthy diet, etc. Putting a healthier activity or substance in front of the addictive response will encourage dopamine attachment to the new activity or substance, thereby rewiring your brain. Rectifying like this will help you rewire your brain, inactivate and eventually break your toxic attachments.

Note, rectification and rewiring can take a long time. The original toxic wiring took place over time and as a consequence of many experiences. As William S. Burroughs says, “it takes about a year and several hundred injections to make an addict. That is because it takes about that long to hard wire your brain and create the hard attachments that function as chronic addiction. For example, if your toxic attachment is drinking, it took a lot of “pleasant” feelings of numbness, detachment, escape, sociability, etc., to get your brain rewired and hard attached to the substance. Unfortunately, it is also going to take a year, and several hundred new experiences in non-toxic environments with non-toxic attachments, to break the hard attachments and rewire the brain. You simply cannot skip these experiences and go cold turkey. If you do not go through the experiences, the rewiring never occurs. If

the rewiring never occurs, all you will do is inactivate your toxic attachments. If all you accomplish is inactivation, the wiring will always remain and you will be prone to reactivation.

Also, keep in mind, once again, that rectification and deactivation of attachments is challenging, and breaking your attachments won't happen overnight. This means you should be realistic about how long it takes to break the physical addiction and toxic attachments. In other words, do not kid yourself. This will not be easy. Inactivating your toxic attachments will require an ongoing act of willpower. Therefore, cut yourself some slack. If you still need the cigarette, casino, or drink after you have put an alternative activity or substance in between, that is fine. Do not torture yourself. Do not shame yourself. But, be mindful, use your willpower, and keep trying. Resist as long as you can, then do as little of the addiction as you require, and remind yourself how good it felt/will feel to stretch, meditate, drink tea, and get love.

Finally, note that being addiction free does not necessarily mean giving things up; it just means breaking the toxic attachment and using experience to reprogram your brain. You might be addicted to shopping, for example, but when you break this addiction, you will still shop, you just won't "enjoy" it so much and you will be in control. The same thing goes for some of the other addictions people have. As long as you are in control, as long as there are no neural vestiges of previous toxic wiring, occasional use of a substance is fine, so long as it causes no harm to the physical unit or those around you. On the other hand, if you cannot gain control, or if the substance is simply too dangerous (e.g. opioids like Fentanyl), total abstinence may be the only option.

To summarize, this unit on addiction defines addiction as a dependency on substances, behaviors, or relationships, noting that addiction is more widespread than commonly recognized. This unit also points out that addictions are not due to individual failings or

genetic predispositions but are rooted in toxic environments and socialization, which cause chronic distress and lead individuals to seek relief through addictive behaviours. This relief is reinforced by dopamine, which creates a self-reinforcing cycle of dependency.

To address addictions, in this unit we suggest recognizing their origins in toxic experiences and conducting a trauma-informed needs analysis. This involves understanding one's life story through the lens of trauma and unmet needs. Overcoming addiction requires a multifaceted approach, including creating non-toxic environments, replacing harmful attachments with healthier alternatives, and gradually rewiring the brain. The process is challenging and requires sustained effort and willpower, but with the right strategies and support, it is possible to break free from toxic attachments and achieve lasting healing and reconnection.

In our next unit we are going to talk about the fourth letter in this HEALING framework, lying. Lying is something you are going to have to address if you want to properly deal with your addictions, heal and reconnect in an authentic fashion. This is especially true when it comes to addictions. Addicts, you see, are particularly prone to lying. This is not because of any failure of character or anything like that, it is because actually dealing with the addictions and the underlying causal factors can be tough, and this for a couple of reasons. Reason **number one**, actually changing behaviours and detoxifying our environments is a lot of work. It much easier to *pretend* we are making changes or pretend others (our parents, our siblings, our friends, etc.) are being nice, and so that is what many people do—pretend—pretend it is not so bad or pretend they've made progress, even when they have not. Reason number two, people lie because actually changing their behaviours often requires them to confront all the shitty things we have done. This confrontation can cause us intense guilt and shame, already likely a problem in the psyche of the addict. Once again, it is easier to pretend that “you did the best you could” or pretend that you are a good person or that you have been

accountable, even when you haven't. By pretending away our shitty environments and shitty behaviours, we avoid intense feelings of guilt and shame. But of course, that doesn't work. If you lie about your environments, lie about the people around you, lie about your own behaviours, you are not going to make any real progress. If you are serious about treating your wounds and your addictions, if you are serious about healing and reconnecting, you are going to have to stop lying. If you do not, there is no way for you to move forward. You either face the truth of things and do what needs to be done, or you stay stuck in the dying old energy world. It is as simple as that.

Connection Coach Certification Questions

1. Pause a few moments and reflect upon your life, past and present. What were the two most toxic environments you ever endured? Was it your childhood or your school? Is it a current relationship? Right your thoughts down. Now ask yourself, what "things" (behaviours or substances) helped you cope with the toxic situations.. Do you feel you are attached to any of these "things?" Why or why not? Write your answers down to these questions in your HC journal.
2. What makes an attachment a toxic attachment? Do you have any problematic behavioural or substance attachments? Write these down.
3. What is the difference between an active attachment and a broken toxic attachment? Do you have any active attachments? Do you have any broken attachments? If you have broken attachments, what has helped you to break your attachments? Write your answers to these questions down in your HC Journal.

4. Briefly describe the LP process of treating addiction. What role does the [Trauma-Informed Developmental Narrative](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Trauma_Informed_Developmental_Narrative),¹⁰⁶ [Needs Analysis](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Needs_Analysis),¹⁰⁷ and [Attachments Analysis](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Attachment_Analysis)¹⁰⁸ perform in the healing process.

¹⁰⁶https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Trauma_Informed_Developmental_Narrative

¹⁰⁷https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Needs_Analysis

¹⁰⁸https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Attachment_Analysis

Lesson Five: “L” is for Lies

In the previous section, we took a look at “addiction,” or what we call **Toxic Attachment**.

As we saw there, toxic attachment to substances, behaviours, and even people develop because of toxic socialization and toxic life experiences, specifically the pain and emptiness caused by violence, neglect, and chaos. The pain of toxic socialization causes us to look for things to salve, sooth, and treat the damage. We find these “things” that help (alcohol, sex, meth-amphetamines, shopping, or whatever), and through the magic of dopamine attachment, we become attached to the point of toxicity, meaning we consume the substances (like tobacco, alcohol, cocaine, carbs, etc.), engage in the behaviours (running, sex, shopping, etc.), or develop toxic attachments to people (i.e., co-dependent abusive relationships) even though they cause damage to our body, our self, our family, our life, and even this world.

As we noted in the last unit, treating toxic attachment, though relatively straightforward, is a challenge. But, with appropriate help and the tools provided in the previous unit (i.e.,

[Trauma-Informed Developmental Narrative](#),¹⁰⁹ [Needs Analysis](#),¹¹⁰ and [Attachments Analysis](#)), you can do it.

At this point, you might be feeling that although this may all quite challenging it is, nevertheless, common sense—and it is. Once you know the truth of toxic attachments to behaviours, substances, and people, it usually only takes a few straight-forward questions and a few honest answers to figure out the source of the trauma and the reason for the toxic attachment(s). The problem is, we don’t often give ourselves honest answers about our traumas, their sources, and the psychic wounds and toxic attachments that result. In fact, as a rule, we tend to lie to ourselves and others about these things. We lie to ourselves and others about our environments and how bad they were. We lie to ourselves and others about the

¹⁰⁹https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Trauma_Informed_Developmental_Narrative

¹¹⁰https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Needs_Analysis

quality of our relationships and how empty and violent they are. We lie to ourselves and others about the severity of our psychic wounds. We lie to ourselves and others about the nature of our actions. We lie to ourselves and others about the presence of toxic attachments. We lie about so many things we don't even realize when we are lying anymore. We lie, lie, lie, lie lie; and then, we lie some more. We lie to epic levels.

Why?

It's not rocket science.

Mostly it is to avoid doing the hard work and the painful guilt and shame.

We lie to ourselves about the pedophile in our family because to tell ourselves the truth would mean doing the hard emotional, psychological, spiritual, and legal work of addressing the toxicity and protecting the children. It would also require us to face the shame of allowing the sexual assaults to happen, or for not having done anything about them when they did.

We lie to ourselves about our own toxic actions because to tell ourselves the truth would mean not only having to deal with intense guilt and shame (often built up over years) caused by all the horrible things that we have done, and that can be quite painful, but also having to do the hard emotional, psychological, spiritual, and legal work of addressing our own toxic actions.

So how do we do it?

How do we accomplish what amounts to an epic level of deceit? There are several well-worn strategies we use to accomplish this.

The Not-So-Bad Self-Delusion

One of the more simple and innocent reasons people lie about their environments, the toxicity in their lives, their toxic attachments, their toxic behaviours, and so on, is that people tell themselves that things are not that bad after all, and so they do not think they have a problem. A toxic attachment to running is a good example of this. Running is a healthy activity, and it is easy to think that it is not a problem, even when it is. Because running is something we all see as healthy, it is easy to ignore any negativity that might result.

Unfortunately, negativity can result. People can become addicted to running and can go out and do it for hours at a time, three to five times a week. An addiction like this can have a range of negative familial, social, and personal consequences.

In terms of the **family**, an addiction to running can mean neglect of family duties, which can lead to tension and conflicts within the family, reduced family time, feelings of neglect and isolation among family members, financial strain as the individual spends heavily on running gear, race entry fees, and travel for events, and even anxiety as family members may become worried about the health risks associated with over-exercising. **Socially**, an addiction to running can cause social isolation, relationship strain with friends and colleagues, and increased conflict in friend and social circles. There may even be **personal consequences**, like physical injuries caused by over training, mental health issues, like anxiety, depression, and obsessive-compulsive behaviours. burnout and fatigue, loss of balance, and even distorted self image, like body dysmorphia or unhealthy relationships with food and exercise.

Despite all these consequence however, it is very easy to ignore them, not only because of positive images of running, but also because these sorts of consequences develop over a long time. For these reasons, it is very easy to *idealize* the addiction, focusing solely on its positive aspects while ignoring any negative consequences. In the context of running, a person might idealize their exercise routine by emphasizing the health benefits, such as

improved cardiovascular fitness, weight management, and mental well-being, while overlooking negative impacts like overuse injuries, social isolation, and neglect of family, etc. Idealization is, of course, a form of lying. It is a deception, often told unconsciously, that enables us to continue with our addiction.

Unfortunately, toxic attachments are not the only things we can justify because it's "not so bad after all." That simple, easy to make lie works with a lot of different things, like spanking your children, which "is not so bad,"¹¹¹ or yelling at our kids, which is "not so bad," or exploiting workers, which is "not so bad, or raping children,"¹¹² which is not so bad, or drinking eight beers a day, which is not so bad.

The truth is, the "it's not so bad" lie allows a lot of bad stuff to continue to happen. However, if we want to move forward, if we want to heal and reconnect, we must stop lying to ourselves about how bad it is. We need to understand that in many case, things are not fine, and it is bad. If we want to move forward and connect, we have to put aside the "it's not so bad" lie and face the hard truth of our toxic lives, behaviours, and the world we live in.

The Shield of Success

Besides the "it's not so bad" lie, another enormously powerful and extremely common way of justifying our toxicities and ignoring our realities, especially in the prosperous West, is to

¹¹¹ Newsflash!! It is. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/04/spanking.aspx>

¹¹²This last point might seem a bit odd, but it isn't. There are many families out there whose children are raped and assaulted (most often by family members, but sometimes by strangers) who never do anything about it, despite the life-long trauma experiences like that induce, especially when they go unaddressed. Only between one and ten percent of child rapes and molestation are ever reported! WTF is going on in parents and siblings head that they don't do anything about this? The answer is it is hard, therefore it is easier to just "let it go" and pretend that it just wasn't that bad after all.

But it is bad. Those who experience sexual assaults in childhood face a range of mental, physical, and social health consequences Sexual assaults in childhood

For a summary, see "Statistics - Child Sexual Abuse," *The Crime Victims Center*, accessed May 25, 2024, <https://www.parentsformeganslaw.org/statistics-child-sexual-abuse/>.

use the **Shield of Success**. We use this shield when we point to our successes, and especially our wealth, as an indication that things are alright. This is the “Look at me, I’m rich and successful” lie. In this scenario, we refuse to admit the truth about our life and we refuse to admit a toxic environment or that we are damaged from toxic socialization. Instead, we say “What do you mean I’m damaged from my childhood? What do you mean my IQ is affected? What do you mean I am hurt and diminished? I have a job. I have a house. I have a car. I’m OK. I turned out alright. I’m rich and successful.”

This “look at me” lie is an immensely powerful lie. It would be hard to walk up to someone like Donald Trump, John Travolta, Elon Musk, Richard Branson, or some other “high functioning” rich person and tell them, “Man, you are messed up and disconnected.” They can easily dismiss such a challenge, simply by pointing at their private jets, fancy houses, gold toilets, and rich celebrity friends. Because our society puts such value on material success, it is hard for those who are successful to see and admit they are sick, ill, and toxic. From Hollywood diva to the middle-class mom, from Corporate CEO to daddy in his man cave, when challenged to face a hard truth we do not want to admit, we point to our fancy lives filled with money and material things and use that to justify, deflect, and excuse.

