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

Thomas Szasz, The Myth of Mental Illness.
# Table of Contents

Preface.................................................................................................................................................... 7  
Key concepts ........................................................................................................................................ 8  
Connection Coach Study ..................................................................................................................... 9  
Finally, a warning ............................................................................................................................... 10  
Workbook goals ................................................................................................................................... 11  
Key Concepts ....................................................................................................................................... 12  
Introduction: Why Healing? ................................................................................................................ 13  
  Violence ............................................................................................................................................... 14  
  Neglect ............................................................................................................................................... 16  
  LP’s Seven Essential Needs ............................................................................................................... 17  
  Instability and Chaos ...................................................................................................................... 19  
  Destruction of Attachments ............................................................................................................ 21  
  Ideology/Indoctrination .................................................................................................................. 25  
Some Challenges .............................................................................................................................. 27  
LP Healing Framework ...................................................................................................................... 30  
What You Need to Know While on the LP Journey ......................................................................... 31  
Self-acceptance ................................................................................................................................. 33  
Study Questions and Activities ......................................................................................................... 36  
“H” is for help .................................................................................................................................... 37  
How to Choose a Competent Professional Healer? ........................................................................ 38  
Qualifications ...................................................................................................................................... 39  
Competency ......................................................................................................................................... 40  
Professional Boundaries .................................................................................................................... 44  
Additional Thoughts on Getting Help ............................................................................................... 45  
Study Questions ................................................................................................................................. 54
“E” is for Healthy Environment.................................................................56
Right Environments are Safe Environments............................................57
Environmental Assessments.................................................................61
Right Environments are Healing Environments.................................62
Self-care...............................................................................................66
Resistance............................................................................................69
The Evidence is Subtle........................................................................69
The System Wants you Broken.............................................................70
Shame and Guilt...................................................................................73
Forgive Yourself...................................................................................76
Study Questions....................................................................................78
“A” is for Addiction..............................................................................79
Lightning Path Attachments Analysis....................................................92
Treatment.............................................................................................96
Study Questions....................................................................................105
“L” is for Lies......................................................................................106
It’s not so bad after all!.........................................................................108
Look at me, I’m rich and successful.....................................................110
I got a job.............................................................................................113
Learning to Lie: Modelling.................................................................115
Learning to Lie: Personal Safety............................................................118
Learning to Lie: Avoiding Guilt and Shame.........................................120
Learning to Lie: Truth Entitlement.......................................................123
Learning to Lie: System Maintenance..................................................128
Study Questions....................................................................................132
“I” is for Ideology................................................................................133
Three Challenges................................................................................137
Challenge One: Understanding Ideology..............................................138
Preface

Greetings and welcome to the Lightning Path (or just LP for short). The Lightning Path is a modern and authentic path of human development that blends authentic spirituality and connected science into a powerful representation of core human and spiritual truths designed to take you from disconnected and depressed to healthy, connected, and empowered, quickly and safely.

The book that you have in your hand is the second book in a series of Lightning Path workbooks designed to teach you what you need to know to heal, connect, and advance towards your full human potential. This book focuses on the healing process and introduces you to the LP HEALING Framework. The Lightning Path HEALING framework is a framework that you can use to understand and take control of your healing process. The HEALING Framework contains seven Focus Points that you can work on in order to move forward towards health, happiness, and authentic connection. These are Healing, Environment, Addiction, Lying, Ideology, Needs, and Growth (HEALING).

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

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1https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/HEALING_Framework
Key concepts

To facilitate clarity and precision of understanding, we introduce and develop several key concepts and ideas in this and other LP Workbooks. Key concepts are identified with bold font the first time you come across them in the text. Key concepts are then defined either inline in the main text, in a footnote, or if the concept is not critical at this stage, via a link to the SpiritWiki\(^2\) definition of the terms. For your information, the SpiritWiki is the canonical glossary of Lightning Path concepts and spirituality. If you are not sure what an LP term means, you can always check the SpiritWiki.

When you come across key concepts, take an extra moment or two to learn the concepts. By the end of this book, you should be familiar with all the key LP concepts introduced in this book. Familiarity with the concepts is important because *LP materials build the foundation for healing and connection*. If you want to build a home with beautiful things where you can live healthy and connected, you have to start with a solid foundation and build up from that. To build a solid foundation for healing and connection, learn the key concepts.

Please note, if at any time you feel confused, anxious, or distressed by any information provided in this or other LP workbooks and materials, please consult your local medical or mental health practitioner. The LP is not responsible for any psychological, emotional, or physical breakdown you may experience as a result of your work. In other words, if you need help, get help, either from the online LP forums or a local and qualified healing practitioner.

Also note, the book in your hand is part of a larger curriculum designed to help move you forward and realize your full human

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\(^2\) The SpiritWiki is the canonical LP Glossary. https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org
potential. To access the full curriculum, visit the Lightning Path at http://www.lightningpath.org/

Connection Life Coach Study

At the end of each unit of this book, and in all the LP workbooks, you will find study questions. You will also find “moments of reflection” scattered throughout the workbooks. These study questions and moments of reflection are designed to help you understand, process, integrate, and ground the LP materials. You can use these study questions at two levels.

**Level one** is a personal level. At this level, you read and answer the study questions and moments of reflection for yourself so that you can understand, heal and connect. You can do this with a therapist or healer if you like. Simply discuss your thoughts with your healer. You can also do this in a healing group of some sort, where you write down your answers and share with members of a healing and connection group. You can also do this with the help of other LP students, by registering as a student and visiting the online forums where you can discuss and share.

**Level two** is Connection Coach Certification. This formal level of certification is like life coaching, but with a sophisticated sociological, psychological, and spiritual focus. Certifying as an LP Connection Coach allows you to help others heal and connect, from a LP perspective.

For more information on CC Certification, visit this page.

https://www.lightningpath.org/cc-certification/
Finally, a warning

Be aware, the Lightning Path is built for speed. If you choose, you can move forward towards healing and connection quite quickly. Be warned however that it is not always advisable to move full steam ahead. Even if you are prepared for the whirlwind that can sometimes ensue once you step on this authentic path, others around you might not be. Always remember, you live in a context (e.g., a home, a community, a workplace etc.) and people inhabit these places. These contexts, these places, will be impacted as you move forward. Ultimately, this is a good thing because, deep inside, everyone wants to move forward; however, fears, misconceptions, and delusions often create resistance, confusion, and even backlash, and these cannot always be overcome so easily. Therefore, empathy, sensitivity, and patience are required, for yourself, and those around you. Manage your progress, take your time, and be empathetic; but, do not go too far. Empathy, sensitivity, and patience are required to be sure, but too much and you may sacrifice your spiritual progress. At a certain point, you may have to make a decision. Either stay stuck in the mud with others around you, or clear your path. Always keep in mind the feelings and situations of others, but always feel free to gently (and sometimes not so gently) push toxicity out of your life so you can move forward, especially when you feel it is time to do so.
Workbook goals

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

- Understand why healing is important and how it is related to spiritual and human development and connection.

- Understand the importance of healthy, safe, non-toxic environments to the healing and human development process.

- Understand the nature of toxic attachments and what you need to do to overcome them.

- Understand the importance of standing in the truth, about yourself and others.

- Know about your seven essential needs, why, as an adult, these needs might be unmet, and what you can do to satisfy these needs and move forward towards healing and connection.

- Understand the difference between deficiency mode and growth mode and to move from a deficiency mode of being to a growth mode of being.
Introduction: Why Healing?

As you pick up this workbook for the first time, a first question that might pop into your mind at the outset is why, in the context of human development and spiritual connection, are we talking about healing?

The answer to that question is simple. Recall, as we learned in *LP Workbook One*, your physical body is a vessel, a container, a vehicle for your higher Consciousness. The simple truth is, for “the vessel” of your higher Consciousness to be able to hold/handle your higher Consciousness, it has to be healthy and whole—and by that we mean there should be no “holes” in the glass. If there are holes in the glass, if there is damage to the physical body (the **Physical Unit** as we like to call it)\(^3\) then it does not matter how strong your connection or how fast you pour Consciousness into the glass, the water of your higher Consciousness will simply pour out of the glass. If you got holes in the physical unit, you have to fix the holes, otherwise you cannot make progress towards stronger connection. It is as simple as that.

Of course, the question that pops up now is, “Do I have holes in my glass?” The answer to that question is an unequivocal yes. As outlined in the paper *Toxic Socialization*,\(^4\) we all endure a **Toxic Socialization (TS)**\(^5\) process. The toxicity of this process damages the physical unit. This damage prevents us from connecting and, if it goes unaddressed, undermines our mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being as well.

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\(^3\) https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Physical_Unit.


\(^5\) https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Toxic_Socialization.
What is toxic socialization exactly? To understand toxic socialization, you must understand what socialization is. Socialization is the process whereby we are trained to fit into human society. Socialization is the process of learning how to fit into one’s family and culture, and how to be who you think you should be. Socialization starts at birth when we are assigned a gender category, and it continues through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood where we learn not only how to act and how to dress, but how to think and feel “properly.”

You would think that the socialization process, the training process, we all undergo would be designed to make us healthy, whole, and well-connected; unfortunately, despite our intellectual and modern advancements, it is not. This toxic socialization process we all endure is characterized by a) violence, b) neglect, c) chaos, d) destruction of attachments, and e) ideological indoctrination. The violence, neglect, chaos, destruction of attachments, and indoctrination leave us unhealthy, sick, completely disconnected, and with many “holes” in our glass through which the Consciousness of our higher Self pours out.

To understand a bit more about toxic socialization, let us look briefly at each of the five components in turn, starting with violence.

**Violence**

As noted, toxic socialization is characterized by violence. Violence includes all forms of violence, like physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual. Violence, in particular emotional, psychological, and sexual violence, is very damaging to the physical unit. The evidence is quite clear on this.6 Violence of any sort, and this includes the emotional violence of screaming, yelling, name-calling, etc., as well as

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6Sosteric, “Toxic Socialization.”
the psychological violence of exclusion, condescension, condemnation, manipulation, and control, etc., damages our physical unit, undermines our mental and emotional health, and makes it harder to contain Consciousness because of the holes it creates in the mind.

What kind of damage are we talking about? Copious damage, especially when the assaults are chronic. It is like getting punched in the arm over, and over, and over again. You might be able to recover from the first punch or two, but repeated assaults will bring permanent neuromuscular damage. The only difference is that in the case of emotional and psychological violence, the damage is emotional and psychological, and far worse than neuromuscular damage.

Emotional trauma damages your emotional responses and makes it difficult to trust, to be happy, to express, and even to relax. Psychological trauma damages your psychological structures, making it difficult to control your impulses, keep your bodily ego in check, or function in a psychologically stable manner.

Emotional and psychological trauma can even damage your intellectual functioning by lowering your intelligence quotient (IQ) and making it harder for you to process, think, and understand. And that is not the worst of it.

Obviously, toxic socialization also damages your ability to connect to others and to your own higher Self. It is difficult for somebody who has had their cognitive and emotional operations altered by violence and neglect, who is depressed, who struggles with a personality disorder, who is narcissist, or avoidant, or dealing with post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), or who is struggling with impulsivity, or some other maladaptive coping mechanism, to deal with their trauma and connect and handle higher levels of Consciousness. To put it
bluntly, toxic socialization results in a damaged physical unit that is “weak” and cannot handle the flow.

If it helps, you can think of it like this. Think of your body like a prism, the kind that breaks white light into its component colours. Think of your Consciousness as a white beam of light flowing into the prism and then out into the real world beyond. In a healthy situation, when the prism is undamaged, the beam enters the body/prism and is then refracted out into the seven beautiful colours (the ROY-G-BIV) of the visible spectrum. However, when the physical unit experiences toxicity, when the prism is cracked by violence, neglect, and other aspects of toxic socialization, the light does not refract out in pure form. When the prism is damaged, cracked, or broken, the light that flows out is distorted, bent, and incomplete. When the damage is severe, the refracted light can be pathological, ugly, and even quite dark.

**Neglect**

Violence is not the only thing that damages your body and undermines your ability to connect. **Neglect** of your **Seven Essential Needs** also causes damage and undermines the development of your full human potential. It is easy to understand why neglect of your needs is bad. It is like growing a pretty flower in a pot, but not giving the flower enough food, water, and sunlight so that it can grow and thrive. If you do not feed and water the plant, it will grow up to be smaller. If you starve the plant, it will grow up stunted or die. This is not rocket science. If you want to grow a healthy and strong plant, you will need to give it just the right amount food, water, and sunlight so it can grow up fast and strong.
It is the same with humans, obviously, except that humans are more complex and have many more needs than a plant. If you do not meet all the essential needs in humans, they also grow up stunted and small. For your information, the following is a brief list of the LP’s Seven Essential Needs. Scan this list until you have a good sense of the comprehensive scope of these needs.

**LP’s Seven Essential Needs**

1. Physiological needs. The need for food, water, nourishment, shelter, and so on. The need for enough money to survive without daily stress.
2. Safety needs. The need for a safe home, safe spaces to develop and learn, etc. Note, safety includes the absence of assault of any kind, including physical assault (e.g., spankings, pushing or shoving, slamming doors, destruction of personal property etc.), emotional and psychological assault (e.g. verbal name-calling, shaming, blaming, withdrawal, and exclusion), and spiritual assault (e.g. misguided spiritual teachings, hierarchical beliefs, oppression, etc.).
3. Love needs. The need for unconditional support, unconditional acceptance, and unconditional inclusion.
4. Truth/understanding needs. The need to know and understand the world you are born into and are able to become your true authentic self.
5. Esteem/Power needs. The need to feel good about one’s self. The need for self-efficacy and the ability to learn the tools in order for you to control your needs in the world.
6. Need for alignment. The need to be in alignment with your Highest Self. The need to express and actualize who you truly are inside.
7. Need for connection. The need for connection with your Highest Self. In Transpersonal Psychology, transcendence; in Christianity, Islamic beliefs etc. salvation; in Buddhism, enlightenment).

