Belief Systems Therapy

A Program of Spiritual and Emotional Healing and Growth

by Gregory V. Wilson, D.Min.
and Helen E. Wilson, B.S.

Contents At-A-Glance

Table of Contents

Contents

Preface: How to Use This Book

This book and workbook is designed to help you become familiar with the concept of **self beliefs** that, along with foundational beliefs and relationship beliefs, form your personal belief system. We will work within the context of seeing all persons as being **blessed, known, good and loved.** We will begin by defining belief systems, and the connection among beliefs, feeling states, and your body's responses to situations and relationship issues. Belief Systems Therapy is designed to encompass not only what we think and believe (which is the realm of Cognitive Therapy) but also our feeling-states (emotions and the deeper affect, which we will access through journaling and guided meditations) and our physiological responses. We believe that attending to all three aspects of our selves offers the best hope of learning to change the beliefs that interfere with our happiness and relationships. Also, in general we would consider our spirituality to encompass and transcend all these aspects of our lives. So as we heal our belief systems, become familiar with our emotions and affects, and trace our physiological responses to understand our whole selves better, we are also healing and growing spiritually.

The central exercise in the book is "**Identifying your family of origin map, Your Map of the World."** Your map is the key to unlocking the mystery of why and how you go through life recreating your early childhood relational patterns. If you attend a workshop, you will have a chance to do some of the exercises there; but they will be most helpful if done over a period of time. The tape, "*Blessed, Known, Good and Loved: Belief Systems Therapy - Introduction*" can guide you as you work through the full book/workbook. The exercises in Chapters One through Five should be worked through in order, as each builds on concepts presented in the preceding chapters. Chapters Six through Eleven introduce different ways of applying belief systems insights to relationships, and can be read in any order.

We introduce belief systems and their role in relationships through an interview with Gregory, which was televised in 1992, which offers an overview of why we developed this work, and how it might be helpful to your life. At the end of the book is Chapter Twelve, on the foundational belief that we are all, at the depth of our beings, blessed, known, good and loved. You will find examples from Christian scripture, as well as other spiritual writings, to support this particular foundational belief system. The Appendix offers some background on the development and theoretical basis for Belief Systems Therapy.

In the balance of the book, we introduce the concept of *Continuity of Care*, look more closely at the Emotional Fields of the family, explore the role of triangles in relationships, and consider the roles in family systems through the lens of belief systems. Once you have grown in your understanding of how these systems shaped your self belief system, you will be ready to begin the long term healing process of identifying and changing specific negative self beliefs, so that you can enjoy healthy relationships and begin to celebrate life as a new being, immersed in the sense of being blessed, known, good and loved.

Throughout the book, we will offer examples drawn from our own life experiences, as well as from stories told by clients and group members. When names are used, they are fictionalized, and details altered to protect confidentiality. The sources of all other quotes are detailed in the Bibliography.

The authors' beliefs and goals

We would like to share some of the beliefs that form the background for this book, and our goals in writing it.

We believe

- that emotional and spiritual health are interconnected, and that inner growth and healing is a necessary part of moving toward a life of greater joy, peace, love, kindness, gentleness, intimacy, relational harmony, freedom from fear, authenticity, inner strength

- that every person has inherent worth, and the capacity to grow spiritually and emotionally

- that humans can change and transform; we are not "stuck" forever

- that every person does the best he or she can at any given time, given the limitations created by their biological state ("nature") and their personal life experiences ("nurture")

- that we are also shaped by our culture, which includes forces that often impose roles, expectations and limitations on us all, and that the effects on girls and women may be different from the effects on boys and men, so that any system of healing and growth must be sensitive to the effect of those cultural differences, as well as the individual's "nature" and "nurture"

- that healing insights can be found in the Judeo-Christian bible as well as other spiritual or sacred texts, and writings from other times and places

- that those of you who are reading this book can make the changes you want in your life

Our goals are:

- to provide tools and models to facilitate growth and healing

- to increase empathy and compassion, by experiencing greater awareness of our own and others' emotional and spiritual growth issues and struggles

- to promote spiritual and psychological maturity

- to create a unique "lens" (Belief systems therapy) for individuals and groups to work with as they grow and heal

Introduction: A Conversation about Belief Systems Therapy

In 1992, I (Gregory) had a private practice in Pastoral Counseling in Florida, and was offering workshops on Belief Systems Therapy and the role of our belief systems in relationships, specifically how our beliefs form, and the effect they have on developing and maintaining intimacy. In December 1992, I was interviewed for a television program in Key West prior to offering a series of workshops there. Parts of the interview, with some additional material, are offered here as a prelude to our exploration of belief systems.

Key West TV Show - Dec. 1992

Interviewer: Tonight we are going to be talking about intimacy and to some degree, what blocks intimacy in relationships. And what's underneath that is: what is that we believe about ourselves, and about others, that gets in the way of intimacy? Gregory, when we talk about intimacy, what is it that we really seek, in your opinion?

Gregory: I don't think that there's any question that all of us seek intimacy, and that we seek warmth, love and affection. I think that's just part of our nature as human beings, as spiritual beings. And I believe that we can identify specific ways of being in the world, in relationship–specific feeling states that we inherently seek out that move us in the direction of greater intimacy with ourselves, with others, with the world around us, emotionally and spiritually.

Part of my work as a pastoral counselor has been to develop a core belief about who we are as people, which is that to identify ourselves as being *blessed, known, good, and loved* at the core of our beings is really important. That identity becomes a foundational belief. And everything I do in my life, I want to be congruent with that foundational belief. A sense of being blessed, of being welcomed, a sense of being welcomed here, of being welcomed when I walk in my front door, of being welcomed when I get up in the morning by my family, and my spouse, is really important to my sense of who I am. And I will strive for that and want that. I will seek to be known, in a relationship that's safe, so I can feel free to be myself. And the sense of being loved–to be cared for, to be able to care for, to have that kind of mutuality in a relationship, that's what intimacy is about. It includes a sense of belonging, a sense of mutuality, a sense that within who I am, I have a sense that I am good.

For a closer look at what it means to be Blessed, Known, Good and Loved, see Chapter Twelve of this workbook.

However, what happens is that as we grow up, things happen to us and the things that happen to us sometimes move us in a direction where I don't necessarily believe those things (that I am blessed, known, good, and loved) about myself. I don't believe that I'm innately good. I don't believe that I'm really welcomed here. An example of how that might come about–if you have a young child who's playing with their toys in the middle of the living room floor, say a 2, 3, 4, or 5 year old, and Dad or Mom comes home in the evening and is kind of irritable. And the child's very innocently very nicely playing on the floor really having an unconsciously wonderful time; and the parent says (somewhat harshly or impatiently) to the child, "What are you doing in the middle of the floor?" And the child in that innocent state is met with what feels to him like a hurtful statement, or a negative statement. If that happens enough over and over again (and as a parent I realize I sometimes do things ritualistically–things in a sense that I wish I did not do, and I have to look at that myself), if that happens to that child over and over again, than that innocent state, that playful state, that spontaneous state will begin to be combined with a feeling of being un-welcome, a negative. And that child will slowly, depending upon the intensity of those words from the parent, will begin slowly to internalize that "there's something wrong with my natural playful state, my natural sense of expression as I play." Then that child will begin to adopt a negative belief about self– "there's something wrong with me, with my innate self because every time I express my innate self, I'm met with something that is negative and hurtful" and that child will become really inhibited about expressing that side of him.

Interviewer: And that's what we bring into our relationships?

Gregory: Yes, we bring the decision not to express our natural self into the relationship because of the pain that's attached to it.

Interviewer: Do we hope that somebody will see beneath the veneer of our inhibitions and let us free so that we can be natural?

Gregory: Yes. I think not only do we hope for it; I think we spend our lives seeking it. Those adjectives I use–they are alive. They are dynamic–being blessed, known, good, and loved–and when I feel that, I have a good feeling about who I am. It's a confident feeling and it's a feeling that's mindful of myself and mindful of others. It's not a feeling or belief that would cause me to be intrusive, nor is it a sense that would lead me to withdraw. It's a sense that I can be present, that I can safely be mutual in a relationship, and I can receive care and I can give care.

Interviewer: For all the parents that are out there freaking out saying "Oh my God I do that every day, one way or the other!" isn't some of this to some degree inevitable–we give too much or too little to our

kids–we either jump too hard on them or we give don't give them enough structure?

Gregory: Of course. I know, with my work schedule and other adults I know with their work schedules, the relationship with our children is really tenuous. How do I carve out enough time? Or how do I put myself in a particular feeling state to be available to my child–and at this point I'm taking responsibility for myself, for being in a particular feeling state. For example, if I've just had a day where I've been out working for 10 hours, and it's been hard, and I'm really down and maybe even irritable if the end of the day wasn't so hot–when I walk in that front door there's a natural tendency to take that negative energy into that front door and just spread it out all over the living room and into the kitchen. When that happens, that child who is needing me, and appropriately so, that child experiences that negativity. I've been learning in my life (and I'm by no means saying that I do this one hundred percent)–I'm becoming conscious of working this out myself, so that as I walk through that front door, I am aware that I have a responsibility to say to myself "now wait a minute, this feeling is about the workday's things. It is not this child's, it is not of this house." And I need to take responsibility to say "take a breath; who are you?" and even in a sense "how am I going to instill in that child the sense of being blessed, known, good, and loved?" And I'm not saying that we do that every day, because that's a lot of thinking and a lot of processing, but the more I do that, and the more I begin to feel that, then it begins to happen in a natural way. So when the child's playing in the living room, I might have a tendency, if I've had a hard day, not to interfere with the child's play as I walk in but to go do something else to take care of myself in some other way. Or I might even seek the opportunity to sit down on the floor and play with the child, really letting go of what happened that day and just enjoy the time. But to interfere and become intrusive with that child is a violation of that child's rights.

Interviewer: So back to intimacy, part of what we're saying here is that it is inevitable, that all of us have some degree of negative self beliefs that we walk into a relationship with, and we're going to confront that. And one of the things that you're going to be doing by coming into the Key West area is teaching a series of workshops that will help people uncover what their belief systems really are.

Gregory: Yes that is true and the first part of this work is really educational. We explore who we are as human beings, how we relate to one another, and the purpose of our relational styles. I cannot stress enough that there is a purpose to our relational styles. So if I am relating in a way that is self-destructive or hurtful, there is a purpose behind that and I need to discover and work on what the purpose is.

Interviewer: Gregory, in terms of the purpose of belief systems: would you elucidate that a little bit?

Gregory: The purpose of any set of belief systems is an attempt to have to intimacy and mutuality and to protect self. That child that was injured will adopt a belief systems that there's something wrong with my natural will and expression. That belief system will stop that child from expressing that will, that natural self, which protects the child from being hurt. So the purpose is to protect ourselves, while at the same time we are trying to get our needs met in a way that produces a mutual intimacy in a relationship. So the purpose is protection. I think it's very important to understand that the purpose of the belief system is a positive one even though the belief system may be a harsh judgment on self. It may be "there is something wrong with me." Or it may be "I don't have a right to have a caring, nurturing relationship" or "I can't put myself in a way of life that would produce a caring, nurturing relationship." The belief system has a positive intention and, in a sense, that needs to be honored. This severity of the negative belief system and the intensity with which I hold it corresponds to the pain behind it. And we need to be really sensitive to the pain behind those decisions to protect self.

Interviewer: In your workshops you help people to identify how it is they shoot themselves in the foot and prevent themselves from getting what they actually want?

Gregory: Yes in such a way that helps not only to identify how they do that, but also to begin to develop strategies and different ways of life so that needs get met in a caring sensitive way.

Interviewer: One of the things I was really fascinated by when we first started talking tonight is your thinking about how our culture right now is in a very special time and that this is an opportunity for us to really reformulate our belief systems in a way that involves everything from politics to spirituality. Would you summarize that for us please?

Gregory: Looking at our history there was an intense time going through World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. We prided ourselves on being the industrial giants. We adopted beliefs that we were special, because we were these industrial giants protecting the world. Something else went along with that: we began to adopt beliefs that correlate with the industrial foundation. And we began to adopt roles that correlated with those beliefs, roles that perpetuated the industrial way of life in which we live in. An example of that might be that a person would continue to work in a factory knowing that statistically they would be likely to die at 65 after retiring at 63, with only 2 years of retirement; and even knowing that, people still committed to that role. That was a

common sort of thing that happened in working in the industrial world. What's happening now is that's beginning to break up; and just as in moving through a divorce, or a family crisis, the roles are beginning to break. It's just like when the tree breaks you can look in the tree and read the life of the tree. And that is what's happening now–the roles are beginning to break, which offers an way to really examine ourselves and the beliefs that we have about ourselves, and the beliefs that we have about our community, the beliefs that we have about our nation, and our roles–and we have an opportunity to do some real changing. However that cannot happen unless there's a sense of safety, and a sense of trust.

Interviewer: And because there is so much transition, there's a lot of anxiety; for example we don't really know what's expected of us as men and women anymore.

Gregory: With this change all roles are changing. I mean it was really clear before–we had the corporate man, we had the woman at home, we had two or three kids we were raising up, and the roles we saw on television were for the most part the roles we aspired to. This is where the money was and where the wealth was. Now all that's changing, because our world is not dependent on factories–it's dependent on how we think, and how we relate to one another in the job setting, which is interconnected with negative belief systems too. Am I setting myself up in my work to have a two-year stay, and change every two years, because I'm setting myself up to be excluded somehow? So to understand our belief systems would be beneficial for the work world as well as intimate relationships.

So, once I begin to identify that, "Yeah, there is something breaking within me. There's been three generations of Steelworkers in my family, and I was designed to be a steelworker, but that system doesn't exist anymore." Do I sit passively or do I take a look at who I am and take some initiative to say, "well I can become something else"? Is my identity so tied up into the past or my beliefs about myself that I can't, that I'm paralyzed? Who am I outside what I was trained to be? I begin to ask those kinds of questions, and if I ask those questions in an environment that's caring, that I can get feedback, that I can have engagement with rather than being tightened up with the pain of the exploration, then I can begin to relax, I can been begin to explore, and maybe some of who I more naturally am can begin to come to fruition. I begin to share that and I might even pick a profession that is more congruent with who I naturally am, and not with what is expected of me or what I was told to be.

Interviewer: "Who I naturally am" seems to be such a fluid phrase the way you say that. But as a female or as a male, how do we come together? It seems like we have the possibility for wearing so many different hats. But again there is that kind of confusion, and if we begin to

understand one another, I imagine that as couples we would really find a lot of surprises in your workshops. People kind of look at themselves as individuals and in their families and wonder what do I expect of myself?

Gregory: I think the greatest hope in doing these workshops is that I'm going to learn to get my needs met in a more sensitive, caring, nurturing way, and that I'm going to have the skills to be able to share with another person, so that as I work on this as an individual and this individual works on whatever needs to be worked on from their history, then I will have better skills and strategies to invest in the relationship and bring about harmony, to bring about care, to have less tension, less anxiety, more trust and safety. In a sense, you have a person who commits to this other person in the relationship, and they just automatically contribute all sorts of relational styles, all kinds of positive beliefs, and all kinds of negative beliefs, and we just do it–it's just there. There are three entities: there is *this* individual, and *this* individual, and there's the relationship. So what happens is the individual needs to be honored; so we begin to unpack what was placed into the relationship unconsciously, both positively and negatively, we'll look at all of that. And what we find out is I've put something into the relationship I didn't necessarily want, looking at it consciously, I don't want it in there. So maybe I have a struggle with being passive aggressive, which is a clinical term which means that if I get angry at somebody I can't be direct with them with my anger out of fear or whatever may come to my mind, so I do something else around the back or something that's passive but yet aggressive. Well if I look I may find I have contributed that to the relationship because that's a pattern that I learned in my childhood, because every time I got directly angry somebody hit me so I decided not to do that any more, which makes a lot of sense for a kid to do. But if you're talking about a relationship as an adult it doesn't make a lot of sense. So if I put that style in there, this work helps me to pull that behavior out, take a look at it, where it came from, and work with it in such a way that I get the caring and nurturing that I need to be able to be direct. So I don't store that anger up and have explosions or go out and do something that's self-destructive or just suppress that within myself and not be really available for the relationship. So when that part of me expresses that anger, it happens in a way that's not threatening, that keeps the relationship safe, and I'm able to be direct and have my say, because I have a right to have my say. It doesn't mean I'm always going to get my way, but I do have the right to share and to negotiate for my way and not automatically assume I can't have it.

Interviewer: Oftentimes in couples' workshops I've heard women say I really want us to do something with our relationship, but I can't get my husband or my boyfriend or my lover to come. What might you say that would assist viewers to consider it, basically males who

say, “I would never do anything like that; that’s not something I would do.” How would you motivate them to be a part of this? It seems like we as men have a harder time being willing to explore this. Are we that much more protective?

Gregory: It seems to me that the men have a more difficult time moving in and understanding and expressing feelings. Some of the men I work with I ask, “how you feeling?” I have to ask several times and it’s not a pushy kind of way, but for the men, some men actually can’t come up with the feeling because they don’t have the vocabulary to identify the physiological state that they’re having as a feeling. And so education is needed. If we’re asking people questions they really don’t have an answer or a vocabulary for, it’s abusive in a sense, and as a counselor if I do that it’s abusive for me to do that. So I need to understand what’s going on with that person and how they’re operating and what they’ve learned about themselves, so they need some exploration that way. I can say this —that if the men will come and work and just take time to see if it makes sense, to see if it’s logical to you—men like to be logical—so come and see if it’s logical to you. If it is, begin to work with it. If you work with it, it has been my experience that the men who have chosen to do that have benefited from it and their relationship has benefited from it, and they’ve gotten their needs met in such a way that they really feel good about who they are and feel OK about what they need to express to their partner.

Interviewer: Would you give a summary of what goes on in belief systems workshops and in couple’s workshops?

Gregory: What we do in these workshops is very honoring to whatever set of beliefs a person brings in and you can expect that we are quite aware that the beliefs are there for protection. So what happens is, there is an exercise that we do that identifies what the beliefs are that we have in our lives, and how we internalize them and how they have an effect on us. In a sense what we do is we work on what relationships may have been intrusive in our lives, and what relationships may have been absent, and what relationships were nurturing. As a result of the relationships that were intrusive and absent there’s a negative belief that was adopted. I try to get around it but I can’t get around it – it always seems to turn out that way. So we form and we understand the family shape–in a sense how the person identifies their map of the world because how people relate to you in your early childhood–5 to 10 to 15 years old–this forms your perception, your map of the world. For example Columbus had a different view, a different map of the world. A lot of people had a map of the world that the world was flat and they were committed to the view that the world was flat. They were trained that the world was flat and you couldn’t argue with them or anything. And when Columbus said, “well wait a minute, maybe it’s not flat,” they argued against Columbus. Well

indeed the world is not flat but they would have lived and died for their belief that the world was flat. That's what happens to us as children. We adopt beliefs and we're committed to the beliefs that we adopt because this is the balance that we have struck in this world and how we survive in this world. Then I've discovered that I have some beliefs that say the world is flat and it helps me to say now wait a minute, maybe that's not the shape of the world and I have the map but the territory's really a little different. And I'll begin to open up to explore this kind of thing.

Interviewer: So this is a workshop of self-discovery?

Gregory: Yes. We will explore the map and after you discovering the shape of your, map there can be intentionality about how would you want your world to look–what self beliefs would you want to have? And we'll work on strategies to counter the negative beliefs if you want to do so.

Interviewer: And the couple's workshops?

Gregory: Well the couple's workshop is similar—the introduction is similar because it's similar work; but then there's a process in which we go about finding out why *this* particular person, and what was the purpose of *this* person's choosing *this* person, and how the relationship perpetuates the negative and positive beliefs. And so in a sense there's a dance going on in the relationship that perpetuates the positive and negative beliefs. That dance is clearly identified, which will help disrupt the style of relationship that's hurtful, and that perpetuates the negative beliefs.

Interviewer: So a positive outcome is maybe not to get stuck in the same fight that's been going on for ten years.

Gregory: Clearly that is the goal: not to get stuck in the same fight that's been going on in the 10 years of the relationship. If it's been going on for ten years in the relationship, maybe it's been going on for 15 or 20 years prior to that as well. The goal is to learn how not to do those things, and to catch the triggers that happen within myself that produce that response so I can take responsibility and I can stop that kind of interaction myself. And then that gives me a chance to engage in a relationship in such a way that's more direct with my needs and with who I am.

Interviewer: Can you talk just a little bit about grace? It's a concept that usually we talk about in theology, but it's a very important statement and concept and experience internally.

Gregory: A sense of grace–even when I talk about it I breathe deeper and I can feel myself being more at ease. It's almost a sense of separateness, that I'm OK, that all is well within me, that I have a

contact with my higher power that's warm and loving, and that I am able to relate to other people in the same way. And that there is not anything within myself that is not acceptable to my higher power or to others in its pure state. And it's a confidence of that truth. It's also a confidence that when I make decisions that are not congruent with myself being blessed, known, good and loved, that's not the end of the world and I don't need to judge myself. That I know that I am in the presence of people in community who are loving, and I know that I have worked hard to get that type of community, and I know that my sense of my higher power, my spiritual self, that I cannot within my power break that love. I cannot do anything that will break that energy coming to me which is caring and loving. It's a belief and conviction that that's absolutely true. So that no matter what happens in my life, that sense of grace always stays intact.

Chapter One: Defining Belief Systems

In our workshops, groups, and client counseling we talk about *belief systems*. We look at how beliefs affect our lives, including our relationships with others, our vocations, everything we do. Our belief systems are basic to all our activities and interactions. The purpose of the first section of this book is to define and identify our *foundational beliefs* and *self beliefs,* especially *negative self beliefs,* and begin the process of changing those beliefs we choose to change.

Like all systems, your belief system can be either **open** or **closed**. An open system "provides for change …[and] offers choices and depends on successfully meeting reality for its continuing in life" while a closed system "provides for very little or for no change at all" (Satir 1972: 113). As we learn about our belief systems, be aware of whether yours are open or closed: can you change your beliefs easily, or is that difficult for you in the beginning? Can you imagine different choices in what you believe about yourself, or the way the world works? As you examine your beliefs, do you find that they match reality?

Many of us grew up in family systems that were not open to new ideas. Religious beliefs, political orientations, beliefs about the roles of men, women, or children—all were "carved in stone" and not about to change. If this was true for you, it may not be easy for you to change your own beliefs immediately, but be patient with yourself–you do have the power to change how you view the world and yourself. And you can choose to go back to old beliefs or keep new ones, depending on your sense of what is most helpful for you.

Foundational Beliefs

There are several different types of beliefs: Our primary belief systems are foundational beliefs and self beliefs. In addition, we have beliefs about relationships—the structure and meaning of relationship with self, others, God, and creation

Foundational beliefs are overall beliefs. They include our theology, our understanding of God; our values and our moral structure; our sense of who we are as people, what it means to be human, or male or female. Foundational beliefs are what we use to create our perception of the world on the deepest level. They are the anchors of our decision making process, and provide a way of understanding the world in which we live.

Some examples of foundational beliefs are:

1. Human beings are inherently sinful.
2. Human beings are at their core both good and evil.
3. The human race is essentially self-destructive.
4. People are divided into Mind, Body and Spirit.
5. Human beings are spiritual beings, and they are innately Blessed, Known, Good and Loved.
6. God is a judge.
7. God is love.

You may notice several of the example foundational beliefs are conflicting with others—which demonstrates why a "belief" is not the same as "the truth."

We form our foundational beliefs in the context of our families, our church communities, our schools, and our culture. As children we unconsciously adopt the beliefs of those around us, and generally have to submit to the "rules" of those systems. Then, as we go through adolescence we often struggle to find our own identities by choosing foundational beliefs that contrast sharply with those of our parents and other authorities. However, because these beliefs form in "reaction" to those of our parents, we are still not freely choosing our own beliefs.

As adults we continue to form, choose, or discard foundational beliefs as our understanding of the world evolves, and we mature as human beings. Because foundational beliefs are so interwoven with our spirituality, it is normal for foundational beliefs to change as we move through the course of our spiritual development. (Recently, much has been studied and written about the stages of human spiritual and moral development, which influence the pattern of our changing foundational beliefs. For a more detailed look at this topic, see the Bibliography for works by James Fowler on spiritual development, and James Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan on Moral Development.)