There is no sense in being hypocritical about it. We all know what this shield is. We have all heard others invoke it and many of used it ourselves. Be aware, however, that worldly success, riches, and fame have absolutely nothing to do with mental/emotional, physical health and healthy and pure spiritual connection. You cannot point to the size of your bank account and say “I’m a good person,” “I’m a healthy person,” “I’m a chosen one.” In fact, exactly the opposite might be the case. As many A-list Hollywood actors, top-flight CEOs, and filthy rich people the world over will surely attest, you need to step on a lot of toes on your long climb to the top. The question is, what kind of person does that? As Jon Ronson

argues,¹¹³ psychopathy, i.e., total callous indifference to the suffering you cause in the world, is a requirement of worldly success as currently defined. The uncomfortable truth for you is, only sick and disconnected people are prepared to “do what it takes” to claw their way to the top. And besides, as any therapist will tell you, money and success do not buy happiness. Awards do not make you feel warm. A big house does not make you less lonely. Money does not make it more likely you will achieve a connection. Just because you are a rich CEO, or a government or religious leader, or the President of your local community club etc., does not mean you are emotionally or psychologically healthy.

Of course, material success, adulation, and awards are all nice to have. Everybody should have a nice house in a safe neighbourhood with enough food to eat, because these are essential needs.¹¹⁴ Everybody should find a skill and ability they can master, and they should gain recognition for it as a result. Meeting these needs, meeting all our essential needs, is key and we all need to do that. But do not fool yourself; “things” cannot meet all your needs. Material things can help with basic material needs like your need for food, safety, entertainment, comfort, and so on, but “things” just do not cut it for higher needs like truth and understanding, alignment (i.e. self-actualization), and connection. In fact, hoarding things, including money, may be a sign of mental illness. You can be the richest CEO in the world, but if your attachments are toxic, if you are out of alignment with your own spiritual ego, if you suffer from profound disconnection, and if you exist in an environment of lies and self-deception, at best you will be miserable and disconnected, and at worst you will be on a descending spiral of mental, emotional, and spiritual disease.

¹¹³ For the argument of Ronson, see Jon Ronson, The Psychopath Test: A Journey through the Madness Industry (United States: Picador, 2011).

¹¹⁴ Mike Sosteric and Gina Ratkovic, Seven Essential Needs, 2018, Available: <https://www.lightningpath.org/healing/seven-essential-needs/>.

Remember this: Money, wealth, and power is no indication of health, well-being, and connection. If you want to move forward, heal, and connect, do not use it as a shield prop to convince yourself and others that you are OK. If you do that, you will never admit to having problems, you will never realize the truth, and you will never do the work you need to do to heal and connect.

The Functional Facade

“It’s not so bad, after all” and “Look at me, I have material success” are two common ways we lie to ourselves and others; but, there is more. Even if we are not altogether successful, and even if there is clear damage (i.e., even if we are dealing with a diagnosed mental infection), if we got a job, and especially if that job is a good job, a professional job, a job which requires a lot of education, we can still find a way to excuse ourselves, our toxic environments, and our toxic actions.

“Sure, I drink every day.”

“Sure, I’m at the casino every night.”

“Sure, I go running all the time.”

“Sure, I’m an ass-hole to my spouse and my kids.

“But I’m no slacker. I cannot be that bad. At least I can provide.”

You will recognize right away that the “Functional Facade” lie is related to the “Not-So-Bad Self Delusion and the “Shield of Success” lies. In fact, all the lies we tell ourselves to avoid confronting the truth about the toxicity in our lives and the damage we have incurred are variations of the simple “I’m OK because...” argument.

“I’m OK because I can still function.”

“I’m OK because I’m rich and successful.”

“I’m OK because I have a beautiful partner.”

“I’m OK because my kids are a great success.”

Etc.

If you think you are “OK because” of all the shiny gewgaws in your life, if you think you are “OK because” you can still function at a decent corporate level, if you think you are “OK because” you got a job, if you think you are “OK because” it is not so bad, or whatever, you are wrong. Worldly success, money, power, successful children, you name it, are not indicators of emotional health and spiritual connection. The only good indicators of health and connection are actual health and connection. If you cannot point to actual mental health and connection then dude, you are not OK.

The Blame Shift

Variations of the “I’m OK” argument are common and we use them all the time. But what happens if there is simply no way for us to pretend we are OK? What if, one day, as the consequence of an arrest, or a conviction, or an undeniable physical illness, there is simply no way to deny? Well, that’s easy. If one day you simply cannot deny your own toxicity or the damage you’ve incurred, just **Blame Shift**. This form of lying involves deflecting responsibility away from oneself and attributing personal issues to outside influences and conditions. Well, I’m an abuser because of my life situation, or I’m an alcoholic because of my spouse, or whatever. The general gist of this is "I'm not the problem; it's everyone else and everything else around me." By shifting the blame, you absolve yourself of any responsibility for your addiction, toxicity, etc.

I got to say, blame shifting, which occurs when we shift the blame for our toxicity onto external factors or other individuals, is one of the more insidious ways people lie about their toxic behaviours and environments. By doing so, individuals avoid confronting their own role in creating or perpetuating negative situations. They can also avoid confronting the painful guilt and shame that would be invoked. In this way they can sidestepping accountability and the need for personal change and healing.

Of course, having said all the above, it is not one hundred percent you. It is true that jobs, relationships, and life can be stressful and toxic. It is also true that we live within a System, a [Regime of Accumulation](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Regime_of_Accumulation),¹¹⁵ that is a highly exploitative system. Finally, it is inevitable that at a certain point, things will get too difficult for an individual to handle on their own. When this happens, we naturally look around for things to help us deal. When we do what do we find? Marketers selling alcohol to young people not as the dangerously addictive substance that it is, but as something that helps them have fun with family and friends—ye haw! Marketers selling you sugary drinks, ultra process foods, and plastic products as a way to make you feel better. Under these toxic and manipulative conditions, it is very easy to get yourself addicted to shopping, alcohol, carbohydrates, drugs, running, sex, etc. The point being, it's not all your fault. You don't become an addict all on your own. You have help.

Still, at a certain point, you have to own your own behaviours. You have to take responsibility. By refusing to take responsibility, you hinder your ability to learn from your mistakes and hamper your ability to make necessary changes. This avoidance behaviour can lead to a cycle of repeated toxic actions, as the root causes of the dysfunction are never addressed. Relationships suffer in particular because the constant deflection of blame, gaslighting, and toxic finger-wagging assaults that go along with blame shifting create anger, bitterness, and barriers to honest communication and mutual understanding.

¹¹⁵https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Regime_of_Accumulation

Additionally, the blame shift can contribute to a victim mentality, where you come to see yourself as perpetually wronged by external forces, which further entrenches your disconnection and unhappiness.

Moving forward from here, you are going to have to make a choice. If you are going to continue to use “I’m OK because” arguments to lie to yourself and others about the state of disconnection you are in, if you are going to continue to deflect blame for all your toxic BS onto others, you might as well put this workbook down right now, because you are just wasting your time. If you want to heal, connect, and realize your full potential, you must quit lying to yourself and others, period. Despite what you might be telling yourself, there is just no other way forward.

Why We Lie

For the rest of you willing to put aside these self-deceptions, the question at this point becomes, what do we do to move forward? First, we need to figure out why we lie. Then we need to find ways to get beyond it. Let’s start with the reasons why. Although the reasons vary, overall it is not rocket science.

Modelling

Number one, we lie because, from day one, lying is modelled to us by the people around us. Our parents lie, our teachers lie, our priests lie and as children, we see it. We know it and seeing our trusted authority figures do it, we learn to lie as well. That is what our “models” do and so we copy that behaviour. Why do we do that? To be clear, it is not because we are morally, ethically, or biologically weak. We do this because that is what our brains and bodies were designed to do. Your brain is filled with these things called “mirror neurons.” Mirror neurons are neurons in the brain which are activated when we observe the actions of

others. For example, if I watch you raise your arm, mirror neurons in my brain fire in the same way neurons are firing in your brain. If you lie and I observe that you are lying, mirror neurons in my brain fire. Why? Scientists are still trying to pin the full picture down, but mirror neurons likely serve an evolutionary survival role by priming learning¹¹⁶ through observation.¹¹⁷ Learning through observation is a very important evolutionary and survival function of the physical unit. A species that learns by observing and modelling its parents is more successful than a species that can learn only through (often) dangerous experience. If a chimpanzee sees its mother take a bite and spit out a certain type of poisonous plant, it makes sense for the biology of that child to mirror and copy that behaviour. If a primate sees its parents running away from a hungry lion and instantly copies that behaviour, it is more successful than a primate who must figure it all out on their own. If a five-year-old human child sees its mother stop and look both ways at a crosswalk, it makes biological sense for the that child to mirror and copy that behaviour moving forward. In other words, *biological organisms are designed and primed to copy the behaviours of the adults that they are attached too and that form their community* (i.e., parents, tribe members, church members, community etc.). It is no surprise, therefore, that when we see our adults lie, we learn to lie as well.

¹¹⁶ Jeon Hyeonjin and Lee Seung-Hwan, "From Neurons to Social Beings: Short Review of the Mirror Neuron System Research and Its Socio-Psychological and Psychiatric Implications," Clinical Psychopharmacology and Neuroscience.1 (2018).

¹¹⁷ European Science Foundation, How Mirror Neurons Allow Us to Learn and Socialize by Going through the Motions in the Head, 2008, Science Daily, Available: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/12/081219073047.htm>, V.S. Ramachandran, Mirror Neurons and Imitation Learning as the Driving Force Behind "the Great Leap Forward" in Human Evolution, 2000, Edge, Available: http://edge.org/3rd_culture/ramachandran/ramachandran_index.html.

Personal Safety

Our life long lying lessons do not stop with modelling. Modelling, after all, only works to a certain point. At a certain point, a child's central nervous system is developed enough to begin to understand the nature of lying. Once they begin to understand that, they see the adults around them are lying and they will naturally begin to question. I say naturally because just as your physical unit is designed and programmed to model and copy behaviour, it is also designed and programmed to seek knowledge, truth, and understanding.¹¹⁸ Of course, this genetically programmed search for truth and knowledge is present at an early age. Children and adolescents are always asking questions and seeking truth. But at a certain point in their development, adolescents become more insistent on their search, questioning adult behaviour and challenging adult hypocrisies.

Unfortunately, when a maturing, child, adolescent, or even adult inevitably and invariably questions the lies and hypocrisy that surround them, they are inevitably silenced by the adults. The silencing is invariably violent—shaming, yelling, hitting, etc. I'm sure most of us have stories of this. Personally, I remember challenging my mother on her lies and hypocrisy and being told, in the midst of the beating, that I should simply respect, not question, my elders. In a similar incident, my one-time life partner Gina, as a young adolescent, read a newspaper article on emotional abuse and violence in the home. She cut this article out, posted it on the fridge, and said to her parents "Hey, this is what we do." Their response, like the response of many adults to challenges from their observant and intelligent children, was violent. They emotionally and physically beat her down.

These stories should not be shocking, and we don't need researchers to point this out. This is the normal everyday reality that, without exception, we all live in growing up. I'm sure,

¹¹⁸Sosteric and Ratkovic, "It Takes a Village: Advancing Attachment Theory and Recovering the Roots of Human Health with the Seven Essential Needs."

everybody reading these words can remember experiences where they tried to tell the truth to a parent, teacher, or other trusted adult, and were forcibly put down as a result. When this happens, we learn that it is safer to go along with the lies—safer to stay silent. Once we have learned that lesson, we begin to simply look away and pretend everything is normal, or we unconsciously, and often consciously, participate in the lying because by doing so we avoid all the pain.

It is the nature of this beast we call The System.

Understand, the point here is not to point fingers at parents, teachers, priests, and others who model lying and reinforce it with violence and abuse. The point is to say that at the moment where we start to question the lies and lying that has been modelled to us by parents, teachers, the media, our bosses, society, etc, we are silenced with various assaults. We don't need to point fingers. You need to overcome the fear.

Avoiding Guilt and Shame

So far we have learned that we lie because a) it was/is modelled to us and b) for personal safety. In addition to that, we also lie because we have done some horrible things to other people, including our children, and to admit the truth of that would make us feel really, really bad. In other words we lie, particularly to ourselves, because it helps protect us from the guilt and shame we experience when we engage in **Wrong Actions**.¹¹⁹

This is a little hard to explain, so bear with me.

As you learn in LP Workbook One,¹²⁰ a wrong action is any action that your body takes that is out of alignment with your own **Spiritual Ego**. Wrong actions include everything from failing to follow your life's purpose to not helping another living being achieve theirs. Wrong

¹¹⁹ https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Wrong_Action

¹²⁰ Mike Sosteric, *Lightning Path Workbook One - Basic Concepts*, vol. 1, Lightning Path Workbook Series (Alberta: Lightning Path Press, 2016), <https://www.lightningpath.org/lp-workbooks/>.

actions also include actions that cause, either directly or indirectly, physical, emotional, and psychological harm to your physical unit or the physical unit of *any* other living being. This includes a wide swath of behaviour, from actual and direct physical harm to the direct or indirect exploitation of labour, through intentional manipulation of behaviour, to simply making another living being feel bad.

As explained in the course, [LP 140: Communicating and Connecting With Your Guide Network](#),¹²¹ wrong actions (or right actions) cause your Spiritual Ego to use **Steering Emotions** to keep its bodily vehicle in alignment. Steering emotions can be positive or negative. Positive steering emotions are emotions like satisfaction, happiness, joy, rapture, and bliss. Positive steering emotions tell us we are thinking or doing something right. Negative steering emotions are emotions like guilt, shame, and regret. Negative steering emotions tell us we are doing something wrong, like engaging in wrong action, wrong thought, or living in a wrong environment.