To be clear, if a human child is going to enter what we call Growth Mode (more on this in the final unit “G” is for Growth), if it is going to develop into a healthy adult human with a strong ego, it has to have all its essential needs met. If the adult is going to be able to handle connection, all of the essential needs must be simultaneously met, especially during early childhood, and especially in the so-called sensitive or critical periods of infancy, childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. It simply does not matter what the genetics of the

7 Obviously, meeting all the essential needs requires a massive input of time and energy far greater than any single person or intimate duo (or trio, or whatever) could ever possibly achieve. Thus, the wisdom in the old-timey saying “It takes a village to raise a child...” In fact, however, it goes deeper than this. It takes more than a village. It takes a family, community, society, and indeed the entire planet to properly raise a child.

If, at this point, you are also thinking that Earth civilizations are a long way away from full satisfaction of human needs, you are correct. As a species, we still have a lot of work left to do. Note however that it is not that we cannot do it. At this time we have the technical, political, social, and even economic capabilities to meet the full needs of all human beings on Earth. We have enough food to feed everybody. We have the technology to house and protect the entire planet. We have the economic, political, and distributive prowess to make sure it all gets distributed fairly. We have had this capacity to fulfill the needs of the planet for decades. Because we are also approaching an “automation revolution”, meeting the needs of humans with all our talents and skills should make prioritizing human needs even easier. The problem is not evolutionary development of the human species. The problem is that the System currently in place is designed to enrich a “chosen” few at the expense of the many. We can do it, but we are just going to have to replace The System.

For details on The System, read Rocket Scientists Guide to Money and the Economy.

You can find out more about our current economic system and why it is incompatible with the satisfaction of our human needs by reading Rocket Scientists’ Guide to Money and the Economy. https://press.lightningpath.org/product/rocket-
child is. If you do not meet all the needs, the child will not mature fully to their authentic true self. It is just like when you’re growing a flower in a pot; if you do not meet all the needs for water, nutrients, and sunlight, the flower will be stunted. *It is only when all the human needs are met that full and healthy development, and strong and clean connections, can occur.*

We will have more to say about the seven essential needs in a later unit, and how you can go about recognizing and meeting these needs. For now, put it in your head that in order to raise a healthy child, in order to be healthy as an adult, you need to ensure your essential needs are met. If they are not, you need to find adequate ways to meet them.

**Instability and Chaos**

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

Chaotic environments are characterized by crowding, noise, lack of routine, and instability. Chaos and crowding is associated with “poorer developmental outcomes for all children.”8 This includes reduced academic performance,9 lethargy, delayed intellectual and


9Ibid.
psychomotor development,\textsuperscript{10} and so on. Chaos and crowding can also impact and undermine child-parent attachment\textsuperscript{11} (see below) and lead to behavioural problems in school,\textsuperscript{12} aggression and conduct disorders.\textsuperscript{13} Chaos and instability in our environments are a particular problem when the chaos is intense and chronic (i.e., long term).\textsuperscript{14}

Why is chaos and instability associated with reduced developmental outcomes? Researchers are still working on that question, but it likely comes down to inability to engage in focused exploratory play, lack of emotion/physical/psychological safety needs, and the toxic impact of stress on brain neurology. Children in chaotic environments are embedded in a sea of stimulation, distraction, redirection, uncertainty, and lack of safety. Is mommy or daddy coming home drunk? Is mommy or daddy going to hit me? Is mommy or daddy going to be mad today?”

You get the picture.


In these conditions, energy and attention which would normally be given over to focused and safe exploration and play is diverted to anticipatory anxiety-ridden self-protection and defence. Under conditions of toxic stress, the child is always trying to increase their safety and security rather than simply playing and growing. When this occurs, over time, instead of biological energy being directed to the development of an open and expressive human being which can understand and accept its own Self, we instead create conditions where children and adolescents divert their energies towards the development of defensive, even hyper-reactive states whose primary focus is on building barriers and protections rather than developing and connecting to the world, and to the Self within. It is hard to be open and connected, it is hard to develop your full potential, when you are constantly in **Defence Mode**; you simply do not have the energy to do it.

To be clear, chaos and instability is bad. If a human child is going to enter what we might want to call **Growth Mode**, and if that child is going to grow into a strong and fully connected human being and not a reactive and defensive rebel, it must have a safe, calm, and stimulating environment that encourages play and growth, rather than a toxic environment that encourages reactive defences.

**Destruction of Attachments**

Violence, neglect, and chaos/instability all undermine development, harm the physical unit, and cause toxic development; but there is more to toxic socialization than violence, neglect, and chaos. Toxic socialization also undermines child attachment. “Attachment can be understood as... the enduring emotional closeness which binds
families to prepare children for independence and parenthood....”

Attachment is the emotional bond between a child and a parent, primary caregiver, teacher, mentor and other care giving agent.

Why are attachments so important? As one researcher notes, “.... Attachment allows children the ‘secure base’ necessary to explore, learn and relate, and the well-being, motivation, and opportunity to do so. It is important for safety, stress regulation, adaptability, and resilience.”

Attachment is important because a child learns its initial identity and its sense of self-worth from its early life attachments. More to the point, attachments are necessary for survival, satisfaction of human needs, and even full human growth. Recall the seven essential needs here. Infants, children, adolescents, and even younger adults cannot meet their own needs despite what we might like to think. We, all us humans, are completely dependent on adult caregivers for years, and partially dependent on them for decades. The type of long-term “no-return” investment required to meet the needs of a child/adolescent/young adult requires a titanium biological attachment. Evolutionary speaking, neurological mechanisms that facilitate and encourage **Primary Attachments** to parental units, and **Secondary Attachments** such as friends or teachers, and eventually **Tertiary Attachments** to employers and other members of the individual’s community, makes perfect sense, and are an obviously essential requirement of growth.

So, what happens when attachments are damaged? Bad things happen at a number of different levels. Weak, disordered, or absent child attachment experiences have a profound impact on the health and

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

If you accept the importance of attachment, and if you accept that toxic socialization undermines and even destroys attachment, then the next question we need to ask is what causes damaged attachments? There are lots of different things.

Primary and secondary attachments are destroyed by chaotic and disordered environments, absent parents, poorly managed break-ups, and violence against children and members of the family unit (including animals). Physical or mental illness on the part of a parent or caregiver can have a deleterious impact on attachment as well, as

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19 If you are struggling with what we are suggesting, perhaps think of your attachment experiences to your pet, your hobby, or your passions, and reflect on all the vested energies you justify and do to commit and maintain that attachment. Now think about how you were raised, or how you justified your own parenting compared to the ways in how you invest in the “other” stuff you choose to do. If you are being honest with yourself, you will see that in order to commit, to master, to learn, and to grow, your attachment to whatever or whoever will determine what your authentic experiences will be. It is the same for our children.
can parental addictions to sex, shopping, alcohol, drugs, etc.. Attachments may also be weakened when parents are poor and have to work all the time, or if they spend all their emotional time with each other, or they are still children themselves. In essence, anything that takes energy away from giving the children the copious care and attention they need, and anything that causes hurt or pain to anybody in the family unit, impacts and weakens attachments.

Tertiary attachments to community and even the planet are destroyed by competition, war, and ideologies of “good versus evil” that set groups (like Christians, capitalists etc.) up against other groups (like Muslims, socialists, etc.). Competition, war, ideologies of good versus evil, ideas that create oppositions and antagonisms, all thwart authentic tertiary attachments to others, primarily because these orientations put you in an antagonistic stance where you are always looking for weakness to exploit, or evil in them to condemn. The antagonistic stance inevitably leads to forms of emotional, psychological, and even physical violence which not only interfere with attachment, but damage the physical unit and undermine our ability to connect.

Hopefully, at this point, you get a sense of just how important meeting human needs and developing healthy attachments is. It is not just a question of spiritual connection, it is question of basic human health. If you do not provide non-toxic environments, if you do not meet all your essential needs, if you force children to grow up in chaos, and if you stand by while attachments are weakened and destroyed, you get unhealthy, sick, diminished human beings. Not only is that problematic, but it is costly at multiple levels. To move forward, you need to work on improving your environments, reducing violence, and giving more attention to meeting your human needs and developing healthy attachments.
Ideology/Indoctrination

The final aspect of toxic socialization we have to be aware of is ideology and indoctrination. Ideology is a set of beliefs, ideas, norms, and values intentionally constructed in order to shape human behaviour for the purposes of political or economic exploitation. Ideologies essentially teach us Wrong Thought and Wrong Action. Wrong thoughts are thoughts that encourage or cause disconnection. Wrong actions are actions that are out of alignment with our highest Self.

Ideology is a complicated topic and we shall discuss it in a bit more detail in the chapter on ideology in this book, and also in Lightning Path Workbook Four where we dive deep into the ideological systems of this world. At core, however, it is quite simple. Ideological statements all revolve around two core sets of ideas. These are, number one, ideas that diminish your sense of self and, number two, ideas that encourage you to engage in toxic actions, or to stay inactive while others are being hurt. Diminishing your sense of self disconnects you and makes you easier to control, something which we will explore in more detail as we progress. Giving you ideas that encourage violence makes it easier to weaponize you. Giving you ideas that encourage you to stay passive and inactive make you easier to sideline and control.

As for ideas that diminish your sense of self, these include ideas like “you are descended apes,” you are being punished for bad “karma,” you are “ejected from The Garden because you cannot follow a simple rule,” and so on. As for ideas that encourage toxic behaviours, these are ideas like “it’s ok to hurt others if they are ‘bad,’” “God punishes bad people,” the universe is all about some kind of cosmic battle.

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between good and evil, “spare the rod and spoil the child,” “karma will
punish you with a lower birth,” and so on. Any secular or spiritual idea
that helps you justify and excuse harming or neglecting other living
beings, including yourself, and especially your children, is an
ideological statement.

What do you do about ideology?

You have to clear it out and replace it with ideas that do not diminish
your sense of self and do not encourage and excuse violence against
others. This can be a bit a challenge since the process involves digging
deep into your thinking process in order to identify and replace
ingrained ideas, but it is possible, and we can help. The LP devotes
considerable time to unpacking, analyzing, and replacing ideology. A
chapter in this workbook is devoted to deepening your understanding
of ideology and, later on in Lightning Path Workbook Four: Archetypes,
ideology is explored in detail. For now, you can get started by simply
learning to pay attention to the thoughts that percolate in your head,
specifically those ideas that diminish you (e.g., “I’m a loser,” “I’m
stupid,” etc) and those that encourage acts of violence and neglect.

**Moment of reflection.** Write down two headings in your Healing
and Connection (HC) Journal, one that says *Diminishing Ideas*
and the other that says *Enabling Ideas*.

Under the *Diminishing Ideas* page, reflect and write thoughts that
you have that diminish you. Are you a “loser” sometimes. Do you
tell yourself “I deserve bad things.” Do you minimize or even
ignore your positive achievements? Do you say things like “I’m
no good at this,” or “I cannot do anything right?” If you are not
sure, ask a partner or friend.
Under the *Enabling Ideas* heading, write down the ideas in your mind that justify the abuse and harm of others. Do you feel that sometimes people deserve to be hurt? Do you invoke notions of evil or even weakness to justify putting another down? What do you tell yourself when you are spanking your children, if you have them.

**Some Challenges**

We opened this chapter with the question, “why healing?” At this point, the answer to the question should be clear. Toxic socialization damages the physical unit. This damage undermines our health and well-being and disconnects us. If you want to be healthy, happy, and whole, you have to heal any damage incurred.

So, what’s next?

At this point, you have a choice to make. You can dismiss what we have said so far and go back to your day-to-day normal existence, or you can accept what we have said and resolve that it is time to *move forward* and do something to create environments that are more conducive to your health and full connection. If you do decide to go back to your normal life, we bid you fond adieu. If you do decide to move forward, there will be some immediate challenges.

**Challenge number one** will be a challenge to acknowledge and accept how bad the toxicity and the damage really is. There is no sense in sugar-coating this. You are damaged and disconnected by the violence, neglect, chaos, and ideology of the Toxic Socialization you have experienced. This damage is so bad that you have become disconnected from your own Highest Self to the point where the most connection you can get, if you’re lucky, is an occasional “peak
experience” or transcendent event. That might seem like a blessing to some, but humans are capable of much more than that. “Mystical experiences,” peak experiences, or whatever you want to call these brief slivers of bliss that people have, are the only things possible in a broken down and oppressed physical unit. They indicate the possibility of connection, true; but they also indicate the severity of the damage. To put it into proper perspective, a healthy and fully connected physical unit would experience these peaks almost full-time. Damaged humans are capable of achieving and handling only brief connection without frying their proverbial brain circuits.

Of course, reading these words for the first time, you may not want to admit that you are damaged and completely disconnected from your own Highest Self in such a profound way. Nevertheless, the truth is, we have all been damaged by toxic socialization to one extent or another and we all must admit that damage before we can begin to move forward towards healing and reconnection. If you want to pretend you are something you are not, that is fine. Just do not expect to get any farther down the path than where you currently stand.