Relational Beliefs

The second category of beliefs concerns our beliefs about relationships. These are similar to foundational beliefs, in that our families initially hand them down to us. Relational beliefs evolve out of the "roles" each of us plays in the family, in marriage, as a parent, as a team worker, as a church member.

Some examples of relational beliefs are:

1. Children should be seen and not heard (their thoughts and feelings have no value).
2. The husband is always right.
3. Family decisions should be made as a group.
4. If you love me, you will always know what I need.
5. If I love you, you will leave me.
6. A good mother sacrifices herself for her family.
7. A good father is always there when you need him.
8. It's more important to be a mother than a wife.
9. A job is more important than a spouse.

Self Beliefs

Our foundational and relational belief systems are not the same as our self belief system. Our foundational beliefs provide a road map to navigate in our world, and our self beliefs provide our personal orientation to the world, the filter through which we view relationships and events. In this book we will talk in some detail about the nature of self beliefs, their origin, and ways to change negative self beliefs.

Self beliefs are how we understand ourselves in relationship to our environment. As children we develop beliefs about ourselves as others relate to us and as we learn about our world. If a person is reared in an angry, anxious environment, the child will begin to believe the world is not a safe place and/or that the people who care for him/her are not trustworthy. These experiences become the source of both self beliefs and foundational beliefs.

Some examples of self beliefs are:

1. I am lovable.
2. I am incompetent.
3. I can never get it right.
4. I'm not worth listening to—nobody ever listens to me.
5. I always do my best.
6. I am unworthy.
7. I can never just be myself, or no one would love me.

Foundational Beliefs are our roadmap of the world.

Self Beliefs structure our orientation to the world–they form our map of ourselves.

Identity Forms in the Interaction between Foundational Beliefs and Self Beliefs

The chart below shows several types of early childhood experiences, and the kind of foundational and self beliefs that might develop in that child. Those beliefs interact to form the identity.

Foundational Beliefs	Identity	Self Beliefs
The Childhood environment was unsafe, angry, anxious, inattentive:		
Foundational belief: *This world is an evil and untrustworthy place.*	Identity: An anxious person who takes few risks	Self belief: *I'm not lovable or worthy of care.*
The Childhood environment seemed positive, calm, but at least one significant caregiver was abusive:		
Foundational belief *The world is a caring place; I see others being cared for.*	Identity: Living with tension: the result of existing with these two beliefs is anxiety and depression.	Self belief: *Something's wrong with me because I end up in relationship with people who are mean to me.*
The Childhood environment was safe; all major caregivers are basically loving and non-intrusive.		
Foundational belief *The world is a safe caring place; I have been cared for and loved.*	Identity: Confident person willing to take some risks in life and relationships	Self belief *I am inherently worthy of love and care, independent of the things I **do.***

Every infant and child will naturally attempt to elicit contact and affirmation from the people in the home. As human beings, we *need* close contact and loving care. Infants in institutions have been observed to sicken and die, even in the presence of sufficient food and shelter, when they were not handled and loved. (The name for this phenomenon–"failure to thrive"– is, I think, indicative of our culture's tendency to "blame" the child for his or her shortcomings. It's not the child's failure to thrive; it's the caregivers' failure to provide the necessary care! It's no wonder children often grow up thinking there's something wrong with them when in fact their environment has failed them.) If the home is codependent, addictive or otherwise abusive or dysfunctional, the child will interpret who they are in terms of these dysfunctional relationships.

An example of how a self belief develops is a child's beginning to believe that there is something wrong with her when significant others do not offer care or respond to her attempts to solicit care. This **belief**, "something is wrong with *me*," becomes connected to the **feeling** of not being cared for, and is often expressed in adulthood like this: "How come I can't get it right? How come my relationships don't work out?" or "If only I were better behaved (or smarter, or prettier, or _____(*fill in the blank*)) they would love me." Some form of self-questioning or self-blaming will be present.

Negative self beliefs develop to protect the true self from the not-good-enough environment. (For more on the importance of the good-enough mother/father, see the work of D.W. Winnicott in the Bibliography, page 135 and the theory behind Belief Systems Therapy in Appendix B, page 132 .) The child creates a negative belief system as a way of binding and controlling the anxiety that exists because the childhood environment was hurtful and the child lived in anticipation of a hurtful, non-affirming future. This reality is often too much for a young child to make sense of and process. To believe that the environment is basically unsafe, that parents are not loving or caring, is too threatening for a young child to handle. As a result the child develops a way to repress his or her feelings about these experiences in the unconscious and develops a negative self belief system to assist in that process and make sense of the world.

Children routinely blame themselves for much of what goes on around them (as in the commonly observed phenomenon of children blaming themselves for their parents' divorce). Over time they will internalize negative beliefs about themselves, which continue into adulthood, unless they are examined consciously, which is the first step in change. After we consider the "Stage" onto which we were born, and define and look at the Emotional Fields in families (Chapter Three), we will explore the origins of our self beliefs, both positive and negative, in the map exercise in Chapters Four and Five.

Choosing to change the negative self-beliefs that keep us emotionally isolated allows us to grow and heal the relationships we have with ourselves, with other people in our lives, with God, and with Creation.

The Role of Belief Systems in Anxiety and Depression

Often there is a tension within the identity because of an incongruity within or between our belief systems. In our chart on page16 we used the example of the foundational belief "*The world is a caring place (I see others being cared for"* in tension with the self belief "*Something's wrong with me because I end up in relationship with people who are mean to me."* This tension causes anxiety, and often a chronic level of depression, so that a person does not reach his or her fullest potential. For example, a person may grow up in a family that values education, and sends the boys to college, but devalues girls, who are told they "are only a girl" and "not worth sending to college, because you'll only get married, and it would be a waste of money." The discrepancy between "A college education is valuable" and "I'm not worth educating" can lead to depression in the woman; if she seeks an education without family support, she may experience a high level of anxiety, because of the underlying self belief that she's not worth educating.

Another example of incongruity between foundational belief and self belief is one I have heard in counseling: "I believe that God forgives everyone, but I am not forgivable." Upon further consideration, we discover that some event in their history has led them to believe that they are not forgivable—that God's forgiveness is not for them. I had the experience of talking with one woman in her forties who said, "I know God is a forgiving and saving God, yet salvation is not for me." There was an event in her life that she feels prevents her salvation, yet her foundational belief is that God's salvation is for everyone.

I have also heard stories of people who will work and give money for the betterment of others, such as helping with college tuition, who have a desire and will to go to college themselves, but who do not go. They have a foundational belief that a college education is beneficial and worth contributing to, but their own self-belief is that they do not deserve to have that education themselves. They have a negative self-belief that is part of their internalized self-evaluation of their own worth that leads them to believe that they have no right to potentialize their abilities and gifts.

Another example of the effect of the discrepancy between relational beliefs and self beliefs is one I have heard described by a number of women. In spite of a relational belief that a good relationship would be based on kindness, some women consistently choose relationships with men who treat them badly. When we talked about this in a woman's group, we found that they didn't believe they were worthy of a relationship with a kind person, and could describe many examples of avoiding relationships with "good" men, and marrying abusive men. The underlying belief that they are not worthy of better relationships is a self belief.

A foundational belief can also be incongruent with another foundational belief. For example the belief that "God is a judge" is in tension with "God is Love" but many people hold both beliefs. Often a negative self belief will move a person in the direction of applying the more negative foundational belief to

herself, reserving the more positive belief for others. And many persons struggle with a belief that they are basically unworthy of being loved, even by God, in spite of a foundational belief that God loves everyone. One woman, in a Christian support group, (an environment that encouraged everyone to feel loved and worthy of love) said, “I don’t feel worthy enough to pray.”

In one workshop on depression and anxiety, we asked a chronically depressed man how he thought God was feeling when he saw him in his depression, and he said “disappointed.” I think this reveals a foundational belief something like “God wants us to be happy” in tension with a self belief that “My unhappiness disappoints God.” It seems likely that this man grew up with a parent or parents who used expressed disappointment with the child’s performance, or their emotional state (“Don’t be such a cry-baby!”) to the point where he expected that reaction, even when it wasn’t appropriate (hence, a God who judges—”I’m disappointed in you”—instead of one who comforts the pain).

One of our goals in creating this workbook is to give people the tools to understand and change their self beliefs so that they are more congruent with their foundational beliefs (reducing anxiety and depression) and more congruent with feeling blessed, known, good, and loved (and believing themselves worthy of experiencing those feelings). As we stated in the beginning, our foundational beliefs include a belief in the inherent worth of each person, and a belief that it is better to live a life free of anxiety, depression, and negative self beliefs—a life lived in joy, harmony, peace, love, kindness and authenticity.

Understanding the nature and origin of the beliefs we hold about ourselves is the first step in reducing the effects of anxiety and depression, in improving our emotional lives, reducing anger and resentment, and opening ourselves up to intimacy in important, emotionally safe relationships. Choosing to change the negative self-beliefs that keep us emotionally isolated allows us to grow and heal the relationships we have with ourselves, with other people in our lives, with God, and with Creation.

Chapter Two: Born onto a stage, where the action has already begun

In a sense, each of us is born into a particular drama, which is occurring on a particular stage. The drama has its own values, scripts and plots. Spiritual transformation begins with reflecting on that drama and stage so that one can begin to write his or her own story.

As you reflect on your life, how would you describe the stage onto which you were born? What was going on just prior to your birth? Describe to the best of your knowledge each of your parents, their family roles, jobs, wishes and dreams for their lives, how they came to the decision to have a child. Where were your grandparents, aunts and uncles, other significant persons in your life, just prior to your birth? What do you think were the expectations each of them had for you?

In the space below, and on the next page, describe, to the best of your knowledge, what was going on in your family just before your birth. What was happening in the lives of each of your family members? What were the important events of the day in the community, nation, and world? You could write this is story format, or draw pictures, whatever helps you get in touch with what was happening. You may want to consult with older family members and get more detail than you have now.

Before (or after) doing that, fill in the blanks of the statements that follow, describing each of the significant others in your family of origin. If your family had fewer or more people, change the wording or add spaces. The important thing is to get a sense of what may have been happening emotionally to each of the "players" on your stage when you were born.

Exercise: The Characters in Leading Roles at the time of my birth

My father was _____

_____

He enjoyed _____

_____

His life's dream was _____

_____

My mother was _____

_____

She enjoyed _____

_____

Her life's dream was _____

_____

My siblings were _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

My grandparents were _____

_____

_____

The Setting: the Larger Picture

One thing that you might notice as you work on this exercise is that there may have been a lot going on in your family and in that world, and it had nothing to do with you (at least not with you personally) because you weren't even there yet! For example, when I (Helen) first did this exercise, I realized that I grew up feeling somehow responsible for my parents' financial struggles–after all, I was born before my father finished college, and a college degree was always held up as the first step to success in the adult world. He ended up not getting his degree until I was 4 years old, at which point my parents immediately had three more children. But when I considered the stories I knew about my parents' life before I was born, I realized they had chosen their own path, and it really wasn't my "fault" at all. So as you move on to the exercise of developing a picture of your Emotional Map of the World in Chapter Five, remember that although you will be working on remembering how you felt as a child, there was a drama already going on before you even got there, that wasn't your responsibility.

Your Family of Origin's World: Who, What, When, Where

Also remember that the larger world has a tremendous influence on our families' lives. For example, in recent decades, more and more women are going to work, most often because it simply takes two incomes to provide an average standard of living. So while my early childhood was spent at home with a mom who had time to bake cookies and read stories to me, many children today are spending most of their waking hours in day care. As you describe the stage you were born onto, consider the social and economic environment, as well as the family. Another foundational belief we hold is that each person does the best they can at the time; so if dad was working two shifts, and mom was exhausted with caring for several children three states away from her family home (work transfers pulled them away from grandparents, aunts and uncles who might have helped if they'd been closer), we aren't "blaming" him for being unavailable, or her for being moody. We're just observing the situation and the relationships that were there at the time.

Chapter Three: Emotional Fields

The Emotional Field in a family or relationship encompasses the emotional life of the individuals and the emotional life of the family or group as a whole. Families and individuals live in an emotional atmosphere and will construct meaning about who they are and how they are to be in this world in relationship to the emotional fields in which they exist.

A family will perpetuate a particular emotional life through time, though often this is unconscious. It will consist of both positive and negative emotional fields. Paying attention to the emotional field in a family allows family members to learn to create a positive emotional field, so that the needs and well being of each person in the family can be considered and cared for.

Some examples of emotional fields are:

- The emotions prevailing in the first year of a marriage
- The new set of emotions that enter the relationship after the first disillusionment
- The new set of emotions that enter the relationship after the birth of the first child
- The feeling in the house as you arrive home from work
- The feelings you have when you first wake up in the morning
- How you feel when you are home alone, expecting another family member to arrive momentarily
- When you arrive home and no one else is there

Can you identify the emotional fields that occur when you are or have been in the above situations? Use the space below to describe some particularly intense emotional fields in your life. They can be emotional fields you experience in your current life, or times you remember from the past. The point of the exercise is simply to identify particular emotional fields. We'll look at more specific emotional fields on the next page.

When does your family's emotional field shift?

"One of my kids shared with me that they used to watch out the window of the living room as I pulled into the driveway after work, to check the look on my face and decide whether or not to hang around." Those kids were getting skilled at anticipating a shift in the family's emotional field.

What early life memories do you have about the emotional fields in your family of origin?

What future event or events do you believe will bring you into a negative emotional field?

I might believe that "If I don't get the promotion at work, I'll be really miserable," which could set up a pretty strong emotional field of anxious anticipation at home, way before the promotion decision is even made. Could I choose a different belief, such as "I'd really prefer to be doing the work I'd have with that promotion, but if I don't get it, then I can decide whether to stay where I am or look for another position"?

Chapter Four: The Origin of Self Beliefs

Now we are going to move on to how we adopt self beliefs. We will see how we can pinpoint where our self beliefs originate, both positive and negative. We will be referring more to negative than positive beliefs, because the purpose of this project is to identify those negative self beliefs and begin a process of changing them, so we can begin to get what we want out of life and to potentialize the gifts and qualities that we have, moving toward wholeness and health.

The Map is not the Territory

On the following pages you will learn the process you will use to identify your family of origin map. One thing it is important to understand at this point is that the map of the world that we got from our families and from our early childhood is *not the territory* of the entire world. The map is not its territory. An example of what that might mean is that the flag of the United States of America is a symbol for a land mass and a people; the flag is in a sense the map, but it is not the earth or the territory. So it is important to understand what the symbols are, what the map is, and what the territory is.

Sometimes differentiating the symbols and the maps from the reality is a scary process, because to think that the way we understand the world may not be the way the world actually *is* can be frightening. And when you begin to change people's maps of the world, they have feelings about it, and will generally let you know about those feelings.

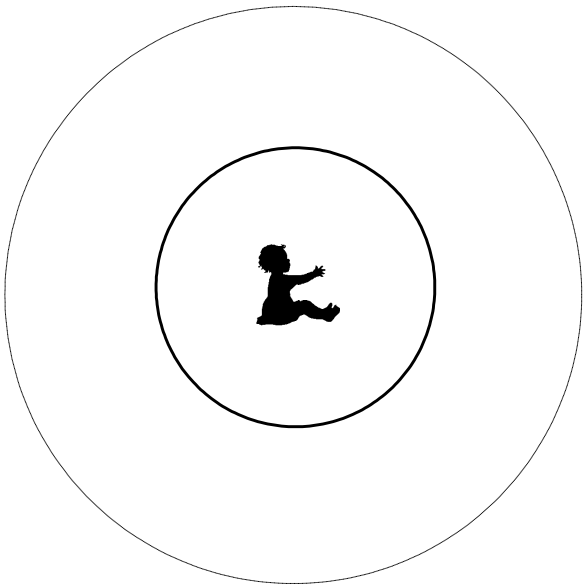
So as we begin to identify our maps of the world, and as we consider some places where it may be helpful to change those maps and beliefs, we can expect to have some feelings about it, and perhaps experience some resistance to our desired changes, both within ourselves and in those around us. It is helpful to consider the effect of the changes we are making, and proceed slowly, care-fully, mindful of those around us, and of our inner responses. Many people find it helpful to talk with a counselor, minister, or trusted friend as they explore "new" territory, and think about re-drawing their emotional maps.

Even as you move toward greater health and happiness, some people close to you may feel that the changes you are making are a threat to their happiness, or security, or power/control needs. They may work at stopping you from changing. Relationships may become more difficult temporarily. In a later chapter, we will talk about ways to step back mentally from what's happening, so that if you find that relationships seem more difficult for a time, you'll be able to get things into perspective, and separate what is your role and responsibility from your partner's (or parent's, or children's) responsibility.

A Sample Emotional Map of the World, with instructions for the exercise on page 41

Your Family of Origin Emotional Map–You are in the Center

To get a better understanding of our perception of our map of the world, we begin with a picture of our self in the middle of a pair of circles.



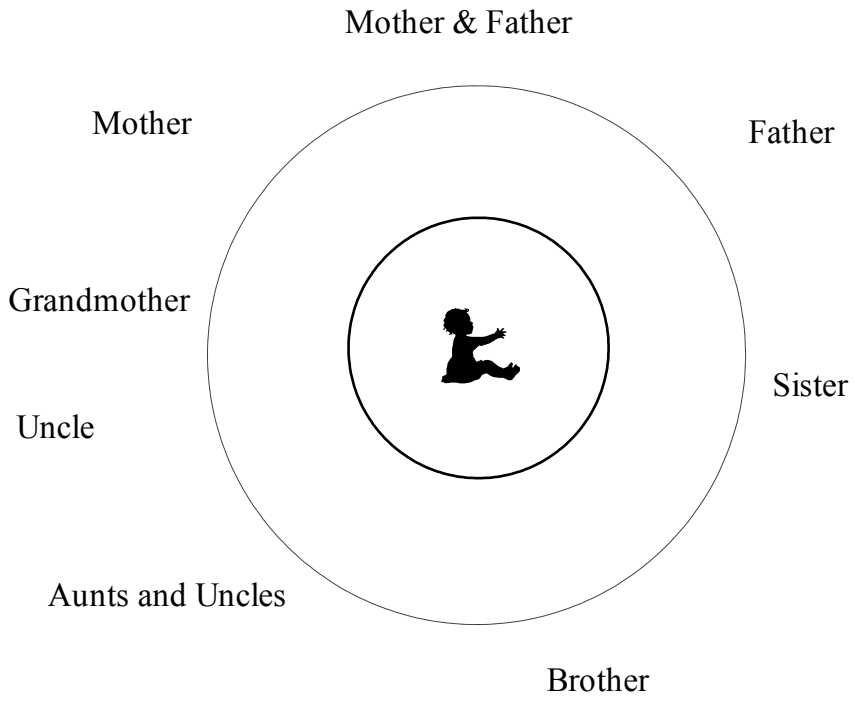
You, like every small child, were the center of your world. Developmentally, it is absolutely appropriate for you to have believed and felt the world revolved around you. So as you develop this map, remember we are recalling how you felt about the people in your life then, without judgment, for either yourself or them. Remember the stage, and the players, and just watch how they relate. As you work on this exercise, if you find it painful or difficult to remember certain relationships, call someone to work with you–such as a counselor, or pastor.

*** * * Important * * ***

Please turn now to page 41 and work along on the blank map as you read through the instructions. You can also draw your map on a separate sheet of paper. Do **not** read through the full instructions before working on your own map, or your results will be less useful.

Your Family of Origin Emotional Map–There are important people all around you

Outside the outer circle, we will place the significant people, both positive and negative, from the first five or ten years of life. Your map may look something like this:



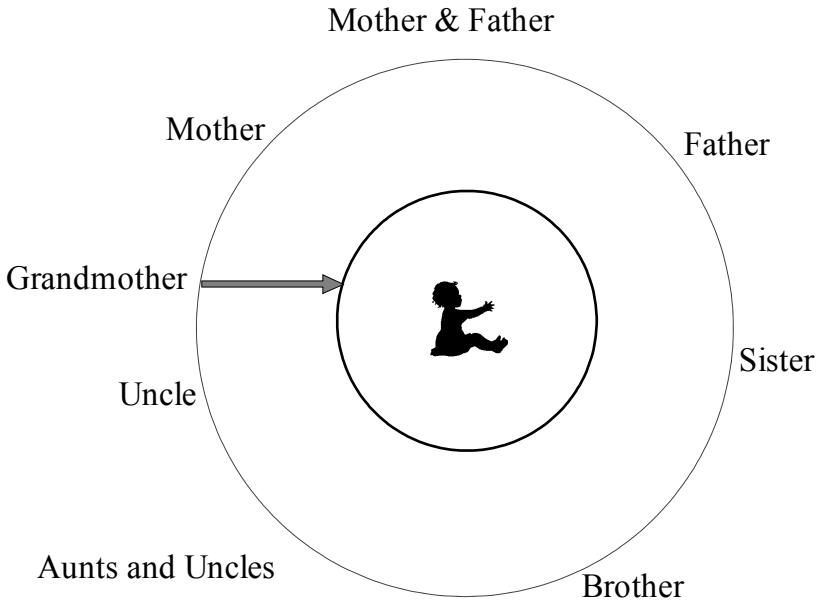
We have placed on our map parents, both individually and as a couple, siblings, a grandparent, aunts and uncles as a group, and one uncle who was a particularly significant person in this child's life. You might also include teachers, coaches, pets, babysitters, anyone who had an important place in your early life.

Ideally, you will draw this map based on the first few years of your life, but if it is difficult for you to recall much from your earliest years, just go back as early as you can clearly remember. The important thing is to be able to remember how each person related to you–how you felt about their role in your life.

Your Family of Origin Emotional Map–Joining

As you consider each person in your early world, imagine that it might have been possible for him or her to have related to you in a way that was perfectly nurturing for you. Ideally, they would have been emotionally available to meet your needs, not too distant and absent emotionally, and not too intrusive, which would be treating you in a way that was critical, or shaming, or physically, mentally or emotionally abusive. If they had been perfect, you would have developed perfectly, becoming who you were created to be, your truest self, and your boundaries would be intact. However, every one of us developed in a less-than-perfect world, one in which we had people cross our boundaries, or in which we had to go beyond our boundaries to meet them and have contact. (For more on boundaries, see Chapter Eight: Boundaries.)

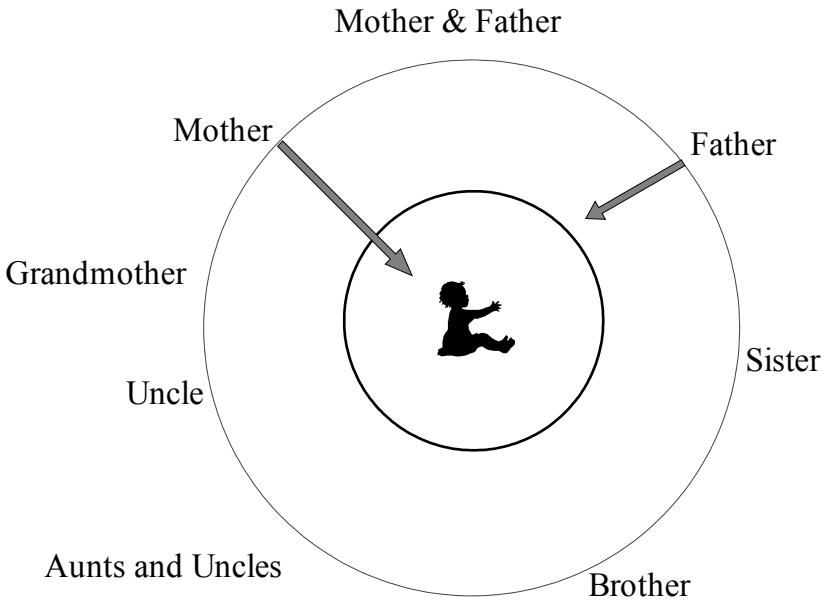
Each significant person in your childhood relates to you in a particular way. Their energy enters your world; and if they relate to you perfectly, giving perfect care, perfect nurturing, the best it could possibly have been, we will indicate that with an arrow drawn exactly to the inner circle.



This person (Grandmother in our sample) related to you in a perfect, nurturing way, honoring you as someone blessed, known, good and loved, honoring your space, and not violating your boundaries. People like this were appropriately available to you and involved in a way that matched your stages of development. They did not violate your boundaries, nor were they so absent that you needed to move beyond your boundary to have a relationship. You didn't have to try to be something you were not, nor did you have to fear revealing your true self to them. They just accepted you, and joined with you as you spent time together. They welcomed you just for being you, and you felt safe, and loved, and could believe that you were good.