Steering emotions help keep the body in alignment, but there is a problem. Even minor amounts of guilt and shame are painful. Guilt and shame can become excruciating when actions are particularly disjunctive (like abusing children, exploiting others, murdering people), when the guilt and shame build up over time, or when others (like your parents, priests, etc.) weaponize guilt to control behaviour. Since our body's are programmed to avoid pain, we tend to find ways to avoid guilt and shame.

Of course, the best way to reduce guilt and shame, really the only way to reduce guilt and shame, is to change the behaviours that cause it. Unfortunately, for various reasons, we often don't stop our wrong actions, even when they are very bad. When we don't change our behaviours, guilt and shame build up. Over time, the associated pain becomes excruciating

¹²¹<https://www.lightningpath.org/courses/lp-140-communicating-with-your-spirit-guides/>

and the only way to stop, other than actually changing behaviours, is to construct an elaborate and fantastical lie, often using sophisticated social props and elaborate psychological defenses.¹²² Once we have constructed that lie, once we have put boundaries around the realities, we then lie to others, pretending we are something we are not (like a good parent, a good CEO, a good wife or husband), because this helps us keep the guilt pressed tightly down. Over the years, the whole thing builds up until it's nothing but a jumbled, ugly mess. At a certain point, it becomes overwhelming and impossible to untie without unleashing veritable torrents of excruciating guilt and shame. And so, over the years, it builds up. As it does we engage in increasingly desperate attempts to cover over the unmanageable, and sometimes unimaginable, guilt and shame by building and maintaining our lies. We lie to ourselves. We lie to others, and we do it until our families are broken, our relationships torn, and our mind is cracked and dysfunctional. I'm not going to lie. I'm not going to sugarcoat. It's ugly to think about, but it's true. We lie to avoid guilt and shame.

System Maintenance

To summarize what we have said so far, we have learned that we lie because lying was modelled to us, because it is often safer to lie, and because we are trying to avoid painful feelings of guilt and shame. Another reason we lie is to maintain the status quo—we lie to maintain **The System**.

Think about it.

Imagine you are an executive of a major oil company, a major military contractor, a major producer of wasteful and environmentally damaging overproduced, plastic products, or a producer of alcohol. You are rich. You are privileged. You are powerful. Are you gonna tell the truth about the damage that your activities cause? Probably not. Not only do you have to

¹²²https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/index.php/Defense_Mechanisms

cover over all the guilt and shame caused by your wrong actions, but you're not gonna want to give up all that power and privilege brought to you by The System. So, you're gonna lie to yourself and to others. If you are an oil executive you will deny climate change and work hard to build up your excuses and lie.¹²³ If you are a military contractor, you'll convince yourself that you are fighting evil. If you sell plastic junk, you will find ways to convince yourself it is useful, even necessary. If you sell alcohol, you will not warn your consumers of its very real dangers (addiction, disease, death). You'll just tell people how fun they'll have. You get the picture.

We call lying to ourselves and others to maintain The System, to feed our addictions to power and privilege, **System Maintenance**. We lie to preserve a system that we benefit from. Members of the **Accumulating Class** do this all the time to justify their exploitative **Regime of Accumulation**, but it is not just them. We lie to maintain toxic social systems, and toxic family systems, as well. I had a client once whose father molested her as a child. Needless to say, this caused her serious mental and emotional disturbance to the point that she became a psychiatric patient. Her father and her mother, however, denied the abuse to themselves and others, and even went so far as to undermine her in front of psychiatrists and other professionals. They convinced professionals that she was "crazy" and they did it so that the professionals would not take her claims seriously. The mother and the father deliberately worked against the apprehension of truth by lying to professionals and undermining their daughter because doing so protected the family system.

It is not so hard to believe and it should not be that shocking to hear. Families do it all the time. In fact, we all do it. Right now, we are all lying to ourselves about the conditions of the planet, the nature of our reality, and what the next couple of decades ahead are going to be

¹²³Ben Adler, "California Sues Oil Companies for Allegedly Lying about Climate Change," *Yahoo News*, September 18, 2023, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/california-sues-oil-companies-for-allegedly-lying-about-climate-change-214655216.html>.

like. We doing it, whether we realize it or not, to maintain a toxic status quo that is rapidly destroying the planet.

Moving Forward

So, at this point it should be clear, as a species, we lie a lot. We don't lie because of some moral failing; we don't lie because we are engaged in some kind of testing. We lie because lying was modelled, because it is often safer to lie, because we are trying to avoid painful feelings of guilt and shame, and because we are trying to maintain a status quo. To move forward and heal, individuals must recognize and break the deeply ingrained cycles of deception. Not gonna lie here. It's going to be hard and it is going to take time, but if you stick with it and get help if you need it, you'll be able to do it. Here is an affirmation and some basic guidance you can do to get yourself started.

First, recognize who you truly are. Say something like

“I am a being of love and compassion. I am a being of bright light and truth. ”

Second, affirm your desire for truth. Say

“I accept nothing less than total truth.”

Third, acknowledge your past toxic actions. Say.

“I know I have done bad things. I know I have harmed other people.”

Fourth, try to release some (or all) of your guilt.

“I promise to do what is right. I promise to make amends.”

Finally, begin to change your behaviour.

“I promise to change my behaviours.”

That's all there is to it, really.

To learn not to lie, recognize who you truly are, affirm your desire for truth, acknowledge how far you have "fallen," promise to make amends, affirm your desire for truth, and begin to change your behaviour.

To conclude this unit on lying I just want to say two things.

One, I'm not going to lie to you, it will not be easy. Learning to accept the truth, learning to tell the truth, is going to be hard, even with the best intentions. That's because, right now, resistance is high and conditions are toxic. But that will change. Resistance will dissipate (faster than you might think) and conditions will begin to change and grow less toxic. All you have to do is hang on long enough for that to happen. When it does start to happen, embrace the truth and move forward with confidence. Remember the affirmations Remember the affirmation.

"I am a being of love and compassion. I am a being of bright light and truth."

"I accept nothing less than total truth."

"I know I have done bad things. I know I have harmed other people."

"I promise to do what is right. I promise to make amends."

"I promise to change my behaviours."

Two, and finally, despite it being hard, you are going to have to do it. You are going to have to get beyond the lies. As noted in this workbook, you are not going to be able to heal if you do not embrace the truth. Similarly, and as you will learn in workbook three, you are not going to be able to connect properly and fully with your own spiritual ego unless you embrace the whole truth. The bottom line is, if you want to heal and connect, you have to embrace the full truth.

Connection Coach Certification Questions

1. In this unit we identified five reasons that people lie: because it is modelled, because it is safer, because we do not want to feel guilt and shame for our past actions, and because lying is an important part of system maintenance. Now, think carefully about your life. **Do you lie** for any of these reasons? Reflect and be honest. This question is not here to make you feel bad, but just to help you identify those areas of your life where you need to work on being more truthful to yourself and others. Do not be in a rush to answer. Keep this question in your mind over the next few days and write your answers down in your HC Journal. When you have completed your reflection, come back and answer this question.
2. Think back to your childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. What was the biggest lie you ever heard from your parents, siblings, teachers, or friends? How has that lie impacted you in your life? Are there any situations where you feel it might be a positive thing to lie to others. Are there situations where lying causes less harm overall, or might even be good?
3. What are some of the things you can do to help you move forward towards a lie-free existence? Feel free to go beyond the workbook guidelines.

Lesson Six: “I” is for Ideology

In the last chapter, we examined the problem of lying. There we saw that lying is not some innate evil but a learned behaviour—modeled to us by damaged adults, encouraged by social systems, and normalized by institutions that depend on denial and deception to function. Lying helps us feel safe, avoid shame, and preserve belonging within toxic environments. It is often adaptive in the short term, especially in the toxic environments required by the System. But while lying may serve as a survival strategy particularly in the capitalist system, its long-term effects are corrosive. Habitual lying—to ourselves and others—contributes directly to what we call the [Five D’s of Toxic Existence](#): diminishment, dysfunction, disease, disconnection, and premature death. This pattern is not incidental; it is systemic. The Regime of Accumulation thrives on damaged, docile, and disconnected human beings. It cannot function unless our perceptual and emotional systems are compromised. Consequently, a variety of agents—what we call **Agents of Consciousness**—consciously or unconsciously reinforce the culture of falseness. These agents model deception, encourage interpersonal harm, and suppress truth. Until we, as a species, develop the discernment to clearly identify these purveyors of untruth, we will remain locked in a recursive cycle of confusion, self-deception, and disconnection.

This leads us to a critical question: how do we learn to identify these agents and the ideas they propagate? It’s not easy. The challenge lies not only in the fact that these agents operate with considerable subtlety, but also in the fact that **we ourselves participate**—unwittingly and habitually—in a complex web of deceptive, diminishing, and disempowering ideas. This is structured, purposeful, and it has a name: ideology. [Ideology](#) is a system of ideas inserted into your brain to make you compliant, disconnected, and useful to the System. Ideology

intentionally blocks healing and connection by shaping how you think, feel, and act in ways that serve the [Regime of Accumulation](#), not you.

If this sounds unreasonable, paranoid, or otherwise conspiratorial to you, consider the modern education system for a moment. The modern K12 education system is all about ideology. An article by Jean Anyon entitled “Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work” makes this quite clear.¹²⁴ For her research article, Anyon visited and observed four different schools catering to four different social classes, the working-class, middle-class, professional-class, and executive-class. She found the teaching style and curriculum to be starkly different in each of these schools.

For example, in the working-class schools, she found the ideas and education geared towards turning pupils into factory/cubicle workers. In working-class schools, education focuses on learning ideas and behaviour that teach working class children to follow the rules and engage in rote “assembly line” style tasks, with “very little decision-making or choice.”¹²⁵ The assumption of working-class education is that the students are off to factory jobs or retail jobs with minimal need for decision making ability and autonomy. This assumption is reflected in the basic training, which teaches students to follow the rules, conform to rigid routines, and submit to authority.

By contrast, the middle-class schools she observed taught middle-class ideas and skills, and shaped students into middle-class workers. Middle-class training revolved around middle-class things in middle-class jobs. Instead of rote memorization, children were encouraged to get the right answer with “some figuring, some choice, some decision making, critical thinking” but only “...within the ‘context’ that is given.” In other words, think inside the box

¹²⁴If you are an LP student, you can read the full article here
<https://www.lightningpath.org/archetype-study/social-class-and-the-hidden-curriculum/>

¹²⁵Jean Anyon, “Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work,” *Journal of Education* 162, no. 1 (1980), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42741976>.

and “fit in.” “As one teacher said, “Language arts is ‘simple grammar, what they need for everyday life.’... ‘They should learn to speak properly, to write business letters and thank-you letters...”¹²⁶

Mind-numbing and soul-destroying might be the term for working-class and middle-class educational streams; but, things get better for you the higher up you go in the social class structure. Anyon speaks about what she calls *affluent professional schools and executive elite schools*. Affluent professional schools train the “creatives” and intellectuals of our society, the people who go on to produce money-making cultural (movies, news, arts, architecture, literature, and so on.) and scientific products. Affluent professional “...schooling is developing in these children skills necessary to become society's successful artists, intellectuals, legal, scientific, and technical experts and other professionals.”¹²⁷ Children in these schools are taught ideas and behaviours that encourage creative thinking, which will later be exploited in the System.

Finally, children in *executive elite schools* learn the skills they need to occupy society's executive positions. These upper-crust schools teach self-control, creativity, and personal authority. Students are taught to strategize, theorize, and develop their own formulas. They do not have to respond to a bell as lower class children do and their movements are not strictly monitored and controlled. As Anyon points out, “their schooling is helping them to develop the abilities necessary for ownership and control of physical capital and the means of production in society.”¹²⁸ In other words, they are not being trained to be peons in factories or cubicles. They are being trained to take control, maintain control, and perpetuate the system.

¹²⁶Ibid., 77–78.

¹²⁷Ibid., 89.

¹²⁸Ibid.

Anyon's article is quite old, but despite its age, the current education system is still very much class-based, so the basic ideas still apply even in today's "modern" schools. Children are streamed into educational rubrics designed to produce workers, managers, intellectuals, creatives, and executives as required by our modern systems of production and accumulation. By the end of your twelve years of schooling, you are shaped in a specific mould and fit into one of these social class categories, whether you realize it, like it, or not. There is some room for social mobility, at least in some societies; but that is limited. By and large, the class you are born into is the class in which will remain. That is because, by the time you graduate the System, your thinking is totally controlled by the limiting ideology fed to you during the sensitive and highly suggestible years of childhood and early adolescence. By the time you graduate your basic schooling, you fit like a cog into a machine.

If you get to this point and are bothered by this, good. *We are talking about the systematic subversion of your full human potential in order to shape you into a form useful to the System.* In this process, who you really are as a human and spiritual being, and whether or not you are happy, fulfilled, and connected, is totally irrelevant. All that matters is that you learn to fit in and accept your allotted place in the System.