If you do admit that there is profound spiritual damage and that as a result you have to heal and reconnect, the second challenge will be dealing with the social/societal resistance and push back that you will receive when you begin to move forward. Until things have shifted a bit more on this Earth, when you choose to move forward, you are likely to get push back, from family, friends, and so on. This push back, which is motivated by a deep fear of being “left behind” or left out, will manifest in both subtle and painfully overt ways. In some cases, violent suppression may even be the result.

If you do experience resistance, and if your relationships are not so toxic that you cannot talk about it, talk about it. Explain you are just
exploring and reassure your primary and secondary attachments. If “no discussion is allowed,” or if there is violence and aggression, avoid it if you can and, if you cannot, consider ending the relationship. It does not matter how strong you think you are; toxic environments do serious damage and will prevent you from healing and connecting. The logic is pretty simple. You cannot heal your wounds and reconnect if you insist on swimming in toxic sludge.

If you manage to get past the challenge of accepting there is damage, and the challenge of standing up and moving forward even against social/familial push back, **challenge number three** is the challenge of doing the work to heal and reconnect. We won’t lie to you. The work of healing and reconnection, we’ll just call it **the work**\(^{21}\) from here on out, is difficult, challenging, and complicated. To help with this challenging process, the LP offers guidance and instruction on both healing and connection. The guidance and instruction is designed to help you think about, understand, process, and ground (insight) so that you can move forward towards healing and reconnection.

**As regards healing,** the LP offers the **LP HEALING framework**. The HEALING framework, which we will discuss in the rest of this book, offers you a road map to help you understand and navigate your healing journey.

**As regards connection,** the LP offers you the **LP Connection Framework**. The LP Connection Framework will help you organize your thinking and your connection practice. We won’t talk about connection much in this workbook. When you are ready to explore connection in more detail, move on to **LP Workbook Three: Connection**.

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\(^{21}\) See https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/The_Work.
LP Healing Framework

In the rest of this book, we look at the LP Healing Framework. At this point, the questions before us are, “What is the LP Healing Framework?” and “How can it help?” The answer to both questions is simple. The LP HEALING Framework is a set of seven focus-points that you must pay attention to, consider, and work through in order to move forward with your healing process. The seven focus points are outlined by the acronym HEALING:

H = Help
E = Environment
A = Addictions
L = Lies
I = Ideologies
N = Needs
G = Growth

Each focus-point in the LP HEALING framework is a guide to those issues that we all must work through on our healing journey. Each of these steps are interdependent, necessary, and will require critical thought, personal examination, and, most importantly, action. To use these focus-points, simply select a unit and read.

It is important to keep in mind, the healing journey before you is not a linear process. It is iterative and cyclical. If you are serious about healing the damage, expect to read each unit more than once. As you take steps down the path, as you heal, grow, and reconnect, you will find new information, new meaning, and deeper understanding.
What You Need to Know While on the LP Journey

Before you get started on your healing, there are a few things we need to say, by way of orientation, about the LP Healing framework.

**Number one**, you need to know that the LP HEALING Framework is a framework, a road map, and **not** a therapy. The LP does not tell you what strategies or healing modalities you should use to heal and connect (though it may recommend stuff at times). Instead, the LP HEALING Framework gives you advice on the things that you (and your therapist/healer) need to pay attention to and focus on as you travel along the path.

**Number two**, you need to know that the LP HEALING Framework is not a linear road map. It can be if that is appropriate for you, but it can also be a “pick and choose,” wind your way through the forest, sort of affair. If you are new to all this, you might want to start with the “H” and the “E” by getting help and detoxifying your environments. On the other hand, if you have had some treatment, therapy, or other kinds of support in the past, you might start where you feel makes the most sense, for e.g., addressing the abuse in your intimate partner relationship, or getting your addiction(s) under control. To decide where to start, read through the book at least once, and then decide where you need to focus more.

If you feel you need guidance on where to start, the LP offers a HEALING MAP (Mindful Action Plan). A HEALING MAP is a questionnaire you fill out to help you examine your own life situation. The HEALING MAP is free to download and fill out. If you like, you can purchase a guided analysis with a trained LP Connection Coach. The guided analysis gives you advice on what aspects of your life you need to focus on first, second, third, and so on. For more information,
to purchase a Healing MAP, or simply to download the MAP form, visit the link below.

https://www.lightningpath.org/service/healing-map/

**Number three**, moving forward, you need to understand, the LP requires discipline and focus. In LP Workbook One, we spoke about the importance of “staying the course,” meaning if you want to successfully move forward and connect, you must stay committed to the Work even when you are tired, doubtful, and unsure. It is going to be a challenge. Understand, healing and connection involves a lot more than a trip or two to the therapist, a singing bowl, and a glass of wine with some friends. Healing and re-connection are a lot of work. To get through it, consistent daily effort (i.e. discipline) is the key. To be sure, you do not have to saturate your life with “healing, healing, healing,” but you must do a little bit every day. The LP HEALING Framework is helpful in this regard because it helps you stay focused and disciplined on the tasks at hand. Work a little bit on some things in the framework every day in whatever stage of development you are in, and you will make consistent progress forward.

**Number four**, if you want to move forward, you need to be accountable, you need to take responsibility, and you need to change. We cannot overemphasize how important responsibility, accountability, and change are if you want to truly heal and connect. Recognize where all the toxicity is in your life, be accountable for your part in it, change your behaviours so you are no longer contributing to the toxicity and damage, and create/find more nurturing and supportive environments. No complacency. No projection of your issues onto others. No scapegoating others for things you are
responsible for. No excuses whatsoever. If you want to move forward, take responsibility, be accountable, and change. It will hurt at first, especially if you have a lot to answer for, but like poking a festering boil, in the long run, you will be happy and relieved that you did.

You can use the following **SAAR Affirmation** to help encourage accountability in your life. SAAR stands for see, accept, be accountable, and take responsibility.

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Today I will see the toxicity that surrounds me,
Today I will accept that it is unhealthy and disconnecting.
Today I will be accountable for my toxic actions.
Today I will take responsibility for the bad things I can change.
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To summarize, in order to make progress on the LP, understand that the LP is a non-linear road map to guide your healing process. To get the most out of it, stay disciplined, remain focused, be accountable for your part in the toxicities and damage, and change your behaviour.

**Self-acceptance**

To be sure, seeing and accepting the truth, being accountable and taking responsibility, are big challenges. One of the things that will help you navigate this challenge is simple self-acceptance. Moving forward, simply accept who you are, what you have done, and what you have been through, without judgment or shame. There is no sense in getting uptight about the things you have done while damaged and disconnected, no matter how bad they are. Just take a deep breath here and let go. Understand, there is no shame in being damaged by toxic socialization. There is no shame in being hurt, angry, or sad. There is no shame in being angry and hateful. There is no shame in
struggling with addictions. There is no shame in making mistakes. There is no shame in repeatedly falling down. There is no shame so long as you wake up and change. It is not a question of good or evil. It is not a question of judgment or accountability. It is simply a question of seeing the toxicity and damage so you can heal and reconnect. There is no fuss “at the gate,” so to speak, and certainly no test that you must pass. All you must do is see the truth, accept that things are not perfect, be accountable for your part in the toxicity, take responsibility for the things that are yours, and commit to ending the nonsense so we can all heal and reconnect.22 That is all there is to it, and it all starts with simple self-acceptance.

As a final note, we’d like to reiterate, healing and connection require time, effort, and copious personal reflection. You cannot just pick up a singing bowl or pray in a pew on Sunday and think you have done your work. You must spend time thinking and processing in a mindful and consistent manner so that you can understand, process, transform, and dismiss. How you do that does not matter, so long as you do it. Gina and I do this reflection when we write, and when we walk and talk in nature. Others might do it by painting, writing songs and poems, or making videos and films. Still others might journal in HC Journal, as noted earlier. Chronicling your thoughts and feelings in a personal HC journal will not only help you record, analyze, process, 22

If you are a therapist, no shame and no judgment applies to you and your practice as well. Do not shame and judge a person damaged by toxic socialization. Instead, accept that it has been a struggle for them and help them on their healing journey. If you’re a therapist that judges and shames those who come for your help, stop. If you cannot stop, find another profession.

Also note, acceptance and no-judgment should not be used as an excuse to enable. You do not judge/shame a person who has self-medicated themselves into addiction, but neither do you enable toxicity or accept the addiction as is. You help them clean up their environment. You help them heal. You help them free themselves of addiction.
and take necessary action, it will also make it easier for you to get help when and if you need it because you will have a record of your mental/emotional processes that you can share with a trusted and competent therapist/healer.

And that is all we have to say in this unit. To recap what we have learned so far, in LP Workbook One we learned that the body is a vessel for Consciousness and that proper human development involves filling the body with higher Consciousness. Also in Workbook One, we learned that filling the vessel requires us to “make a connection.” When we make a connection, Consciousness begins to flow into the body.

In this workbook, Workbook Two, we learn that the body is damaged by a toxic socialization process and that this damage makes it hard for the body to contain higher Consciousness. To put it simply, toxic socialization creates holes in the glass through which the water of higher Consciousness flows out. Once we recognize the need to fix the holes so that Consciousness does not pour out of the glass as the basic human problem we all face, the work of healing the damage so we can all reconnect begins.

At this moment, we are done our introductory work and it is now time to begin the healing and reconnection process. We will start, in the next unit with the first focus point in the LP HEALING Framework, getting help. Before we get to that, however, here are some study questions that you can look over to help you get started on the process. These questions invite you to take an honest look at the toxicity in your life. This honest look is a necessary first step to navigating a successful healing process.

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Study Questions and Activities

1. What are the five components of toxic socialization identified in this unit. Briefly describe each.

2. Thinking about what was said about toxic socialization, what are some of the damages you can think of that might be caused by the violence, neglect, chaos, and indoctrination of Toxic Socialization.

3. What is ideology? What “two core sets of ideas” constitute ideology? Can you think of some examples from your own life on how these ideas diminish you and enable and encourage toxic action.

4. What are three challenges an individual might face when recognizing there is a need to heal damage? Have you experienced these challenges in your own healing process? If so, write them down in your H/C Journal.
“H” is for help

As you are now aware, this book is a book to help you heal so that you can successfully reconnect. It would be nice if we could say that healing and reconnection are easy processes. It would be nice if we could wave a magic wand, say magic words like “abracadabra,” and you would be healed and connected. But we cannot. Healing and connecting can be tough processes and they can take a long time, especially if your childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood experiences were difficult, and by that we mean violent, abusive, and neglectful. If you grew up in a toxic environment, if as a child you experienced constant emotional, psychological, verbal, or physical assault, chronic neglect of your essential needs, chaos, growing up, healing and connection will be difficult. In fact, in cases of extreme childhood/adolescent toxicity, which are far more prevalent than most of us would like to admit, the damage will be so profound, and the healing and connection might be so difficult that to accomplish it, you will need to get some help.

Understand, this is not a statement about your strength or weakness. It is just the way it is. Some of us have experienced so much damage that to heal and connect we are going to need help. We may need that help now, or we may need it later. Experience enough trauma and even the toughest among us will eventually need professional assistance. Even the strongest weightlifter eventually reaches their limit. Do not be shamed into suffering in silence. If you need help, get it.

How do you know if you are going to need help with the healing and connecting process? Simple. Pay attention to your own well-being. Take an honest look at your emotional and psychological state. If you are finding things are a challenge, if you seem stuck in the same place,
if you are not making any progress with your depression, addictions, self-worth, self-esteem, or relationships, if you feel like you are spinning your wheels, if you find you are long-term avoidant, apathetic, angry, reactive, defensive, or agitated, if you are feeling anxious that you are not moving forward, if you have a feeling that you should be doing something, if you are lashing out at loved ones, if you are struggling with compulsivity, rumination, and mental or emotional disruptions, then you may need to get yourself some help. Life should be lived in calm, serene, peaceful, and (if not blissful, then at least) purposeful contentment. If this is not your life, then you probably need help.

Follow your gut intuition at this point. If it is telling you that you should get help, get help.

**How to Choose a Competent Professional Healer?**

If you decide you need to get help, the question then is, how do you find appropriate and competent help?

A good way to get started on this is to ask someone. If you know someone, a family member, a relation, a friend, who has overcome an obstacle, ask them how they did it and query them concerning the kinds of help and support they received. Don’t be afraid to ask them the names of practitioners, books, support groups, etc. Word of mouth is a wonderful way to seek and find appropriate and competent help. Of course, pay attention to the healing progress of the person you are asking.

If you do not know somebody who you can ask, check your one phone book for therapists and agencies, or check your local community for therapists. Many therapists will have a web presence. In addition to looking for individual therapists, call local agencies, like local
domestic abuse agencies, and ask them for guidance and recommendations as well.

Once you get to the point where you have some recommended healers in hand, the next question is how do you assess if a therapist or healer is qualified, competent, and appropriate for you?

**Qualifications**

As for **qualification**, qualified healers will be healers that have a specific expertise in the area of healing for which you seek assistance. If you are dealing with addictions, this person should have knowledge and experience dealing with addiction. If you are dealing with anger and hatred, then this person should have knowledge and experience dealing with anger and hatred. If you have been sexually assaulted, the person should have knowledge and experience with sexual violence. If you are working with your partner on a relationship, find a good relationship expert.

You get the idea.