Your Family of Origin Emotional Map–Absent or Intrusive

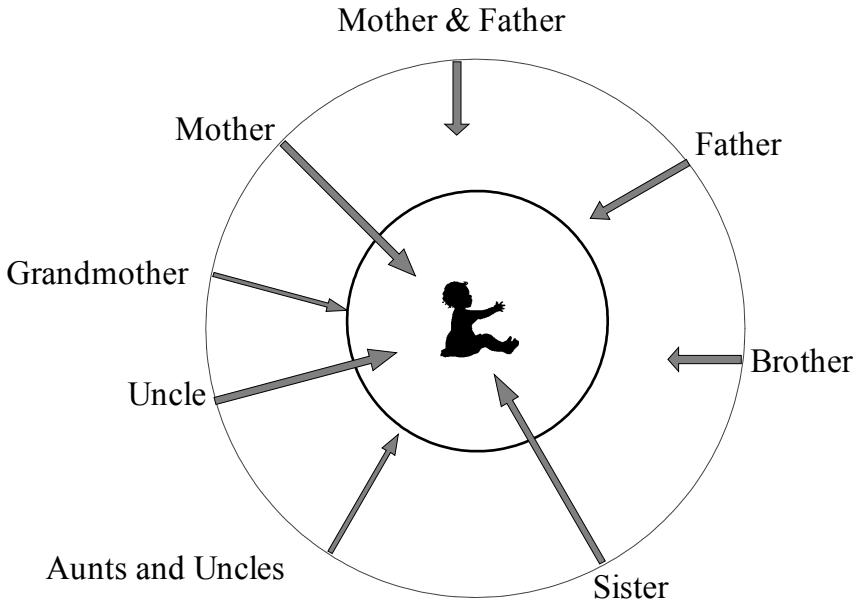
If the person was to some degree absent from your life, physically or emotionally or spiritually, the arrow from that person falls short of your inner circle. If on the other hand, the person was intrusive, abusive, inappropriately attached, the arrow is drawn inward beyond the inner circle, invading your personal boundaries. In this example, the mother was somewhat intrusive, and the father somewhat absent.



In our sample map, we have placed the father as someone absent. He may have been there physically, but was emotionally unavailable. Some people have a father who was there for a time, but then left because of divorce or for some other reason, so the child would have a sense of who the father was, but he was somewhat absent. If the father were completely absent, not knowing and being known by the child, we might draw him as completely absent, by placing a gap in the outer circle. To discover if important people were "absent: in your childhood, ask yourself "Would I have wanted to spend more time with that person?" or "Would I have wanted that person to know me better?"

In our example, we have drawn the mother as somewhat intrusive, along with the absent father. This creates a triangle between father, mother, and child. (We will look at triangles in relationships in detail in Chapter Nine: Triangles in Relationships). The mother's intrusiveness may have been influenced by the father's absence. Angry and resentful toward him, she was overly involved, or shaming and critical to the children. One reason we started by looking at the "stage" that was set before our birth was to begin to see that many of the relational dynamics that we grew up thinking were about us were in fact going on before our birth, and had nothing to do with us. We were the innocent recipients of emotions that really belonged between our parents, or between parents and siblings.

In our sample map, we have an older sister who is somewhat intrusive. It often happens that if the father is absent from one child, he will be absent from the other children as well. If that is the case, the other children will have some feelings about the father's absence, possibly angry feelings. The younger child may have become the target of those feelings, and the older sister became intrusive into the younger child's world. There is also a brother who was rather absent.



We also have a grandmother who was very appropriate in her relationship with the child. She joined the child's world in a way that was safe, encouraging, and welcoming. So in our map of this child's world, there are two dominant figures who were intrusive, one who was absent, and one who was joining.

We see that there were aunts and uncles who were generally appropriate in their way of relating, but one uncle who stands out as being intrusive. Another variation in grouping significant others is the "Mother & Father" combination, because it is important to consider how you remember your parents being together around you. Were they often angry and yelling (which would be an intrusion in relationship to you) or did you rarely see them together, a significant absence, because it is important for a young child to see his or her parents relating comfortably with each other.

Another way you might get in touch with people who were absent, while others may have been over-involved, is to answer the question "What I didn't get from my mother (or father), I got from my (father … mother … grandmother … grandfather … sister … brother … uncle … aunt … pet … teacher … minister … friend … girlfriend (or boyfriend) … spouse … child … job … boss … therapist … alcohol (or other addictive substance)).

Your Family of Origin Emotional Map–Absent AND Intrusive

In almost every workshop where we present this map process, someone asks "How do I indicate someone who was sometimes absent and sometimes intrusive?" The example one woman offered was a mother who was fine when she was sober, and abusive when she had been drinking. In this case, the "mommy drunk" and abusive (intrusive) was probably a more significant presence in the little girl's life, while "mommy sober" always carried with her the potential to shift toward the negative influence. So you might want to indicate something like this with a solid line showing the intrusiveness, and a dotted line for the more neutral or absent times. The uncertainty as to which "mommy" she was dealing with created a very anxious emotional field in the little girl's early life. Because the child is often the recipient of the parent's anger when drunk, this dynamic also encourages the belief that "I have to be perfect, so mommy won't get drunk and be mean. It's my fault she gets that way." The child will try to figure out ways to get mommy to stop drinking; and she will fail at every one.

"We kids were always on the lookout to see if our mother had started drinking, and was getting ready to yell at one of us. Now, as the wife of an alcoholic, I have the same feeling of anxious anticipation waiting for him to come home, wondering if he stopped off for a few beers along the way."

Another example was the father who was away from home a lot of the time, but was angry and critical when he was home. With this relational dynamic, the child also feels an anxiety, as well as an ambivalence, wanting to be with the father, but fearful of his anger. This child may go out of his way to please his father, cutting the grass before he gets home, drawing a nice picture, cleaning up his room, but the father comes home angry anyway. A small child has no way of understanding this has nothing to do with him, and will end up believing, "I can't get anything right" or "He just doesn't love me."

To decide which aspect of a person's relationship with you had more meaning, consider your feelings about key events. Often negative events carry more weight emotionally, and have a more predominant place in our memories. If this is true for you, you might want to learn some techniques for changing how you carry memories. We teach such techniques in therapy and through workshops. For more information, contact us at the address listed at the end of this book.

Your Family of Origin Emotional Map–Missing persons

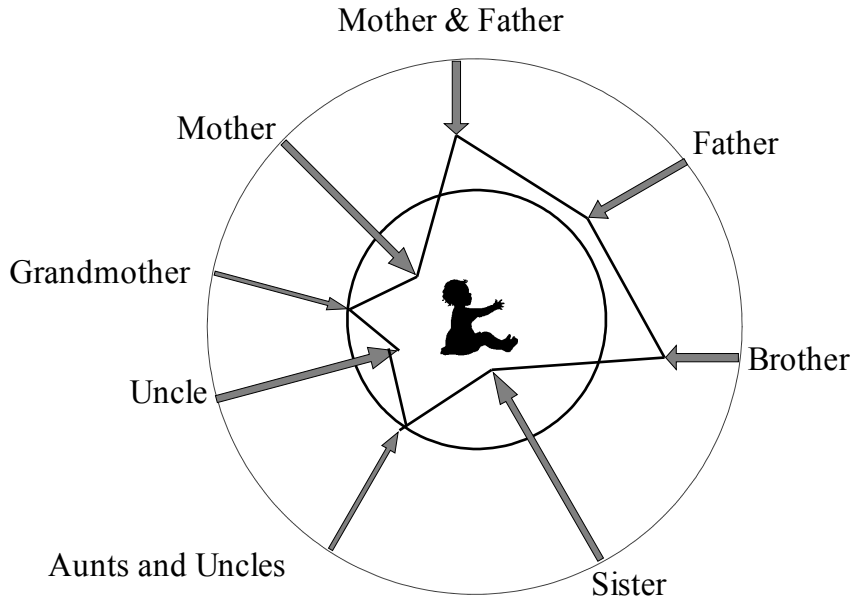
Another important aspect of the Intrusive-Absent-Joining scenario occurs when a significant person who should have been there is entirely missing. For example, perhaps a grandparent has died, or a sibling died before you were born, or a parent has abandoned the family, or is off at war. There will be an effect, not only on you, but also on the other people in the family.

An example I encountered in counseling was a woman whose mother's mother died shortly before the client's birth. Her mother had always been very close to her mother, and she became depressed for a couple of years. Because of the depression, the mother was not emotionally available to the child, who developed a strong belief in her own inadequacy. Her delightful babbling and giggles were not mirrored by her mother; and mirroring is a necessary stage in forming a healthy self-image. She learned to stop trying to connect, and became a withdrawn child, which helped perpetuate her mother's depression. When another child was born after a couple of years, the mother was able to be more attentive, confirming the girl's belief that there really was something wrong with her, and that was why her mother didn't pay attention to her.

If there were people missing from your early life who should have been there, go ahead and put them on your circle, near the person who would have been closest to them, (you can put them in parentheses to indicate they were not actually there) and later, when we talk about triangles, consider the effect of their absence in your early emotional world.

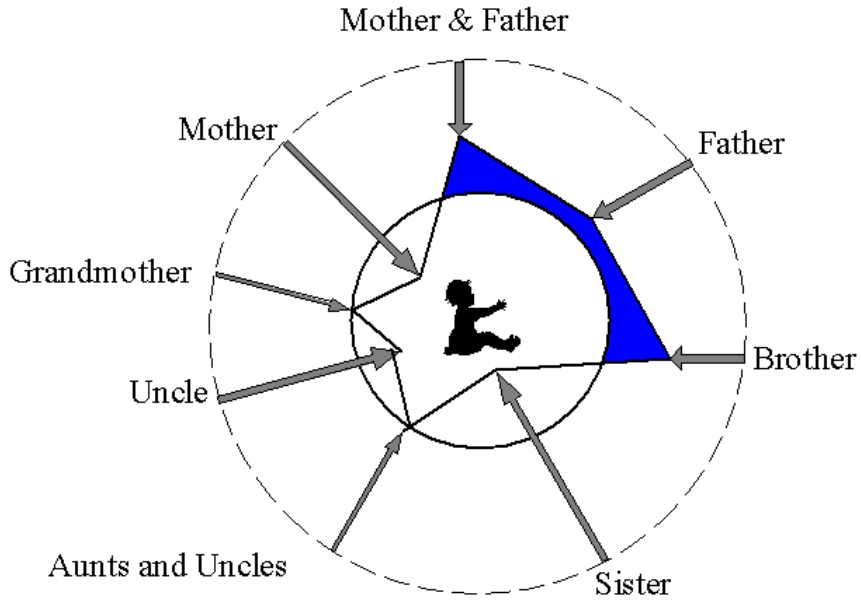
Your Family of Origin Emotional Map–The Shape of the World

After drawing the arrows, we will connect the tips of the arrows, which will show us the shape of this person's emotional world, how he was related to by significant others. This map of his world will guide him in relationships throughout life.



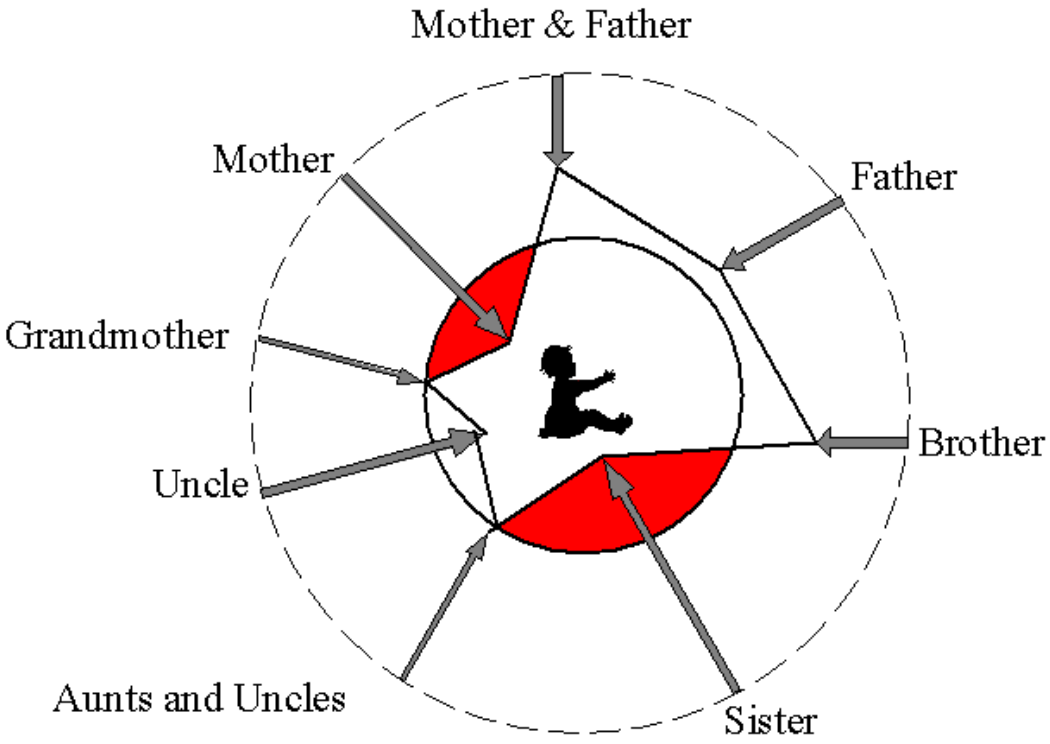
It is important to understand that when we are children, other people are responsible for giving us their worldview. Parents are responsible for doing that for their children. Unfortunately, in many homes, the nurturing, care and kindness is less than "good enough." If they were good enough, that person would have a harmonious feeling within, and they would walk through the world with a sense of wholeness and integrity. They would not violate others' boundaries; nor would they tolerate others violating theirs, because they would have a sense of having a right to their space. When someone has a sense that they have a right to their boundaries, they generally operate in the world exercising that right. They developed a worldview as a child, because their boundaries were honored, that resulted in their honoring the boundaries of others.

Your Family of Origin Emotional Map–"What I Gave Up"



On this map, we have shaded in an area that represents where this child had to go beyond her or his boundaries to meet and relate to the absent people in her or his life. For example, a little boy who's craving attention from his father may think to himself, "If I clean up the garage really neat, Dad'll notice and be so happy and proud." So a little fellow who should be out climbing trees or fishing, or reading a book, or painting a picture, is spending his afternoon at an adult (or at least teenage) task. And when Dad comes home from a long day at work, he may not even notice. He collapses in front of the TV and zones out. Or if he's in a bad mood, he may say, "yeah, but you missed that corner over there – didn't you see all those cobwebs?" Our little boy not only doesn't get the affirmation he needs, he'll begin to think there's something wrong with himself for even wanting it. And on top of that, he'll believe he's not very good at doing tasks. A little girl might go out of her way to dress up, or make a special dinner, or paint a nice picture to get Dad's attention. Or she may run after big brother and try to play baseball with him, only to be rebuffed with "Stop tagging along with me. Go home a play with your dolls!" If patterns like this form a major part of this child's relationships, he or she will begin to think there's something wrong with them, because people don't want to be with them, or don't notice them, or love them. They don't feel welcomed, or loved, or known. And it must be because they just aren't good enough.

Your Family of Origin Emotional Map–"What I Lost"



The shaded portions of this map represent the parts of the child's life where significant intrusive people, in this case the mother and sister, caused the child to "shut down" part of his or her natural self, to avoid the pain of the intrusions, which might be shaming, criticism, physical punishment, sexual abuse, or excessive control. This may be the parent who won't give her 8 year old boy any privacy. This parent may show up at school at *every* opportunity, relentlessly checking on the child's progress and behavior. Or the parent of the little child playing happily in the living room, with her family of little dolls spread around her–until big sister comes in and says "Why are you playing with those baby toys! What a mess." This child will learn to "hide" or bury parts of its natural self, and may grow up believing that she or he needs to keep those wounded parts buried, hidden even from spouse, children, friends, even from God. A common theme among codependent persons is "If you really knew me, you wouldn't like me." A belief like this can be produced when a child grows up with intrusive persons in the family. An undercurrent of shame, of believing "there is something essentially wrong with me" will interfere with all later attempts at forming intimate relationships.

Note: Before going on, I would like to remind you that for this exercise, we are looking at the Map of the World that you formed as a child. One way people often get sidetracked at this point is by thinking about how they relate or related to their own children. There will be time for that later. For now, stay focused on you as a child. This is your time to learn about and take care of you.

Using the Map of the World to trace the origin of self beliefs

We believe that at each point an arrow enters the child's world, there begins the process of developing a self belief. If an arrow is placed right on the circle, at that point the child is developing a positive self belief. At the places arrows fall short or intrude, indicating relationships that were intrusive or absent, the child is developing negative self beliefs. It is natural for a child to be self-centered, to think that everything that happens to him is about him, is his fault, or his responsibility. As adults, we can begin to see that much of what we thought was about us was really never about us at all.

"I realize now that I chose men in my life who were controlling, because I believed I wasn't capable of controlling myself–I needed someone to keep me in line. My father always said I was 'nothing but trouble.'

In our example, we can see that this child's boundaries were not honored, so he may have developed a sense that he did not have a right to his boundaries. A self belief that resulted might be, "I need other people to keep me in line." There were significant people in this child's world that did not relate to this child's boundaries in a way that would be nurturing.

An example of a negative foundational belief that might develop in the child in our example map/worldview is that it is all right for women to be intrusive into his world. The child won't say it; but when he grows to be a man, he will invite people (most likely women) into his world that are intrusive to him, because that's the way the world is. He is not conscious that he is saying that "it is all right for people to violate my boundaries and be abusive to me," but that is the result of the negative belief. And he will accept the lack of significant male friends, or the fact that his relationships with men are mainly superficial, with little sense of intimacy, or knowing and being known by them. The lack of close males in early life may build a foundational belief that "Men keep to themselves" or "Real men don't show weakness." The corresponding self belief may be "My fears are a sign of my weakness. I'm not strong like others, and if I let other men see how I really am, they won't like me."

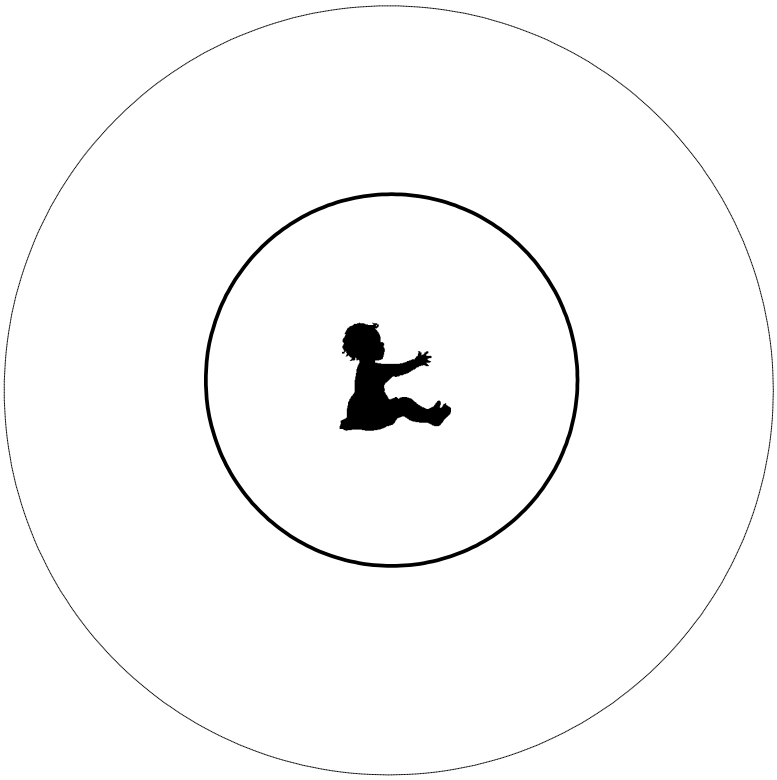
"If a boy in my family showed any sign of weakness, one of the men would be sure to say, scornfully, 'You're just a woman!'"

This is a double blow– the boy is shamed, and girls are made to feel as if they are inherently inferior.

If this sample map were a woman's map, she might have grown up going beyond her natural boundaries to have relationships with her father and brother, and would have adopted beliefs that it was okay to overextend herself to be in relationship with men. Codependent behaviors are a common result of self beliefs that formed in an early emotional world where important people were physically or emotionally unavailable. For more on common characteristically codependent behaviors, see Chapter Seven on Continuity of Care.

Chapter Five: Your Emotional Map of the World™

Your family of origin emotional map



The person inside the circles is you during the first 5-10 years of your life. The inner circle represents your part of the world, the boundary around your self, the place where you could comfortably and appropriately come into contact with those around you, in a way that would perfectly sustain you and foster in you the sense of being blessed, known, good and loved.

Now, on the outside circle, place the significant people that were in your life from ages one to ten. Place them wherever your intuition tells you to put them. An example is you might place parents at 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock and siblings at 3 and 9, something like that. If appropriate, include people like teachers, coaches, even pets, and include both positive and negative influences.

Now, from each person you have placed on the outer circle, draw an arrow toward the inner circle. If the person had been a perfectly nurturing person all the time, the arrow would go right to the circle. If the person was critical, shaming, or otherwise intrusive, the arrow would penetrate the circle. The depth of the

intrusion should indicate of the intensity of the intrusion. If the person was absent or emotionally unavailable, the arrow would stop before reaching the inner circle, and the end of the arrow would be at a distance from the inner circle. Again, the relative position would indicate the intensity of the absence.

At the end of each arrow, a self-perception is internalized. This can lead to positive self beliefs and negative self beliefs. Begin to consider what self beliefs you formed as a result of each of these relationships.

In addition, you can connect the points of the arrows to indicate the "shape" of the map of your early relational world, and possibly your present world.

Not only is it helpful to see this formation in terms of restructuring your relational world, but also it can help you begin to identify helpful or not helpful triangles that exist in your relational world. For example, if you see an absent father and an intrusive mother, you may have received her anger as abuse and interpreted it as being about you, ("If only I could keep my room neater, Mommy wouldn't have to yell at me all the time. What's wrong with me that I am so sloppy!"); but her anger may have been because of the absence of your father. Or you may have a sibling who seemed distant to you, but was very involved with one parent. In this triangle, the sibling's absence may have been more about the relationship with the parent, and not directed against you at all. But to a small child, everything in the world is about them, ("I'm just no fun to be around" or "I'll never be able to keep up"). We form our map of the world, and our beliefs about ourselves, long before we are capable of a detached viewpoint.

As you complete your Map, you can use the lists of positive and negative self beliefs on the next pages as examples to help you identify your own self beliefs that began to take shape in your childhood.

Examples of Some Common Positive Self Beliefs

1. I am important to people who love me.
2. I am worth caring for.
3. I am beautiful.
4. I am capable.
5. I am lovable.
6. I am basically a good person doing the best I can.
7. I am generally a happy person that other people enjoy being around.
8. I am a loving person with much love to share with others.

Below, identify positive beliefs you might be functioning with or that you identified as you looked at your map of the world. They may be from the list here, or different beliefs that you recognize in yourself. If you can, describe the influence of significant others in your early life as they related to your developing positive self beliefs.

1._____

2._____

3._____

4._____

5._____

6._____

Examples of Some Common Negative Self Beliefs

1. I'm not important.
2. I'm not creative
3. I have to please others for them to care for me.
4. I don't feel as if I fit in or belong.
5. I'm not capable.
6. I'm not worth paying attention to.
7. My opinions aren't wanted.
8. Bad things I've done are unforgivable.
9. I can't do anything right.
10. I'm stupid.
11. I'm not as smart as others, so I'm no good.
12. I'm clumsy.
13. I'm ugly.
14. I fail no matter how hard I try.
15. I have to yell to get anyone to listen.
16. I'm lazy.
17. I never get what I want.
18. I have to suffer in some way to achieve success.
19. I'll never live up to my parents' expectations.
20. If only I were different, I would get along better with my family.

Below, identify negative beliefs you might be functioning with or that you identified as you looked at your map of the world. They may be from the list here, or different beliefs that you recognize in yourself.