Is fitting you into the System by teaching you ideas and skills appropriate for a single social class a good thing or a bad thing? It is a mixed bag really. It is true the System, particular its capitalist variant, has created a powerful system of innovation and production that has brought incredible material wealth and technological sophistication to the planet. On the other hand, in order to create this powerful system of production and accumulation, humans have had to be treated like *things* to be used as input into an economic machine. In order to fit you in, in order to ensure you are docile and compliant cog in the gears, in order to turn you into a suitable human resource, in order to ensure you accept the status quo, the System, through ideology, distorts thinking, subverts human health and full human potential, and

prevents connection. It prevents you from being who you really are, who you could be. This is most obvious in the case of working and middle class education where creativity is stifled and submission, rote repetition, assembly line drudgery, and “in-the-box” thinking are taught, but it also occurs in professional and elite classes. In the elite class, for example, compassion and empathy are subverted to ensure managers can “do what it takes” to keep a business running, even if that means harming the planet and its people.¹²⁹ This subversion of empathy throws members of the elite class out of alignment, causes intense guilt and shame (which must be suppressed somehow, typically drug, alcohol, sex, and consumption), and generally makes it harder for the individual to be fully connected. High or low, it just does not matter. The bottom line is, you are damaged and diminished as a consequence of a toxic socialization process that fits you into the system and rules over your thinking.

Three Challenges

Dismantling the ideology that diminishes you and damages you is an essential prerequisite for healing. If you leave it there you’ll be stuck where you are now, no matter how hard you try. Therefore, you have to dig it out right down to its roots. This is not a trivial task. Ideology does not just float at the surface of your thoughts—it is woven into your inner world, fused to your emotional landscape, and embedded in your sense of identity. Dislodging it requires courage, clarity, and sustained effort. To do this work effectively, you must face three core challenges.

¹²⁹Mike Sosteric, “The Red Pill or the Blue Pill: Endless Consumption or Sustainable Future?,” *The Conversation*, 2019, <https://theconversation.com/the-red-pill-or-the-blue-pill-endless-consumption-or-sustainable-future-110473>.

Challenge One: Understanding Ideology

The first challenge is conceptual, and probably the hardest: if you are going to dislodge ideology, you must first understand what it is, where it comes from, and how it gets inside you. This can be a challenge, both cognitively and emotionally.

What It Is

Let's begin with a precise definition. *Ideology is a collection of ideas, norms, beliefs, and values intentionally designed by Agents of Consciousness to shape your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in ways that serve the interests of the Accumulating Class and not, say, your health, authenticity, or connection.* Ideology is a strategic instrument of social control. It is inserted into your consciousness to make you docile, disconnected, and compliant.

For example, the belief that “hard work always pays off” sounds harmless, even noble. But in practice, it is often used to justify economic inequality, blaming workers for their poverty while obscuring the structural advantages of the wealthy. Or consider the idea that “men shouldn’t cry.” This ideological norm disconnects boys from their emotions, making them easier to train into aggressive, competitive, and emotionally repressed roles that serve militarized and hierarchical systems. Even religious messages like “you are born a sinner” or “God will punish you for disobedience” are ideological tools that install fear, shame, and submission—making it difficult to question authority or seek healing.

Where It Comes From

Ideology does not originate spontaneously in the minds of parents, teachers, priests, and agents of socialization. It is transmitted *through them to you* through the movies and songs and stories and lessons they share with you. They pass it on to you because it was passed on them to them, and so on and so. However, it doesn’t originate with them. The origin of ideology runs deeper than individual experience. Ideology is rooted in ancient story

templates—what scholars call the **Master Narrative** or “Master Story”.¹³⁰ This template was developed thousands of years ago by priestly and political elites in the ancient Near East.¹³¹ Its purpose was clear: to justify hierarchy, normalize domination, and spiritualize obedience.¹³² This narrative has been updated, modernized, packaged and repackaged in countless ways, from tarot cards and religious myths to Hollywood scripts, but its core remains intact. It teaches hierarchy, judgment, punishment, exclusion, sacrifice, guilt, and submission.

How Does It Get Inside

Ideology does not mysteriously appear in your brain as a result of some black magic spell. Ideology gets in via a process of **indoctrination**. Indoctrination is a systematic process of cognitive conditioning that relies on emotional and cognitive vulnerability, repetition, emotional reinforcement, and the manipulation of biologically rooted attachment algorithms in order to effectively and permanently condition thought and behaviour. When you put it like this it sounds quite Orwellian, but it’s really quite mundane. In early childhood, the developing brain is intensely plastic. Children themselves are completely dependent on the adults around them for everything. Because of that, children are wired, from an evolutionary perspective, to trust and model the adults around them. The plasticity and dependency makes them *vulnerable*. When trusted adults *repeatedly transmit* certain ideas about what is right, wrong, normal, sacred, or inevitable, those ideas become internalized without resistance and hard-wired in without conscious awareness.

That’s all it is.

¹³⁰J. Harold Ellens, “Introduction: The Destructive Power of Religion,” in *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. J. Harold Ellens (Westport, CT: Praegar, 2001), 1–9.

¹³¹Mike Sosteric, “From Zoroaster to Star Wars, Jesus to Marx: The Art, Science, and Technology of Mass Human Manipulation,” *Athens Journal of Philosophy*, 2024, doi:10.30958/ajphil.3-4-1.

¹³²God, or the Gods, will love you if you always do as commanded.

Parents and teachers and writers and singers singing you songs and telling you stories with ideas and archetypes and themes that come from ancient elite sources, modified for modern eyes and ears. You hear the same messages in bedtime stories, school assignments, church sermons, Saturday morning cartoons, and family rituals. These messages are reinforced by rewards (approval, praise, belonging) and punishments (shame, exclusion, violence). Over time, they become the common sense that rules your life *and*, disturbing when you really think about it, the personal statements that make up your identity. Because they are taught early and repeated often, you forget they were ever inserted. You forget they are even there. Indoctrination does not require much cognitive effort at all. Nor does it require explicit lies or overt political coercion. It gets inside us because it comes to us through our trusted adult sources.

In summary, ideology is a strategic system of ideas designed to diminish, disconnect, and subordinate you. It is **inserted** by parents, teachers, writers, etc. (what we'll call Agents of Consciousness because they impact your consciousness, often unknowingly), through **indoctrination**. Its deep structure comes from the Master Narrative—an ancient template used to maintain elite control.

Challenge Two: Identifying Ideology

Now that you know what ideology is the next question becomes, how do you identify it. That's a lot harder than it sounds, for five primary reasons.

The first reason that ideology can be difficult to identify is *because indoctrination begins early*, in childhood (before you can even speak, really), at a time when your cognitive defences are weakest and when your need for adult approval is greatest. As a result, ideology is absorbed pre-critically. It becomes embedded in your character structure as common sense and identity.

The second reason that ideology can be difficult to identify is because *ideology is typically presented as positive*. Ideology rarely announces itself as toxic or manipulative. “Hey, look at me, I’m gonna control your mind, haha.” Instead, it is spun in emotionally resonant and morally appealing terms. For example, corporal punishment, i.e., hitting children, is known to produce physical and psychological trauma, reduce empathy, and diminish cognitive function.¹³³ ¹³⁴ Parents are never told to “hurt your child so they’ll submit to wage labour.” Instead, they’re told “spare the rod” else “spoil the child.” They are told that hitting and screaming means “discipline” and “tough love. Patriarchal control over women is presented as “protection.” Workaholism is praised as “ambition.” Ideology relies on spin because if its real purpose were made explicit, most people would reject it.

The third reason ideology can be difficult to identify is because it is made out to be to special and important in some manner, to be sacred. The process of making an idea (or anything for that matter, like a wand, a cup, a robe, a building, or whatever) feel sacred is called [sacrilization](#).¹³⁵ Sacrilization occurs when an idea or object is embedded within already-sacred forms like rituals, religious doctrines, national holidays, oaths, or emotionally charged customs. An oft-repeated church service, an intense Satanic ritual, a stylized Masonic rite, even a daily repeated “pledge of allegiance” are all rituals that are designed to make whatever ideas are being presented special in your mind. These contexts impart a powerful emotional charge, making the associated idea feel too important, too “holy,” or too identity-defining to question.

To an idea, sacrilization is like armour. It gives ideological content a protective aura. Once an idea is wrapped in sacred ritual, divine authority, or ancestral tradition, it becomes

¹³³Sosteric, “Toxic Socialization.”

¹³⁴“Children Who Are Spanked Have Lower IQs, New Research Finds,” *ScienceDaily*, accessed August 15, 2019, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/09/090924231749.htm>.

¹³⁵<https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Sacrilization>

psychologically insulated from scrutiny, no longer open to question. In fact, certain ideas might be so special, so sacred, that you will vigorously, even violently attack and defend in order to protect them. The more sacred it becomes, the more vigorously, even violently, it is defended. This is how absurd or harmful ideas persist across generations: not because they are logical or beneficial, but because they are sacralized through ritual repetition and cultural reverence. You're no longer just questioning a belief—you're "attacking God," "disrespecting your elders," or "betraying your country." This psychological charge makes it harder to think critically, especially if you were exposed to these ideas during the highly suggestible years of early development.

Any idea can be made sacred, even very silly ideas. For example, the notion that a king rules by "divine right" or that a particular flag must never touch the ground are not rationally grounded in any empirical truth—they're ideological props sacralized through repetition, ritual, and emotional bonding. Once embedded, these sacralized ideas demand obedience and trigger guilt, shame, or fear if questioned. The result is not only mental rigidity, but also a deep-seated reluctance to examine the roots of disconnection and dysfunction.

A fourth reason ideology can be so hard to identify is because ideology hides within cultural and familial traditions. In these traditions, ideology is normalized and even defended as identity or heritage, even when the ideas lead to harmful practices. For example, traditions that shame children, suppress emotional expression, encourage alcohol abuse, or impose rigid gender norms often pass unchallenged because they are "the way we've always done it." *Ideology embedded as cultural tradition is very powerful.* Questioning it feels like betrayal not just of your family and culture, but of your very self.

A fifth reason is that ideology is often disguised in the language of science and reason. Pseudo scientific theories about race, gender, intelligence, or inequality are wrapped in equations, graphs, and lab coats to lend them false legitimacy. Social Darwinism,

behaviourist child-training manuals, and neoliberal economics are not value-neutral disciplines—they are ideological systems masquerading as objective fact. This camouflage allows ideology to present itself as truth, when in fact it serves power.

To summarize: ideology is a strategic system of ideas designed to shape, mould, diminish, and disconnect you—so that you can be inserted into the System in a predictable, compliant, and productive role. It originates in ancient elite narratives and is transmitted through agents of socialization—parents, teachers, media, clergy—most of whom are unaware they are passing it on. Ideology is hard to recognize because it enters your psyche early, is spun as virtuous, armoured in sacred ritual, embedded in tradition, and disguised as rational knowledge. But once you learn how to spot it, you can begin the essential work of extracting it.

Table One: Five Mechanisms That Obscure Ideology

| | Mechanisms | Description | Example |
|---|----------------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Early Indoctrination | Ideology is inserted in early childhood when critical thinking is undeveloped. | Gender roles taught in nursery rhymes or discipline modeled through adult violence. |
| 2 | Positive Spin | Harmful practices are reframed as good, loving, or necessary. | Hitting children called 'tough love'; overwork called 'ambition'. |
| 3 | Sacrilization | Ideas are made sacred through ritual, symbolism, and emotional investment. | National flags, church doctrines, and oaths made immune to question. |
| 4 | Tradition Embedding | Harmful ideas are passed down as family, cultural, or national identity. | "That's just how we do things"; male dominance defended as heritage. |
| 5 | Pseudo-Scientific Disguise | Ideology is cloaked in the language of science, data, and expertise. | Social Darwinism, IQ-based racism, neoliberal economic policy framed as objective truth. |

Four Ways To Identify Ideology

By now, it should be clear that ideology is something you must learn to recognize and remove.

Ideological content is not neutral—it contains ideas that diminish and disconnect you. If you want to heal, reclaim your potential, and reconnect with your full Self, you must (a) identify the ideas that limit you, and (b) clear them from your consciousness.

This isn't always easy. Ideology is deep, subtle, and often disguised. But it can be found—and there are four main pathways for uncovering it:

1. Scientific inquiry
2. Sacred forms and rituals
3. Big existential questions

4. Resistance and emotional triggers

1. Scientific and Scholarly Inquiry

The first method for identifying ideology is through scholarship, research, and critical reading. Social scientists and religious scholars have long investigated how ideology is embedded in texts, symbols, and cultural myths¹³⁶ and it is useful to consult with them. One example comes from Harold Ellens, who discusses the ancient “Master Story”¹³⁷—what we call the [Old Energy Creation Template](#). This template, discussed in more detail in the article “From Zoroaster to Star Wars,” has deep roots in Zoroastrian theology and Persian imperial culture. It contains spiritually flavoured ideological formulas designed to normalize hierarchy, obedience, violence, punishment, and exclusion.¹³⁸ For example, one of the “Zoroastrian archetypes” is the notion of a good versus evil universe and a fight between these two opposing forces. This template normalizes violence, among other things. As long as you can convince yourself that the person you are being violent towards is evil or bad in some way, then you can justify violence, whether that is spanking, or yelling, or shooting in a war.

This old energy Zoroastrian template still shapes our culture today. You’ll find it in police dramas, Marvel movies, Disney plots, science fiction movies like Star Wars,¹³⁹ and even the

¹³⁶Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (New York: Norton, 1978), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01b.htm>; Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (New York: Verso, 2014); Antonia Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Prison Notebooks*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, vol. Volume ONE (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975); Jeffry R. Halverson, H. L. Goodall, and Steven R. Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Arthur Versluis, *Magic and Mysticism: An Introduction to Western Esotericism* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007).

¹³⁷Ellens, “Introduction: The Destructive Power of Religion.”

¹³⁸Sosteric, “From Zoroaster to Star Wars, Jesus to Marx: The Art, Science, and Technology of Mass Human Manipulation.”