You would not discuss your suicide ideations with your mechanic, unless he's been on a successful healing path. Likewise, you should not discuss car repairs with a psychologist, unless they know something about cars. It is the same with anything. Pay attention to specialization and expertise. Ensure that the help you are receiving is coming from someone who has studied and has knowledge, expertise, and experience in the issues you are seeking support with.

In this regard, education is important. Whether we are talking physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual, healing is a complicated thing and education helps a person understand these “things” at a deeper level.
How do you assess someone's qualifications?

Start by examining their educational credentials and the institutions who conferred these credentials. Specifically, you want to look for credentials from credible institutions. Relevant credentials include Masters level work in psychology, counselling, social work, family therapy, and so on.

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

In addition to specialization, finally, look for evidence that the practitioner keeps themselves up to date. Practitioners keep themselves up to date by going to conferences, doing workshops, and keeping current on the field by reading books and journal resources. You can ask potential counsellors directly if they do things to keep themselves up to date.²⁴

**Competency**

When you are looking for help, finding qualified help is important. But, relevant education and training is not the only thing you should be looking for. In addition to being qualified in the area you are seeking help in, the therapist should also be competent. This is an important consideration. Not all healers (doctors, psychologists,

therapists, life coaches, etc.) will, for whatever reason, be competent in their practice, even though some of them have years of “book learning” behind them. It is not safe to assume that just because a healer has gone to school, just because they are recognized by a professional organization, and just because they have their own practice, that they are sincere, effective, and competent in their chosen field. Healers come from the same families that you come from and deal with the same toxic environments that we all do. Consequently, they experience the same traumas as everybody else. A healer can read all the books in the world and take all the best classes from all the best universities, but their effectiveness and competence as a healer will be compromised if they haven’t fully healed themselves.

How do you tell if a healer is competent or not? Primarily, make sure they have resolved any issues they may have that are relevant to your concerns. You simply cannot expect an addictions counsellor who is addicted to shopping to help you with your addictions. You cannot expect a relationship counsellor who has been divorced several times to understand the nature of relationships. You cannot expect a psychotherapist who is obsessive/compulsive to help you with your disorder. You cannot expect a family counsellor whose own children have mental health issues to be able to guide you with you and yours. In general, you want to avoid healers who have unresolved issues of

If you are a therapist/healer you have to be aware, sometimes you need healing too. We've all been through trauma at some level, and we all need healing, including the healers. I (Gina) have learned as a domestic abuse and violence counsellor that my effectiveness as a therapist is directly related to my own level of well-being. In my early days, my childhood and adolescent trauma sometimes got in the way of me being an authentic and effective healer. As noted earlier, we all experience toxic socialization and we are all damaged as a result. No healer is going to be an expert when they first start, but if you deny your own need for healing, you will never be a competent and effective healing presence.
their own to deal with, especially when those issues are close to the ones you are dealing with.

How do you tell when a healer has done the work? You can ask them directly if they have ever been in therapy. You can even ask them if they had, or are still dealing with, any childhood issues. If they tell you they didn’t have any issues emerging from their childhood, find another therapist. Nobody grew up in a perfect environment and so we all have, or had, issues to deal with. Any therapist that denies this is clearly not self-aware. In addition, any therapist that cannot be open about their issues probably has not done the work necessary to resolve them. The bottom line is, anybody that is not self-aware and has not done the work will not be able to help you with your issues.

Of course, if you ask this question, be prepared for defensive responses. Some therapists will be uncomfortable with questions like this. Some may even get defensive and hostile. They will say you are crossing personal boundaries and not want to share with you their histories. To an extent, this is true. You should not expect to be able to constantly query your healer about their own personal histories. At the same time, they should be comfortable enough to make some general statements about the work they have done during the initial consultation, or in the first session or two, when rapport and trust are being established.

If their reaction is overly defensive, if they won’t tell you generally about the work they have done, chances are they have not done the work. Any therapist, and individual, who avoids answering your questions, any therapist that tries to tell you that they have not experienced emotional or psychological trauma, any therapist who

tells you they haven’t had issues to deal with, or any therapist who aggressively tries to put you down for asking, is either lying, self-delusional, or both. We have all got trauma to deal with and if a therapist is not open enough and self-aware enough to at least acknowledge that, they probably have not done the work needed to heal their trauma and damage, and they are probably still dealing with deep guilt and shame. If true, then it is very unlikely they will have done the work necessary to understand and heal their own trauma and damage. If they have not done work on their own trauma and damage, they will not be able to help you with you and yours.²⁷

This goes for professionals, friends, and family. If you are relying on help from individuals who are not grounded, informed, or healthy themselves, your healing will be compromised. People who are sick themselves will not be able to help you heal. People who have “done a little” might be able to “help a little,” but they will only be able to take you so far, which is fine, to a point. A person does not have to be a fully ascended master healer to help heal and connect. At the same time, they can only lift you as high “up the ladder” of healing and connection as they are. Don’t be afraid to assess the healer. Be honest with yourself about the help you are receiving.

²⁷ Note to therapists and healers, especially those working with emotions and psychology, if you ever want to be fully effective and live up to your potential as healer, you need to admit to yourself any trauma you have experienced and damage that has been done and do something about it. And note, it does not take much. Our daughter had her self-esteem destroyed by a single session with an incompetent and unqualified speech pathologist who made her feel stupid with a single word. It took over a decade to build up her self confidence in the face of school authority, and she still struggles from time to time. The damage from that single incident was profound. And that is just a single incident. Most of us have experienced far worse than her. If we do not acknowledge the damage we have experienced, we cannot heal. If we cannot heal, we cannot be an effective healer because our own issues will always block our understanding and corrupt the guidance we give to others. We often wonder what happened to that speech pathologist to make her think what she was doing was okay.
There is no point “hoping” for the best here. There is no point pretending to feel supported if you are not properly supported, and there is no point desperately clinging on to therapists, family members, or friends who are sick and stuck. In fact, doing that can cause more damage. Clinging to sick people in the hope that they will give you the support and assistance you need is dangerous, because they can do damage. They can do damage by a) offering you bad advice, b) lashing out when you trigger them, and c) undermining you in unconscious ways to prevent you from getting ahead of them. Obviously, if you are putting yourself in situations where more damage is being done, you won’t be making progress on the healing front. So, do not do it. If you do not trust the help you are getting is competent and qualified, find new help.

Finally, when determining competence, pay attention to any weird, unusual, or ref flag behaviours that might give you clues to their competence and mental/emotional state. Do they seek attention and approval? Are they cold and aloof? Are they paying attention and listening, or do they tune out, or keep glancing at their screens. Do they overemphasize the facade?

**Professional Boundaries**

In addition to being qualified and competent, professional healers should be just that, professional, and they should maintain professional boundaries. They are the healer, you are the client. They should not act like your friend; they should not replace your mother or father emotionally; they should not “have coffee” or “drink wine” with you, etc. It is not a healer’s job to fill your emotional and psychological holes. Rather, it is the healer’s job to heal you. It is their job to equip you with the skills and knowledge you need in order to
heal your own damage and patch your own holes. Healers and therapists teach you how to meet your own needs, find your own friends, navigate your own personal relationships, and fix your own damage. Their job is to guide you through a healing process and nothing more. Your therapist is not going to be able to do that effectively is they cross emotional boundaries with you, so be aware.

If you feel like your counsellor/healer is your friend, if you feel a budding emotional attachment to them, and especially if they’ve made you worried about them, something is wrong with the therapeutic relationship. Either you are projecting unmet needs onto the relationship, hoping the therapist will meet them, or they are projecting their needs on you, hoping you will meet theirs. Either way, appropriate professional boundaries are absent. Either way, it is a red flag. If your healer is not at least self-aware and educated enough to know that therapeutic relationships are not “friend” relationships or “partner” relationships or “parent” relationships, or if your healer is not powerful enough to prevent inappropriate attachments from developing, their ability to help you will be limited, and they may even cause you more long-term damage.

**Additional Thoughts on Getting Help**

Hopefully, this section on “getting help” has been enough to orient you to the importance of sometimes getting help. Hopefully, this section has also given you some information that can help you find the best type of help there is. The lesson of the unit is simple. If you need help, get it; but, be careful and attentive to the type of help you get. Not all help is competent or appropriately qualified to help you on your way. Moving forward, get help if you need it, but be discerning of the type of help you get. Ask the hard questions and watch for red
flags. If you do not get answers to your questions, and if you see some read flags, you may need to look for better help.

Before closing out this section on how to get help, there are a few more thoughts we would like to share.

**Number one, there is no shame in getting help**, even when it comes to seeking help for mental health issues. Remember, your body is a physical vehicle for Consciousness, like your car is a physical vehicle for your body. If your car is not working properly, you do not hide it in a corner and blame it for breaking down, you try and fix it yourself or you take it to someone qualified and competent who can. That is all there is to it. It is the same with your physical unit, your mind and body. Your physical unit is a vehicle for your Consciousness. Your physical unit is a complicated piece of bio-machinery that when broken, sometimes requires expertise and resources to fix. There is as much shame in that as there is shame in taking your car to a mechanic to fix, which is to say, none. If anybody tries to shame you for your illness, addiction, or whatever, whether that person is your mom, your dad, your partner, your spouse, a friend, a priest, avoid physical contact with them, and block them out of your awareness.

**Number two, you do not need to actually connect physically and in expensive therapeutic sessions with helping professionals to get help.** Sometimes you can “help yourself” by immersing yourself in information found in self-help books, videos, workshops, support groups, etc. These days, there is no shortage of information in this regard, so we encourage you to seek out help in whatever form you can find it. Once again, we remind you, be discerning. Just because somebody has a book, a blog, or a website does not mean they are qualified to help you heal and connect. Pay attention to qualifications,
signs of competence, and any red flags that might indicate underlying problems.

**Number three,** *if you do choose to seek out a professional healer, make sure you feel comfortable and safe with whatever professional you choose to work with.* If you do not feel comfortable or safe, either say something to the therapist, or find another therapist. Saying something to the therapist is always the best course of action because a competent healer will welcome feedback, will understand that they won’t be able to “connect” and support everybody, and will appreciate the opportunity to improve their practice. Keep in mind, not saying something to a professional is not doing them any favours. Not providing feedback to a healer prevents a competent and qualified healer from growing their own skill and expertise. Similarly, not providing feedback to incompetent or unqualified healers also prevents their growth. Your single feedback may not jolt and incompetent healer into self-reflection and action, but if they hear it enough times, from multiple diverse sources, it might. Don’t be silent about things. Being silent helps nobody. Always give constructive feedback to your therapist/healer.

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

Also, keep in mind, while competent therapists will welcome feedback, incompetent and unqualified therapists may be threatened by your feedback, even when it is presented in a positive fashion and with helpful intent. If a healer reacts defensively to feedback you
provide, this is a red flag. As already noted, if you say something to the therapist and they divert, blame you, react defensively, or aggressively push you back down, find another therapist immediately.\textsuperscript{28}

**Number four**, in addition to getting over shame, learning to help yourself, seeking out competent and qualified help, you also need to distinguish between authentic assistance and enabling. An authentic helper is somebody that challenges you, your thoughts, and your behaviours in order to help you heal and connect. An enabler is an individual who enables your bad behaviour, even when that behaviour is violent and toxic to yourselves and others. An enabler is someone who says “let’s go for a drink” even though they know you are struggling with addiction. An enabler is someone who says, “That is ok,” even when you have done something horribly wrong. Enablers enable. They enable sickness. They enable violence. They enable toxicity and disconnection even while ostensibly trying to help. Understand, being supportive does not mean enabling toxic behaviours. Support means love and acceptance while at the same time challenging wrong thoughts, wrong actions, and wrong environments. You do not want an enabler in your life. You want people who will support your healing journey and encourage you towards right action, right thought, and right environment.

\textsuperscript{28} Also note, if you are dealing with a healer who cannot deal with even constructive feedback, if you find someone that diverts, blames, reacts defensively, and aggressively pushes you back down, consider filing a formal complaint to the appropriate professional bodies that oversee your healer’s profession. These sorts of attacks might not sound serious, but they are. You can help shift professional awareness and ethical standards by making complaints. Complaints do not have to be mean. They just have to be feedback. If the therapist is not taking your feedback, talk to their professional association. Doing so will not only make it more likely for your therapist to actually listen, but it will also help shift professional awareness and ethical standards in a more positive direction.
**Moment of reflection.** Write down two headings in your HC Journal, one that says *My Enablers* and the other that says *Who I Enable*. Now, think about all the people in your life.

Under the *My Enablers* heading, write down the names of all the people in your life that enable your unhealthy and toxic behaviour. You might have trouble at first, but keep this page in mind as you read through this book. Add names as you progress through this workbook and realize who the enablers in your life are. Note, writing names here is not a licence to get angry. It is simply to make you aware. Once you are aware, it is easier to stop the enablers from enabling.

Under the *Who I Enable* heading, write down the names of the people that you enable. Do you know somebody that likes to lie? Do you avoid challenging them? Then you are enabling them. Do you know somebody with a drinking problem but do you avoid saying something to them? Then, you are enabling them. Write these names down and learn to interact without enabling.

Enabling, we have to say, is a pretty big problem, and one we cannot go into detail here. Here we’ll just briefly explore two questions, and let you figure the rest out for yourself. Question one is “why do people enable us?” Question two is, “why do we allow people to enable us?”