1._____

2._____

3._____

4._____

5._____

6._____

Choose one of the negative self beliefs you identified and describe how it might have affected your life both as an adult and as a child. For example, I (Helen) have always loved to read, but somehow I connected that with the belief that I was lazy. As a result, I undervalue the time I spend studying, reading, and writing, and feel guilty if I fall behind in my housework.

Now, consider how your life might be different if you changed that belief. In the example above, if I consider mental work to be as valid as house-keeping, and that my preference for reading and writing is not proof that I am lazy, how would that affect how I spend my time, and how I feel about it?

An exercise to help identify self beliefs

Another way to get in touch with negative self beliefs that formed in childhood is to remember what you had to do to get love, or attention, or affirmation. Whenever I feel that I have to **do** something in order to get the love that should be a natural part of a relationship, I am choosing a codependent behavior that perpetuates a self belief.

Below is a statement with some behaviors others have used to get the love or attention they need. Choose one or more of them, or add your own, and then describe how the behavior affected your relationship(s). You may have adopted different behaviors in different relationships, so you may want to choose to write about more than one behavior.

"In order to get the love (or attention) I needed, I had to be:

- good
- bad
- perfect
- brilliant
- lovable
- quiet
- noisy
- messy
- neat
- funny
- talented
- attentive
- home
- not home

*"My older brother was always perfect. When we got older, he was Captain of the Football team, straight A's, played piano, did everything just right. There was no way anything I did was half as good. So even as a little kid, I figured out the only way to get attention was by being **bad**.*

*"I was always the one who made everyone laugh. Any time things get tense, I crack a joke. I don't feel like I can let people see how insecure I feel, and being **funny** makes me feel like part of the group."*

Choose one or more of the above, and describe how you used it in childhood. Try to relate the behavior to a specific self belief you developed as a result.

Your Inner World

Our inner world, our imaginative and subjective capacities, is made up of:

- Beliefs
- Hopes
- Wants
- Memories
- Needs
- Thoughts
- Dreams
- Fantasies
- Sense of self
- How you make decisions
- Awareness of sensations and emotions

These aspects of our inner self are structured within our imaginative realm somehow, and the structure has meaning and a relationship to the external world. The structure is related to our Map of the World. During childhood, this structure simply forms in an unconscious way as a result of early relationships and the nature of environment. However, our spiritual work is about reflecting on this inner self, and about becoming intentional about the nature and order of this structure.

Self beliefs can structure either a dysfunctional lifestyle or a spiritually healthy life. In the next section, we are going to focus on learning to identify the feelings and feeling states associated with our self beliefs.

Following is a list of feelings. These feelings and feeling states become connected to self beliefs and become merged. *It is as if the feeling and the self belief are the same.*

Take some time and look over the feeling words lists on the next four pages, and remember some experiences from your life. Try to use experiences that you recalled when working on your map of your early world. Identify the feelings connected to those memories.

As we mentioned in the introduction, many people, particularly men, don't have a very well-developed vocabulary to talk about their feelings. The exercises that follow will help by suggesting some words you can use to describe your feelings.

Feeling Words List

Feelings can be identified in terms of whether they are physically oriented, cognitively oriented (affecting how we think), spiritually oriented, or emotionally oriented. Listed below are some examples of feelings in each of these categories. Note times when you remember having one or more of these, or other, feelings.

Physical
alert
breathless
burdened
calm
cold
crushed
desirous
energetic
enervated
excited
exhausted
fatigued
flustered
full
high
hot
hungry
jittery
lazy
lecherous
lethargic
nervous
restless
satisfied
sexy
shaky
sleepy
startled
strong
stuffed
stunned
suffering
tense
tired
uncomfortable
violent
warm
weary
weepy
wide-awake

Feeling _____

What happened when I was feeling that way:

Feeling _____

What happened when I was feeling that way:

Use the space below and on the back of the following pages to describe other feelings that you connect to from each list. Capture the feelings any way you like – tell a story, write a poem, draw a picture. Let your imagination carry you into the feeling, and then back to this space to describe it.

Cognitive
absorbed
adamant
alert
amazed
ambivalent
appreciative
astounded
aware
awed
challenged
clear-headed
clever
complacent
composed
concerned
confused
curious
deceitful
determined
distracted
engrossed
fascinated
hesitant
inquisitive
interested
intrigued
involved
optimistic
perplexed
pessimistic
puzzled
reluctant
skeptical
stimulated
suspicious
unconcerned
uninterested
unnerved
vehement
worried

Feeling _____

What happened when I was feeling that way:

Feeling _____

What happened when I was feeling that way:

*"I can remember feeling extremely **ambivalent** about moving to a new house in a different school district when I was 6. I was excited that we would be in our own house, near my grandparents, but terrified about changing school again. I had just changed six months ago, and knew it wasn't an easy thing for me, as shy as I was. The worst part was, I had no control over the situation, and frustration over not having control over my own life was a common feeling in my childhood."*

Spiritual
apathetic
awakened
bad
bored
bound
committed
complacent
confident
courageous
defeated
despairing
detached
discouraged
downhearted
empty
enlightened
fearful
free
fulfilled
grateful
guilty
helpless
hopeful
hopeless
insecure
inspired
joyful
jubilant
lost
loving
moved
peaceful
penitent
powerful
proud
redeemed
renewed
repentant
thankful
trustful

Feeling _____

What happened when I was feeling that way:

Feeling _____

What happened when I was feeling that way:

*"I felt really **peaceful** when I went fishing with my gramps. We had to be quiet so we wouldn't scare away the fish, which was a nice change from my noisy home life. And we always went at dusk, which is still my favorite time of day. Sitting and watching the sun going down over water is a sure way to bring back that peaceful feeling."*

Emotional
abandoned
afraid
anguished
alarmed
amused
angry
annoyed
anxious
bad
bitter blissful
bold
bored
brave
concerned
confused
dejected
delighted
depressed
disappointed
disgusted
dismayed
displeased
ecstatic
elated
embarrassed
enthralled
frightened
frustrated
glad
grieved
happy
horrified
infuriated
jealous
lonely
merry
pleased
relieved
sad

Feeling _____

What happened when I was feeling that way:

Feeling _____

What happened when I was feeling that way:

Identifying Your Feelings

In the space below, describe in more detail significant feelings that you can identify from your own experience. You may want to draw a picture of an experience when you had a strong feeling. Can you see feeling-patterns from childhood that shaped your responses as an adult? Or perhaps you would like to change the way you experience some of these feelings. Describe them below.

Positive and Negative Self Beliefs and Feeling States

If you have identified one or more of your positive and negative self beliefs on the previous pages, write a description of what the feeling or feelings are connected to those beliefs. Then as you consider each belief, describe what happens to your body, the physiological response that is connected to the feeling. Describe how the negative self belief connects to the emotion and to the physiological response.

1. A Positive Self Belief

2. The feelings connected to that belief

3. Your physiological response* / Feeling state

---

1. A Negative Self Belief

2. The feelings connected to that belief

3. Your physiological response* / Feeling state

---

1. A Negative Self Belief

2. The feelings connected to that belief

3. Your physiological response* / Feeling state

* Physiological response: what happens to your body, e.g. tight, relaxed, rigid, short of breath, anxious, chest or stomach tightening, etc.

Exercise: Tracing the physiological response

Choose one of the self beliefs you identified in the previous exercise, and going backwards through time, try to remember other times when you experienced a similar physiological response. Use the questions below to help you trace the feeling state/physiological response and its attendant beliefs.

- What was the first time you can recall when you felt that way? Is there a similarity among the events you recall?

- Can you identify the feelings and emotions that go along with that physiological response?

- Can you trace particular self beliefs associated with those feelings and emotions.

- Finally, can you trace those feelings and beliefs back as far as your Emotional Map of the World from childhood?

Internal Dialogue

"My child has an imaginary friend; her name is Linda."

"To motivate myself when I need to do something I don't want to do, I tell myself in a rather angry voice, "Just get up and do it!"

"After I have a fight with my partner, I always beat myself up when I think about it."

"I judge myself all the time."

"I can just hear my aunt saying "Don't let anyone see how you feel."

"When I'm preparing for an important presentation, I tell myself, "You can do this. You are competent."

What is this process, in which I have imaginary friends, judge myself in my mind, have an aspect of myself that yells at myself, a part of me that encourages or discourages me?

Many people have an internal dialogue—an inner voice that speaks to them. Internal dialogue can include metaphors, images, language, memories—all symbolic representations of internalized data. We use internal dialogue when we rehearse plans for tomorrow's football game, or practice the presentation we are planning for a meeting at work. It is one way we access helpful information from the past.

We may have a memory of Dad's encouraging us, such as my (Gregory's) memories of playing chess with Dad, who set things up to let me take one of his pieces, speaking in a way that was calming and okay. Or the internal voice may offer warnings like "Don't share your feelings!" If there has been childhood sexual abuse, the voice is often unforgiving. As with other defenses, even the judging voice has a positive intention, stemming from a desire to avoid further pain.

As humans, we have an imaginative capacity for self reflection and self dialogue. When there are hurtful events in childhood, our capacity for reflection and internal dialogue will go into action in an attempt to make meaning of those events. For example, "If Mommy or Daddy yells at me, it must mean I am bad." or "What's wrong with me that my Daddy never talks to me." These are two examples of the origin of self-judgmental internal dialogue that supports a negative belief system.

A judgmental style of internal dialogue reinforces a negative emotional life, which is the foundation of a negative belief system. When you identify a negative self judgment, what is the feeling that accompanies the judgment and how does that feeling affect your day?

Can you remember a particular internal dialogue that included some form of self-judgment? If so, can you trace it back to a person or event from an earlier time in your life? Have you ever misinterpreted a judgmental inner voice as being a judgment from God, when in fact it was an internalized parent's voice, or older sibling, or teacher, or other person from your history?

Chapter Six: A Relational Chart based on your Map of the World

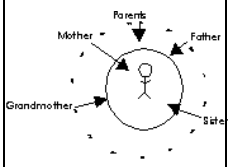
Instructions for the Relational Chart

The two charts on the next pages bring to light the process of how self beliefs, both positive and negative, are maintained relationally. Each page represents one person in a relationship. The first (outermost) column represents your map of the world as you sketched it in Chapter Five. Pick one of the relationships on that map and identify the feeling states that correspond to the relationship as symbolized on the map. Then identify and write down the beliefs you internalized because of that relationship. Next, try to identify the behavior that corresponds to the belief and the feeling state.

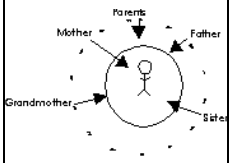
An example of how this might look is this: a mother who was not overtly angry, but was disappointed in her marriage had a tendency to be overly demanding on her child (person A). This child would resist the mother's demands, and the mother would become angry and critical. The child responded by shutting down emotionally and leaving the room when possible. Twenty years later this person picks a person (person B) to marry who experienced anger in his or her childhood, because persons would not listen to them unless they became angry and loud. Person A struggles with the self belief "I just can't get it right" anchored in a feeling state of fear and frustration connected to the behavior of emotionally shutting down and leaving. Person B struggles with the belief "I'm not important (no one listens to me)" anchored in loneliness and anger, and the behavior is getting louder and more aggressive. So when person B gets a bit intense in communicating, person A shuts down; person B gets more aggressive and louder; and person A leaves the room or house. This is the "Style of Relationship" for this couple. The style of relationship will be the commonality for both persons doing this exercise. As you can see, these scripts began in childhood and will be played over and over through the generations until the process of continuing the negative self beliefs is confronted and altered, until the deep wounds are healed.

As you begin to identify these feelings and beliefs, and begin to change the behaviors connected to the feelings and beliefs, the family system or person with whom you are in relationship may be resistant to the changes you need to make. When this happens it is helpful if the other person in the relationship is also working on looking at the behaviors, feelings and beliefs from his or her history, the things that are working to maintain the style of relationship. In any case, remember that there is a woundedness behind the behaviors that will take time and gentleness to heal. Chapter Seven, Continuity of Care, presents more ideas on how you can structure your relationship to facilitate the healing process, for yourself and others.

Relational Chart (Person one)

Family of origin map	Feeling States	Internalized Beliefs	Behaviors	Style of Relationship
	1)	1)	1)	
	2)	2)	2)	
	3)	3)	3)	
	4)	4)	4)	
	5)	5)	5)	
	6)	6)	6)	
	7)	7)	7)	
	8)	8)	8)	
	9)	9)	9)	
	10)	10)	10)	

Relational Chart (Person two)

Style of Relationship	Behaviors	Internalized Beliefs	Feeling States	Family of origin map
	1)	1)	1)	
	2)	2)	2)	
	3)	3)	3)	
	4)	4)	4)	
	5)	5)	5)	
	6)	6)	6)	
	7)	7)	7)	
	8)	8)	8)	
	9)	9)	9)	
	10)	10)	10)	

Chapter Seven: Continuity of Care

Your Map of the World, Relational Fields, and Continuity of Care

We developed the concept of Continuity of Care to describe a pattern of living in relationship in such a way that each person gets to know the other, especially the inner world of the other, and works to avoid creating negative emotional fields, and to support positive feeling states.

In a close relationship, whether it is with a spouse, parent, child, or sibling, as closeness and intimacy grow, the other person will learn to know you and your history well. If it is a safe relationship, you can let the other person know the things that were missing in your life before, that you would like to have in your relationship now; and the things that were hurtful before, that would cause pain if they occurred in your relationship. Continuity of Care means that the other person will use their consciousness of your history, needs, weaknesses, and strengths to care for you appropriately over time.

For example, a woman grew up in a chaotic house where she was paid little attention, and she never felt as though her voice was being heard. If she became too assertive about getting her needs met, she was punished. She formed the belief that she did not deserve to have her needs met, and that she would never really be heard or have someone pay attention to her needs. As an adult she was always afraid to ask for her needs, and never felt that she was being heard. Her husband at first thought she was just easily satisfied and content, but gradually began to understand that she was not asking for what she really wanted, because she felt unworthy and that it wouldn't matter anyway as she wouldn't be heard if she asked. He began to pay particular attention to her, asking for her opinion, letting her know that he valued her thoughts, and wanted her to participate in the decision-making process in their home. *Over a period of time* she began to feel cared for in a way she had not experienced before, and slowly changed her self belief that she was not worthy of being heard. Her emotional field held less fear and resentment than before, and the relationship became more intimate and joyful.

If, on the other hand, she had married a man who always needed to "wear the pants in the family," and she tried hard to make him listen to her and consider her opinion, his refusal to listen would get in the way of their caring for each other. She might passive-aggressively avoid meeting his needs around the house, leading him to be even more demanding and assertive, setting in motion a cycle in which they felt more and more distant from each other.

In any relationship, we can identify issues that become more important than the relationship itself. These are the issues that break the continuity of care. With continuity of care, we can learn to put the relationship ahead of these issues, and to shorten the length of time spent in negative emotional fields.

Why do we need Continuity of Care?

Any relationship has the potential to be either nurturing or devaluing. In a nurturing relationship each person has the sense of being valued, important, safe (both emotionally and physically), confident, welcomed, feels the other pays attention to them, and can express his or her own individuality as well as being able to contribute to the relationship and the welfare of the other. In a devaluing relationship one person is devalued, used to meet the other's needs, has no voice, and lives in fear of abandonment, an anxiety-filled life with an underlying depression.

One of the difficulties in Western Culture is that we function in an economic system that is toxic to the psychological and spiritual life of individuals, families, and communities. Paul Gilbert, in his work, *Depression, The Evolution of Powerlessness,* does an excellent job of relating the development of our subjective/inner world, where our sense of self evolves, to our social/economic structure. In his concluding observations on Western Culture, he highlights the toxic relationship between our economic way of life and our psychological life. Given this toxicity, the question is, How can we as a community create a place of emotional safety and health, when we live in the context of a socio-economic system that manipulates our collective imaginations to relate to one another in a dehumanizing way? Continuity of care in relationships is a practical method that begins to answer this question, and provides a way of relationship that moves individuals, relationships, and communities in the direction of spiritual and psychological health.

The central perspective of continuity of care in relationships is developing the capacity to view the world through relationships and have the health of the relationship as a primary value. The guiding question that is central to this method is "What is going on?" in terms self and the "other." Through this question we become mindful of life cycles, community history, personal narrative, and the value systems of the other. We then live and make life's decisions out of this mindfulness.

Continuity of care in relationships brings both internal and relational activity to consciousness. For example, in pastoral counseling, Jan reported being concerned about her relationship with Mike. She had the feeling that after their two children (17 and 15 year old boys) left home, the distance that had evolved in their relationship over the past 18 years would become an insurmountable problem. Their relational issues were receiving the focus of her energy. When I asked what the children leaving home meant for her, not for the relationship, but for her and her own life, she looked puzzled. All her life she had referenced what she did around others and caring for others, supporting others as they got along with their life's journeys. When I asked about her dreams and hopes for this next era of her life, it opened up an entirely new way of thinking, which took some of the pressure off the relationship.

Continuity of Care from a family perspective means moving beyond relating to spouses and children to behave in a particular way, even moving

beyond influencing children to have a particular set of values. A primary dynamic in continuity of care in relationships is to be aware of where children are developmentally and relating to them age-appropriately. For example, around the age of 8-12 children need to be bringing tasks to completion. If there is pressure to do this prior to the ages 8-12, the child may begin to complete tasks, which may be pleasing to the parent, but it also may prevent the child from feeling and thinking freely and creatively. Children are then vulnerable to becoming rigid in their thinking, or angry. Alternately, a parent may complete projects for the child at this time rather than gradually letting go and helping the child in a slow and graceful process to take over his or her own life. The child may become manipulative in getting others to do their work and life for them. Continuity of care in relationships keeps an observing eye on relationships and asks, "What is going on here *(which includes where is this person in his or her natural development)*, and how am I to respond?" This focus highlights what I call an ethical way of being in which the other is held in a state of mindfulness. The "other" could be immediate family, or persons who live in a community in which my company just decided to build a chemical plant.

Continuity of care in relationships is a way of understanding and experiencing the other through the lens of relationship steeped in the value system that evolves out of the conviction that persons are blessed, known, good, and loved. Once a person or a group of people ask the question, "What is going on?" the next question is, "What shall I do?" These questions lead me to a response to the world recognizing that I am, as we all are, part of a larger community.

The continuity of care in relationships is manifested in relationships when persons maintain a conscious awareness of the other, God and creation; and the awareness of the other is embedded in a sense of care, love, empathy, and other agreed-upon qualities that would be healing for that particular relationship. For example, as I work with couples exploring their story, they may become aware of the lack of care they received in their family of origin (which could manifest itself in many ways–in absences or intrusions, as we learned in Chapter Four). At that time couples can label that negative experience as, for example, the lack of affirmation, criticism, abuse, or neglect; and the couple can agree to place the sense of what they were lacking in childhood into the foundation of continuity of care in their relationship. For example if one or the other grew up in an emotionally unsafe environment, they could agree that a sense of emotional safety would need to be a part of the foundation of the continuity of care in their loving relationship. This can provide a deep awareness within the relationship of the painful emotional experiences of the other and may also, over time, provide healing to the historical injuries through the intentionality and consciousness of the agreement. The sense of care for the other is held in caring consciousness of the relationship over time. It is a way of remembering and being remembered, of knowing and being known. When the continuity of care is interrupted, both parties realize it and acknowledge that the work of the relationship is to understand the process of brokenness; this creates an opportunity for reconciliation and closeness. This work takes a strong commitment and willingness to journey inward.

This is also an image of a spiritual discipline, reflecting relationship to God. The process of continuity of care explores how memories of the other, God, and ourselves are held and how the emotional atmosphere around those memories influence relationships and one's sense of self. It places us in touch with how we believe we are held in God's memory and how we hold God in our memory. With this sense of how one holds God and others in consciousness, we can discern if we are living our daily lives with congruency between our stated theology/value systems and our lived theology/value systems. In other words if the husband agrees to work on creating a household that is emotionally safe, but continues to shame others and to speak sarcastically, then his lived behavior is not congruent with his stated value system.

An Example of Historical Roots of Separateness

As I counseled with a couple they shared that over a period of 15 years, they had grown apart. Both felt as if they were not important to the other because over time their activities together had diminished. Through counseling both discovered that this feeling and belief of not being important could be traced through their childhood. As each partner told his or her story, they discovered new understanding and insight about the other. Their sharing of their narratives led each to a greater empathy for the other. ("I never knew that about you" is a common phrase to hear during this time in couple's counseling.) Each agreed to work on facilitating the sense of importance within the other, because they *are* important to each other regardless of the belief and feeling. I suggested they work to restructure their relationship in order communicate over time the sense of *importance*. The event of committing out of a love relationship brings warmth and vitality to both individuals and the relationship. This has not been easy for them, however their experience of the relationship and as individuals has gained an emotional quality it did not have before; emotional safety and a realistic expectation of kindness are becoming predominant in the household.

Continuity of Care Exercises

To understand where Continuity of Care could be helpful in your life, first review your Map of the World. If you consider your Map of the World in terms of the emotional fields in your family of origin, can you identify negative feeling states that still occur in your life today? What life events contribute to the prevailing emotional fields in which you live? Describe them in the space below.

Can you identify negative self beliefs (like “I have nothing valuable to say”) or foundational beliefs (such as “Nobody really cares about anyone else”) that contribute to a negative emotional field in your life, and which you might be able to change? As we are all relational beings, significant others’ being aware of your needs and consciously working to create a caring relationship helps provide an environment within which you can heal and grow. Can you list or describe what you would need in order to let go of those negative beliefs?

When you have identified your needs, reflect on your availability to have those needs met in relationships.

Can you describe the needs of your significant other in terms of providing Continuity of Care for him or her?

Chapter Eight: Boundaries

Introduction

What are boundaries? Webster's New World Dictionary defines a boundary as "any line or thing marking a limit." Psychologically and emotionally, a boundary is "an invisible line of demarcation that separates a system, subsystem, or individual from outside surroundings" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 1990, 45). Relationally, it is "how far we can go with comfort in a relationship… Boundary is a concept that provokes a real experience within us." (Whitfield 1993, 1) The real inner experience of a boundary is what we used in determining Your Emotional Map of the World: our sense of our personal boundaries helped us define who was absent and who was intrusive.

We will be looking at three aspects of boundaries: mental (or intellectual), emotional, and physical, recognizing that all three are parts of our total, spiritual selves. All our boundaries develop (or are weakened) within our family system. So, we will begin by looking at boundaries (as described by Merle Fossum and Marilyn Mason in their ground-breaking book, *Facing Shame*) at the family structural level (the system), then at the intra-family level (the sub-system or generational boundaries), the intra-psychic level (the individual ego boundaries) and finally the internal boundaries as described by Dr. Ernest Hartmann in *Boundaries in the Mind*.

Boundaries can be too thin, permeable or blurred, or they can be too thick, rigid and impermeable. A totally open system would have no boundaries, and would cease to exist; while a totally closed system would permit no communication with the outside world, and would die. A boundary can be blurred, creating boundary ambiguity, as when a father is physically absent, but there was still a psychological presence; or a physically present father is psychologically absent. (You may have encountered a relationship like this in your Emotional Map of the World.) The resulting boundary ambiguity is defined as "a state in which family members are uncertain in their perception about who is in or out of the family and who is performing what roles and tasks within the family system" (Boss 1984, 536).

Three Basic Types of Boundaries

Family Structural Boundaries

We discovered in our model of our Emotional Map that significant people in our families often related to us in a way that was too distant (absent) or too intrusive for our healthy development. One way these intrusions and absences affected us was by their impact on our developing sense of self, which is partly defined by our boundaries. Before looking at boundaries at the personal level, we need to see how the family system as a whole defines itself, and see what rules were in effect in our family of origin, and what rules we may be living with now.

Boundaries are the rules of a system, defining who participates, and how they participate (Minuchin 1974, 53). In the family system, boundaries protect the system by defining who is inside the system and who is outside. They set limits for family members, enforced by family rules.

Family structural boundaries include:

- the ease of entering or leaving the family
- the family's interaction with those outside the family (or avoidance of interaction)
- the family's rules about who comes or goes, both family members and outsiders
- the distinction between the family and the rest of society

When family members can interact within the family unit and rely on continuity of the rules that shape their family system, then the family forms a healthy identity in relationship to other families. The family boundaries develop from rules established by the parents, and can change depending on the developmental stages in the family life. Researchers have found that healthy families have clear boundaries, while families with weak or blurred boundaries may exhibit pathological relationships over several generations (Bell 1962, 61).