¹³⁹Mike Sosteric, “Star Wars Is a Religion That Primes Us for War and Violence,” *The Conversation*, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/star-wars-is-a-religion-that-primes-us-for-war-and-violence-89443>.

modern Tarot deck.¹⁴⁰ If you want to begin identifying ideology in your own mind, start by studying how these patterns show up in popular media and spiritual texts.

2. Examine What You Hold Sacred

As we have seen, ideology often hides behind the mask of the sacred. By embedding itself in religious rituals, national ceremonies, and moral customs, ideology becomes emotionally insulated from scrutiny. To uncover it, examine the **rituals and ceremonies** you've participated in—especially those from childhood.

For instance, if you grew up attending church, what ideas were embedded in that experience? I was taught, week after week, to sit and kneel in silence while a white male priest interpreted a “holy” book for me. That ritual didn't just teach Bible stories—it installed ideological beliefs: that wisdom comes from above, that God is an authority figure (a king), that the bible should be read in snippets by a spiritual authority that lies outside myself, and so on. To a lot of people, these feel normal and right, but they are not. There are other perspectives on God, on the source of spiritual wisdom and authority, etc. We'll talk about those as we move forward but for now ask yourself: What rituals shaped your understanding of authority, worth, punishment, and identity? What ideas were treated as beyond question? These are clues to ideological content.

3. Ask the Big Questions

Another powerful method of identifying ideology is to ask yourself the [Big Questions](#),¹⁴¹ the deep existential inquiries about your being and purpose:

- Who am I?
- Why am I here?

¹⁴⁰Mike Sosteric, “A Sociology of Tarot,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 39, no. 3 (2014), doi:0.29173/cjs20000.

¹⁴¹https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Big_Questions

- What is my purpose?
- What happens when I die?

In toxic societies ruled by a predatory Accumulating Class, answers to these questions are almost always ideological. For example, you may have been told:

- You are an evolved ape here to compete and survive.
- You are a fallen soul here to learn hard lessons.
- You are one of the chosen, destined to rule.
- You are rewarded or punished based on an overall assessment of your life.

These are not neutral answers. They encode assumptions about value, human purpose, hierarchy, suffering, and submission, all of which have a profound impact on your thoughts and behaviours. We'll unpack all this ideology in some detail as we progress through the Lightning Path materials, but you can begin deprogramming right now. Ask yourself these big questions, write down your answers, and then *interrogate* their source. Where did you learn them? What sorts of thoughts and actions do they encourage? Who benefits if you believe them? Learning to identify and trace the ideas in your head is an important step towards clearing ideology.

4. Track Resistance and Triggers

The final method that we will discuss here is to pay attention to resistance, both external and internal.

[External resistance](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/External_Resistance)¹⁴² shows up when you challenge a normalized belief and others push back. External resistance is resistance you receive from friends, families, and others who resist challenge and new ideas. If you grew up in Catholic home, for example, and you start

¹⁴²https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/External_Resistance

to challenge the idea that hitting your children is a good thing, you may get push back. Maybe you will be shamed and ridiculed. Maybe you will be told to go read the bible. In some cases, in families where interpersonal violence is the norm, you might even be physically harmed. If that happens, if, when you question or challenge an idea, you are met with forms of resistance and push back, that is a good indication that you are dealing with some sort of ideology.

Internal resistance is just as important. Internal resistance occurs when you question ideology, and when that questioning raises self-doubt, anxiety, fear, and even panic. If you question an ideological statement, for example, the notion that God is a white male patriarch in heaven whom you must slavishly bow before and fearfully obey, you may experience self-doubt, anxiety, and even fear that you will go to hell for daring to think such blasphemy. If the thought “maybe God isn’t a patriarchal sky king” makes you panic, that’s not intuition—it’s programming. Ideology triggers inner alarms not because you’re wrong, but because it’s defending itself.

Both forms of resistance are diagnostic. Track them. Name the idea. Investigate its function.

To summarize, ideology consists of ideas designed to diminish and disconnect you, so that you can be slotted into a role that serves the System. It is installed through a process of indoctrination and maintained through rituals, traditions, and identity structures. To locate ideology in your own consciousness:

1. **Study** the scholarship
2. **Examine** your rituals and sacred stories
3. **Reflect** on your answers to life’s Big Questions
4. **Observe** internal and external resistance

Each insight is a step toward reactivating your full human and spiritual potential.

Challenge Three: Clearing Ideology

Once you begin to recognize the ideological content embedded in your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, the next question naturally arises: **How do I get rid of it?**

In principle, removal is straightforward. Once you’ve identified a harmful idea, you replace it—consciously, persistently, and compassionately—with something better. For example, when I was working through spiritual ideology, I began to notice how often the idea of **judgment**—of being condemned, excluded, or punished—arose in my thoughts. Each time it appeared, I acknowledged it, reminded myself that it was ideological, gently pushed it out of awareness, and replaced it with a new idea rooted in inclusion, forgiveness, and unconditional connection.

That process sounds simple—and at one level, it is. But in practice, it can be emotionally challenging. Old energy ideologies like judgment, exclusion, or divine punishment are not just abstract propositions. They are loaded with affective charge: fear, shame, guilt, and existential anxiety. These emotions were intentionally built into the **Master Template** to keep you from thinking too deeply or resisting too forcefully. Ask yourself: “Will I be condemned? Sent to hell? Cut off from love forever?” These are powerful deterrents to critical thought.

This can be a challenge because your body’s natural response is to avoid pain, threat, and anxiety—physical or psychological. When confronting painful ideas triggers anxiety or dread, your instinct is to avoid or repress them. But repression doesn’t neutralize ideology. It merely buries it beneath the surface, where it continues to operate without your awareness. Worse still, repression—especially during a powerful Connection Experience—can intensify the very anxiety you’re trying to escape. This can culminate in what we call a [Nadir](#)

[Experience](#),¹⁴³ or what Grof and Grof termed a [Spiritual Emergency](#),¹⁴⁴ a full-blown psychological and energetic crisis triggered by confrontation with toxic internal structures.

To avoid this, you must learn to stay with the fear long enough to metabolize it. This means breathing through the anxiety, anchoring yourself in a calm state, and repeating new, healthy truths to yourself with clarity and conviction. Each time you do this—each time you *consciously override* an old ideological imprint—you weaken its hold. Eventually, the idea collapses entirely and no longer arises with emotional force. But this takes work. It requires persistence, self-discipline, and emotional regulation. Be clear. Clearing ideology is not merely an intellectual exercise, it's a spiritual practice of inner purification.

The Four-Step Basic Blueprint

To support this process, we offer a foundational four-step approach:

1. **Identify** the ideological content.
2. **Face** the emotional charge—fear, guilt, shame—without flinching.
3. **Gently and persistently push it out** of your awareness.
4. **Replace** it with something more truthful, empowering, and connecting.

At this point you should be in a position to begin your ideological deprogramming. The only question now is, what do you replace ideology with. This is a major challenge. Most of us weren't taught healthy metaphysical frameworks. We weren't given spiritual archetypes rooted in love, connection, or authenticity. Parents read stories that others have provided so

¹⁴³A Nadir Experience is a negatively felt Connection Experience. Nadir experiences are unpleasant moments of stress, anxiety, anger, confusion, fear, paranoia, and even psychosis caused when Connection occurs, and the individual is unprepared, damaged, or embedded in a toxic milieu. A Nadir experience is the opposite of a Zenith Experience

See https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/index.php/Nadir_Experience

¹⁴⁴Grof and Grof, *Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crises*; Christina Grof and Stanislav Grof, *The Stormy Search for the Self: A Guide to Personal Growth Through Transformational Crises* (Penguin, 1990), <https://amzn.to/2UtkgP1>.

they are no help. Schools don't teach this either. Neither do most religions. And trying to invent a replacement system from scratch—especially while dealing with emotional instability or spiritual crisis—can be overwhelming and time-consuming. The truth is, we don't have time to reinvent the wheel. The planet is in crisis. Humanity is suffering. And the faster we deprogram, the faster we heal.

Thankfully, you do not have to figure it out on your own. In *Lightning Path Workbook Four: Archetypes* (and related materials) I provide an in-depth guide to this process. In that workbook you will learn how to recognize and clear old energy ideas and archetypes and how to install their replacements using a consciously developed system called the **Triumph of Spirit Archetype System (TOSAS)**. TOSAS offers a New Energy Creation Template designed to support human healing, authentic expression, and conscious connection to Self and others.

And that, finally, brings us to an end of this lesson on ideology. To conclude:

- Ideology is a system of diminishing, disconnecting ideas installed via indoctrination.
- It exists to make you compliant, malleable, and useful to the System, a cog in the archetypal **Wheel**.
- It is reinforced through repetition, sacred ritual, tradition, and fear.
- You can identify it by researching, reflecting on your traditions, examining your Big Questions, and paying attention to emotional or social resistance.
- Once identified, you can dismantle it using a structured, conscious process of recognition, confrontation, and replacement.

This chapter is just a beginning. If you're serious about this work—and we encourage you to be—then continue with **Lightning Path Workbook Four**. There, you'll find the tools,

templates, and training necessary to fully cleanse your consciousness and begin rebuilding on a healthy, empowered foundation.

Ideology can be cleared. Healing is possible. Connection is inevitable.

Keep going. You'll get there in the end.

Connection Coach Certification Questions

1. Class-Based Schooling and Ideological Training

- What does it mean to say the school system is structured along social class lines?
- How does this shape the kind of person you were trained to become?
- Reflect on your own educational path: what social class were you being prepared for —working, middle, professional, or elite?
- Can you now identify specific ideological messages embedded in that training? List at least two and describe their intended function.

2. Core Concepts: Ideology, Agents, and Indoctrination

- Define the following in your own words, using insights from the reading: Ideology, Agents of Consciousness, Indoctrination.
- Where does ideology come from, and how is it transmitted?
- Why is it essential, in the context of healing and connection, to locate and remove ideological statements from your consciousness?

3. Barriers to Recognition and Tools for Exposure

- What are the five primary reasons ideology is hard to identify? Briefly explain each.
- What are the four key methods for identifying ideology in your life?

- Apply at least one method to your own experience. What ideological idea(s) have you begun to suspect or uncover in your belief system?

4. The Four-Step Deprogramming Protocol

- What is the Four-Step Basic Blueprint for removing ideology?
- Have you actively attempted this process with a specific ideological imprint?
- What results did you notice?
- Did you encounter internal resistance (e.g., fear, anxiety, shame) or external resistance (e.g., pushback from others)? Describe what happened and how you responded.

5. Next Steps: Preparedness and Support

- Do you feel ready to begin the deeper process of ideological clearing in your own consciousness?
- If not, what obstacles (emotional, cognitive, spiritual) are standing in your way?
- If yes, what's your next concrete step?
- Are you planning to engage with Workbook Four (TOSAS)? Why or why not?

Lesson Seven: “N” is for Needs

So far in this workbook we have looked at key aspects of human development and human pathology that have to be addressed if one is to proceed towards healing and connection. As identified in this workbook, the most important things to do are

- a) get help if you need it,
- b) detoxify your environments,
- c) analyze and address your addictions,
- d) work on removing self-deception and lying so you can be honest with yourself and others about what has happened and what needs to be done,
- e) identify and remove ideology.

Of course, all this does not have to be done at once. These five healing items represent a considerable amount of time and effort. It is impossible to accomplish all of them in a short period of time. We should also note, it is not just that these focus points require time and effort. Most important to understand, each of these aspects of healing requires ongoing and iterative personal *and* collective change. To put this another way, all the work does not fall to you. For the planet to make progress towards healing and connection, you need to make personal change, that is true; however, these personal changes must be accompanied simultaneously by incremental *collective* change as well; otherwise only limited personal progress can ever be made. You can make improvements in your home environment, for example, but if you go into a toxic environment at school or work, or if your friend groups are toxic, it won't matter that you have a nice safe cocoon at home, you will take ongoing damage all the same.

To be clear, to make fast and full progress towards healing and connection, it does not just fall to you. The world has to heal as well. Keep this in mind if sometimes you feel like your progress is not as fast as you like. Do not carry all the weight and responsibility of change on your own two shoulders. Ultimately, it is a collective effort.

With that said, it is now time to turn our attention to a more positive aspect of the healing and connection process, and that is our human needs. It is very important to understand, we all have human needs. If you want to heal and connect, if you want your kids to grow and realize their full human and spiritual potential and not become sick, diminished, and stunted, it is important to make sure that all human needs are met, in full, one hundred percent of the time.

Some may think this is a strident statement; nevertheless, it is true. The human physical unit, like other physical things on this planet, is a growing thing. Growing things have needs and if a growing thing is going to grow up healthy and strong, *all* its needs must be satisfactorily met, period. If you do not meet all the needs of a growing thing, that thing will not grow to its full potential. Instead, it will stunt. If the neglect is serious, it will die.

This is not rocket science and it should be obvious to anybody who grows anything, like plants, animals, or even human beings. If you do not meet the needs of plants, if the plants you are trying to grow do not get enough sunlight, nitrogen, water, and oxygen, they will stunt and die, period. *This is not open to debate.* Either you meet the needs of the things you are growing, or they do not achieve full potential. It is as simple as that.

Of course, when it comes to plants, it is easy to specify their needs. Plants need proper soil PH, sufficient sunlight and water, nitrogen, oxygen, and so on. The needs of humans, on the other hand, are not so easy to specify. Humans are far more complex than plants. Humans have many things that plants do not have, like muscles, internal organs, nerve cells, brain

structures, and so on. Consequently, human needs go beyond the simpler, primarily physical needs of planets.