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

It is like when you are trying to quit smoking while your “friend” cajoles you with cigarettes. They do this because they benefit from your addiction. They want company with their addiction. They want a smoking buddy. They do not want you to quit smoking because if you do, they will feel bad because they are still smoking. You get the idea. People enable your toxic and unhealthy behaviour because they benefit from it in some way. When you pause to reflect, identify all the enablers in your life and ask yourself why they are doing it.

As for why we allow people to enable us, it is not because there is something wrong with us in any way, it is because we are rewarded emotionally, psychologically, and even financially by the people who enable (and benefit from our) toxic behaviour. For example, we gain acceptance and inclusion\(^9\) when we “have a drink with the boys.” We gain esteem, power,\(^{30}\) and inclusion in the “cool,” mean girl/boy groups when we engage in spiteful gossip. We get to play with new toys, or gulp down tasty substances, when we let the advertisers fuel our addictions. On the opposite side of this coin, we are shunned and often attacked when we refuse to participate any longer in the “mutually beneficial” enabling schemes.

It takes a lot of work, and a hard shift, to get us to the point where we are willing to push the enablers out; however, we must do it. If you are trying to quit smoking and you hang out with smokers, you will never

\(^9\) Inclusion and acceptance are one of our seven essential needs.

\(^{30}\) Esteem and power are also one of our seven essential needs.
quit. If you want to move up in your career, you need to surround yourself with those who can teach and inspire you. If we want to heal, you will need to pause and reflect and take some kind of action. You will need to find good healers and step out of your enabling relationships.

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

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

2. Most of the toxicity and trauma in your life occurs at the hands of family and, to a lesser extent, friend groups. If you think about it, it will be your family, your parents, your brothers and sisters, your aunts and uncles, and others who are “close to
you” who will have done the most harm. It is our parents who hit us the most. It is our parents who scream at us the most. It is our parents who shame us the most. It is family members and “friends” (acquaintances) who are the primary perpetrators of sexual assault.31 It’s in families where we tolerate and are subject to the most violence. If you find this hard to believe, consider that the home is the only place where it is legal to assault a human being that is smaller in stature and weaker in strength. That is, it is normal and legal for adults to “hit” their own children within “reasonable” limits of physical harm defined by a callous legal system. It is also still perfectly legal for parents to engage in mental and emotional torture of their children. And this does not even include an assessment of the psychological and emotional assault directed at us by our siblings. Families, and to a lesser extent friends, are the primary location of assault and trauma. It is not a judgment; it is just the way it is.32

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

32 Why are families the primary source of assault and trauma? There are several reasons for that. Number one, they are private spaces, and it is easy to hurt others in private, especially when these spaces are protected by codes of silence (“what happens in the family, stays in the family.”), as many family spaces are. Number two, assault is encouraged in families. “Spare the rod and spoil the child,” as the bible says. Number three, assault is modelled in families. Our parents did it to us and through this modelling, we learn to do it to our children. Number four, emotional trauma travels downhill. When a parent comes home after experiencing violence and trauma at work (a so-called “hard day”), they take it out on safe targets, i.e., targets that cannot defend themselves and fight back, i.e., their children. There is no safer target than a small and defenceless child, in a private family space, or a spouse silenced by mafia like codes that say “keep it in the family.” We learn from our parents that it is OK to assault weak and defenceless targets and when we need the emotional outlet, we do what was done to us, often with impunity because it is in private and nobody will talk about.
3. This tendency for families to be the primary source of assault and damage leads us to the third reason why we do not recommend you go to your family for healing guidance which is, your family knows better than anybody on the planet how to hurt you. They know your sensitivities; they know your weaknesses; they know your soft spots; they know your buttons. They know, in short, exactly what to do to hurt you. Do not be a fool about this. When they are sick and disconnected themselves, when they are struggling with their own emotional/psychological damage, when they are defensive and repressed, they will do it, sometimes in subtle and hard to identify ways, and sometimes with overt violence and direct emotional, verbal, psychological, or even physical assault. They won’t necessarily do it consciously. They will do it a) in self-defence, b) because they are projecting their anger and resentment, and c) because they are sick, desperate, and in need of healing themselves. However, whether they “mean it” or not does not matter. It is important to understand, an assault is an assault is an assault; it will damage you and undermine your healing progress no matter who it comes from. In fact, an assault by an individual whom you are more open to (i.e. family or friend) and knows your sensitivities, weakness, and buttons is likely going to be more damaging than an assault by a total stranger.

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

Speaking of finding help from books, the rest of this book, and the rest of the Lightning Path for that matter, is devoted to help you heal and connect. We do this in this workbook by running you through the rest of the LP HEALING Framework which you can use to think about and guide your healing process. For example, after reading this book and realizing how important the environment is, you might realize your environment is toxic. Realizing this, you can make an effort to improve your environments either on your own, or by asking your therapist/healer to help you reduce toxicity in the environment. Keep in mind, the LP HEALING framework is not a therapy, it is a guide to help you and your therapist/healer focus on those things most important and most relevant to you. Focusing and dealing with what’s important builds an excellent foundation for healing and connection.

**Study Questions**

1. Healing is important, and so is getting help, especially if you need it to heal. What are some ways that you can tell if you need help or not? Do you think you personally need physical, emotional, or psychological healing assistance? If so, why? Right your answers down to these question in your HC Journal and share with the group or online.

2. How do you find/choose a competent healer? What are qualification and competence and why are they important?
What are some red flags to watch out for? Have you had experiences with incompetent and unqualified healers? Write your answers down in your HC Journal, and share with your group or online.

3. What is the difference between authentic assistance and enablers. Why is it important to identify enablers? How you identify enablers in your life, or the life of a client? Go further now and look at your own behaviour. Are you an enabler of others? If so, what emotional needs are you getting met when you enable the toxicity of others. Write your answer down in your HC Journal.

4. Why does the LP discourage people from getting help from friends and family? Do you agree? Do you think there are any circumstances when it is appropriate to get help from friends and family?
“E” is for Healthy Environment

In the last unit, we looked at the issue of help. There we emphasized that sometimes it may be necessary to get help. You should understand, getting help is not an indication of personal weakness, nor is it something to be ashamed of. Getting helps is a reflection of how bad the damage can sometimes be. As we said in the last unit, if you think you need help, get help. If you do need help, look for healers who are competent and qualified to help you with your issues and look for red flags that warn you when the healer may be dealing with their own issues, and not in a position to help you with your own.

Now that you understand the importance of getting good and qualified help, it is time to move on. In this unit, we are going to look at the second plank in the LP HEALING framework which is “E” for environment—specifically, the need for a healthy non-toxic, non-violent, safe, clean, healing environments. We will just say this directly. If you are going to heal the trauma and damage done to you by Toxic Socialization, if you are going to prevent further damage, hell, if you are going to avoid damage altogether, you are going to need to have an environment suitable for psychic health, healing, and also connection. On the LP we call this Right Environment. Right environment is a clean, non-toxic environment that supports and makes healing and reconnection possible.

What does an environment suitable for psychic health and healing look like? Environments suitable for healing and reconnection are safe and healing. Safe environments are non-toxic, non-violent environments where wounds are protected and trauma will not reoccur. Healing environments are environments filled with people who understand wounds, and will treat them properly in order to
support the healing process. Let us look at each of these in turn, starting with the requirement for safe environment.

**Right Environments are Safe Environments**

As for the need to create safe environments for psychic health and healing, understand, violence of all forms causes trauma. Physical violence causes physical trauma. Emotional violence causes emotional trauma. Psychological violence causes psychological trauma. If you punch somebody, whether that is with a fist, a word, a dirty look, or an angry voice, you do damage to their physical unit.

This is important.

**Toxic environments**, that is, environments where there is ongoing psychic or physical assault, cause everything from alcohol dependence and abuse, through eating disorders, personality disorders, depression, and even suicide. Toxic environments are implicated in

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37 Gabriel Behr Gomes Jardim et al., “Influence of Childhood Abuse and Neglect Subtypes on Late-Life Suicide Risk beyond Depression,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 80
increased criminality,\textsuperscript{38} dysfunctional personal relationships,\textsuperscript{39} and even serious cognitive deficits, like lower IQ.\textsuperscript{40}

If you want to avoid ongoing trauma, if you want to heal your wounds, heck, if you want to create environments where trauma does not occur in the first place, you have to make sure your environments are safe and free of violence.

This seems like a no-brainer, really. If somebody breaks their arm, you do not put them into a ring of prize fighters, you take them to the hospital where their wound will be properly treated, and you send them to a safe home where they can rest and heal. If you break your leg falling off a bike, you do not continue to ride your bike in the park.


\textsuperscript{39}Julia C. Poole, Keith S. Dobson, and Dennis Pusch, “Do Adverse Childhood Experiences Predict Adult Interpersonal Difficulties? The Role of Emotion Dysregulation,” \textit{Child Abuse & Neglect} 80 (June 1, 2018): 123–33, doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.03.006.

If you gash your hand with a kitchen knife, you do not go dip it into your toilet. When you are physically injured, you settle down, take it easy, and avoid further strain. When you are physically injured, you make sure you do not enter into dirty and filthy environments because of the further harm and increased risk of infection. When dealing with physical wounds, you make sure you enter an environment that is safe and clean.

Now, while the need to be in a safe and clean environment in order to heal physical wounds is an obvious no-brainer, it is not so obvious when it comes to our emotional, psychological, and spiritual wounds, i.e., our Psychic Wounds. When we are wounded psychically, there is very little awareness of the need to be in a healthy and safe environment in order to treat the wound and prevent further damage. In fact, often even serious psychic wounds are simply ignored and we are sent back, or we send ourselves back, into toxic and unclean environments where psychic trauma is likely to reoccur, and damage is likely to get worse.

That makes no sense. If you want to heal your psychological, emotional, and spiritual wounds, you can’t do that. If you want to avoid trauma and infection, you need to move yourself to a safe and clean environment and you need to protect the wound. If you do not, then, just like with physical wounds, you will re-traumatize the and making it worse.

This is important and bears repeating. You cannot heal your physical wounds if you re-traumatize them and expose them to what is causing

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By definition, a Psychic Wound is an emotional, psychological, or spiritual wound caused by emotional, psychological, or spiritual assault severe enough to cause neurological damage the Bodily Ego. Put another way, a psychic wound is caused by an assault severe enough to damage and shift neurological programming and pathways in the brain.

https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Psychic_Wound
the infections. Similarly, you cannot heal your psychic wounds if you re-traumatize them and expose them to ongoing abuse and infection. You cannot heal if you work in a toxic environment. You cannot heal if your social groupings are toxic. You cannot heal if your home is toxic and violent, in any way. It does not matter how many times a week you see your expensive and “knowledgeable” therapist; if you are going back to a toxic environment at home or at work you will never ever heal.

Establishing right environment both inside and outside the home is of critical importance for healing and connecting not only for yourself, but the entire planet. To establish right environment, to create environments where wounds are protected and can heal, do the following:

1. detoxify your home environments so you are not exposed to toxicity behaviours (violence, aggression, etc.) and wrong thoughts at home.
2. stay away from/get out of other toxic environments that might infect you.
3. get away from toxic people who assault you and cause you additional harm.

To help shift your realities towards right environment, we recommend a total commitment to non-violence in your life. Non-violence means that no violence is allowed. In a non-violent environment, there is no yelling, no name-calling, no emotional assault, no physical violence, and no aggression of any kind. Committing to non-violence provides an easy to understand, rock

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41 And reconnection, we might add.
solid foundation upon which to build healthy and clean psychic environments where healing can naturally occur.

**Environmental Assessments**

To help you with your goal of creating right environment, the LP provides several online instruments that you can use to help you identify, assess, and reduce the toxicity of your environment. The LP assessments include the following:

The “**How Toxic is My World?**” assessment. This assessment can give you an indication of how toxic your childhood, adolescent, current domestic, social, and even work environments are. You can use the survey to assess your childhood, home, work, school, and social environments. The survey gives you a Toxicity Score for each of these environments. To move towards right environment, work to lower your toxicity score.

The “**How Violent Am I?**” assessment. This assessment can give you an indication of the ways you contribute to the toxicity in your environments. Obviously, if you are going to work towards right environment, you will have to address your own toxic and negative behaviours.

Finally, the “**How Chaotic is my World?**” assessment. This assessment can give you an indication of how chaotic your home environment is, and some hints on what to do to work towards calm and safe environment.

You can access all these self-assessments and more by visiting

[https://www.lightningpath.org/self-assessments/](https://www.lightningpath.org/self-assessments/)
Note, if these assessments trigger guilt and shame because you find you are guilty of hurting and harming others, take a deep breath and relax. This is not about the chains of judgment, guilt, and shame. This is about the freedom of truth, alignment, and release. If you want to be released from guilt and shame, do not block awareness of it, because that will block forward progress and eventually cause illness. Instead, simply acknowledge it exists, determine the source of the guilt and shame, atone if necessary, and change your behaviours so they are in alignment with your own Highest Self. It is that simple. As we will discuss in more detail in Lightning Path Workbook Three: Connection, relief from guilt and shame only comes when you face the truth and change your thoughts and behaviours to be more in alignment with your own Highest Self.

And just to be clear, we have all done things to be ashamed of. Because of ignorance, psychological trauma, and profound disconnection, we have all harmed other living beings, often even our own children. As we will see below, there is no point in denying this fact or making this into a contest. If we want to move forward as a species, we must all acknowledge our toxic actions so that we can change our behaviours, and clear guilt and shame so we can connect. Anybody that tells you differently does not know what they are talking about.