Family boundaries also help define subsystems within the family, such as the parental dyad, and the parent-child relationship (a generational boundary). An example of a subsystem boundary problem is when a grandparent interferes with her daughter's rearing of her children, overstepping her authority, being intrusive and crossing family boundaries.

Family Boundaries Exercises

What were the family rules in your family of origin that shaped your family's boundaries?

1. Did visitors frequently, sometimes, or never drop in unexpectedly? Were visitors in general welcomed, or not?

2. Were there rules that guarded your family's private time? For example, in some families, the phone is turned off at dinner time, so the family has uninterrupted time together.

3. Did members of your extended family (grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins) visit frequently, occasionally, or almost never? Were they free to drop in and feel at home, or were more formal arrangements necessary?

4. Did you feel free to invite friends over anytime you liked? Was it clear that some times were better than others?

5. Was your household closed and secretive, protecting a dysfunctional (alcoholic, abusive, unstable) member of the family from outside visitors?

What are the family rules that shape your family now?

1. Do visitors frequently, sometimes, or never drop in unexpectedly? Are visitors in general welcomed, or not?

2. Are there rules like the “no phone calls at dinner time rule” that guard your family’s private time?

3. Do members of your extended family (grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins) visit frequently, occasionally, or almost never? Are they free to drop in and feel at home, or are more formal arrangements necessary?

4. Do you feel free to invite friends over anytime you like?

5. Is your household closed and secretive, protecting a dysfunctional (alcoholic, abusive, unstable) member of the family from outside visitors?

6. Is there a relationship between the family rules in your family of origin and those in your present family?

7. What about those of your spouse or others you live with now? Were their family of origin rules similar to or different from yours? If they were different, how have you worked out the rules you live by now? Are the boundaries clear, unclear, or a source of conflict?

Generational and Intra-family Boundaries

Within each family system are subsystems. Intra-family boundaries are the boundaries that establish the family's subsystems, which include the husband/wife, parent/child, and sibling subsystems. Generational boundaries can include grandparents, and, like all boundaries, the boundaries between generations can be healthy and permeable, or overly rigid, or blurred.

A family with healthy intra-family boundaries forms when the parents have a healthy, intimate relationship. When the parents' relationship is strong, it clarifies the boundaries for the subsystems that include the children. When the parents' relationship is troubled, the generational boundaries can become overly permeable, and a competing parent/child coalition may develop. For example, a child born into a weak or troubled marriage may become "mommy's special pet" while the neglected father feels unwelcome and spends more and more time away from the home. An unhealthy mother/child alliance forms, which may eventually draw the child into a relationship with the mother that does not reflect their different generational status. One reason we include the mother & father dyad on our Emotional Map is to begin to get a picture of the generational boundaries in our family of origin. If mother and father together were pretty much absent, or were fighting to the point where their being together in our presence was intrusive, there is a strong possibility the intra-family boundaries were not healthy.

Dysfunctional boundary patterns within families include:

- a mother/son or father/daughter sexualized relationship
- the failure of attachment between child and mother or father
- a child who fulfills a parent's intimacy needs
- "Parentification"-- in which the child is drawn into adult decisions and situations
- a child's experiencing difficulty with separation and individuation

Children who grow up in families where the attachment was inadequate (either mother or father absent) or inappropriately intense and anxious (either mother or father intrusive) tend to enter adult relationships in which they project their idealized fantasy onto their partners. As long as a person is relating to projected fantasy and not the true self of the other person, there can be no true intimacy. The partner becomes in a sense invisible. The boundaries in the adult relationships reflect their inability to see the other clearly, and there is the potential for forming inappropriate relationships with others in the family system. In the example we used above, the mother may have felt disappointment that her husband was not the romantic figure he seemed to be when they first married, and she turns to her young son to meet her emotional needs.

Children who are the attachment figures for their parent's intimacy needs are not free, and do not experienced the appropriate mutual parent/child relationship they needed during separation-individuation. In this way, the too permeable or rigid boundaries within the family have an effect on the intra-psychic or ego boundaries of the developing child. When children cannot form healthy intra-psychic boundaries, the tendency to form too weak or too rigid boundaries in their family relationships goes on from generation to generation.

Generational Boundaries Exercises

1. How did you experience your parents as a unit? On your Emotional Map, did they appropriately join your world? Or were they absent? Or intrusive?

2. Can you identify any intra-family or generational boundary problems in your family of origin? Examples include those dysfunctional boundary patterns listed above, or other patterns including grandparents or other members of the immediate family.

3. Within your current family, are the intra-family boundaries clear and appropriate? Is the parental relationship strong and healthy? If not, are children drawn into relationship with one parent to the emotional exclusion of the other parent?

4. Is the parental relationship so enmeshed and inward-focused that the children don't have clear relational boundaries to help shape their own sense of self.

Intra-psychic or Ego Boundaries

Fossum and Mason define the ego boundary as "*the ego barrier that guards an individual's inner space, the very means he or she employs for screening and interpreting the outside world and for modulating and regulating his or her interactions with that world*. The person who grows up with clear boundaries can mature to a full and competent self; one cannot establish an identity without clearly defined boundaries." (Fossum and Mason, 63)

In healthy development, our ego boundaries form within healthy relationships. For the first few months of life, the baby has no sense of self and non-self. There is a one-ness with the mother or father. Gradually, if the parents are able to give "natural caring" (Davis and Wallbridge 1981) or "good enough" mothering (Winnicott 1965, 17) the child will develop a sense of "me" vs. "not me." Winnicott offers these words on the importance of the quality of the mother-child relationship: "Only if there is a good-enough mother does the infant start on a process of development that is personal and real. If the mothering is not good enough then the infant becomes a collection of reactions to impingement, and the true self of the infant fails to form or becomes hidden behind a false self which complies with and generally wards off the world's knocks." (Winnicott 1965, 17). In terms of ego boundaries, the infant who "fails to form" a true self has too permeable boundaries, perhaps because of a psychological or physical absence of the parent; while the formation of a strong "false self" may signal the development of too rigid boundaries, especially in the case of "impingement" by an intrusive or abusive parent.

Ken Wilbur writes that "the boundary between the self and the not self is the first one we draw and the last one we erase." He also points out that it is difficult to distinguish the boundaries *between* things until we have distinguished ourselves *from* things (Wilbur 1981). This process of distinguishing ourselves from others depends on the balanced emotional availability (not absent or intrusive) of the parents. If the parents are struggling with their own issues of weak or impermeable boundaries in their own egos and relationships, they will not be able to recognize and support their child's developing separation and individuation, which is necessary to establish the child as a self distinct from the rest of the world, and with its own particular identity. And as we have seen, the child with absent or intrusive parents will have a system of negative beliefs about itself that continues to keep it functioning in the false self world of emotional reactivity and compliance.

There are several factors that influence the formation of healthy ego boundaries. We will continue to consider the role of absences, using the idea of *relationship vacuums,* and intrusions in the form of boundary invasions that cause blurring of mental, emotional, and physical boundaries. You may want to refer back to your Emotional Map to see where you identified absent persons (leaving a vacuum in your emotional world); and also those intrusions that were a form of boundary invasion.

We will then look at boundary building, and begin the move from living out of a false self to discovering and being your true self.

Relationship Vacuums

When parents have poorly defined individual boundaries, their relationship boundaries tend to be fused, resulting in a high degree of emotional reactivity and little intimacy. This forms a relationship vacuum within the family system. As we saw in the discussion of Generational Boundaries, the result is often that one parent forms a parent/child "marriage" and the other seeks relationship outside the family, in a job, church or other outside role, or other relationships. The child in the parent/child relationship feels trapped, and shameful about usurping their parent's spot. The boundary crossing leads to a confusion of feelings, from shame to fear to pride (a parent might say "you have to be the "man" of the family" or similar statements elevating to child to adult status). Some parents share inappropriate sexual or other intimate information with the child. When a child pushed into an adult relationship with the parent, it is called "parentification" of the child. Parentification of a child is particularly common in families with a chemically dependent parent, and in the case of separation or divorce. It occurs when one or both parents are psychologically absent (even if they are physically present).

The child who was fused to the lonely parent may grow up and form weak marriages, which fail, or which form a relationship vacuum in the new family. Some therapists recognize the need for the adult child to "divorce" the parent before their marriage can be strengthened. In other cases, the adult child may fill the relationship vacuum with drink, compulsive behavior, or another cross-generational relationship. In addition to parentification, there may be "childification" in which the parent steps down crossing the generational line and entering a peer relationship with the child ("My son is my best friend.")

1. Can you identify Relationship Vacuums in your family of origin? As you reflect on your parents' relationship in particular, is there a sense that either of them sought substitute relationships, with a child, or another person, substance, or entity within or outside the home? If so, what was the effect on you and your sense of secure boundaries?

2. Are there Relationship Vacuums in your life now? Are there significant people with whom you have a less-than healthy relationship, people with whom you wish there were more true intimacy, or real closeness? If so, how are you filling those vacuums?

The Earliest Formation of Ego Boundaries

In earliest childhood, there is a relationship between the parent (usually the mother) and the child, with a physical and a psychological closeness. This closeness is strengthened through non-verbal communication, which allows the child to develop a sense of trust. In the beginning the emotional flow is one-way, with the parent providing a one-way flow of affection. There is a psychic fusion in the attachment of the infant to the parent. No attachment is perfect, as no parent is able to be totally available. However, attachment definitely suffers if the parent's availability is limited by depression, addictions, or rejection.

When the parent is available, the child's development continues bolstered by physical touch and holding, eye contact, mirroring (reflecting the child's emotional reactions back to the child, validating his or her feelings), and what Winnicott calls "object-presenting or *realizing* (that is, making real the infant's creative impulse) [which] initiates the infant's capacity to relate to objects. Faulty object presenting further blocks the way for development of the infant's capacity to feel real in relating to the actual world of objects and phenomena" (Winnicott 1965, 19). For example, the infant has the physical experience of hunger, and when he cries, the mother provides milk. At the earliest stages, mother, baby, and milk are all one to the child; but as he grows, he becomes aware that the mother brings (or fails to bring) the milk. If the mother consistently fails to bring the milk, or offers it so frequently that the child never has chance to feel hunger and have the experience of his expressed needs being met, the child cannot develop the sense that he a) is a separate being with needs that are met by someone beyond himself and b) that the world consists of "objects" (like mother) that can and will meet his needs.

The child who experiences "good enough" parenting learns to trust the "other" and can form a sense of self separate from the other. This is the beginning of the process of *differentiation*, which we define as the capacity of a person to be emotionally autonomous while still being emotionally available and in emotional contact with others. It begins with the ability to distinguish between me and not-me. Differentiation depends on having adequate ego boundaries, which reduces the amount of emotional reactivity in relationships. In the young child, the sense of trust supports the formation of ego boundaries, and forms the basis for all future psychological and social development. It begins with healthy attachment.

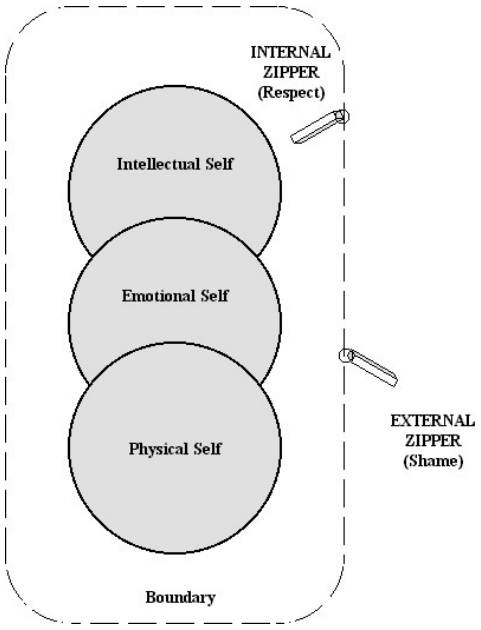
If the bond between parent and child is not healthy, the child will not be able to move away from the parent without tension and anxiety. The relationship between parent and child becomes a series of transactions governed by strong implicit rules, which prevents the child's *individuation.* Individuation is the process of parent and child discovering the shape and features of the child's true self, the child as a unique, whole individual. It is facilitated by an environment in which the child is free to experience his or her own needs and emotions, and have his or her needs met. In an unhealthy parent/child relationship, the child learns to shut down its own emotional needs to accommodate the needs of the parent. They become dependent on the parent to supply their feelings and thoughts. Without healthy attachment and trust, the child will lack a secure base from which to operate; he will not have a clear sense of where he ends and the rest of the world

begins. This is a fearful and painful position, and it is here that we begin to develop defenses and repression of the fear and pain. We also develop negative self beliefs, such as "If I were a better person, someone would love me and meet my needs," or "I am not lovable" or "I am inadequate, and not worthy of love and care."

Without clear ego boundaries, the child will grow into an adult who will seek that missing sense of safety and security in another person or institution (work, church, social standing). They will try to attach to others to find the identity and self-worth that did not form in childhood, and when that fails, they may seek it in compulsive and addictive behaviors. Negative self beliefs lead the person to seek attachment to people not available for healthy relationships, continuing the pattern of failed intimacy. Insecure attachments, along with a pattern of emotional shut-downs, feed deep feelings of shame and inadequacy. Healing the shame and the negative self beliefs happens through the life-long process of rediscovering the true self, protected and supported by healthy ego boundaries.

The Zipper Metaphor

We will continue to explore boundary formation, looking at intellectual, emotional, and physical boundary blurring and strengthening. To clarify this discussion, we will use the Zipper Metaphor, introduced by Fossum and Mason in *Facing Shame*, to illustrate what others have called the internal or external "locus of control."



When a person has a sense of control over his or her personal boundaries, they have a sense of self-respect. In a shame-bound family system, there is a belief that one is regulated and controlled by other people and the outside world. The regulating mechanism is shame, and the boundaries are unclear. If one's Emotional Map revealed significant others who were very absent or intrusive, their boundaries were either poorly formed, or broken by early life experiences. The child learns to feel like an object, and is vulnerable to having others "unzip" them and invade or steal their emotions and thoughts. The child also believes there is something wrong with them, because they let someone get into their space. Negative self beliefs and the feeling of shame keep the zipper out of control.

People with unclear boundaries and external zippers have some common behaviors. Lacking a clear sense of what is safe or harmful, they make poor

decisions, and are then judged as "asking for trouble," which perpetuates their belief that they need outside forces to keep them in line, to control their zippers. They may appear to be "victims," or they may assume an aggressive stance, overflowing their boundaries and attempting to exert control as a cover for a deeper sense of insecurity and lack of a sense of self. Another common behavior is the adoption of extreme sex-role behavior: the macho man or the helpless female is another form of the false self.

Intellectual or Mental Boundary Blurring

- Blaming
- Criticizing
- Put-downs
- Prying
- Comparisons
- Threats of Punishment
- "Talking-over" and completing sentences
- Mind-reading
- Constant correction (grammar, speech patterns)
- Raising voices

Intellectual boundary blurring results when parents behave intrusively by blaming, criticizing, mind-reading, and prying (Fossum and Mason, 72). Mind-reading is when one person interprets another's thoughts and or feelings, and believes that their interpretation is correct without checking it out. The goal is agreement ("You know you really like going shopping with Aunt Alice") or manipulation ("You know you feel good when you dress up like that, and everyone says what a handsome fellow you are!"). When the parents address the child like that, using statements that begin with "You…" they deny the child's right to think and feel for himself. The child naturally believes the parent must be right, and they learn to doubt their own perceptions, feeling shameful for thinking otherwise, and they learn to defer to others (keeping the zipper on the outside).

The behaviors that cause intellectual boundary blurring can be subtle, as in the examples above, or not so subtle, in the case of put-downs, comparisons, and threats of punishment. The child's response to these less subtle invasions may be retreat and withdrawal, or negative acting out. Either response keeps the zipper external, as they give over control or have it wrested from them

Another form of intellectual invasion is the prying parent who needs to know everything about the child's inner and outer life. They will try to discover all of the child's activities, thoughts, and feelings. The parent who engages in this behavior is often one whose emotional needs are being met by the child's behavior. For the parent to feel good, the child must be good, so there is a need to pry into the child's world and control what is there. Another invasion is the practice of "talking over" the child, interrupting, continually correcting the speech patterns and grammar, completing the child's sentences, and the raising of voices.

The result of these intellectual boundary invasions is that the child grows

up feeling inadequate, inferior, and ashamed of himself. And the broken boundaries that result leave the child vulnerable to invasion by others outside the family, which reactivates and intensifies the shame. (For more examples of intellectual boundary blurring, see *Facing Shame,* Fossum and Mason, 73-75)

1. Using the list above as a reference, can you identify instances of intellectual boundary blurring in your childhood?

2. Can you relate intellectual boundary blurring in your childhood to times when you deferred to others?

3. Do you find yourself mind-reading other people, or feel as if they are mind-reading you, instead of checking out what is really in yours or their thoughts? Have you had conversations where you felt as if the goal was agreement rather than communication?

4. Do you find it difficult to stand up for your own thoughts or beliefs, finding it more comfortable to defer to others? Do you sometimes feel as if your thoughts are not valuable enough to be expressed?

Emotional Boundary Blurring

- Lonely parents who share secrets
- Telling the child about sexual relationships
- Sharing personal feelings in a way that child takes them on as his/her own
- Extracting the child's own feelings and overwhelming them with the parent's feelings
- Parents emotionally absent
- Child who feels abandoned and unlovable
- Child who believes "I have to take care of myself"

When a parent is emotionally intrusive, they cross the generational boundary and share intimate feelings with the child. They are generally lonely or angry parents whose emotional needs are not being met in the marriage, so they share their secrets with their children and bind them to them in an emotional fusion. This excessive sharing may even extend to telling the child about their secret sexual relationships, which becomes a form of sexual abuse, or emotional rape. The child who is thus fused to one parent will often blame one parent for any family problems, while defending the other parent. The child feels a sense of shame at being drawn into the secret world of the parent, and his or her boundaries are broken.

When there is a significant absence (with emotional deprivation) or psychological abandonment, the child's emotional boundaries become blurred. The child experiences a sense of confusion, and often moves into self-defeating behavior. When there is not a person with clear boundaries to bump up against to help form a sense of where I end and you begin, there is a lack of feedback, and a feeling of abandonment. The beliefs that result may be "I can only rely on myself," or "I have to take care of myself." There are underlying negative self beliefs like, "I am not lovable" or I am not worthy of being loved."

Sometimes shame-bound persons with insufficient emotional boundaries are like sponges, soaking up the feelings of others, confused about whose feelings are whose. (Fossum and Mason, 76) They take on others' pain as if it were their own and are not able to control their emotional responses. In adult relationships they are likely to pair up with someone who is repressing their pain, and the person with blurred emotional boundaries will do the feeling work for their partner. They may both be following a family rule that it is not okay to express your own feelings, a common rule in codependent family systems.

Another form of emotional boundary blurring was termed "emotional anemia" by Horvitz (1982). It can be seen in "the deficiency in the acknowledgement and acceptance of affection, appreciation, and closeness from others." They have difficulty accepting others' appreciation of their "good points, competence, skills or resources." An Emotional Anemic rejects positive comments and ends up mistrusting the person who offers affirmation (because there is a belief that "that person must be wrong or stupid to praise such a worthless being as myself"—grounded in the feeling of shame and the self belief that "I am worthless.")

The experience of Extractive Introjection which "occurs when one person steals for a certain period of time (from a few seconds or minutes, to a lifetime) an element of another individual's psychic life" (Christopher Bollas in *The Shadow of the Object*, p. 158) causes emotional boundary blurring. The parent extracts the child's feeling, replacing it with his or her own feelings. For an example, see the Glossary at the end of this book.

1. Was there any instance of clear emotional boundary violation in your childhood? If so, was it an intrusion, with inappropriate sharing of the adult emotional world; or absence, with the resulting belief like that of "I can only rely on myself."?

2. Are your emotional boundaries today clear or blurred?

3. Do you ever feel that you are carrying or expressing your partner's feelings for him or her? Or that they are doing that for you?

4. What were your family rules for expressing your feelings? Were they validated, accepted, or were you discouraged from showing how you really felt? What about now? Do you find it easy or difficult to express your feelings? Can you easily identify how you are really feeling?

5. Do you now or have you ever had difficulty accepting appreciation or affirmation for your strengths or skills? Have you ever mistrusted someone who expressed high regard for you?

Physical Boundary Blurring

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Parents physically absent or unavailable, so child develops fear of touch, even good touch
- Comments or teasing about physical characteristics

Physically intrusive persons on your Emotional Map cause the blurring of your physical boundaries. This might have taken the form of physical abuse, or sexual abuse. When a child experiences sexual boundary crossing, they often shut down emotionally, and develop the belief that "Something is wrong with me. I am unlovable." Their sense of self-respect is lost, and they cannot defend or control their physical boundaries. They may try to shield themselves through barriers to closeness such as extreme defensiveness, smoking, overweight, or withdrawing socially.

If there is a physical intrusiveness or physical absence in significant childhood relationships, the child may experience a sense of discomfort or fear of touch, possibly even casual touching or hugging. The child may develop a strong self-consciousness, with the feeling of being split in two, with the self-conscious self observing the other self. This feeling of being split off cuts the child off from the feeling world, and breaks the interpersonal bridge. The child lacks the clear physical boundary that makes it safe to enter into close relationships with others. Their physical boundary may also be damaged by poor body image, brought on by comments and teasing by family members that point out any difference from the "norm," with the resulting self belief that "I am too fat" (or skinny, or tall, or short, or ugly, etc.). The child lacks the self-respect to hold onto control of their "zipper."

1. Did you have childhood experiences that violated your physical boundaries? If so, can you connect those experiences with behaviors you use today to avoid closeness in relationships? Can you connect them to negative beliefs you hold about your physical or emotional self?

The Internal Zipper: Self Respect

The goal of self-help work like that guided by this book, and of therapy and other systems of growth and support, is to shift control of the zipper from the outside to the inside. The key to this process is to move from a shame-based system to one based on self-respect with a clear sense of self and value. We can begin this journey by building better intellectual, emotional, and physical boundaries. We need to develop a sense of control before we can give up control in intimate relationships. And we need to learn how to express our feelings, positive and negative.

Intellectual Boundary Building

Healthy intellectual boundaries are in evidence when

- I can think and speak for myself
- I accept curious thinking and exploring concepts
- I can wonder out loud and ask questions
- I am able to say "I'm wrong. I'm sorry. I made a mistake."
- I can have something private and secret without feeling guilt
- I am able to stand up for my own beliefs

Emotional Boundary Building

I will know my emotional boundaries are healthy when:

- I realize my good feelings come from my own behavior
- I am able to express a full range of feelings
- I understand feelings are not good or bad—they just *are*
- I can *choose* what feelings to express to others
- I stop blaming—my feelings are not dependent on others' behaviors and feelings
- I can experience guilt without feeling ashamed
- I can accept that there is a dark side as well as a light side in each of us
- I can have empathy and compassion without taking on the other's pain—I realize life is suffering, and pain is part of being human

Physical Boundary Building

When I have appropriate physical boundaries:

- I have a clear sense of physical space
- I can move closer to or further from another to establish my own distance comfort
- I have good self esteem about my physical self
- I am able to touch and be touched
- I am able to nurture and receive nurturing

As you begin the process of creating healthy boundaries, you will find that everyone in your family system is affected. The process of setting firm boundaries, which is a characteristic of differentiation, may trigger some steps by other family members to stop the process. You may feel you are being told "You are wrong." "Change back." "If you don't …" Your role is to stay on course without defending yourself, counter attacking, or seeking approval (Bowen 1985). As your boundaries grow, you will be increasingly able to take responsibility for your own happiness.

Moving from False Self to Real Self by Facing Shame: A Spiritual Journey

When emotional deprivations (absences) and invasions (intrusiveness) can be faced and worked through, a person can begin to build an inner self. When healthy boundaries are built, a sense of self and identity begins to form, and self-trust increases. Facing the feelings of shame and the negative self beliefs helps a person to identify the areas in their life where boundaries are weak, and need to be re-established.

This is a slow process of building an inner self, but the result is a person with increased self respect, an internal zipper that controls protection and availability of the self, and an increase in the capacity for intimacy in relationships.