At this point the obvious question becomes, “What are human needs?” When asked this question, most folks, even very knowledgeable folks, would probably turn to the work of psychological Abraham Maslow for insight. Maslow conceptualized human needs way back in the 1940s.¹⁴⁵ At that time he came up with two lists of needs that he used to specify our human needs, these were the **Hierarchy of Basic Needs**,¹⁴⁶ and the **Hierarchy of Cognitive Needs**.¹⁴⁷

Maslow’s first hierarchy was his hierarchy of basic needs. This hierarchy initially included five sets of basic needs, including

- a) physiological needs,
- b) safety needs,
- c) love needs,
- d) esteem needs, and
- e) self-actualization needs.

Later on,¹⁴⁸ Maslow added additional basic needs, like the need for aesthetically pleasing environments, or the “spiritual” need for transcendence, which on the LP we simply define as the need for connection.

¹⁴⁵A. H. Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370–96, doi:10.1192/bjp.bp.115.179622.

¹⁴⁶https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Hierarchy_of_Basic_Needs

¹⁴⁷https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Hierarchy_of_Cognitive_Needs

¹⁴⁸A. H. Maslow, “Lessons from the Peak-Experiences,” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 1962): 9–18, doi:10.1177/002216786200200102; A. H. Maslow, “Various Meanings of Transcendence,” *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 1, no. 1 (1969): 56–66; A. H. Maslow, “The Farther Reaches of Human Nature,” *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 1, no. 1 (1969): 1–9.

Maslow's second hierarchy of needs, pretty much completely ignored by psychologists and organizational theorists over the decades,¹⁴⁹ was his hierarchy of cognitive needs. In this hierarchy, Maslow placed two needs,

- a) the need to know and
- b) the need to understand.¹⁵⁰

According to Maslow, the *need to know* is our basic, biologically rooted need to know things, like why is the sky blue, what's 2+2, what are the sparkly lights in the sky, do I have a soul, etc. Maslow said our need to know was powerful, but it was not our only cognitive need. Maslow said that once we knew something we were subsequently impelled to understand that thing.¹⁵¹ According to Maslow:

The facts that we acquire, if they are isolated or atomistic, inevitably get theorized about, and either analyzed or organized or both. This process has been phrased by *some as the search for "meaning."* We shall then postulate a desire to understand, to systematize, to organize, to analyze, to look for relations and meanings.¹⁵²

Maslow would say these cognitive needs, like all needs on both hierarchies, were rooted in the evolutionary biology of the organism. That is most certainly true. The biological nature of our needs is obvious in the case of the physical needs for food, shelter, and safety, which are clearly required for the biological health of an organism; but it is also true of the higher needs, and our cognitive needs as well. Knowing and understanding your environment is most definitely a survival thing, and consequently an instinctual thing. An organism that does

¹⁴⁹We can speculate why this might be. We think it is because of the uncomfortable implications of this hierarchy for personal therapeutic, and wider economic, political, and social practice. See Mike Sosteric and Gina Ratkovic, "What Does It Mean to Be Human: Abraham Maslow and His Hierarchies of Need," 2018, <https://www.academia.edu/35635479>.

¹⁵⁰Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," 385.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Ibid.

not know and understand its environment, an organism that cannot meet its needs and adapt, is an organism not long for this world. As Maslow said, the need to know and the need to understand are biologically rooted and instinctually driven, just like the more basic needs, like the need for shelter, or food and water.

It should be noted, Maslow was not saying anything particularly revolutionary or new when he said humans have cognitive needs. Way before Maslow, Einstein said that “There is a mystical drive in man [sic] to learn about his [sic] own existence.”¹⁵³ Others have said the same. In any case, that this need exists is obvious. Every child above the age of two wants to know and understand the world. Whenever a child asks the questions “What is that?” or “Why is that?” or “Why am I here?” they are expressing these powerful needs.

Maslow’s Limits and the Lightning Path Update

Maslow’s hierarchies of need were groundbreaking for their time, but they are outdated. His theories are nearly a century old and suffer from several conceptual and practical limitations.

First, the popular “hierarchy” model—represented as a pyramid—is a distortion of Maslow’s own thinking. He never framed needs as a rigid progression. Instead, he described needs as boxes that overlap and nest. Indeed, the canonical pyramid of needs that everybody uses to represent his theory was not his invention; it was fabricated by a management consultant to exploit Maslow’s ideas for workforce manipulation¹⁵⁴

Second, research and observation now show that human needs are not hierarchical or prepotent. They are equipotent.¹⁵⁵ That means we don’t satisfy one level of need and then

¹⁵³ See William Hermanns *Einstein and the Poet* (Boston: Branden Books, 1983), <https://amzn.to/2n8MjnC>.

¹⁵⁴ Sosteric and Ratkovic, “It Takes a Village: Advancing Attachment Theory and Recovering the Roots of Human Health with the Seven Essential Needs”; Mike Sosteric, “Eupsychian Theory: Reclaiming Maslow and Rejecting The Pyramid The Seven Essential Needs” 2024, <https://www.academia.edu/76834401>.

¹⁵⁵ Mike Sosteric and Gina Ratkovic, “Eupsychian Theory I: Reclaiming Maslow and Rejecting The Pyramid The Seven Essential Needs,” *PsyArXiv Preprints*, 2020, doi:10.31234/osf.io/fswk9.

move up a ladder. We strive to meet *all* our needs simultaneously. A child doesn't stop needing love just because they're hungry. A traumatized adult doesn't stop needing understanding just because they've secured a paycheck. The real picture is more dynamic and integrated.

Third, Maslow's theory is never presented properly. His second hierarchy of needs is universally ignored and needs added later, like aesthetic needs, transcendent needs, etc, are typically not incorporated. To resolve these issues, the Lightning Path replaces Maslow's old model with the more accurate **Seven Essential Needs**. This updated framework offers a more accurate, comprehensive, and functional model of what it takes for human beings to heal, grow, reconnect, and flourish, both individually and collectively.

In this Lightning Path model, essential human needs are divided into two broad categories:

- **Basic Needs:** These are the external, biopsychospiritual conditions necessary to maintain and develop a healthy physical unit.
- **Inner Needs:** These are the intrinsic needs related to the alignment and integration of the Bodily Ego with the Spiritual Ego. That is, alignment and connection.

The Five Basic Needs Categories Are:

1. Physiological
2. Emotional
3. Cognitive
4. Psychological
5. Environmental

These support the biological, emotional, and psychological integrity of the physical unit and are essential for everyday survival, growth, and functionality.

The Two Inner Needs Categories Are:

6. Alignment — the need for the Bodily Ego to align with the intentions, values, and trajectory of the Spiritual Ego.
7. Connection — the need for a lived, experiential connection between the Bodily Ego and the Spiritual Ego specifically, but the body and the world around, including its life forms, more generally.



Meeting **basic needs** stabilizes the vehicle and ensure it is physically and mentally healthy and strong. Meeting **inner needs** allows that vehicle to become a vessel of Consciousness. Keep in mind satisfying all needs, basic and inner, is necessary. Healing and growth require attention to all seven domains, simultaneously and consistently. A graphical representation of the needs is provided below.

To reiterate, the human body, has seven essential needs categories, five *basic needs categories* (physiological, cognitive, environmental, emotional, psychological, physiological) and two *inner needs categories* (alignment needs, and connection needs). Each of these categories contain a subset of needs. For example, the category of physiological needs include your need for food, water, air, clothing, etc. The category of cognitive needs include your need to know and your need to understand.

Note that each of these needs has a biological, psychological, and spiritual component. Biologically, these needs exist because they help the body survive and thrive in the world. Psychologically, these needs exist because they help support the complex neurological functions of your physical body, neurological functions which in turn support the “spiritual” functions of the body, specifically the development of a healthy bodily ego capable of aligning and connecting with the spiritual ego.

Let us take a more detailed look at each of these in turn, starting with your body’s basic needs.

Basic Needs

As noted, basic needs are those needs required to maintain and develop a healthy physical unit.

Physiological needs

Physiological needs are your most basic biological requirements for survival: clean air, water, food, rest, warmth, shelter, movement, and freedom from physical pain. These needs form the non-negotiable biological foundation of life. If they are unmet, your body, your physical unit, deteriorates. Stunted growth, chronic pain, disease, and early death typically follow.

Meeting physiological needs is important, and not just for bodily maintenance and survival. Psychologically, your mind and your emotions cannot function properly if your body's physiological needs are not met. Spiritually, your body, your physical unit, is the vehicle of your power spiritual ego. A body in various states of deprivation is distressed, and a distressed body cannot properly house or express Consciousness. As such, satisfying physiological needs is not only a biological imperative but a psychological and spiritual one as well. To put it plainly, you cannot heal, function, align, connect, and thrive if your basic biological systems are breaking down due to malnutrition, overwork, or physical suffering.

Emotional Needs

Emotional needs are your needs for unconditional love, acceptance, belonging, and emotional safety. These include, for example:

- Feeling like you are welcomed and valued by your family or community.
- Knowing that your existence matters and is affirmed.
- Experiencing love as both a receptive and expressive state.

Biologically, these needs, which help attach us to others in reciprocal relationships of support and aid, are essential to survival. Human infants remain dependent for years. Even as adults we rely on cooperative social systems for everything from food, to safety, to technology. We

are not designed to survive in isolation. Emotional connection, through love, empathy, and mutual support, is a core human survival adaptation.

Psychologically, emotional needs are foundational to the development of a coherent, resilient, and integrated self. When consistently met, these needs support stable self-worth, emotional regulation, secure attachment, and the development of a healthy Bodily Ego. When unmet, due to neglect, conditional love, or abuse, our psychological systems are forced into defensive compensation (i.e., we go into [Deficit](#) or [Defense](#) Modes). Damage ensues. Chronic activation of our body's deficit mode leads to fragmentation of the self-concept, chronic insecurity, emotional dysregulation, and dysfunctional relational patterns. Over time, the failure to satisfy emotional needs can produce anxiety, depression, and a persistent inability to form safe, stable relationships. More importantly, chronic emotional deprivation weakens our bodily ego and prevents us from maturing into alignment with the Spiritual Ego, thus obstructing connection and higher development.

Spiritually, the need for love and inclusion is rooted in your true nature as a [fractaline](#) expression of the [Fabric of Consciousness](#). The Fabric of Consciousness consists of various [Facets of Consciousness](#), one of which is love. Therefore, your need for love is not merely about being loved, it is also about expressing love. The human body is built to receive and radiate love. However, this capacity is often shut down early by **toxic socialization** (neglect, abuse, indoctrination). Healing restores this capacity. As you heal, you will rediscover your ability to give and receive love. When this reawakens, do not suppress it. Acknowledge and release the fear, anger, or mistrust that may have accumulated over years of wounding. Let the love flow, both from within and toward others.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶There is a great song about this by the Bellamy Brothers called "Let your love flow."

Cognitive Needs

Cognitive needs refer to the deep and persistent human drive to know, understand, and make sense of reality. These needs manifest early in life through endless questioning and observation:

- “Why is the sky blue?”
- “What happens when we die?”
- “Why are people mean to each other?”

Biologically, cognitive needs support adaptive intelligence. To survive, organisms (that’s you and me and everything else that is alive) must perceive, predict, and respond to constantly changing patterns and signals in the environment. If environmental conditions change, we have to change. There we need to know and understand our environment. Obviously, the more accurate our understanding of the world, the better our chances of survival and thriving.

Psychologically, cognitive needs are foundational to mental coherence, reality testing, and the development of a stable, integrated, and grounded self-concept. When cognitive needs are satisfied in a safe and supportive environment, our mind learns to trust its own perceptions, form rational models of the world, and engage in reflective, creative, and critical thinking.

Conversely, when cognitive needs are thwarted, by confusion, trauma, deception, or indoctrination, our psychological system becomes disoriented. Cognitive dissonance, learned helplessness, dissociation, chronic confusion and, in the worst cases, personality disorders can result. Long-term deprivation of cognitive needs impairs not only learning but also identity formation, moral reasoning, and relational trust. When our emotional needs are simultaneously unmet, we may retreat into dogma, authoritarianism, or nihilism as compensatory strategies.

To be clear, cognitive needs support psychological and emotional health. The significance of this cannot be overstated. As Maslow said, "the most important characteristics of psychological health are simply the ability to perceive clearly—that is, to see the truth, to penetrate falsehood, phoniness, hypocrisy, and so on."¹⁵⁷

Spiritually, these needs are the extension of Consciousness Itself, which is awareness, perception, and truth-seeking by definition. Our collective drive to understand the world emerges from the deep structure of our being, from the driving primordial impulse of Consciousness to build it itself and its creation out. If you're not focused on the truth of things, you're not being true to your Self, your spiritual ego.

Just like hunger for food, hunger for truth is a biological and spiritual need. It should be cultivated as part of the educational process, protected, and satisfied through disciplined inquiry, critical thought, and fearless observation.

Psychological Needs

Psychological needs are your needs to feel good about yourself — to feel powerful, competent, efficacious,¹⁵⁸ and capable of engaging with the world in meaningful ways. These include the need to feel:

- That you are competent and skillful.
- That you have agency and influence.
- That you are a good and worthy person.
- That you are growing and actualizing your potential.

¹⁵⁷ Abraham H. Maslow, "Eupsychia—The Good Society," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 1, no. 2 (1961): 3.

¹⁵⁸ I would define power as the feeling of self respect" Ibid., 2.

Biologically, the drive to feel competent and capable is a primitive survival mechanism. Organisms that can learn, adapt, and exert control over their environments are more likely to survive, reproduce, and thrive. This drive to competence pushes humans to develop skill, problem-solving ability, and mastery — whether as hunters, healers, builders, or artists. Those who have their psychological needs met, those who feel competent and secure in their agency and self-image have a survival and creative advantage.