**Right Environments are Healing Environments**

Creating a clean and safe environment where your psychic wounds are protected and where you can heal is the first step in the healing process. If you do not establish a safe place at least in your home, you will continue to undergo damage, and you will struggle with other aspects of the healing process.
Making your environments safe is only step one of the process. Making your environments safe is like building the hospital where you go to treat your wounds. Once the hospital is built, you have to fill it with people who know how to treat and heal wounds.

Obviously, you cannot fill your home or your work spaces with nurses, doctors, and psychologists who can help you treat your wound, but you can teach yourself and others what is necessary to treat and heal psychic wounds. It is not that hard. In fact, its actually common sense. Everybody knows what to do when you are physically wounded. When you are physically wounded, you do three things. Number one, you protect the wound from further damage. Number two, you clean the wound to prevent infection. Number three, you treat the wound and give it the support it needs to heal.

You can see this basic strategy in play when you cut your hand with a kitchen knife. First, you will protect the wound from further damage. You will drop the knife, cover it with cloth of some sort, and try and stop the bleeding. If the wound is not too bad and you can treat the wound yourself, your next step will be to clean the wound of any dirt and grime to make sure that no bacteria gets in and causes infection. Finally, you will treat the wound by applying an antibiotic cream and by scaffolding the wound (applying bandages or stitches) to help the wound heal.

To heal a physical wound, you protect, clean, and treat the wound.

This knowledge is so basic that even children know what to do.

If you do not protect, clean, and treat a wound, the wound, especially if it is severe, is not going to heal properly. If you poke at your cut with a stick, if you jump into a dirty pool with a bunch of open wounds, if you just get back up and start riding your bike again after you have broken your leg, your physical wounds will never heal. In
fact, if you do any of these things, your wounds will get worse. It is as simple and straightforward as that. If you want to heal your physical wounds you must clean, protect, and treat the wound so the wound can properly heal.

Despite all the complicated psychology spit up over the years, treating your psychic wounds is exactly the same. When you receive a psychic wound, whether that wound is emotional, psychological, or spiritual, you must protect, clean, and treat the wound. Of course, the process is a little different when it comes to psychic wounds, but not really.

Say, for example, you are a parent or teacher and you witness one child calling another child names. If you consider words as little daggers that stab you in the emotions, then the first thing you do is stop the stabbing and protect the wound. In this case, you would separate the children to ensure no further verbal stabbing occurs.

Simple.

Once you have protected the wound from further damage, then the next step is to clean the wound. In the case of an emotional stabbing, cleaning the wound will require not punishment, which will just make everything worse for all involved, but proper treatment for both parties, and a sincere apology from the perpetrating student.

Let us be clear here. Despite what psychologists like B. F. Skinner might have said, punishment does not work. Over the long term, punishment makes things much worse. Punishes increase trauma in the perpetrator being punished and it teaches the victim that the solution to violence is always more violence. Punishing others only makes sense if your overall goal is to ensure the perpetuation of violence in society. Otherwise, it is absurd. You have to treat both

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parties because the perpetrator is a perpetrator not because they are
mean or evil, but because they are also victims of violence and trauma,
often in their own home. If you fail to acknowledge and treat that
trauma, if you simply punish the perpetrator, you are failing to deal
adequately with the issues and perpetuating interpersonal violence.

After both students have both been treated, a sincere No Buts
Apology from the perpetrator helps clean the wound of any negative
thought and emotion, so that thought and emotion does not linger
and cause infection.

Finally, once the wound is protected and cleaned, you have to treat
the wound. Treating the wound, as you know, often involves
scaffolding the wound. When you scaffold the wound, you give it extra
support to ensure it heals properly. Physically, scaffolding involves
creams, bandages, stitches, casts, and so on. Psychically, scaffolding
involves, as appropriate, hugs, kisses, care, concern, love, support,
extra attention, and extra kind words until the wound is completely
healed. In the case of a child, and presuming this is the only psychic
assault this child will receive for a period of time, who has been
repeatedly stabbed with a verbal knife, a hug, love from the parents,
and additional attention and support at school for a short time should
be sufficient to heal the wound.

And that is it.

Conceptually, it is that simple. If you want to heal and connect, build
a safe environment and fill it with people who a) are not going to run

44A No Buts Apology is an apology where you say “I am sorry, I was wrong.” And
That is all. You do not justify the behaviour by saying things like “but you deserved
it” or “you made me mad.” You do not say “but you did the same to me last week.”
You simply acknowledge your behaviour was wrong, and promise to not do it again.

45Of course, this is not a safe assumption. The reality is, children are constantly
assaulted from all sides, even their parents.
around assaulting everyone and b) know how to treat psychic wounds. If you train everybody around you, or at least surround yourself, with people who know how to treat psychic wounds, and if you create safe and healthy environments, you will go a long way towards establishing right environment where all your psychic wounds can finally heal.

Of course, the above is an ideal conceptualization of a treatment process for psychic wounds. Almost all the subtlety and detail of protecting, cleaning, and treating psychic wounds is left out. This is an important consideration, especially since most people are not dealing with a single psychic wound. Most people are dealing with multiple wounds that they have incurred over a lifetime of assault, and that have become seriously infected as a consequence of our failure to properly treat them. This means that in almost all cases, a little care, attention, and affection is not going to be enough. In most cases, extended effort will be required. If this is the case with you and yours, remember to get that therapy. Find a qualified therapist who can help you deal with your emotional infections, and put in the time necessary to protect, clean, and treat your wounds.

**Self-care**

Note that if you cannot find a therapist, cannot afford one, or just do not want one because you would rather do it yourself, you can also engage in a self-care and self-treatment regime. Self-care helps you deal with the toxicity in your life, relieve stress, and treat psychological, sociological, and spiritual damage. Self-treatment helps you heal your psychic wounds.

Self-care is not something to be dismissed. It is a critical part of the healing regime, even when you have your own therapist. When the doctor sends you home with a cast on your broken leg, you go home
and take care of yourself. The doctor will have given you advice, of course, but ultimately you are the one engaged in your own care.

These days, lots of people are talking about self-care and giving out advice for the those interested in psychic wellness, so we will not rehearse the details here. Just remember, the point of the care is to treat your psychic wounds. Be careful with the advice that you get. Be discerning. Corporations that seek to profit from your trauma can sometimes lead you to think that buying things (like scented candles and yoga mats) are a necessary prerequisite of self-help regimes. While scented candles and yoga mats might be nice, when appropriate, it is important to remember that the goal is treating psychological, sociological, and spiritual damage. Just like a scented candle won’t help much with a broken leg or a cut hand, scented candles and other forms of products are often only peripherally related to psychic healing. If you want to heal, you need to focus on the core psychic wounds and infections that undermine health and connection. Focusing on that core involves cleaning the wound, clearing infection, and preventing further damage. Do not get drawn away from this core truth by corporations who just want your money. Stay focused on the core need to clean, protect, and treat.

Speaking about the core treatment, one ancient and proven way to help clean wounds and clear out psychic infections is with positive affirmations and mantras. In this regard, a simple Affirmation of Self can be used to help clean out the wound. An Affirmation of Self (AOS) is an affirmation of the power, light, and divinity of your own Highest Self. An AOS is like a disinfectant wipe you use to clean out dirt and grime from your psychic wounds. To be effective, an AOS should be something simple to remember and repeat like

"An Affirmation of Self (AOS) is an affirmation of the power, light, and divinity of your own Highest Self."

I am powerful. I am healthy. I am beautiful. I am strong.
I am worthy. I am connected (to Self). I am beautiful. I am strong.

You can use affirmations like this to help heal yourself. Whenever you feel assaulted, clean out the negative ideas and the emotional gunk before it gets infected by reciting an AOS, preferably in a hot bath, on a nice nature walk, or something like that, until the wound is clear and you feel better. Also, keep in mind, you need to protect the wound. If you are assaulted by someone, tell them not to do it again and if they do not comply, stay away from them. Just like dipping an open wound into a cesspool will cause infection, getting re-assaulted will cause psychic infection. If you want to heal, stay away from toxicity.

You can also use affirmations like this to help others clean out their wounds and prevent infection. Find good ones and teach them to your kids, your clients, and your healing groups. Use them for even the smallest psychic wounds and repeat often until the wound is clean and healed. You can even use them to treat chronic infections. In cases of serious and chronic infection, an AOS should be repeated daily, and often, in relaxing situations.

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47 We understand that leaving toxic environments is not easy and that there are many confounding factors to overcome before one can escape from them. Nonetheless, if you want to heal, you need to protect yourself and get out of toxic environments. This is core truth and necessary for healing.

48 When you notice someone engaging in self inflicted toxic behaviours, try to shift their perception by pointing out something positive to them. If they say, “I’m such a loser!” respond back, “No, I think you are a kind and gentle human being,” or something like that.
Resistance

At this point, the nature of psychic wounds, and the need to clean protect, and treat these wounds, should be clear. On an ideal world, this simple knowledge would go a long way towards preventing psychic infections and healing damage. On an ideal world, we would simply stop assaulting each other and our children, and properly treat the wounds. Unfortunately, the struggle to heal does not end with enlightened realization of the nature of psychic suffering. Even though we now know there is a problem, and even though we now know how to fix it, there will be resistance to this idea and its implementation. You may experience this resistance from your own family, friends, and even coworkers at work. When you try and tell them about creating a healthy environment or a safe space, they may ignore you, make fun of you, or even, if they are very toxic, engage in psychic assault. If you are not expecting it, you might find yourself quite surprised. You may even experience this resistance internally for your self, possibly doubting, denying, and even attempting to dismiss the information you read in this book.
The Evidence is Subtle

There are several reasons why we experience resistance to creating healthy environments. One very rational reason is that people struggle to accept the reality of psychic wounds, because the evidence of these wounds can often be subtle and easy to miss. Every parent can see when a child has a physical cut because a physical cut and the danger it poses is obvious. However, psychic cuts are not that obvious. We cannot see emotional, psychological, or spiritual wounds like we see physical wounds. Beyond tears and a sad face, or subtle psychological and behavioural changes, there is no immediate and obvious physical evidence for even debilitating psychic wounds.

What is more, failure to treat psychic wounds can lead to **Psychic Sepsis**. Psychic sepsis is a serious and life-threatening psychic infection caused by failure to properly protect, clean, and treat a psychic wound. Psychic sepsis manifests as various forms of, what the psychiatric establishment refers to as “mental illness.” Psychic sepsis often only shows up much later. A child that is in an emotionally abusive environment at home may not develop cutting behaviours until they are twelve, or even later. An anxiety infection (i.e. anxiety disorder) caused by chronic assault at home, in the classroom, or in your workplace, may develop gradually over the course of a few years. The time span between initial trauma and manifestation of symptoms can make it difficult to connect the infection the original trauma.

Thus, without the immediate and obvious evidence of a physical wound, and with the fact that infection and sepsis can only show up later, the reality of psychic wounds is easy to overlook, ignore, and even dismiss.
The System Wants you Broken

To be sure, the “subtle” reality of psychic assault and damage is easy to miss; but surely once you understand the nature of psychic trauma and psychic infection, the whole thing should be obvious, and you will cease and desist from resistance. This is not rocket science, after all.

Unfortunately, even when you spell it out simply and explicitly, people will still resist. They do this not out of spite, but because they have been socialized within a toxic system that a) explicitly teaches them to ignore and belittle psychic suffering and that b) actually encourages them to endure and enact psychic assault on others. Within this system, even physical assault on defenceless children, euphemized as “spanking,” is tolerated, and even encouraged by most parents, despite the profound damage that it does.

You can see how the system teaches us to ignore and belittle people with psychic wounds by looking at male socialization practices. When male children are hurt in any way, they are often taught to pretend that they are not hurt, and to suppress the tears and sad faces that are the direct evidence of their emotional pain. Boys, and men, are told to “get over it,” “toughen up,” and “grow up.” Those who cannot are belittled and often feminized with statements like “Oh you are such a girl.” And it is not just boys. Women who want to enter the “real world,” especially the corporate world, are encouraged to suppress and amputate their emotional responses just like men. Women who do not are looked down upon as a less reliable “investment.”

It is hard to take psychic wounds seriously when you have been conditioned to ignore your wounds and make fun of other people who

49Scott Clement, “Millennials like to Spank Their Kids Just as Much as Their Parents Did,” Washington Post, 2015.

are injured. Unfortunately, however, it is much worse than that. Human beings are even counselled to embrace psychic assault because the psychic trauma presumably “builds character” and “makes us stronger.” Who has not heard the phrase “my suffering has made me who I am today.” Even so-called “positive” psychology has gotten in on the act of embracing trauma because, as they say on their website, “crises reveals character.”

This is, of course, a pile of malarkey. Saying that “crises reveals character” or that “what does not kill us makes us stronger” is like saying gashing your legs open makes you a better person. It does not. Trauma damages you, period. It is the height of human absurdity to suggest that psychic trauma is actually good for you. All the evidence suggests that psychic trauma does serious and debilitating damage. If there is a ever a “silver lining,” it is in spite of the trauma, not because of it.

Why are we counselled to accept damage and embrace future trauma? Because damaged people are easier to control and disconnected people are easier to fool. Damaged people are easier to insert into boring, meaningless jobs and easy to manipulate by nefarious political actors. Disconnected people can be led around like sheep. This is why some representatives of Western churches, which have been elite affairs since the Emperor Constantine created the Catholic Church, encourage you to hit your children with sayings like “spare the rod, spoil the child.” This is why politicians like American Jeff Sessions makes fun of “safe spaces” and emotional care. This is why elite actors like Donald Trump say they “love the poorly educated.” They

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52 For an overview of the research, see Sosteric, “Toxic Socialization.”
do not want children to be safe. The Power’s That Be (PTB) want humans to be damaged and diminished by constant emotional trauma because that makes humans easier to manipulate and control. If we want to stop that, one of the most important things we have to do is to stop abusing each other right away, so we can all heal the damage and fully reconnect.