As we are spiritual beings, this process is a spiritual journey. Speaking of family therapy, Fossum and Mason point out that "Shame erodes the spirit, that natural, animating life force that is unknown to human language. Spirit is made up of mind, the unconscious, and intuition. Families as well as individuals are spiritual…As clients face their shame, their spirits awaken and resume their natural growth…Families find that the hurt, anger and rage known in shame, which were felt and never expressed over the years, are often buried under repression and denial…As we work with families in pain and crises, threads from the old fabric are woven into the new, creating new patterns in the spiritual cloth of the family. We often see a deepening of compassion, a softening toward others, and acceptance and respect of others' separateness." (161)

Ernest Hartmann offers another view of our internal boundaries, one that describes differences that exist in how naturally thick or thin our internal boundaries are, which affects both our personality formation, and how we relate to others and the external world.

Thick and Thin Boundaries in the Mind

In 1991 Ernest Hartmann offered a theory of personality based on *Boundaries in the Mind*, a way of looking at the range of individual boundary differences. He described an individual's internal boundaries as being on a continuum between extremely "thick" and extremely "thin," with most of us having boundaries somewhere in between. These boundaries have to do with the way aspects of our self relate to one another, such as the relationship between thinking and feeling, rather than the way we distinguish our self from another. They do have an affect on the way we enter into relationships, and understanding and acknowledging the differences among us can help us be more accepting of those differences.

Dr. Hartmann developed a questionnaire with which he defined one's internal boundaries in terms of 12 categories:

1) Sleep/wake/dream states
2) Unusual experiences
3) Thoughts, feelings, and moods
4) Childhood, adolescence, and adulthood
5) Interpersonal relationships
6) Sensitivity, especially to sensory input
7) Neatness, exactness, precision
8) Edges, lines, clothing
9) Opinions about children and others
10) Opinions about organizations and relationships
11) Opinions about peoples, nations and groups
12) Opinions about beauty and truth.

Hartmann found that people with thin boundaries tended to move from sleeping to dreaming to waking states gradually, with the boundaries between those states blurred. A thin boundaried person might spend considerable time in a state somewhere between waking and sleeping, possibly even "hearing" voices as if in a dream, while in an in-between state. They might waken slowly in the morning, unsure for a time if they are still in a dream, or in reality. A person with thick boundaries, in contrast, just wakes up, moving quickly to full consciousness. He or she may not remember any dreams, and may report that "I never dream."

A person with thin boundaries has difficulty separating their thoughts from their feelings, and might say "I need to feel my way into a decision." A person with thick boundaries might say "Feelings just get in the way of making a decision." Also, their approach to thinking and decision-making is very different. A person with thick boundaries will stick to one thought, follow it through to its completion, and then stop or move on to something else. Decisions are clear-cut; right is right, and wrong is wrong. A thin-boundary person may find that each

thought branches into several more, which connect to other thoughts, and on and on. This process can be enriching, but it can also be confused or chaotic, and only with difficulty brought to completion. Communication between thick and thin boundary persons can be difficult, if each expects the other to think in a way similar to their own. Acknowledging that they are different, and neither way is "right" or "wrong" can help foster effective communication.

There is also a difference between thick and thin boundaries in the area of identity. The boundaries between childhood, and adolescence, and adulthood, for example, may be thick ("Put away the things of childhood…") or thin, in which case childhood is still a part of the adult world. A person with thick boundaries will move through adolescence relatively quickly and easily, often wanting to become an adult as soon as possible. People with thin boundaries often experience intense conflicts in adolescence. Another aspect of identity is constancy, and while a person with thick boundaries senses his identity as solid and fixed, one with thin boundaries may see his identity as flexible, changing over time or indifferent situations; "I'm a completely different person when I'm with her."

Boundaries include body boundaries, the barriers between us and the rest of the physical world. For example, we all have some kind of psychophysical barriers against outside stimuli, like bright lights, loud sounds, intense odors, scratchy clothing. Thin barriers offer very little protection against such stimuli, and thin boundaried people are sensitive to and easily bothered by sensory input. They lack the thicker boundaried person's "protective barrier." Body boundaries are also revealed in posture, like a defensive, rigid posture in a thick boundaried person, or the sense of softness, fluidity, lack of solidity that a person with thin boundaries might have.

Interpersonal boundaries can range from very thick (which can include maintaining an emotional distance from others, and not getting involved with another person too quickly) to very thin (in which case the person might become involved rapidly and deeply, with the sense of losing one's self in the relationship). While a person with thick boundaries can seem distant, or cold, there has been a cultural ideal, particularly for men, of maintaining thick personal boundaries. On the other hand, the idealized image of "falling in love" includes the thin boundary experience of losing yourself in merging with the other. People who have thin internal boundaries may tend to have thin boundaries between themselves and others; and those with thick boundaries may appear distant and unwilling to get involved.

The way one experiences or draws a boundary around groups (religious, national, social, racial, etc.) in influenced by the thickness or thinness on one's boundaries. If the boundary is thick, there is a huge perceptual difference between "insiders" and "outsiders." To someone with thin boundaries, whether one is or is not part of a particular group is less defining of the self. He will not think of himself as "a Texan" or "a Catholic" but more likely "a citizen of the world." There are also variations in lifestyle preferences depending on the thickness of one's boundaries. A person with thick boundaries is likely to "have a place for everything, and everything in its place." There is also a preference for thick, solid clothing, heavy picture frames, solid walls and doors, well organized living space.

They will be most comfortable in situations, including jobs, where roles and expectations are well-defined. They will make decisions differently, tending to see things in black-and-white, while a thin-boundary person will see shades of gray.

Most people are somewhere along the continuum between very thick and very thin boundaries. If you recognize, either intuitively or by taking the Boundary Questionnaire in *Boundaries in the Mind*, that you and/or your spouse, family members or friends have significantly thin or thick boundaries, you might find it helpful to consider the effect you preferences has on relationships and other aspects of your life. For example, if you have thin boundaries and you suspect your spouse has thick boundaries, you may want to talk about compromising your "anything goes" attitude toward planning a vacation and his or her need to know exactly where you'll be at any given moment. Your internal boundaries may be in part physically determined, and to expect the other to change according to your preferences (and vice versa) may not be conducive to a healthy relationship. Understanding and accepting our own and other's individual differences in boundary structure can be a real aid to intimacy and empathy.

Chapter Nine: Triangles in Relationships

The Family as a System: The Emotional Field

In this section we at look at the family as a system. Several things may be taken into account when looking at the family as a system: the *context* in which a family exits; the previous *generational dynamics* of the family; the *sense of future* the family has for itself; and the *relational dynamics* among the individuals that make up the family. Understanding the family as a system is a way of observing family patterns and relational styles for the purpose of restructuring dysfunctional aspects of the family system.

One of the difficulties for the individual studying her or his own family is the difficulty in seeing the part that he or she plays in the functioning of others. Therefore it is helpful not only to look at the relational styles between people but also to look at the internal dynamics within each individual. Murray Bowen describes family systems in terms of a natural systems theory, in which he understands the family as an emotional unit. This is different from many psychotherapies in that in family systems there is a focus on the family as a whole and not on the individual. And each person in the system plays a role within the other person's life. Murray Bowen calls this their *functioning position.*

A person's functioning position has significant influence on his or her beliefs, values, attitudes, feelings, and behavior. Each individual's functioning position occurs in the emotional field or the emotional atmosphere of the family. This is often difficult to understand because the emotional field or emotional atmosphere is not something that you can see. It is something that you feel. "The functioning positions of family members are a manifestation of the emotional system. Feelings, attitudes, values, and beliefs play an important role in creating and maintaining the various functioning positions in a family, but the roots of the process are deeper than feelings or cultural influence." (Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 55)

In this way of understanding how families work, there are two life forces that counterbalance each other: individuality and togetherness. There is "a force that inclines people to follow their own directives, to be independent (individuality), and a force that inclines them to respond to directives from others, to be connected (togetherness)." (Bowen, Family Evaluation, 61) The interplay of these two life forces shifts the locus of control from the individual to the relationship. The life forces are greatly influenced by environment and group process, as people seek to find a balance of their individuality and togetherness forces, while in an emotional field. When the forces of individuality and togetherness are unbalanced, anxiety is the result. When anxiety is the result of an unbalanced emotional field, relationships begin a process called *binding anxiety.* Anxiety can be bound by conflict, distance, closeness, anger, rage and often the process of *triangulation.*

As anxiety increases in the relationship, adaptations need to occur within the persons involved and within the relationship. These adaptations affect the self

of a person involved. The person who, for the purpose of maintaining attachment, adapts the most, loses more of the self, (which results in conscious or unconscious resentment) and a person who adapts the least gains more of the self. However, as anxiety is relieved in the relationship through this losing and gaining, both partners lose. "The person who gives in more to the relationship pressure promotes relationships harmony, but simultaneously "absorbs" anxiety within himself." (Bowen, 85) When this occurs, if severe enough the person can experience physical symptoms, chronic anxiety, and chronic depression. For either the person giving in to the relationship or the one who adapts less, the result can be a life filled with resentment.

Often in a family system one person is unconsciously selected to bear the anxiety of that system. The family may become closer together, however differentiation is sacrificed and the family may experience emotional fusion. When this occurs healthy development, creativity, and spontaneity are sacrificed. Individual expression is diminished, as individual expression would expose the anxiety being bound by the emotional fusion.

The greater the differentiation within the system, and the more the system can support and nurture individual expression within the emotional field, the less need there is for a person or a destructive family theme to be triangled in to maintain togetherness and bind anxiety. Bowen in his clinical work observed, "Emotional isolation and chronic anxiety appear to be a substrate on which many clinical symptoms appear." (Bowen, 86) What it means to be a healthy human is to be in relationships, in balance, and have a sense of self that is differentiated. And what appears to be a mark of health, the process of empathy, is also related to the level of differentiation. Empathy and differentiation are key to family health, individual potential, and the ability to be involved in community. Differentiation is seen in the individual who can enhance his or her own welfare without impinging on the welfare of others.

The emotional field is maintained and structured by self belief systems. Next we will look at the emotional fields of triangles and family systems. We will identify the different emotions that constitute the emotional field and the corresponding belief systems.

Relational triangles are the basic unit of family structure. When a child is born a triangle is formed, mother, father and the child. From the infant's perspective it takes time for awareness of the triangle to emerge. When people meet each other and develop a relationship, their history and family of origin is triangled into the relationship. Triangles are transgenerational as well as generational and have emotions and beliefs that structure them. The structure and nature of triangles is most clearly seen when tension exists in the family.

In the family systems model that Sharon Wegscheider-Cruise uses to describe the addictive nature of some families, the scapegoat, the second-born, is identified as such because of his/her response to the triangle of the parents and the first-born. This triangle is structured by the emotions of rejection and anger. In Virginia Satir's family model of the persecutor, rescuer and victim, the emotional foundation of each role is different, persecutor-anger, rescuer-fear and anxiety,

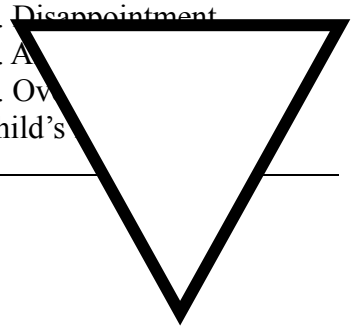
and the victim-fear and shame; yet these three different functional positions make up the whole of the emotional field. When an individual leaves that emotional field the tendency is to find (co-create) another one with similar emotions.

Here is an example of how an unbalanced triangle works in relationship to the two life forces, individuality and togetherness. Let's say that in a young marriage, prior to the birth of children, something happens to cause one of the couple to question the marriage, "I never thought it would be like this. I feel as if I have to give up part of myself being married." and this is not resolved. The marriage continues with this imbalance and a child is born. The child provides an opportunity for the anxious, disappointed parent to have a relationship without the sense of dis-ease. The emotional bond becomes intensified to the exclusion of the other parent. The other parent senses the distance in the marriage and feels triangled out of the relationship between the other parent and child. So the triangled out parent becomes overly involved in activities outside the home, perhaps work or church, to balance out the emotional positioning. This triangle would have the emotional base of rejection, disappointment, anger, and resignation. If the child is forced to adjust to and comply with this emotional base, it will become part of the emotional field of the family for years to come unless there is some form of intervention.

Once you have discovered the emotional field of a particular triangle, you can begin the process of change by de-triangulating. By becoming aware of your role in the triangulation process, you can identify the ways you respond, and begin to respond differently. For example, in the case of the family described above and diagrammed below, when the husband is absent, the mother could choose not to be overly attached to the child, and as a result the child can develop his/her own psychological world.

On the next page, place members of your family of origin on the triangles and work to identify the emotional base that becomes the foundation for the child's personality formation and relationships. Once you have discovered the emotional field of a particular triangle, you can begin the process of change by de-triangulating. By becoming aware of your role in the triangulation process, you can identify the ways you respond, and begin to respond differently. In the case of the family described above and diagrammed below, when the husband is absent, the mother could choose not to be overly attached to the child, and as a result the child can develop his/her own psychological world.

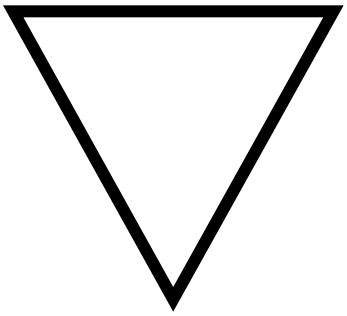
Mother
1. Disappointment
2. A
3. Ov
child's



Father
1. Rejection
2. Anger
3. Under-involvement in child's life

Child
1. Anxiety
2. Shame
3. Perfectionism

Mother
1.
2.
3.

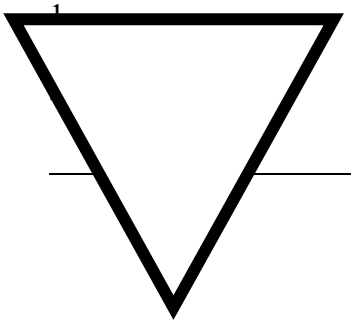


Father
1.
2.
3.

Child
1.
2.
3.

Person 1

1.



Person 2

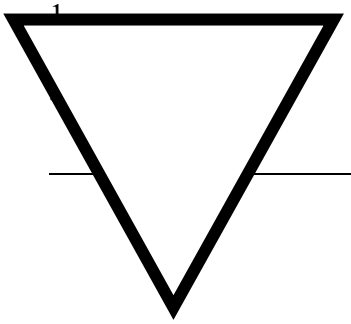
1.
2.
3.

Child

1.
2.
3.

Person 1

1.



Person 2

1.
2.
3.

Person 3

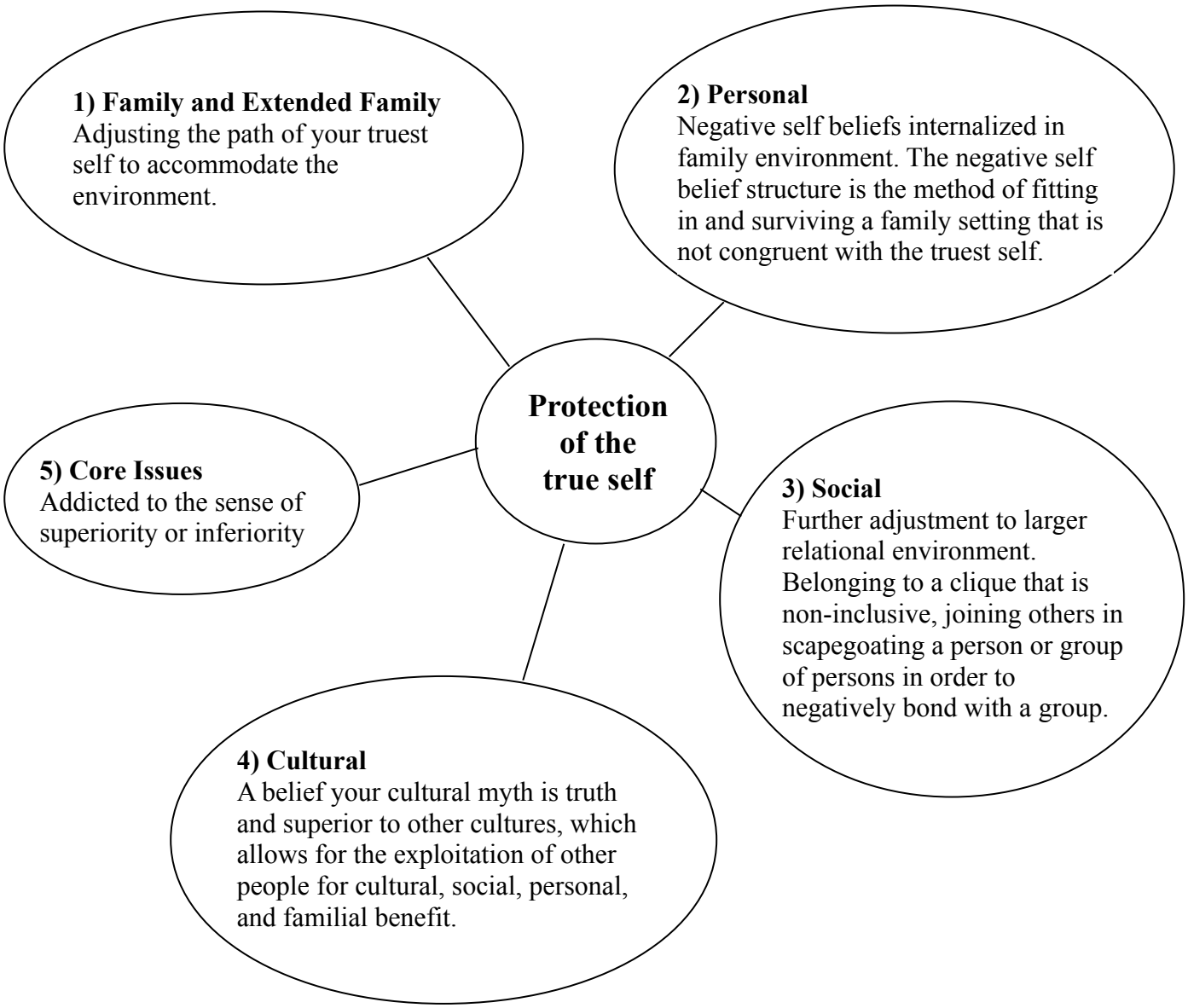
1.
2.
3.

Chapter Ten: Codependency

In this chapter, we will introduce and define the concept of codependency and codependent behavior patterns. Some writers in the field estimate that as many as 95% of people in our culture struggle with codependent behaviors, and that in fact we are a society of addicts (and all addictions carry with them codependent behaviors). If you or someone you care for had a childhood that included abuses in the form of intrusions (addiction to drugs or alcohol, verbal, physical, or emotional abuse) or emotional absence, then you may find it helpful to consider the nature and role of codependency in your life.

The Dimensions of Codependency

Codependency has several dimensions that provide windows to view your history, the world, and perspectives of the present and projected future.



Definitions of Codependency

Listed below are some definitions of codependency adapted from *Codependence: Misunderstood–Mistreated* by Anne Wilson Schaef, and *Co-Dependence; Healing The Human Condition*, and *Healing the Child Within* by Charles L. Whitfield. After reading through them, write down your own definition or understanding of codependency.

- An exaggerated dependent pattern of learned behaviors, beliefs and feelings that make life painful. It is a dependence on people and things outside the self, along with neglect of the self to the point of having little self-identity. The co-dependent is human-relationship-dependent and focuses her/his life around an addictive agent. (Sondra Smalley cited in Wegscheider-Cruse 1985).

- An emotional, psychological, and behavioral pattern of coping that develops as a result of an individual's prolonged exposure to, and practice of, a set of oppressive rules—rules which prevent the open expression of feeling, as well as the direct discussion of personal and interpersonal problems. [Codependence] is an emotional, psychological, and behavioral pattern of coping that is born of the rules of a family. The rules include

    - It's not okay to talk about problems
    - Feelings should not be expressed openly
    - Communication is best if indirect, with one person acting as messenger between two others (see "Triangles", Chapter Nine)
    - Be strong, good, right, perfect
    - Make us proud (unrealistic expectations)
    - Don't be selfish
    - Do as I say, not as I do
    - It's not okay to play or be playful
    - Don't rock the boat (Robert Subby, 1984)

- Preoccupation and extreme dependence (emotionally, socially and sometimes physically) on a person of object. Eventually, this dependence on another person becomes a pathological condition that affects the co-dependent in all other relationships. This may include . . .[people] who are (1) in a love or marriage relationship with an alcoholic; (2) have one or more alcoholic parents or grandparents; or (3) grew up in an emotionally repressive family… It is a primary disease within every member of an alcoholic family (Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse 1985).

- A personality disorder based on: a need to control in the face of serious adverse consequences; neglecting one's own needs; boundary distortions around intimacy and separation; enmeshment with certain dysfunctional people; and other manifestations such as denial, constricted feelings, depression and stress-related medical illness (paraphrased from T. L. Cermak 1986)

- Those self-defeating learned behaviors or character defects that result in a diminished capacity to initiate, or participate in, loving relationships (Ernie Larson 1987).

- Individuals who organize their lives — decision-making, perceptions, beliefs, values — around someone or something else (S. Brown 1988).

- [A disease wherein a person has difficulty]: (1) experiencing appropriate levels of self-esteem; (2) setting functional boundaries; (3) owning and expressing their own reality; (4) taking care of their adult needs and wants; (5) experiencing and expressing their reality moderately (P. Mellody 1989).

For me, codependency has meant always worrying about what others will think of me. I'm basically afraid that if they really knew me, they wouldn't like me. I'm not sure I even like myself.

- A maladaptive bonding within a family system. To survive psychologically and socially in this dysfunctional family, the child adopts patterns of thinking, acting and feeling that at first dull the pain but finally are self-negating in themselves. These patterns become internalized and form an essential part of the personality and worldview of the individual. The child continues to practice these self-destructive patterns of thinking, behaving and feeling in adulthood and in so doing recreates over and over again the bonding in which the destructive patterns originated (J. A. Kitchens 1990).

- A Spiritual condition, the shadow side of our love nature. . . .a "dis-ease" of unequal relationships being acted out, of giving our power away (J. Small 1991).

- Co-dependence is a condition that stifles our True Self, our Child Within. It results from and contributes to parental conditions such as alcoholism, other chemical dependence, chronic mental illness, dysfunctional physical illness, child abuse (physical, sexual, mental-emotional, spiritual), extreme rigidity/punitive/judgmental/perfectionism in parenting. It is "any suffering and/or dysfunction that is associated with or results from focusing on the needs and behavior of others." (C. Whitfield, 1989)

When I was growing up, my family had a lot of "secrets" –things we knew not to talk about outside the house. Now it's hard for me to know what's okay to talk about, and what's not—what's pretty normal in life, and what would be unacceptable to my friends.

- Giving your responsibility and personal power over to someone, something, or some idea to give meaning and direction to your life. It is life without mutual dialogue and compromise, dominated by compliance to others. (Wilson, 1998).

An important point to remember is that the goal of healing our codependent behaviors is to become, not independent, isolated selves, but **interdependent** with other people and with all creation.

"The perfect achievement of our spiritual life is dependent on the spiritual life of every other human being." (Francois Roustang, Growth in the Spirit, 1963)

In the space below, write your definition of codependency, and your understanding of the role it plays in your life. Include self beliefs that keep you locked in codependent behaviors.

Family Rules

Review the list of family rules in John Subby's definition above. Did your family live by any of these rules, and can you list some rules from your childhood family, and the family you are part of today.

List your family's rules about:

- showing emotions, including love and affection
- family secrets
- family tasks, jobs, work
- food and eating
- drugs and alcohol
- religion and spirituality
- play and recreation
- safety and health

Traits and Core Issues of Codependency

Traits of codependency are difficult to list. There are underlying issues, deep affective and emotional responses to an environment that was not appropriately attentive to the child. These deep affective and emotional responses manifest in relationship to the environment and the significant others in the child's world. Any list of traits is incomplete and must be generalized. The temptation is to own or reject traits you see on paper. However, a list of traits is a guideline to reflection on your life.

Even though identifying traits may remind you of specific memories, they are more about the process of relationship over time. When you review the characteristics listed, reflect on the relational processes over time that form the traits you have identified from your life.