Psychologically, the need to feel competent and efficacious is essential for developing healthy self-esteem, resilience, and a coherent identity. When this need is met through authentic challenge and success, the individual experiences pride, confidence, and motivation. When it is blocked, by failure, systemic oppression, constant criticism, or lack of opportunity, the result is often learned helplessness, low self-worth, chronic anxiety, and depression. Over time, failure to satisfy this need can produce deep psychological distortion and internalized shame. We may even develop compensatory defense mechanisms, narcissism, workaholism, and saviour complexes to cope with unfulfilled psychological needs. Healing involves recognizing these distortions and rebuilding an authentic foundation of competence and self-worth.

Spiritually, psychological needs reflect the imperative of our [Fractaline Consciousness](#) (our spiritual ego) to grow, expand, and express itself in creative and capable ways. The desire to "be good at something" is not merely social conditioning; it is the echo of a deeper imperative to embody your purpose and complete the **Great Work** — the full manifestation of higher Consciousness through the physical unit. Developing *your* talents and fulfilling *your* potential enables *your* Spiritual Ego to more effectively operate in the world. It is part of the process of spiritual maturation and alignment.

Environmental Needs

Environmental needs refer to your deep and persistent requirement for safe, secure, stable, and aesthetically nourishing environments. These environments include:

- A safe and stable home where you are protected from violence, neglect, and chaos.
- A safe and respectful workspace where you are not exploited, degraded, or abused.
- Financial security sufficient to eliminate chronic anxiety about survival.
- Relational stability, especially during childhood, including consistent caregiving and predictable emotional environments.
- Aesthetic harmony — spaces that are clean, beautiful, orderly, and life-affirming.

Biologically, environmental stability is necessary for healthy nervous system development and long-term physical health. Chronic exposure to stressors like instability, poverty, or environmental toxicity leads to persistent activation of the stress response system (HPA axis), which causes cumulative physical damage over time. The result is increased risk of illness, inflammation, immune suppression, accelerated aging, and even early death. Safe, stable environments are doubly important when considering children. The developing body and brain requires safety, predictability, and nurturance. Without safety, the physical unit cannot function properly or support higher developmental processes.

Psychologically, lack of environmental safety or predictability leads to toxic stress, emotional dysregulation, and chronic anxiety. When your energy is consumed by threat detection, financial survival, or emotional chaos, there is no capacity left for healing, creativity, or connection. The self becomes reactive, fractured, and oriented toward control or escape. In extreme cases, long-term exposure to environmental insecurity (low wages,

constant threat of job loss, constant fear of assault) contributes to trauma-related disorders, disorganized attachment, depression, and burnout.

Healing begins by removing sources of instability and harm and restoring environmental coherence. A calm, safe space gives the nervous system the signal that it is safe to grow again. Thus, safe and secure environments are not optional. They are essential preconditions for recovery, integration, and conscious evolution.¹⁵⁹

Spiritually, the environment functions as the energetic and material container through which the Fractaline Consciousness expresses. If the container is chaotic, violent, impoverished, or hostile, then the Spiritual Ego cannot fully enter, align, or express through the physical unit. Environmental degradation directly obstructs the embodiment of higher consciousness and delays the unfolding of the Great Work.

A secure, beautiful, and life-affirming environment is not a luxury — it is a sacred infrastructure. The external space must support the internal work. For the physical unit to become a stable vessel for Consciousness expression, the environment around it must be harmonized with the values of safety, dignity, love, and creative freedom.

Inner Needs

In addition to the basic needs in the outer circle you also have inner needs. Inner needs are needs related to the alignment and integration of the Bodily Ego with the Spiritual Ego. Satisfaction of the inner needs for alignment and connection is a prerequisite for full activation of human potential and full human flourishing.

Alignment

¹⁵⁹This is perhaps the principle reason why the accumulating class, the elites, put so much effort into creating insecure and unsafe environments.

Of course, the question now becomes, what is alignment and what is connection. Alignment is the need for your Bodily Ego, your everyday self, personality, and decision-making structure, to come into coherence and cooperation with your Spiritual Ego, the true and proper driver of your life trajectory. Alignment means that your physical unit, in particular your Bodily Ego, is doing what your Spiritual Ego intends it to do. It means your actions, relationships, decisions, and direction in life reflect the purpose, values, and evolutionary intent of the Fractaline Consciousness that inhabits your body. This is the need to express who you truly are, to actualize your inner self and potential.¹⁶⁰ Maslow tagged this need as the need for self-actualization, which is correct as long as you capitalize the “S” in Self-actualization and understand that the self referred to here is referring to the spiritual ego.

It can be hard to wrap your head around what alignment actually means, however it’s easy to understand if you use an autonomous vehicle metaphor. An autonomous vehicle is a car with an artificial intelligence (AI) capable of monitoring and driving the car. In this metaphor, you think of your body, your physical unit, like it is the car, you think of your Bodily Ego like the car’s AI, and you think of your Spiritual Ego (your soul, Atman, monad, Fractaline Consciousness, or whatever you want to call it) as if it is the driver of that car. To be clear,

- Your body is the vehicle.
- Your Bodily Ego is the onboard AI — capable of managing the car but not inherently aware of the bigger picture.
- Your Spiritual Ego is the driver — the source of higher intent and the holder of intelligence, wisdom, compassion, strength and (most importantly) your life’s purpose.

¹⁶⁰ Abraham H. Maslow, “How We Diminish Ourselves,” *The Journal of Humanistic Education and Development* 29, no. 3 (March 1, 1991): 117–20.

Now, when this metaphor in your head, understand that when the AI (the bodily ego) listens to the driver (the spiritual ego) and the car goes where the driver wants, the system is **in alignment**. If the driver grabs the wheel and/or tells the AI to turn right, and the car turns right, the vehicle is in alignment. But if, for whatever reason,¹⁶¹ the AI (the bodily ego) ignores the driver, the vehicle drifts. If this happens you may end up in jobs, relationships, or belief systems that have nothing to do with your purpose. You may also find yourself driving in circles and you may even crash out early, which would be too bad. I'm sure you have people who love you and none of them would want to see that.

Anyway, it is important to understand, misalignment isn't your fault. On this planet, we are raised in a culture of **toxic socialization** that fills the mind with ideological junk, damages the physical body, and cuts off communication with higher Consciousness. Trauma, ideology, indoctrination, attachment rupture, and survival stress and so much more all contribute to the disabling of the body's alignment mechanisms (e.g. [steering emotions](#)) and its disconnection from consciousness.

It is also really important to understand that regardless of why you are misaligned, alignment remains a *critical* need that must be fulfilled if you want to actuate your full potential. Biologically, alignment correlates with neurological integration, especially between higher cortical regions (which govern long-term planning and values) and subcortical regions (which govern instinct, habit, and emotional response). When trauma or stress hijacks the nervous system, your alignment circuitry gets bypassed. When that happens, your decisions are no longer guided by higher awareness but by fear, reflex, deficit, and defensive programming.

¹⁶¹There are many reasons a bodily ego might ignore or actively suppress its spiritual ego. Some reasons include damage, trauma, fear, and bad programming (ideology). Ultimately, the goal of individual and collective development/evolution is to heal from the damage and trauma and overcome the fear and bad programming so we can all align and reconnect to the powerful fractiline consciousness inside.

Psychologically, the need for alignment manifests as the desire for meaning, authenticity, integrity, and direction. When you are aligned, your life feels *right*. Your experiences flow and your life is filled with purpose, clarity, and energy. You know who you are and what you are here to do. When you are misaligned, you feel lost, empty, conflicted, or trapped. You may experience a vague sense of failure or falseness, as though you're not living your real life. This condition is common, especially in high-survival or highly ideological environments. It often leads to burnout, apathy, self-betrayal, depression, personality disorders, and existential despair.

Spiritually, alignment is essential because it is through alignment that your Spiritual Ego incarnates fully. The point of embodiment is not to suffer, but to live your life as a conscious, integrated extension of Source, to fulfill your purpose, to engage in **The Great Work**.

To be clear,

- If your soul came here to teach, but you are stuck in tech support...
- If your soul came here to dance, but you are trapped in in working-class debt...
- If your soul came here to build healing communities, but you are isolated and afraid...
- If your soul came here to do this, but you are doing that...

...then you are out of alignment not because of failure, but because the conditions required for alignment, proper definitions, proper education, proper support, etc., were never properly provided. Moving forward, the goal is to reclaim agency, identify your true purpose, and build a life that reflects it. The goal is to align so you can proceed forward towards health and full connection. The goal is to connect so you can live your life fully fully actuated and whole.

Connection

As you can tell, meeting your body's need for alignment is critical, not only because doing so means you'll live a life that is empowered, fulfilled, and comfortable, but also because if don't live an aligned life, you won't be able to fully connect your bodily ego with your spiritual ego, and that's would be a bad thing because ultimately, that is what you are here to do. Here are here to get aligned and connected so you can fulfill your life purpose with all the power, intelligence, and grace that comes to you when connected to your powerful, intelligence, and graceful spiritual ego. If you lack connection, you are not actuating your full potential. If you lack connection, you are walking around like a half-alive zombie.

And just to be clear, connection is not a mystical fantasy. As scientists, indigenous societies, and eastern and western mystics have observed over the centuries, it's a real thing.

Connection is the natural and intended outcome of proper human development. Connection is your birthright. Connection is what allows your higher Self, your Fractaline Consciousness, your Atman, to fully incarnate into the material world. When connection is established, you become more than a biological organism running survival scripts, you become an agent of Consciousness, capable of clarity, power, direction, love, and creative actualization. You become, quite literally, the hands and eyes of God in the world.

Biologically and psychologically, connection reflects the full activation and integration of neurological, hormonal, emotional, and energetic systems. It manifests in increased intelligence, heightened emotional range and stability, stronger intuition, more consistent empathy, and greater adaptability — all of which improve survivability.

Spiritually, connection is the development goal of all human beings. The whole point of a body of any type is to allow Consciousness to express through, experience, and work in/on physical creation. Connection is what allows the soul to “come to life” or “come online” if

you prefer. If your need for connection is thwarted, you are just not your full Self. When connection is thwarted, psychological and emotional diminished and pathology are the result. Without connection, you are fragmented and reduced, locked in partial modes of being, governed by fear, ideology, and trauma responses.

And note, connection isn't about talent, bloodline, karma, or grace. There is no special blood colour, supernatural privilege, or elevated status reserved for saints, monks, or "initiates" of whatever dumb fucking "order" you happen to belong to. The idea that connection is rare or reserved for a "chosen few" is one of the central lies of elite ideology, a lie used to maintain hierarchy, mystify disconnection, and gatekeep access to power. The yellow brick road is for everybody. The real reason people fail to connect is not spiritual inadequacy, it is damage and disconnection caused by toxic socialization.¹⁶² As long as you meet all the needs of the physical unit, as long as you are mentally and emotionally healthy, connection happens automatically, in little snippets when you are younger, but more fully once your brain and central nervous system is fully developed.¹⁶³

And that, as I keep saying, is really the goal. The goal of human development is aligned, consistent, and persistent connection. It's an endpoint and a beginning. It's the endpoint of a healthy childhood and it is the beginning of lifelong growth. Indeed, when all your needs are met, all your trauma is cleared, and you are healthy and connected, your body, your physical unit, slips into [growth mode](#), a permanent state of integrated expansion where your full human and spiritual potential can be realized.

¹⁶²Mike Sosteric, "Everybody Has a Connection Experience: Prevalence, Confusions, Interference, and Redefinition," *Spirituality Studies* 4, no. 2 (2018), <https://www.spirituality-studies.org/dp-volume4-issue2-fall2018/files/assets/common/downloads/files/4-2-sosteric.pdf>.

¹⁶³Lin Edwards, "Brain Is Not Fully Mature until 30s and 40s," *Medical Express*, 2010, <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-12-brain-fully-mature-30s-40s.html>. Since your brain is the primary site of connection.

We will explore growth mode more fully in the final unit of this healing workbook. For now, and by way of concluding this unit on needs, it is important to understand two things.

Number one, understand that meeting all the essential needs is not an individual, maternal/paternal, or even familial challenge. That is, you cannot meet all your essential needs on your own, and you certainly cannot meet the needs of your children (if you have them) on your own. The essential needs are comprehensive and require ongoing service and attention. Meeting needs is not something you can do alone in a cave or a bedroom. This is a systems-level requirement. In the same way a child cannot build their own house, grow their own food, educate themselves, and regulate their own nervous system, no human being can meet all their essential needs in isolation. This means that the human project is fundamentally collective. As a collective, we must build an economy and a society capable of supporting healthy and fully actuated physical units. This is our purpose. This is why we are all here. We need an economy and a society designed and built to support [Human Flourishing](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Human_Flourishing).¹⁶⁴ We need a conscious economy, a [Harmonic Social Structure](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Harmonic_Social_Structure) (HSS),¹⁶⁵ a world structured not by the needs of the addicted accumulating class but one optimized for the efficient and sustainable satisfaction of *all* human needs of all human beings. Until we have that, we're all stuck. Some may be a bit more aligned and a bit more connected, but nobody can achieve full alignment and full connection within their current, toxic tribes.