Shame and Guilt

So far we have dealt with two reasons for resistance to creating healthy environments and learning basic healing skills. Reason one is simple ignorance. Reason two is a system that encourages violence because that violence diminishes us and makes us easier to control.

A third and final reason we might experience resistance to the idea of creating safe, healing environments is because of shame and guilt. What are shame and guilt and why do we experience them? More to the point, why is shame and guilt and obstacle to health and healing? In order to understand this you have to understand that shame and guilt are Steering Emotions. As explained in The Great Awakening: Concepts and Techniques for Successful Spiritual Practice, steering emotions are emotions that are triggered by your higher Self to help identify problem spots and to encourage aligned behaviour. When we do something that is out of alignment, we feel bad. When we do something that is in alignment, we feel good. These good and bad feelings help steer us towards alignment when we are disconnected.

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Ideally, when we feel shame and guilt, we identify the bad behaviour that is causing the shame and guilt and change that behaviour, thereby bringing us more into alignment. When we do that, the guilt and shame goes away. Unfortunately, because the damage is subtle and easy to miss, and because The System encourages violence, we often do not change our behaviour. When we do not change, when, for whatever reasons, we keep engaging in wrong action by, for example, assaulting our children, hurting others, stealing from the poor, etc., the guilt and shame build up. Over time, the guilt and pain become unbearably. When guilt and shame become unbearable, we do whatever we can to avoid feeling that guilt and shame.

Not to compare people in a negative way to dogs, but it is like confronting a puppy who has chewed up the furniture while you are away at work. A puppy who has destroyed the house will not want to look at the furniture because to do so reminds it that it did something wrong. To avoid guilt and shame, the canine will pretend the reality it created does not exist. It will lower its head, avert its eyes, and try anything to take its attention of the crime. It is the same way with humans. Humans who have done bad things will do anything to avert attention from the bad things they have done.

Of course, we humans have a more sophisticated emotional and cognitive apparatus than dogs, though perhaps some might argue otherwise. When it comes to avoiding reality, we have more tools in our tool box than your typical canine companion. When guilt and shame become painful, there are four things you can do to avoid reality and help alleviate guilt and shame.

Number one, we can repress the emotions down so we are not aware of them and do not feel them at all.
Number two, we can pretend that our actions are not so bad after all. We can pretend that spanking our kids makes them behave better (spare the rod, spoil the child). We can pretend that hurting others really makes them stronger.

Number three, we can blame the victim for being broken or weak. This is what happens when a parent, for example, blames their daughter’s eating disorder on a “predisposition” rather than the toxic and controlling parenting that produces this result.

Finally, number four, we can forget the events really happened. As long as we do not remember and think about our actions, it is easier to suppress and repress guilt. This is what my mother does when she forgets that she used a belt to whip my brother and I when she was feeling furiously mad.

Obviously, if someone you know is repressing, pretending, blaming, and forgetting, the last thing they are going to want to do is face reality and change it. They are also not going to want to create a safe and healing environment. Why should they? It is not needed. They do not feel bad after all (they repress). Their actions were not as harmful as you say (they pretend). And besides, if you were not such a weakling, the problem would just go away. They will resist even admitting there is a problem because to do so would require them to, well, admit there is a problem.

We can understand why they would do this.

If they admit there is a problem, a psychological cascade occurs. If they admit there is a problem they have to admit they did something wrong. If they admit they did something wrong, they can no longer blame, repress, pretend, and forget. If they can no longer blame, repress, pretend, and forget, all the guilt and shame comes flooding back in. Depending on how much and how long they have suppressed
those painful emotions, it could be substantial, like a tsunami. If there is a lot of repressed guilt and shame, the resistance might be so profound that it will seem like they are living in an alternate reality from you, and they are. In order to avoid the experience of guilt and shame, they will literally repress, pretend, blame, and forget their way to an alternate reality. Trying to get through that resistance will feel like banging your head against a brick wall.

So what do you do? If it is someone else, not much. The psychological and emotional obstacles may simply be too high to overcome, in which case your only solution may be to find a different environment and, if you love them, continue to work on your self, model healthy ways of being, and pray for some kind of miracle to happen.

Forgive Yourself

If guilt and shame is an issue for you, if it is causing you to resist doing the things you need to do to heal and connect, then understand, the only way to clear that guilt and shame is to face the reality of your actions and forgive yourself for your trespasses. Do not be hard on yourself. You did the things you did not because you are bad or evil but because you were ignorant of the truth and traumatized/damaged by the System. There is no sense in wasting psychic energy by dwelling on things you cannot change, or trying to repress it all down. To move forward, just change your behaviour, get help if you need to, and quit participating in the toxicity. True, there may be a lot of trauma and damage to heal from, but you will not be able to do that if you are rendered inactive and unable to move by intense guilt and shame. If you want to release yourself from the chains of guilt and shame, if you want to change your world, if you want to change the world, do not repress guilt and shame. Acknowledge your bad actions,
forgive yourself your trespasses, and move forward and live a more aligned life.

To recap, if we want to heal we need to understand that psychic assaults cause serious psychic wounds, we need to understand the basic treatment strategy for dealing with those wounds, and we have to create safe environments where these wounds can be protected and treated so they heal and do not become infected. In theory, this strategy for healing is relatively straightforward; however, because

1) psychic wounds can be subtle and easy to miss,
2) serious infections can take years to develop,
3) we are encouraged to ignore the trauma and embrace the damage as if it is actually good for us, and
4) guilt and shame can cause us to avoid even acknowledging toxic environments,

...we can experience a lot of resistance to the whole notion of toxic environments from those around us, and maybe even ourselves. In many (perhaps most) of our environments, even asserting the desire to take psychic trauma seriously by establishing right environment can be met with hostility and ridicule. Because there is still a general ignorance and resistance, especially amongst the older generation, it is not always possible to completely avoid toxic environments and toxic/violent people. However, you should at least create a healthy space in your home environment where you can protect, clean, and treat your wounds and later, work to connect. Ideally, your entire home should be a safe and non-toxic space, but if all you can do is create a one-room cocoon, that is fine too. If, for whatever reason, you cannot even create a safe room in your own home, you may need to accept a different life course, terminate toxic relationships, find
others places to live, and/or seek professional help. Remember, if you take your injuries and go swimming in a dirty cesspool, your wounds will get infected, and you will never heal and connect.

**Study Questions**

1. What are the reasons why we are not aware, ignore, and fail to treat even serious psychic wounds? Why do we expose ourselves to ongoing toxicity and trauma? Have you fallen victim to

2. How do you detoxify your environment? What is right environment? How do you establish right environment? What are some of the challenges you might face when trying to detoxify your environment?

3. Why do psychic wounds become infected? What can you do to prevent psychic wounds from becoming infected? What is an Affirmation of Self? What sorts of wounds is it intended to clean/cure.

4. What are the four things can humans do to avoid the guilt and shame that comes from wrong action? Provide examples. What does it mean to say that in order to relieve guilt and shame you must “face and forgive?”
“A” is for Addiction

So far in this workbook we have looked at the issue of getting help if you need it, and the importance of safe and non-toxic environments to the healing, connection, and human development process. We have emphasized the need to focus on creating a healthy, protective, and nurturing environment so you can protect, clean, and treat your wounds, especially when they get infected. We have also said, if you need help, get help. Getting help may be particularly important if you find your wounds are infected, or you are dealing with serious emotional sepsis. When wounds are infected, right environment, mindfulness, and simple affirmations may not be sufficient. When wounds are infected, you may need competent and professional help.

This is especially true when it comes to the third point in the LP HEALING Framework, addictions. An addiction is anything upon which you, or rather your physical unit, has a biological, neurological, psychological, or emotional dependency. An addiction is something you do that you cannot stop. As you will see, you can get addicted to substances (i.e. money, heroin, cocaine, alcohol, opioids, etc.), behaviours (running, sex smartphones), and even people (i.e. relationships).

How do you tell if you are addicted to something? The test for addiction attachments is quite simple. If there is a substance or activity that you cannot stop, and that you justify and make excuses for, you are addicted. You have an addiction to alcohol if you cannot stop drinking for any significant length of time. You have an addiction to shopping if your day is not complete without a consumer purchase of some sort. You have an addiction to gambling if you compromise

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your financial security and obligations to feed your fix. You are addicted to social media if you spend all day long interacting with your screen.

What causes addictions? In the not-too-distant past, scientists explained it by blaming the “addicts” themselves, basically suggesting that there was something wrong with them. Addicts were “bad, crazy, ignorant people” who were addicted because they were weak, had moral failings, or were mentally ill. Of course, scientists have now admitted that there is no such thing as an “addictive personality” and that genes do not play a prominent role; unfortunately, science’s understanding of the causes of addiction hasn’t advanced that much beyond this appalling “blame the victim” strategy. Nowadays, folks are just subtler about it, blaming an individual’s defective neuro-mechanisms, their lack of “psychosocial skills,” the presence of “outlying traits” (read “abnormal”), how individuals interpret their “experiences,” and even difficulty with “self-regulation.” As one scientist puts it:

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


62 Presumably, if one “interprets” an experience the “wrong” way, one can become addicted. Szalavitz, “The Addictive Personality Isn’t What You Think It Is.”
When genes are abnormal, brain enzymes and other proteins that are involved with neurotransmitter function may be abnormal. For example, the production (synthesis) or breakdown (metabolism) of dopamine is the responsibility of various enzymes. If the person has a genetic defect such that the enzymes that make or break down dopamine are faulty, then the amount of dopamine in the brain will be abnormal. Also, the response of that person’s brain dopamine systems to changes in the environment may be abnormal as well. In the mesolimbic system such abnormal functions of dopamine may lead to distorted mood, such as too little pleasure from positive experiences or too much pain from negative interactions. The person with such a genetic defect may be especially susceptible to the ability of cocaine to elevate brain dopamine to levels that are closer to “normal.”

For the record, I find this author’s “self-regulation” thesis to be absurd. Her notion that addictions are “developmental disorders,” “learning problems,” that can be “outgrown,” is merely a restatement of “blame the victim” arguments she herself attempts to debunk, i.e., old “morality” or “character disorder” arguments. We have to say, the mental and spiritual gymnastics required to support and deny the exact same position are impressive.

Although, to be fair, she does get close. According to her “…addiction is a learned relationship between the timing and pattern of the exposure to substances or other potentially addictive experiences and a person’s predispositions, cultural and physical environment, and social and emotional needs.” She even points directly at the environment when she mentions autism and maltreated children: “solutions. In fact, severely neglected children often develop autistic-like behaviour such as constantly rocking as a way to soothe or stimulate themselves—and maltreated children often appear to have ADHD because they are hypervigilant to “distractions” like the sound of a door slamming.” Maia Szalavitz, Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2016). In the end, however, she finally says addiction is a “learning disorder” and “compulsives self-medication,” thereby placing the blame squarely in the individual’s lap, where The System needs it to be. and now what it really is which is a perfectly reasonable adaptation to a highly toxic environment.

Are “bad genes,” “brain illness,” lack of social skills, or “faulty” readings or reality the cause of addiction? Absolutely not. All these explanations blame the victim while ignoring social, political, and economic contexts. These explanations conveniently and intentionally divert attention from the real culprit causing addiction, which is our toxic environments, toxic societies, toxic cultural practices, toxic educational practices, and toxic religious practices. In other words, Toxic Socialization causes toxic attachment.

It is the avoidable toxicity of our collective human realities that are the proximate causes of addictions.

Remember, toxic socialization involves violence, frustration of needs, chaos, destruction of attachments, and indoctrination. Violence and assault, the neglect of our essential needs, the experience of chronic chaos at home and in the world, the destruction of our attachments, not to mention the profound guilt and shame we experience as a consequence of the disjunctive and harmful actions we engage while trying to survive, all hurt us and make us feel bad.

When we live in toxic environments and are subjected to toxic socialization, we feel bad.

Nobody wants to feel bad, especially when it is ongoing. Not only does it feel bad to feel bad, but it is bad for the health and well-being of the physical body. Feeling bad washes us in negativity, impairs us physically, emotionally, and psychologically, and makes our brain
chemistry neurotoxic. Our physical unit, our body, has an instinct to avoid pain and bad feelings programmed into our body (Sigmund Freud called this the pleasure principle), and that is exactly what we try to do. When our environments are highly toxic, when our needs are not fully met, when our life experiences are highly painful, when their is chaos all around, we have an instinct to try and do something about it.

When we feel bad,
We do things that help us feel good

At first, we will do the only thing that really works, which is try to halt the assault, reduce the toxicity, and have our needs met. As children, we might cry when our needs are not satisfied or when we are subject to forms of assault. As adolescents, we might point out the hypocrisy and the toxicity of the violators in front of us in the hopes that truth and good sense will prevail.