The list below is the first known list of codependent traits. This list was written in the 1970's by Tony A., a member of AA. This is Tony A.'s list, an outcome of his spiritual work, as he worked through his written personal inventory. However, many persons identified with his list and it became generalized, primarily through Janet Woititz's book *Adult Children of Alcoholics.*

1. We became isolated and afraid of people and authority figures.
2. We became approval seekers and lost our identities in the process.
3. We are frightened by angry people and any personal criticism.
4. We either become alcoholics, marry them—or both—or find another compulsive personality, such as a workaholic, to fulfill our sick abandonment needs.
5. We live life from the viewpoint of victims and are attracted by that weakness in our love and friendship relationships.
6. We have an overdeveloped sense of responsibility; it is easier for us to be concerned with others rather than ourselves; this enables us not to look too closely at our faults.
7. We get guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves instead of giving in to others.
8. We become addicted to excitement.
9. We confuse love and pity and tend to "love" people we can "pity" and "rescue."
10. We have "stuffed" our feelings from our traumatic childhoods and have lost the ability to feel or express our feelings, because it hurts so much.
11. We judge ourselves harshly and have a very low sense of self-esteem.
12. We are dependent personalities who are terrified of abandonment, and we will do anything to hold on to a relationship in order *not* to experience the painful abandonment feelings that we received from living with sick people who were never there emotionally for us.
13. Alcoholism is a family disease, and we became para-alcoholics who took on the characteristics of that disease, even though we did not pick up the drink.
14. Para-alcoholics are reactors rather than actors.

Describe below any codependent traits you see in yourself.

In the space below reflect on how your relationships are affected by the codependent behaviors you identified above.

In the World but not of it

In John 17: 13-16 and 23, Jesus prays for his disciples: *"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. . . .May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."*

"In order to perceive the addictive system for what it is, one must be in it but not of it. In other words, one must be recovering from its effects." (Anne Wilson Schaef, *When Society Becomes an Addict,* 1987)

Christopher Bollas describes what he calls "the normotic illness." It is a drive to be normal, which means to be of this world. "This element is a particular drive to be normal, one that is typified by the numbing and eventual erasure of subjectivity in favor of a self that is conceived as a material object among other man-made products in the object world." (Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow Of The Object*, 1987)

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."" Romans 12:2

Being conformed to the pattern of this world is living out of the codependent self, supported by negative self beliefs. An example is a person who defines her sense of worth and thus her identity by her level of success in her career. Her self belief may then be, "I didn't get the promotion I thought I deserved. I'm obviously just not capable enough. I just can't get it right."

Codependency and the addictive way of life is one that is compliant to culture. Describe some of the ways that you believe culture influences you to be "of the world."

Chapter Eleven: Family Roles

Codependency in Family Systems

In the next section, we have listed the beliefs of persons who struggle with intimacy, (see the "Myths of the Struggle for Intimacy,"). The myths include several negative self beliefs, as well as some beliefs about relationships that interfere with true intimacy. Intimacy as we are using the word here is impossible between persons who are living out of a false self, constructed of negative self beliefs. Increased intimacy is related to the development of the true self in persons and communities. In a caring, empathic relationship, the need to relate out of the negative self belief system diminishes. Intimacy occurs when I experience myself as being blessed, known, good and loved, while knowing the other as also blessed, known, good and loved.

Then some of the family roles of the dysfunctional family as described by Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse in *Another Chance* is presented, followed by examples of how the role plays out in the struggle for intimacy. This process is an exercise to help you become familiar with the dynamics and process of a co-dependent system and the roles that people live out of in such a system.

The roles move from hero, to scapegoat, to lost child, to mascot. After each role's definition and description, we list what we consider to be some applicable beliefs from Woititz' work in *The Struggle for Intimacy* that match that particular role.

You are encouraged to do the same exercise and develop different traits and beliefs for each role. Space is provided for you to write about the traits and beliefs that you see a connected to each role. You can use this exercise to develop skill in observing these patterns in yourself and others.

From the work of Virginia Satir, we know that members of a family system can interchange roles and consequently shift which beliefs and traits would be primary; however, it is shame that is at the core driving the painfully addictive system.

Even though these systems were developed in working with persons struggling with the effects of alcoholism, the alcoholic and the family, this work also describes many family systems in which substance addiction is not present. For example, the person whose environment was anxiety-ridden because of verbal or physical abuse and neglect will also struggle with the beliefs and character traits Woititz identifies.

MYTHS from THE STRUGGLE FOR INTIMACY

by Janet Woititz

I. "If I am involved with you, I will lose me."

2. "If you really knew me, you wouldn't care about me."

3. "If you find out that I am not perfect you will abandon me."

4. "We are as one."

5. "Being vulnerable always has negative results."

6. "We will never argue or criticize each other."

7. "Anything that goes wrong is my fault. I am a terrible person."

8. "In order to be lovable, I must be happy all the time."

9. "We will trust each other totally, automatically, and all at once."

10. "We will do everything together; we will be as one."

11. "You will instinctively anticipate my every need, desire and wish."

12. "If I am not in complete control at all times, there will be anarchy."

12. "If we really love each other, we will stay together forever."

13. "My partner will never take me for granted, and always be supportive and non-critical."

What are the myths in your life?

In the space below, reflect on one or more of the myths listed above, as they apply to your life and your belief system. Some are Relationship Beliefs, such as "If we really love each other, we will stay together forever." Others are more clearly related to Self Beliefs, such as "Anything that goes wrong is my fault. I am a terrible person."

Family Roles

On the next few pages, we will present models of some of the major roles we adopt as children. Each of these roles is in some way an attempt to get attention, approval, love, or acceptance from parents or other significant persons. And as we explored in the chapter on triangles, the child is often the third part of triangle, reducing the anxiety in the father-mother relationship.

The roles one adopts may be correlated to the birth order. However, this is not always the case. For example, in a family whose cultural background values males significantly more than females, may encourage the Hero role in the first-born male, even if he is the second-born child. The older sister may find herself suddenly displaced from the hero position, which is sure to affect her self-esteem. She may move through life alternating between feeling competent and self-assured, and inadequate in relationship to men.

In general, however, the first-born is the Hero child. Every milestone in the child's development is eagerly awaited, photographed, videotaped, shared with extended family, praised and celebrated. As the child grows, he or she is expected to be always happy, strong, bright, someone the family can be proud of – the "bearer of the family's esteem."

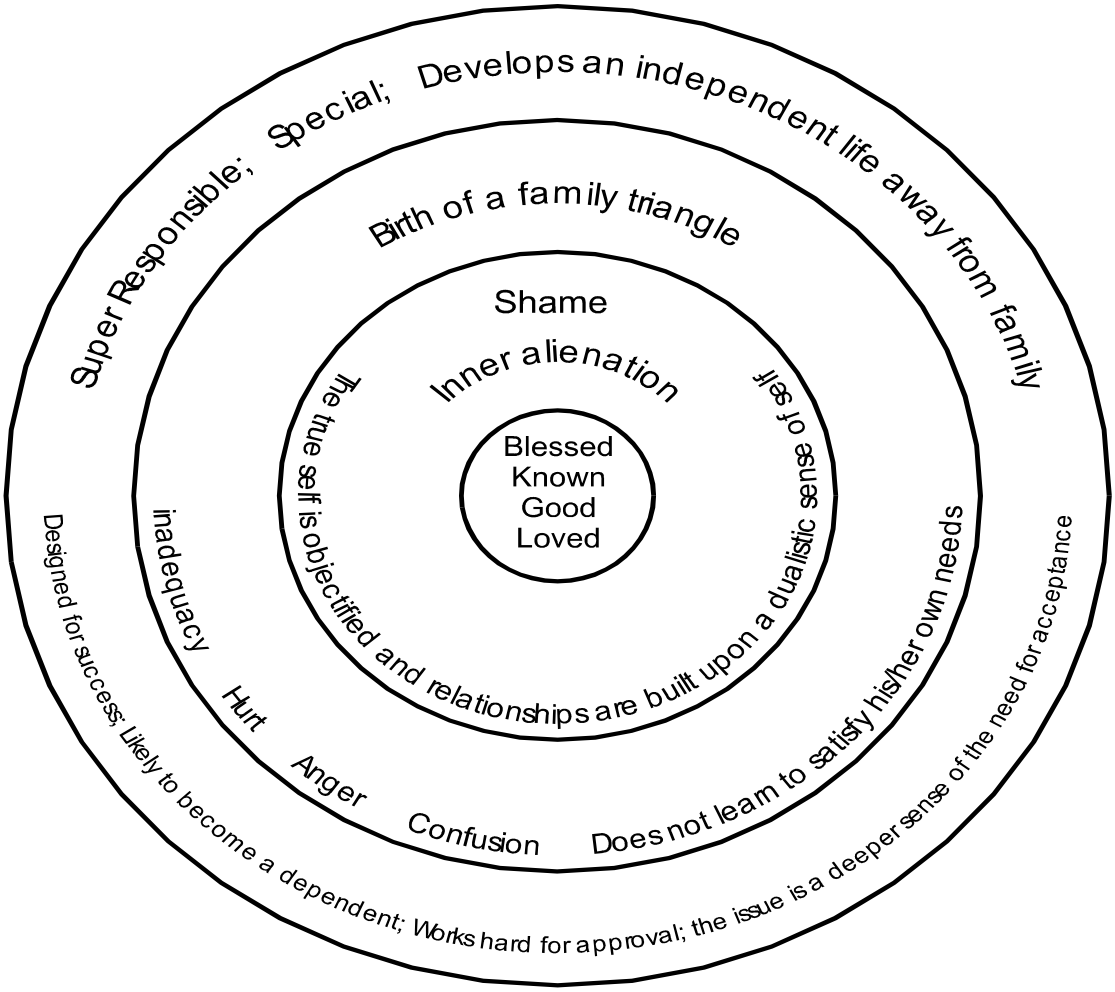
The second-born enters the scene, and no matter how hard he or she tries, this child soon learns that it can never live up to the standard set by the first child. Often this child shifts to getting attention by negative, rather than positive, behavior; this is the Scapegoat, the "bearer of the family's shame."

When a third child is born into this family, there is a lot going on—praising the Hero, fighting with the Scapegoat. This child may just keep to herself, becoming the "Lost Child" who stays in her room, avoiding the chaos that was in progress when she arrived on the scene.

If another child is born, he may adopt the role of the Mascot—the child who tumbles down the stairs, jumping up with a bright smile at the bottom, having accomplished his task of disrupting the fight in progress. He's the one who always cracks a joke when things are tense or sad.

While each of these roles has a positive intent in terms of dispelling the family's anxiety and bringing each person his or her share of love or attention, each role also has the negative effect of locking the person into particular behaviors that are not the full spectrum of possibilities for the expression of the true self. For example, the Hero child cannot express fear or show signs of weakness. The Lost Child is particularly vulnerable to abuse, including sexual abuse, because of reluctance to disrupt the calm of the family, and a disinclination to being the center of attention. Layers of codependent behavior build up over and around the core of being blessed, known, good, and loved. Understanding and unpacking those layers can help the person locked into a role to discover that core, and live a more authentic life. This is slow, sometimes frightening work, because we have self beliefs that the role we play is necessary to get the love we need.

The Hero: The Bearer Of The Family's Esteem



The first-born child in the family often plays the role of the Hero. The Hero provides the family with a sense of worth, The Hero seems to have it made, got it all together; no one would guess the fear and feelings of inadequacy behind this mask. Because of the success of this role, the Hero is the most difficult to reach in treatment. One of the developmental problems with the Hero is that his/her weaknesses will grow weaker while strengths are developed. The emotional complications that coincide with this phenomenon occur because vulnerability is required to develop the weaknesses. Yet vulnerability is not a character trait that develops well in a family system that lacks intimacy and empathy.

The repressed feelings of the Hero are inadequacy and guilt. The Hero child cannot carry the responsibilities of worth and a healthy esteem for the family. As a consequence, the feelings of guilt and inadequacy gain power with no means of direct expression. The theological model that develops from this role is works-righteousness. In this model guilt becomes the motivation for acceptance. When this is the case, God is receiving parental transference from the Hero. The Hero is always trying to save his or her family of origin.

The Hero's Myths

"If you really knew me, you wouldn't care about me."
"If you find out that I am not perfect you will abandon me."
"We are as one."
"Anything that goes wrong is my fault. I am a terrible person."

The Hero works hard at carrying the family's struggles to the point of losing him/her self in the role.

In relationships attempts will be made to assume responsibilities of others.

Being responsible for others feels at home (i.e., normal)

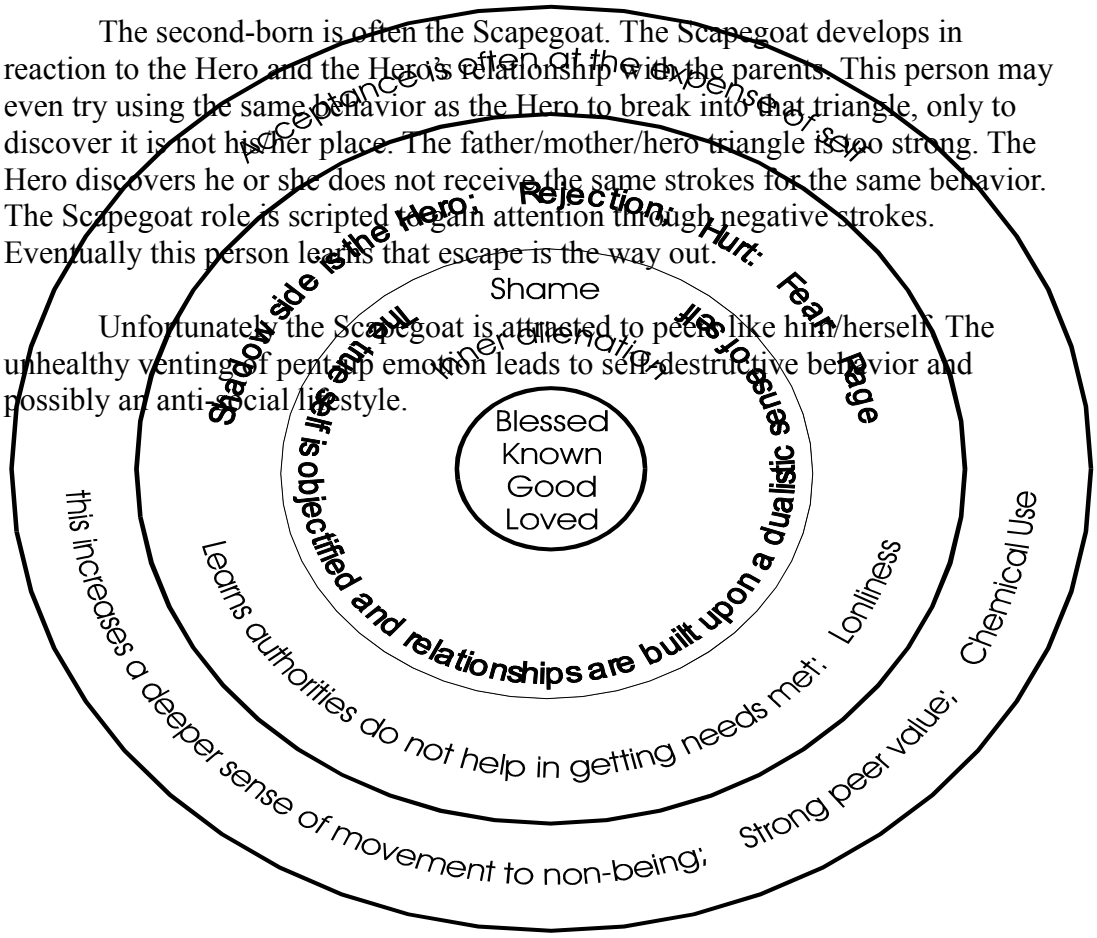
Being responsible for others is a possible seduction to keep others dependent. When this is the case, individuation is impossible for all parties involved. Unhealthy bonding is a symptom of this process.

Myths and roles of the Heroes in your family:

The Scapegoat: The Bearer of the Family's Shame

The second-born is often the Scapegoat. The Scapegoat develops in reaction to the Hero and the Hero's relationship with the parents. This person may even try using the same behavior as the Hero to break into that triangle, only to discover it is not his/her place. The father/mother/hero triangle is too strong. The Hero discovers he or she does not receive the same strokes for the same behavior. The Scapegoat role is scripted to gain attention through negative strokes. Eventually this person learns that escape is the way out.

Unfortunately the Scapegoat is attracted to peers like him/herself. The unhealthy venting of pent-up emotion leads to self-destructive behavior and possibly an anti-social lifestyle.



The Scapegoat's Myths

"We are as one."

The intermeshing connectedness with peers is set up by the dynamics of the family of origin.

Reliance on peers. "My friends are the only ones who understand me." (*Another Chance,* Wegscheider-Cruse, p.125).

"We will trust each other totally, automatically, and all at once."

Impulsive behavior; fact, relationships and this style lends itself to addictive behavior.

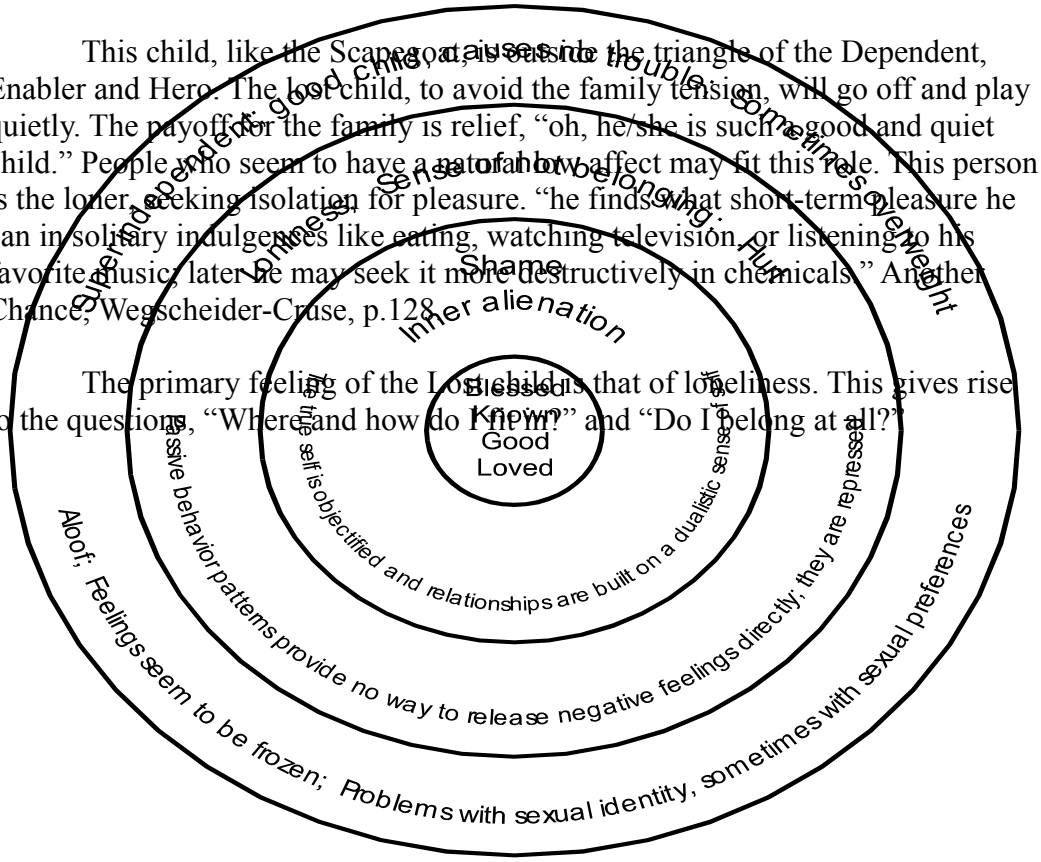
Compulsively seek needs that were/are not being met in the home.

Limit and boundary issues.

Intrusive into other's psychic space.

Myths and roles of the Scapegoats in your family:

The Lost Child



This child, like the Scapegoat, arises in the triangle of the Dependent, Enabler and Hero. The lost child, to avoid the family tension, will go off and play quietly. The payoff for the family is relief, "oh, he/she is such a good and quiet child." People who seem to have a natural low affect may fit this role. This person is the loner, seeking isolation for pleasure. "he finds what short-term pleasure he can in solitary indulgences like eating, watching television, or listening to his favorite music; later he may seek it more destructively in chemicals." Another Chance; Wegscheider-Cruse, p.128.

The primary feeling of the Lost child is that of loneliness. This gives rise to the questions, "Where and how do I fit in?" and "Do I belong at all?"

The Lost Child's Myths

"If I am involved with you, I will lose me."

Instead of, "I will lose me," for this role I would change this to read "I will be lost in not knowing how to relate."

This person has done a lot of self-parenting and selfhood is still developing. As a result, this person is easily influenced in attempts to find direction never received from the family of origin.

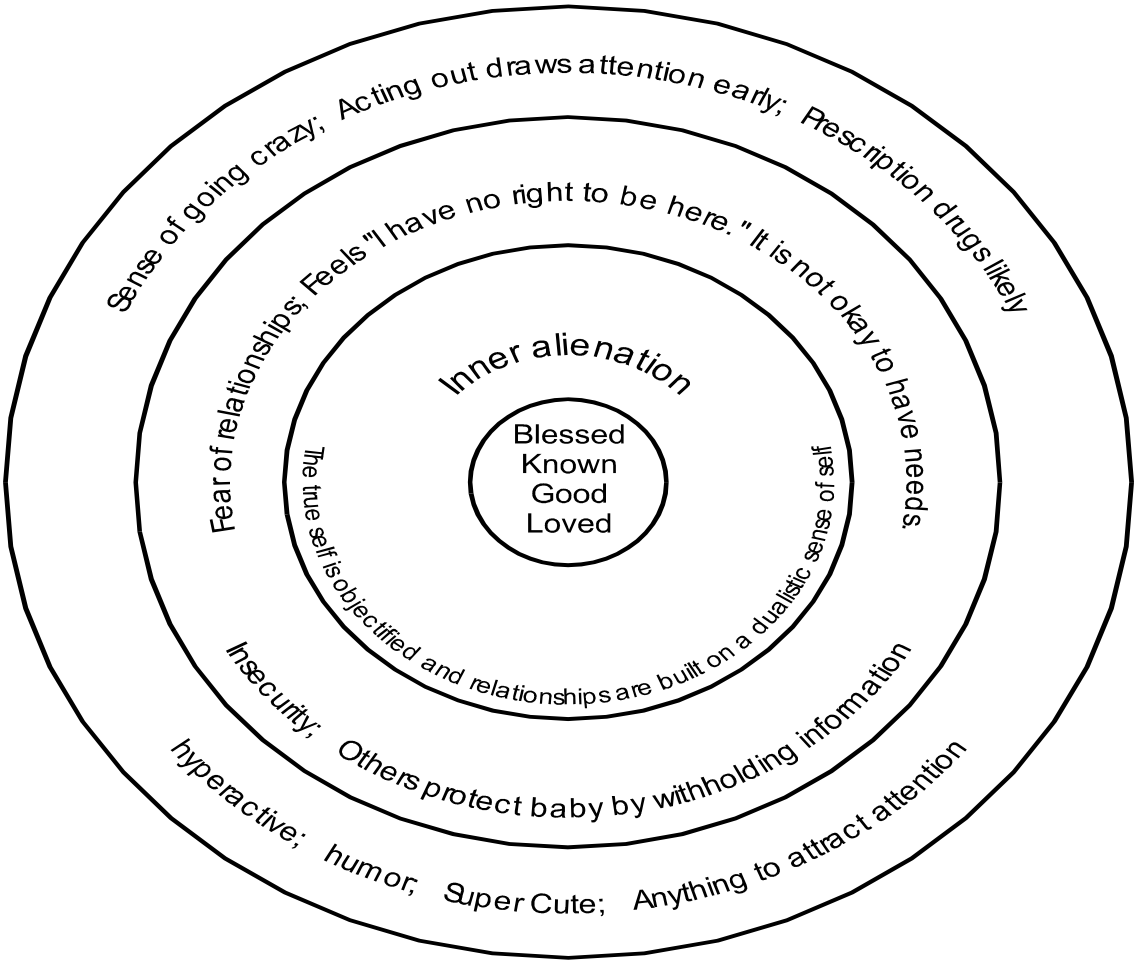
"If you find out that I am not perfect you will abandon me."