Number two, understand that, moving forward, the problem is not the human species. As a whole, the human species has the productive, technological, economic, financial, and administrative expertise to instantiate a complete HSS in less than a decade or two. There is no question. Just end all the marketing, military, entertainment, plastic waste of energy and resources. Turn it all to something new. The only barrier is the accumulating class and their

¹⁶⁴https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Human_Flourishing

¹⁶⁵https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Harmonic_Social_Structure

destructive Regime of Accumulation, a regime that prioritizes addictive private greed¹⁶⁶ over global public need. ¹⁶⁷ As long as this system persists, we will struggle to connect. As long as human society is built to serve the addictions of a privileged few, toxicity, wasted effort, and disconnection will remain the norm.

And that's all I have to say about needs. To summarize, the human body has seven essential needs which must be met in order for the body to grow up healthy, strong, connected, and fully actuated. These needs include your physiological, emotional, cognitive, psychological, environmental, alignment, and connection needs. Meeting all these needs is a challenge. Meeting these needs requires an advanced and progressive society. As a species, we have what is required to create such a society, but we are currently blocked by a toxic and addicted accumulating class who refuse to make the changes needed to transition the current economic System to a healthier, more supportive society.

Connection Coach Certification Questions

1. List and define the Seven Essential Needs of the human physical unit. For each, provide:
 - A biological rationale
 - A psychological consequence of neglect
 - A spiritual function
2. Conduct a personal needs audit of your childhood and adolescence.
 - Identify which of the Seven Essential Needs were consistently unmet.

¹⁶⁶Mike Sosteric, "How Money Is Destroying the World," *The Conversation*, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/how-money-is-destroying-the-world-96517>.

¹⁶⁷David McNally, "Power, Resistance, and the Global Economic Crisis," in *Power and Resistance: Critical Thinking about Canadian Social Issues*, ed. Les Samuelson and Wayne Antony (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2012), 129.

- Analyze the compensatory behaviours, belief systems, or psychological strategies you may have developed to cope.
 - Reflect on how this has shaped your present patterns of connection, alignment, and relational behavior.
3. As the old saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Discuss what this means in the context of Toxic Socialization and our Seven Essential Needs.
- Explain how Toxic Socialization undermines the satisfaction of essential human needs.
 - Describe the structural features of a Harmonic Social Structure that would support full needs satisfaction.
 - Reflect on the collective responsibilities of families, communities, and institutions in enabling connection and alignment.

“G” is for Growth

From these and similar observations, we may generalize and say that the average child in our society generally prefers a safe, orderly, predictable, organized world, which he (sic) can count on, and in which unexpected, unmanageable or other dangerous things do not happen, and in which, in any case, he has all-powerful parents who protect and shield him from harm.¹⁶⁸

In the last few units we have examined the Lightning Path HEALING framework. This framework provides a template or map you can use to address the damage and disconnection you carry. If you follow its guidance—get help if you need it, create a non-toxic environment, address toxic attachments, learn to be truthful, deconstruct damaging ideology, and begin to satisfy your Seven Essential Needs—you will build a solid foundation for deep and sustained healing.

Once this foundation is laid, the next question arises: what now? Where does the healing and satisfaction of essential needs lead?

The answer is [Growth Mode](#).¹⁶⁹ Growth Mode is the condition under which the physical unit—your body and mind—has sufficient resources and safety to allocate most of its energy toward the realization of full human and spiritual potential. In Growth Mode, you are no longer trapped by unmet needs, reactive defenses, or ongoing repair. Your energy is liberated for creativity, expansion, exploration, and Connection.

¹⁶⁸Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 378.

¹⁶⁹https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Growth_Mode

For your information, growth mode is one of four [Ego Modes](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Ego_Modes)¹⁷⁰ the physical unit, the body, can operate under, the others being [Defense Mode](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Defense_Mode),¹⁷¹ [Deficit Mode](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Deficit_Mode),¹⁷² and [Repair Mode](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Repair_Mode).¹⁷³

Growth mode is not that difficult to understand. Consider a flower. If you give a flower all the food and water it needs, if you give it lots of sun, if you protect it from pests, if you do not stomp on it, all the biological energy it has will go into growing into a strong and healthy plant with beautiful flowers on top. Obviously, putting a flower into growth mode is what every competent gardener tries to do. In growth mode, the flower can become strong and beautiful because all its energy is directed towards manifesting its full potential. It is the same with humans. If the environment is safe, needs are met, lies are dismantled, and there is sufficient stability, the physical unit can enter growth mode. Here, energy flows freely into developmental expansion, authentic expression, and reconnection. In growth mode, the flower does not just survive or repair, it blooms.

Deficit Mode: Sometimes, however, an organism does not enter growth mode. Sometimes, there are problems. Sometimes, the soil is insufficient. Sometimes, the plant gets too much rain, or too little rain, or not enough sun. When a plant's needs are not met, the plant will go into deficit mode. In deficit mode, an organism will direct energy towards trying to meet unmet needs. An indoor plant, for example, that does not have enough light, perhaps because it is not by a window or because its light source is not strong enough, will grow tall and spindly as it directs already inadequate resources towards growing itself closer to the light.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Ego_Modes

¹⁷¹https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Defense_Mode

¹⁷²https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Deficit_Mode

¹⁷³https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Repair_Mode

¹⁷⁴Maslow quoted in Edward Hoffman, *The Right to Be Human: A Biography of Abraham Maslow* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1999), 4395.

Defence Mode: In addition to deficit mode, living organisms have a third mode of operation known as defence mode. This mode is activated when the physical unit is under environmental, psychological, or emotional stress, for example from precarious finances, abuse in their relationships, exploitation at work, etc. In this mode, [Survival Mechanisms](#) activate. Autonomic systems override conscious processes. Emotional numbing, aggression, withdrawal, hyper-vigilance, denial, and dissociation take over. In this state, the physical unit does not explore or express. Instead, it hides, braces, and reacts. In this state, connection is attenuated, even blocked.

Finally, we have **Repair Mode:** If you put a flower out in your garden and it gets stepped on, it might die. If it does not die, it will take a lot of energy to straighten up and rebound. The energy spent on rebounding, on repair, while necessary, is energy not directed towards growth. The energy lost to repair can be a little energy if damage is not too bad or a lot of energy if damage is severe. If you step on a plant once, it might recover without too much difficulty. However, if you step on the plant repeatedly, it will need to spend a lot of energy on repair—that is if it doesn't just die. It may bounce back, but like the flower that did not get enough sunlight, it will be much smaller and weaker as a result.

To be clear, when you do not meet an organism's essential needs, it enters into deficit mode. When you assault and damage it, it enters defence mode. When it can finally recover and heal, it enters into repair mode. In each of these modes, a substantial portion of its biological energy is diverted from growth. As a consequence, the organism grows up stunted.

Recognizing and Activating Human Growth

The differences between growth mode, deficit mode, defence mode, and repair mode should be clear at this point. You are in growth mode when

1. Your body is not wasting energy on defence and repair.

2. Your Seven Essential Needs are consistently are sufficiently satisfied.

At this point, you may have two questions:

1. How do I enter Growth Mode?
2. What does Growth Mode actually look and feel like?

How to Enter Growth Mode

As for the first question, how do you enter growth mode, you already have the answer to that. If you look back over the content of this workbook, you will see that all of the guidance provided here, like creating a safe environment, learning to tell the truth, learning to reject ideology and wrong thought, and finding ways to satisfy your own needs, are all about creating the conditions whereby you can stop wasting energy on defence and deficit needs gratification and instead focus on repair and, eventually, growth. The HEALING Framework in this workbook provides a roadmap for liberation. It is a repair book which you can use when you are ready to begin your process.

Theoretically, getting into growth mode is straightforward:

- Remove threats.
- Deal with addictions.
- Meet needs.
- Heal wounds.
- Stop lying to yourself and others.
- Dismantle toxic ideologies.
- Create space for reconnection and expansion.

Note that while the principles are simple, implementation is not. I have said it before but I will say it again because it needs to be repeated until it is clear. Healing and growth require time, support, and favorable social conditions. If you don't already have these things, you will have to spend energy on creating them. Free time, find support, and create favourable social conditions. Eliminate things that waste energy. Step away from toxic co-workers, friends, and family. Build networks of support. Use the **Pathfinder Therapeutic AI**.

Also keep in mind, growth mode is not a binary state. There is no switch to flip. You do not go to bed one night dealing with deficit and defence and then the next day wake up all bright and shiny and creative. It is gradual and occurs over time. You may experience moments or pockets of growth long before it becomes your baseline, but that's fine. Don' be discouraged. Even if you are deeply damaged, you can still engage in connection practices and experience glimpses of alignment and expansion. These partial entries are valid and valuable. Over time, with sustained effort and supportive environments, these moments can stabilize into a continuous state.

Finally, let me say that on the Lightning Path, we refer to this long-term healing trajectory that takes you from deficit and defence through repair and finally into growth simply as [The Work](#). As defined in the SpiritWiki, The Work is the essential process of development, healing, and reconnection necessary to undo the damage caused by toxic socialization and restore full alignment and connection. The goal of The Work is to bring the human physical unit into stable and enduring growth mode, something that very few people are able to achieve in our current toxic environments, but something we all have to do if we want to live healthy, stable, creative lives.

What Does Growth Mode Look Like

As for the second question, what does growth mode look and feel like, that is not too difficult to answer. A flower in growth mode is vibrant, resilient, colorful, upright. Its roots run deep, its stalk is firm, and its blossoms are a visual manifestation of fully realized potential.

Similarly, a human being in Growth Mode is not merely surviving, not simply coping, not just “getting by”—they are thriving. They are expanding. They are becoming fully themselves. A

A human being in sustained Growth Mode expresses the undistorted vibrancy of their Consciousness. The Fabric flows smoothly through them. The egoic filters—those distortions introduced by toxic socialization—have been dismantled or sufficiently cleared to allow clear perception, coherent action, and aligned intention. Thought, word, and deed become integrated and consistent with Source Consciousness.

In concrete terms, a human in Growth Mode:

- Experiences a baseline of physical vitality and emotional stability.
- Has a mind capable of clarity, creativity, and systemic insight.
- Is animated by purpose—not externally imposed, but internally revealed.
- Is spiritually aligned, capable of conscious Connection with their Spiritual Ego.
- Is emotionally available, empathic, and able to experience deep joy, intimacy, and community.
- Is free of compulsive patterns, no longer driven by unconscious addictions, lies, or ideologies.
- Is compassionate, not because they’re told to be, but because alignment with Source *requires it*.

- Refuses to harm themselves or others and is capable of standing against harm in all its social, political, and interpersonal forms.
- Becomes increasingly immune to ideological manipulation, having transcended the Master Narratives of domination that keep most people in defense, deficit, or repair modes.

It should be noted that Growth Mode is not about personal achievement in capitalist terms. It is not wealth, status, power, or prestige. It is *not* a luxury yacht, a six-figure bank account, or a corner office in a glass tower. These are illusions, symptomatic of profound disconnection. Like the rest of us, the richest people on this planet live in chronic deficit and defense mode, addicted to the very system that ensures their spiritual impoverishment. Their ability to dissociate from the suffering they cause, or to rationalize their predation with colonized social theories (e.g, **Social Darwinism**), is not strength, It is trauma and pathology. It is a spiritual dead end. The lie that wealth equals superiority must be confronted and dismantled. True growth requires *alignment*, not accumulation. It requires truth, not spin. It requires distributed empowerment, not hierarchical dominance.

Are you rich? Are you listening? Do you get it?

Let it be said plainly: the Regime of Accumulation stunts human development. It deforms the physical unit. It distorts the ego. It isolates the Spiritual Ego. It conditions competition, not compassion; hoarding, not healing; deceit, not truth. Real Growth Mode—individual and collective—requires system change. We must dismantle the structures that trap humanity in survival and deficit, the current [Regime of Accumulation](#). We must transition from an economy of extraction to an economy of care and distribution. We must replace ideology with insight, competition with cooperation, alienation with alignment.

In other words, Growth Mode at scale means planetary transformation.

A Final Invitation

If you are serious about growth—authentic, sustained, planetary-aligned growth—then do the Work. Follow the HEALING Framework. Engage the Connection Framework (outlined in LP Workbook Three). Use the tools. Learn the principles. Live the values. Your life will be better for it.

And when you are ready—when your own roots run deep and your own petals unfold—turn outward. Help others heal. Help others rise. Help others reconnect. Help the world remember itself. Remember, growth is not merely a personal triumph, it is a collective necessity. A sacred responsibility. A planetary calling.

If we do not grow together, heal together, connect together, our societies, this world, already fraying at the seams, will crumble into dust.

But if we do the Work,
If we rise in rhythm,
If we grow in truth and unity—
then this garden can flourish again once again.

It's not too late.

Let's get to work.

Connection Coach Certification Questions

1. Clearly distinguish between the four ego modes: Growth Mode, Deficit Mode, Defense Mode, and Repair Mode.
 - How do these modes differ in terms of energy allocation, psychological state, and behavioral patterns?
 - What specific conditions must be present in a child's environment for Growth Mode to emerge and stabilize?
2. Reflect deeply on your own developmental environment—your childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood.
 - Were your environmental conditions conducive to healing and growth?
 - What aspects of Toxic Socialization (violence, neglect, chaos, indoctrination, etc.) were present in your life?
 - Based on your reflection, what healing work remains to be done? What might reconnection look like for you?
3. In a three-column table labeled Short-Term, Medium-Term, and Long-Term, identify realistic steps you can take to:
 - Satisfy unmet needs
 - Reduce exposure to toxic people and environments
 - Shift energy out of defense and repair and toward healing and growth

If your current political or economic context limits your options, document these external constraints clearly. Pay attention here. Recognition of structural barriers is not defeat, it is the first step toward collective empowerment and systemic change.

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