Once or if this person connects, a sense of panic sets in at any sign of disconnection.

Impulsive over-connectedness is possible as this person has not been taught limits in normal friend/family relationships.

Myths and roles of the Lost Children in your family:

The Mascot



The Mascot is usually a latecomer. By the time the mascot arrives on the scene, the role is cast. The family has solidified roles and years of deterioration have passed. There is a silent and pervasive chaos controlling the family. This chaos may be symbolically manifested in the behavioral expression of the Mascot.

As a child, the Mascot has a sense that all is not well within the family. Often the family gives the mascot mixed messages. The verbal message is "everything is fine," yet he or she hears arguments behind closed doors. Something does not make sense; the Mascot may personalize this feeling and believe that is he or she who does not make sense. The Mascot discovers that they have the power to make everyone laugh, and the Mascot exploits that power at the expense of other areas of development. "He is a singer who knows only one tune. He can be funny, period. Whatever the situation—a family argument, a poor report card, rejection by a girlfriend, an illness or accident—he has only one response in his social repertoire." (Wegscheider-Cruse 1981, 144)

The Mascot's Myths

"In order to be lovable, I must be happy all the time."

"If I am not in complete control at all times, there will be anarchy."

This person controls the situation through humor. This is the person who, when things get tense or emotional in a group, will say something like-hearted or humorous, just to break the tension. Or, when sharing something painful, will smile or laugh to cover the pain.

Myths and roles of the Mascots in your family:

Chapter Twelve: Blessed, Known, Good and Loved

We accept and internalize beliefs as young children, consciously and unconsciously, and these beliefs become our guidelines for functioning in the world, relationally, socially, vocationally and spiritually. Our beliefs are foundational to our sense of identity. Believing that God blesses us, knows us, finds us good, and loves us is a healthy set of foundational beliefs. Believing that we are blessed (that all of who we are is welcomed by God and others), known and emotionally safe to be known, good at the core of our being, and loved and lovable is the corollary set of self beliefs. Healing and growing in the direction of holding these beliefs, and identifying with them, is the central goal of Belief Systems Therapy.

Our culture is filled with people struggling with anxiety, depression, panic attacks, fearfulness about the future. Anne Wilson Schaef in her book, *When Society Becomes An Addict*, addresses these problems, relating them to an addictive process that permeates our culture. This addictive process and living in a culture in which value systems are changing often results in inner fragmentation. Often persons struggling with addictions and who are involved in the addictive process have been broken, feel broken, and know a sense of being fragmented or scattered. As a result, to *"Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God"* (Phillipians 4:6) and "*to be mature and complete not lacking in anything"* (James 1:4) may be some of the most difficult tasks for a Christian in our era. Yet we know this is the direction in which we have to move. To be able to grow into the stature of Christ (Ephesians 4:13) is a way to grow toward wholeness and to develop a solid and complete sense of self, without a sense of being divided within. The purpose of this program is to help with that growth.

As we move in the direction of living without anxiety, we will become able to live with others in a spirit of kindness to one another ("*We love, because he first loved us." "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*" 1 John 4: 19, 11. *"How very good and precious it is when kindred live together in unity."* Psalm 133:1).

Blessed

"And God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female God created them. And God blessed them."

Genesis 1:27-28.

God's first action toward human beings was to bless them. This experience can be described as feeling "All is well with my soul."

This experience of being blessed is a physiological phenomenon - the experience of feeling welcomed by God. After the experience of feeling blessed by God, a crisis can occur: do we genuinely believe that we are blessed, welcomed by God and others, and do we live out that belief? Working with and identifying our beliefs about ourselves, about God, and the world is central to the transformation process in recovery.

We accept the belief that God blesses us, but the belief may not match our behavior, or the conscious process of self-reflection. This self reflection involves seeing one's own self in operation, making observations about how we function and what we believe, and reaching conclusions about the observations in order to make adjustments that facilitate behavior which matches the belief in being blessed by God.

Once we have made the adjustments that bring us into acceptance of the belief that we are blessed by God, there will be a feeling, a physical sense of being that is the physiological state which God desires for you.

Consider the story Jesus told of the lost son, the prodigal son, who took his inheritance, left home and squandered it all in "loose living." When he came back home, penniless and feeling unworthy ("I am no longer worthy to be called your son."), his father "felt compassion for him, and ran, and embraced him, and kissed him." God is **always** ready to bless us, to welcome us home, and take away our sense of unworthiness with the embrace of his love.

On the following pages are exercises to help you identify the times in your life when you felt blessed and welcomed, and the times you felt unwelcome. Take some time to remember events in your life when you felt blessed or not blessed, welcomed and unwelcome.

Being blessed has the sense of being welcomed. In the space below, describe a time that you can recall feeling welcomed.

Now describe an experience in your life when you had a sense of being unwelcome.

How do you think the experiences of being welcomed or unwelcome have influenced your life and your sense of self?

In the space below, describe a time that you can recall welcoming another person or group of people in your life or community.

Now describe an experience in your life when you had a sense of not welcoming another person or group of people.

How do you think the experiences of being welcoming or not welcoming have influenced your life and your sense of self?

Known

"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you."

Jeremiah 1:5

"Lord, you have searched me out and known me;
you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You trace my journeys and my resting places
and are acquainted with all my ways."

Psalm 139:1-2

"But if anyone loves God, he is known by Him."

1 Corinthians 8:3

To be known: Adam hid from God in the Garden, in paradise, in a time filled with the experience of pure love with God. Somehow Adam had a need to hide from one he knows loves him. Acting as if he did not know where Adam was, God invites Adam to conversation. Adam responds and moves through his shame to be reconciled with God. Is this a story of a Fall or of a reconciliation?

To be known and reconciled are intimately related. Shame and hiding an aspect of yourself, within yourself, within your mind, are intimately related. Yet I must experience and sense the invitation from God and others to move through my shame to know the experience of reconciliation. To be in healthy relationship and community is to be known. Keeping secrets and knowing shame are the cornerstones of the addictive process. It takes time and perseverance to build a community in which one can feel safe enough gradually to share ourselves with others and with God. There is no quick fix.

To believe that you are known by God and reconciled is the *beginning of knowing yourself*. Knowing yourself is the beginning of spiritual maturity.

To be known has a sense of emotional safety, that you can be yourself. This is in contrast to the experience of shame, family secret keeping, and living in an environment that is not physically and emotionally safe.

On the following pages are exercises to help you identify the times in your life when you felt known and emotionally safe, and the times you felt unsafe. Take some time to remember those times in your life.

I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.

Hebrews 13:5

In the space below, describe a time that you can recall feeling known and emotionally safe.

In the space below, describe a time that you can recall feeling a sense of shame, or emotionally unsafe.

How have the experiences of being known and safe, or unsafe influenced your life and your sense of self?

In the space below, describe a time that you can recall feeling that you are beginning to know someone deeply, and that this knowing is happening in way that both of you feel safe.

Describe a time when you felt distanced from someone, perhaps because of his or her sense of shame, or of not being emotionally safe.

How have the experiences of relationships in which the other person feels known and safe, or unknown and unsafe influenced your life and your sense of self?

Good

"And God saw everything that God had made, and behold, it was very good."

Genesis 1:31

"For everything created by God is good."

1 Timothy 4:4

God creates and calls it good. What God created did not need to *do* anything—it (we) simply existed, and God called it (us) good, simply for being. To know that I am good, I must find myself in God, for it is God that calls me Good. The question we must all face is, are we conscious of God all day long? As I work, as I love, even as I am anxious about the future, and shameful and blind concerning my past, am I conscious even then of the God that calls me good?

How is it that God calls me good when **I know** my deeds? My deeds, even though I pretend to forget them, are there. As I dream, as I see the faces of those to whom I have been mean, as I see those whom I have disappointed, including myself, I know my history, and I am reluctant to remember much less share with God or anybody that which I know to be true. I also know the shame and the guilt that are alive within me and drive me to do the same things again. I am still compelled not to reveal my shame. Who would offer to comfort the wounds of my shame?

Staying focused on past behaviors and living out of the self-judgments of those behaviors prevents my taking responsibility for those deeds I have done and avoids the necessary spiritual work that needs to be done to move beyond the sense of not being good as God called and created us to be. How do I deal with the tension of my self beliefs when they are other than those that I know God would have for me? How is it that Adam came out to talk with God the first time God called to him? I know God has called to me many times directly and through others, and I remained silent, frozen in my pain; for to move I surely would have felt the love of God calling me good, and that would be painful.

The self belief that I am in essence good, not because of what I do, but because of who I am, made in the image of God, chosen by God to be God's child, will give me a sense of confidence, to do or **not do** the things I feel called to do, or to let go of. The struggle to stop doing, to stop controlling everything and everyone, is made easier by this sense of innate goodness, of being accepted just for who I am. Many of us struggle with a low sense of self-worth. We feel unworthy of God's love, of others' love, even of our own love. But moving toward the belief that God created us good, and that we **are** good, heals that sense of unworthiness, and strengthens our self-esteem. We begin to feel at peace within ourselves, because we know that no matter what happens in our lives, in our hearts, where God's spirit dwells, we are good.

The self belief that I am good results in a sense of confidence and can be seen in a person's ability to be creative and spontaneous. The alternative is a lack of confidence and compliance. On the following pages are exercises to help you identify times when you felt confident and creative, or compliant and fearful.

In the space below, describe a time that you can recall feeling confident, or creative and spontaneous.

Now describe a time when you lacked confidence and felt a need to comply with another's wishes, even though to do so was opposed to the inclinations of your inner self.

Describe how have the experiences of being confident or compliant influenced your life and your sense of self?

In the space below, describe a time that you can recall relating to another out of the clear belief in their inherent goodness, so that they were encouraged to feel confident, or creative and spontaneous.

Now describe a time when you related to someone in a way that resulted in their feeling less confidence and feeling a need to comply with your wishes, even though to do so was opposed to the inclinations of their inner self.

Describe how have the experiences of treating others in the awareness of their inherent goodness, and of not doing so influenced your life and your sense of self?

Loved

"We love because He first loved us."

1 John 4:19

"In this is love, not the we loved God, but that He loved us."

1 John 4:10

"*And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."*

1 John 4:16

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear."

1 John 4:18

"Thy unfailing love is wider than the heavens."

Psalm 108:4

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:38-39

To be able to be still and experience the love of God, to believe that I am loved, is to move in the direction of God and God's world.

Can I allow God into my past, present, and future knowing I am loved, without fear of abandonment even while living in a world that abandons?

A sense of being loved has the feeling of contentment and connectedness. The other side of this, the sense of being unlovable, is an anxious experience, and moves us toward depression.

Am I available to be loved? To know myself as blessed, known, good and loved?

On the following pages are spaces for you to reflect on times when you recall feeling loved, and lovable, as well as times when you felt unlovable, or anxious and depressed.

In the space below, describe a time that you can recall feeling loved, with a sense of being at ease.

Now describe a time that you can recall feeling unlovable and anxious or depressed.

How have the experiences of being loved and at ease, or unloved and anxious influenced your life and your sense of self?

In the space below, describe a time that you can recall feeling loving, creating with another a sense of being at ease.

Now describe a time that you can recall finding it difficult to feel or act in a loving way. Did the other person seem more anxious or depressed than they might have been if you could have been more loving?

How have the experiences of being loving and at ease, or unloving and anxious influenced your life and your sense of self?

Closing thoughts

Throughout this book, we have encouraged you to reflect on your history, and your present life, as well as to consider ways you might choose to do things differently. In closing, as a final exercise, reflect on what the experience of working through this book might mean for your life. Are you more able to distinguish between your beliefs and reality? Can you identify relationships and situations in which you truly feel blessed, known, good, and loved? Do you feel you can make different choices so that you can draw closer to that core of your being where God dwells, and where you find your truest self? What other gifts and tools might you draw on to continue the journey? You may find yourself drawn to traditional spiritual paths, such as prayer and meditation, journaling, silence and solitude, companioning one another in community, reading sacred texts.

If you have insights or experiences from this process that you would like to share with us, we would love to hear from you. Our phone numbers and email addresses are in the back of this book. If you would like to be on our email or snail-mail list for information on groups and workshops, tapes, and future books, send us an email.

For those of you interested in the theoretical and theological underpinnings of Belief Systems Therapy, email us for a copy of Gregory's Doctoral Dissertation from his D. Min. studies at Columbia Theological Seminary. We would enjoy hearing your thoughts on his dissertation as well as this workbook.

> "Be complete:
> develop yourself to the fullest degree,
> just as the Source of All
> constantly bears fruit,
> completing all movements
> in Unity"
>
> a reading of Matthew 5:48 from the Aramaic
> translated by Neil Douglas-Klotz
> in *The Hidden Gospel*, page 129

Definitions

Absent

In the context of Belief Systems Therapy, absence occurs when a caregiver is inappropriately unavailable for the other. Absence can be physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. Both intrusive and absent relational styles lead to anxiety, depression and a diminished capacity for hope in the future.

Continuity of Care

A process of caring for the other. It is a way of holding the other in one's imagination. The idea of being conscious of the other with a sense of fondness is central to this way of being in the world.

Continuity of Care includes getting to know the other's history, weaknesses, and strengths, and being in an attitude of support and care. Knowing the other's history, weaknesses, and strengths allows a person to care for the other in light of that knowledge. Relational interaction is guided by the knowledge of the other's needs, what was missing in their life, what they need to feel blessed, known, good, and loved.

Continuity of Care also involves enjoying the other; that is, enjoying the other for who they are, not who they are in the relationship, but who they are with their own dreams, hopes, and interests.

Differentiation

The core of this concept is the capacity of a person to be emotionally autonomous while still being emotionally available and in emotional contact with others. A differentiated person has the capacity not to be emotionally reactive to the other's emotional life.

Emotional field

This is a concept that helps bring to consciousness the emotional life of individuals and the emotional life of the family as a whole. A family will perpetuate a particular emotional life through time, though often this is unconscious. It will consist of both a positive and negative emotional fields. Families and individuals live in an emotional atmosphere and will construct meaning about who they are and how they are to be in this world in relationship to the emotional fields in which they exist.

Through Continuity of Care, family members work to create a positive emotional field so the needs and well-being of each person in the family can be considered and cared for.

Emotional Reactivity

A person's reacting to a stimulus with more intensity than is called for in the here and now situation. It does not refer to emotional reactions that *are* appropriate for the given situation. Anxiety and reactivity generally parallel each other in intensity. When we observe emotional reactivity, we know it is an indication that anxiety is high and the choices of response to the situation have become restricted.

Emotional reactivity is related to relational distance and/or conflict. The intensity of emotional reactivity is difficult to assess, because it can be expressed outwardly as hysterical, impulsive, or hyperactive behavior, or inwardly as obsessive behavior, indecision or inactivity.

Extractive Introjection

This complex term describes a relatively simple and common relational event. It "occurs when one person steals for a certain period of time (from a few seconds or minutes, to a lifetime) an element of another individual's psychic life." (Christopher Bollas in *The Shadow of the Object*, p. 158). For example, a five-year-old child spills a glass of milk at the dinner table. His father yells, "You clumsy kid! Why can't you be more careful!" Just before the father's outburst, the child was feeling shocked and upset by the event. But the intense reaction of the father "steals" the child's own feelings and wipes out his reactions, as the father assumes he is the only person who feels shocked and upset. The father could restore the child's contact with himself by saying, "I'm sorry. I know it upsets you when this sort of thing happens. Don't worry." The child could then process his own shock and self-criticism, and with relief say, "I'm sorry for spilling the milk."

In another example, a small child is playing with her dolls, moving them around in a playful,

private drama. Her mother comes in, and distracts her from her dolls, telling the child what the play is about, prematurely engaging in playfulness. The child's spontaneity is lost, even though she may continue to play with her dolls and her mother. If this pattern is repeated constantly, the child may lose her own sense of play.

These examples illustrate intrusive behavior on the part of the parents (see *Intrusive* below).

Individuation

A process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality. It is the process of forming and specializing the individual nature of the person; the development of the psychological individual as a differentiated being from the general, collective psychology. It is an extension of the sphere of consciousness, an enriching of conscious psychological life (Jung 1971, 448-450).

Intrusive

In the context of Belief Systems Therapy, intrusion occurs when a caregiver inappropriately crosses the personal boundaries of another. This could be a physical act, emotional or verbal aggression, or being too protective and confining a person to a particular way of being. An intrusive relational style will lead to the formation of negative self beliefs and contributes to the family's emotional field.

Joining

The relational style in which the caregiver enters the world of the other to meet the needs of the other. There will be an awareness of who the other is and where the other is developmentally. This awareness will assist in the way of caring for the other. It is also a way of being with others, enjoying the person and the relationship, being neither intrusive or absent.

Self: False And True

False Self: the false self is an organization of beliefs supported by and anchored to feeling states that result from impingements (anxiety provoking events that the infant / child / adult does not have the capacity to process) and or absences of parental figures. The false self protects the true self and the greater the intensity of the impingements and / or absences of parental figures, the stronger the false self. This results in less awareness of the true self. The behaviors that are the outcome of these self beliefs can be called codependent.

True Self: the true self is the spontaneous expression of life. Only the true self can be creative and feel real. The true self is life itself; the spontaneous creative expression is the mark of the true self, whereas compliance and lack of confidence are the marks of the false self. Compliance is connected to despair at one end of the continuum of life, and spontaneity is connected to hope at the other end. Persons live out their lives in the tension and ambiguities of that continuum.

Shame

Shame has many dimensions. Some of them are:

- Shame is the experience of feeling completely diminished or insufficient as a person. This sense of shame is usually accompanied by self beliefs that one is bad, inadequate, defective, or not fully valid as a person.
- Shame can concern a possible future event which when interpreted results in a painful affective state, the anticipation of being rejected and experiencing helplessness
- Being ashamed is a complex organization of one's memory, so that the emotional and affective response of an historical event is experienced over and over.
- Shame can control behavior: a person can have a response to internal dialogue, resulting in a sense of shame, which can restrict behavior. This can be either positive or negative. In each case, shame restricts the possibilities of the future and diminishes the sense of hope.

Bibliography and Works Cited

Beattie, Melody. *Beyond Codependency.* San Fransisco: Harper & Row, 1989.

Beattie, Melody. *Codependent No More.* New York: Hazelden, 1987.

Bell, N. Extended family relations of disturbed and well families. *Family Process,* I(2), 175-195, 1983.

Bollas, Christopher. *The Shadow of the Object*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Boss, P. Family Boundary Ambiguity: A new variable in family stress theory. *Family Process*, 23, 535-546, 1984.

Bowen, M. Family Therapy. Paper presented at the Family Therapy Conference, Milkaukee, WI 1979.

Bradshaw, John. *Bradshaw On: Healing the Shame That Binds You*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1988.

Briggs, Dorothy Corkile. *Celebrate Your Self: Enhancing Your Own Self Esteem*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1986

Carlock, Jesse. *Enhancing Self-Esteem*. Taylor & Francis, Inc., 1997

Co-Dependency: An Emerging Issue. Pompano Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1984.

Davis, M. and D. Wallbridge. *Boundary and Space*. New York: Brunner/Mazel. 1981.

Dowling, Colette. *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence*. New York: Pocket Books, 1981.

Fossum, Merle and Marilyn Mason. *Facing Shame*. W. W. Norton & Co., 1989.

Glasser, William. *Positive Addiction*. San Francisco: Harper & Row

Goldenberg, Irene and Herbert Goldenberg. Family Therapy: An Overview. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1990

Gorski, Terence T. *Passages Through Recovery: An Action Plan for Preventing Relapse.* San Francisco: Harper & Row

Halpern, Howard M. *How to Break Your Addiction to a Person.* New York: Bantam Books, 1982.

Hartmann, Ernest. *Boundaries in the Mind.* BasicBooks, 1991.

Horvitz, A. Emotional anemia. *Brain/Mind Bulletin*, 7(13), 1-4. 1982.

Kerr, Michael and Murray Bowen. *Family Evaluation*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 1988.

Larsen, Earnie. *Stage II Relationships: Love Beyond Addiction.* San Francisco: Perennial Library, 1987.

Larsen, Earnie. *Basics of Co-Dependency.* Brooklyn Park, MN: E. Larsen Enterprises, 1983.

Lerner, Harriet Goldhor. *The Dance of Anger: A Woman's Guide to Changing the Patterns of Intimate Relationships.* San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Lerner, Harriet Goldhor. *The Dance of Intimacy: A Woman's Guide to Courageous Acts of Change in Key Relationships*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Lindquist, Marie. *Holding Back: Why We Hide the Truth About Ourselves*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Lloyd, Roseann, and Richard Solly. *Journey Notes: Writing for Recovery and Spiritual Growth.* San Francisco: Harper & Row.

May, Gerald G. *Addiction & Grace.* San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Mellody, Pia, Andrea Wells, and J. Keith Miller.

Facing Codependence: What It Is, Where It Comes From, How It Sabotages Our Lives. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989

Miller, Alice. *The Drama of the Gifted Child (originally published as Prisoners of Childhood).* Basic Books, 1981.

Miller, J. Keith. *Hope in the Fast Lane: A New Look at Faith in a Compulsive World.* San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Miller, J. Keith. *The Secret Life of the Soul*. Broadman & Holman, 1997

Minuchin, Salvador. *Families and Family Therapy.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974.

Norwood, Robin. *Women Who Love Too Much*. New York: Pocket Books, 1985.

Parham, Philip A. *Letting God: Christian Meditations for Recovering Persons*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Potter-Efron, Ronald, and Patricia Potter-Efron. *Letting Go of Shame*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Ray, Veronica. *Design for Growth: A Twelve-Step Program for Adult Children.* San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Schaef, Anne Wilson. *Codependence: Misunderstood--Mistreated*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.

Schaef, Anne Wilson. *Escape from Intimacy.* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989.

Schaef, Anne Wilson. *When Society Becomes an Addict*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988.

Schaeffer, Brenda. *Is It Love or Is It Addiction: Falling Into Healthy Love.* New York: Harper & Row, 1987.

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. Boston: The Augustine Fellowship Press, 1986.

Subby and Friel. *Co-Dependency and Family Rules.*

Tennov, Dorothy. *Love and Limerance*. New York: Stein & Day, 1978.

Twerski, Abraham J. *Self-Discovery in Recovery.* San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Wegscheider-Cruse, Sharon. *Choicemaking: For Co-Dependents, Adult Children and Spirituality Seekers*. Pompano Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1985.

Wegscheider-Cruse, Sharon. *Co-Dependency.* St.Paul, MN: Nurturing Networks, 1984.

Wegscheider-Cruse, Sharon. *Miracle of Recovery.* Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1989.

Weiss, Laurie and Jonathan B. Weiss. *Recovery from Codependency.* Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1989.

Whitfield, Charles L., M.D. *A Gift to Myself.* Pompano Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1990.

Whitfield, Charles L., M.D. *Boundaries and Relationships*. Pompano Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1993.

Whitfield, Charles L., M.D. *Co-dependence: Healing the Human Condition.* Pompano Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1993.

Whitfield, Charles L., M.D. *Healing the Child Within.*. Pompano Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1987.

Whitfield, Charles L., M.D. *Spirituality in Recovery.* Pompano Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1985.

Wilbur, Ken. *No Boundary.* Boulder, CO: Shambala, 1981.

Winnicott, D.W. The Family and Individual Development. London and New York: Routledge, 1965.

Woititz, Janet Geringer. *Home Away from Home.* Pompano Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1987.

Woititz, Janet Geringer. *Struggle for Intimacy.* Pompano Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1985.

Contact Us:

You can contact the authors at:

772-486-4029 (Gregory)
772-485-6865 (Helen)

or by email at

GVWilson@bellsouth.net
HHWilson@ gmail.com

Our website is www.pathways-to-healing.org

Gregory V. Wilson, D. Min., is a Fellow with the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (www.AAPC.org), and an ordained minister, with a Doctorate in Ministry from Columbia Theological Seminary. Gregory is the Minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Brevard, and has been in private practice as a pastoral counselor for over 20 years, counseling individuals, couples, families and groups. Gregory created Belief Systems Therapy™ which he has been using in groups and workshops since 1989.

Helen Hare Wilson, B.S. has a degree in psychology, and a Certificate in Spiritual Formation and Direction from the Institute of Pastoral Studies in Atlanta. Helen has been working with Gregory developing and utilizing Belief Systems Therapy™ since 1993.