Unfortunately, however, our families our social networks, and indeed our societies, are sometimes so toxic that our efforts to stop the toxicity and get our needs met often fail. As children and adolescents, our needs are simply ignored and toxicity and violence is excused. We are told the toxicity is good for us (spare the rod and spoil the child), that it builds character (what does not kill you makes you strong), or that we did something to deserve it (karma, original sin, bad behaviour, etc.). As adolescents, our insights and requests are dismissed, and we are told either that we are “going through a phase”

or it is our own genetic or psychological weakness that is causing the problems. As adults, we are expected to be able to “deal with it,” otherwise we are labelled weak and whiny. Often, our protestations are met by increased violence and censure—attempts to keep us silent. In the long run, for many of us, our attempts to reduce violence, chaos, and neglect fail.

What happens when our attempts to halt assault and reduce toxicity fail. “do something about it” fail, as they often do? When that happens When our efforts to reduce toxicity, improve our environment, meet our needs, and feel good fail, as they do for many, we can

1) seek out things that **calm** the internal chaos caused by the violence, neglect, and chaos of a toxic environment (soothing, in other words),

2) **numb** the emotional pain we feel.

3) look for ways to **escape** the environment (we escape the house, we run away, we take drugs),

4) look for ways to **repress** guilt and shame,

5) seek out “things” (substances and activities) that help **make us feel good** or

6) find things that **satisfy** whatever need has been neglected.66

This is where addictions come from. Addictions arises as a consequence of our self-soothing attempts, our attempts to escape from violence and chaos, our efforts to repress, our need to better, or

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66 A rather interesting take is provided by the article “Is addiction an Attachment Disorder?” which says that alcoholics had terrible parents and as a result didn’t “attach.” Thus, failed attachment and neglect leads to attachment disorder which is the cause of addiction. Alcoholics Guide, Is Addiction an Attachment Disorder?, 2014, Inside the Alcoholic Brain, December 12 2018. This is interesting, but it too narrowly focuses on only one unmet need. We have more than just a need to attach.
to satisfy some unmet need. When we cannot improve our life experience because of toxic environments, when we cannot get our needs met authentically, when we need something to make us feel better, or to help us ignore and forget, we find things to do it. We start smoking because it a) calms our frazzled nerves or b) helps us fit in (i.e., satisfies a need for belonging). We drink alcohol because it a) helps us fill the hole left by failed parental attachment, b) helps us numb, c) makes us feel good, or d) helps us forget. We shoot heroin, go to a casino, even shop and go running for the same reasons. It is the same with all attachments/addictions. We engage in behaviours consume substances because these soothe us, help us escape, make us feel good, and so on. When our environments are toxic, we look for ways to compensate/cope/escape.

We should note, there is nothing wrong with this. This is natural, normal, and healthy. As Sigmund Freud pointed out, the avoidance of plain and the pursuit of pleasure is the most fundamental and basic algorithm of life. Certain substances and certain behaviours are pleasurable, and so when we feel bad we naturally seek out these things. But this self-medication does not explain where addiction develops, especially when it comes to addictions like running. Lots of people run, but not everybody gets addicted to running. Lots of people drink alcohol, but not everybody becomes an alcoholic. Because our societies and families can be so toxic, everybody self medicates to one degree or another, but not everybody develops a toxic attachment (i.e. an addiction) to their medication.

So why do some substances and behaviours turn into addictions, while others do not? As it turns out, there are two reasons for this.

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67 Alcoholics Guide, Is Addiction an Attachment Disorder?
On the one hand, toxic attachment arises because substances like alcohol, tobacco, cocaine, Fentanyl, etc., are actually physically addictive. These substances hook your body and cause physical craving for the substance. But the physically addictive properties of some substances are not the only, nor the most important, mechanism at work. As Szalavitz explains, “only 10%-20% of drug users become addicted to substances like marijuana, alcohol, cocaine, and heroin.”

That is a remarkably low percentage, especially considering common perceptions about the dangers of things like heroin. Thus, the addictive properties of some substances do not explain why a) most people who try addictive substances do not become addicted and b) why some activities such as shopping, social media habits, or hoarding (none of which could be physically addicting) become addictions nevertheless.

To understand why, we must understand the reward/reinforcement mechanisms in the brain, specifically the role of dopamine. Dopamine is a learning chemical. When dopamine is released in your brain, your brain “learns” something, specifically an association. When your brain releases dopamine it creates an association. This association is what creates the learning, and the addiction. When we endure toxic environments, we look for things that help us cope. When we find the “thing” that helps us escape, calms us, makes us feel good, or meets a need, dopamine, a chemical long linked to addiction, is released. This release creates an attachment to the substance or behaviour that will cause your brain to seek that out.

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68 Szalavitz, Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction, 273.

69 Trevor W. Robbins and Barry J. Everitt, “Drug Addiction: Bad Habits Add Up,” Nature 398 (1999). Note the title of this article. Despite talking about genetics and the neuropathology of addiction, the authors (or the editors) insert a statement that blames the addict.
As psychologist David J. Ley says, dopamine release is “like a little red flag to your brain, saying ‘hey, pay attention, this is about to feel good, and you want to remember this, so you can do it again.’”

The more dopamine is released in relation to your thing (alcohol, shopping, sex, money, etc.) the stronger the association, or attachment, will be. Once there is a dopamine attachment built up, whenever your brain sees the thing” your brain will trigger a desire for it. The stronger your dopamine attachment, the stronger your desire, and the more addicted you will be.

In the case of a behaviour attachment to running, when you repeatedly go running to self-sooth, escape, meet unmet needs, etc., dopamine slowly and inevitably attaches you to that activity. On the other hand, if you go running not to escape, calm yourself, or feel good, but to simply exercise and stay in shape, dopamine is not triggered in the same way.

You can see, addition is caused by a response to toxic environments that, when paired with dopamine programming, leads to some form of addiction. If you experienced toxic socialization, if you live in a toxic environment, you are prone to developing addictions because you will be motivated to find something that offers relief/release/pleasure/escape. When you find that “thing,” dopamine will attach you to it.

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71 Interestingly, this is the source of the problems with “self-regulation” noted by Szalavitz. It’s not that children have a “self-regulation” problem or a “learning disorder,” it’s that dopamine released in toxic environments causes and attachment that is so powerful, children simply cannot stop the behaviour. Problems with self-regulation are caused by toxic environments combined with dopamine attachment. Szalavitz, Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction.
Because addiction is caused by an attachment which is facilitated by dopamine release in the brain, we might prefer to call addiction *Toxic Attachment* because that is what it is, a toxic dopamine attachment. When an individual is in the “throes” of alcohol addiction, or is addicted to running everyday, we might say they have an *Active Attachment* to alcohol or running. Similarly, instead of using the word “clean” to describe someone free of “addiction,” we would prefer to say they have an *Inactive Attachment* or *Broken Attachment* to alcohol.

An active toxic attachment is an attachment which the individual currently attempts to service. An inactive attachment is an attachment that is controlled, but for which neurological vestiges remain. That is, individuals may “crave” especially during times of discomfort and distress. A broken attachment is an attachment that is unlearned and for which no neurological vestiges remain.

Note that inactive attachments are not the same as broken attachments. An inactive attachment is an attachment that still exists, i.e. vestiges of neurological attachment remain, but the attachment is not dominant or overpowering. Because vestiges of neurological attachment still exist, inactive attachments are prone to reactivation, especially when toxic conditions are still prevalent. On the other

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72 https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Toxic_Attachment.

73 Note, using the word “clean” to describe someone free of an addiction implies that the when addicted the person is “dirty” and contaminated. This terminology characterizes a person struggling with toxic attachment in a judgmental and extremely moralistic fashion. We should never use the words “clean” and “dirty” since these terms ignore the environmental and neurological contexts, implies personal failure, and encourages and contributes to shame and guilt, which further exacerbates the “need” for escape Our advice is to use the terms “active” and “inactive.” Someone who is using has an active addiction. Somebody who is “clean” has inactivated their addiction.
hand, a broken attachment is an attachment where the neurological attachment no longer exists.

Because of the neurological programming involved, while one can inactivate an attachment over a brief period (a few days to a few months, depending on the addiction), it can take many years to completely break and attachment. A good example here is smoking. An individual can quit smoking (i.e., inactivate their attachment) after only a few days, perhaps a week or two. However, the attachment remains and may be reactivated after only a single cigarette. It takes many years to break an attachment to the point where smoking a cigarette will not reactivate the latent attachment.

Moving forward from here we will refer to “addictions” as toxic attachments. We will further refer to addictions as either active, inactive, or broken. Thus, if you are an alcoholic, you are not an addict, you have developed a toxic attachment to alcohol. If you are a shopaholic, you are not addicted to shopping, you have a toxic attachment to this horrifically toxic behaviour. If you have your one-year coin you have not been “clean” for a year, your attachment has been inactive for one year.

At this point we can become “attached” (i.e., addicted) to anything. Anything that gives escape, relief, or pleasure, and that repeatedly triggers dopamine expression in the brain, can become a toxic attachment, especially when the substance or behaviour is in response to toxicity, neglect, anguish, etc. It is not about “bad genes,” weak moral character, faulty learning, or whatever; it is about this toxicity we live in and our brain’s evolutionarily ability to cope with the toxicity and pain by programming itself to seek out compensating pleasure. The mechanism is simple. We become attached to substances and behaviours because they help us cope and survive.
Toxic socialization causes toxic attachments to both substances and behaviours.

At this point, we should note that toxic socialization is not the only cause of addiction. Other factors are involved. For example, Pushers push us into addiction and Enablers encourage it. We will look at pushers and enablers more in the section on Lies and Ideology later. These additional factors are probably insufficient by themselves to cause addiction. Social, political, and economic toxicity, which cause the body to seek pleasure, which releases dopamine, which causes an attachment, are the necessary and sufficient causes of our challenging toxic attachments.

Consider cutting as an example of a toxic behavioural attachment. Cutting is a deliberate act of self-harm. When someone cuts, they use a sharp object to cut into their flesh. Cutting is a serious mental health problem. We know of children, mostly females, as young as ten who cut.

Why does cutting start and how does it become an addiction? Cutting starts as a distraction/escape from the pain and anguish caused by violence and chaos in the home or at school,\(^{74}\) as an outlet for emotional pain. Physical pain is less painful than psychological and emotional pain; thus, cutting provides relief and escape from physical and emotional pain by drowning out the physical/emotional pain. Cutting may also start as a desperate plea for help or change. A kid who cuts is asking for help and crying out for attention. A kid who is cutting is attempting to send a clear message to parents and others:

“pay attention to me, I’m in need, I’m in pain, and something needs to change.”

Cutting is thus an attempt to effectuate change, to get a need met for safety, esteem, and power, in an otherwise toxic environment. Cutting also starts because physical harm releases the “feel good” endorphins in the brain. Thus cutting provides many of the “services” that individuals in toxic environments seek. Cutting provides escape, distraction, endorphin release, and at least at attempt at needs satisfaction. As with all other attachments, we become gradually attached as the dopamine “hits” slowly program our brain. The more often we cut for relief, distraction, etc., the more dopamine is released, and the more attached we become to the cutting behaviour. Eventually, we become so attached that we are recognized as “addicted” to the cutting.

Cutting is not the only serious behavioural attachment we may develop. As many reading this will be aware, we can also develop toxic attachments to social media. The mechanisms of toxic attachment to social media are identical to the mechanisms that attach us to cutting. We use social media a) as a way to distract/escape from chaos and violence in the home environments, b) as a way to get some essential needs met that are not otherwise being met in the home or in our

75 Certainly cutting is not the most effective way of to effectuate change since an individual who cuts is often pathologized and dismissed. However, one cannot expect a twelve year old child to be able to conceptualize the reality of their toxic environment, or be able to lucidly communicate the need for change to parents and authorities who a) think within the primitive confines of old energy archetypes and old energy psychology or are b) in a state of denial regarding their own mental health issues, and their own contribution to the toxicity of the situation. As a child, telling my mother she was hurting me, and asking her to stop, only made the whipping, the emotional assaults, and the denials more violent.

76 B. A. West, “Understanding Endorphins: Our Natural Pain Relief System... Part 6,” Nursing 11.2 (1981). A highlighted version is available
relationships, and c) because the “likes” and shares we get release boost our self-esteem and give us shots of endorphin. Because all these things make us feel better, dopamine is released. Over time, toxic attachment to the social media platform develops. This is not rocket science. In fact, it is well-known science. Facebook, and no doubt other platforms, were deliberately designed for behavioural addiction.  

The creators of Facebook set out to make you dependent on the platform. If this sounds like an awful thing to you, it is. At least one former Facebook executive, Chamath Palihapitiya, feels “tremendous guilt,” as he rightly should, at the damage these platforms, which he helped develop, are causing.

**Lightning Path Attachments Analysis**

When we examine attachments to Facebook, cutting, alcohol, and shopping as we have done above, i.e., when we identify the behaviour or substance and clarify the reasons why we are attached (it meets a need, it helps us escape from violence, etc.), we are engaged in step one and two of a **Lightning Path Attachment Analysis (LPAA)**.

Step one of the LPAA is **identification** of the toxic attachments. This step is easy. If you cannot stop the substance or behaviour, you have a toxic attachment. For example, at one time, “I was addicted to cigarettes.” I started smoking because it helped calm me, and also because it helped me fit in with the “cool.” Because I couldn’t stop, I was addicted to cigarettes.

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79 https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Attachments_Analysis
Step two of an LPAA is classification. In this step, you classify the severity of your toxic attachments from mild to severe, and their toxicity from benign to fully toxic. Mild toxic attachments are attachments which you have a degree of control over, while severe toxic attachments are attachments which you consume your body and mind. Similarly, benign toxic attachments are toxic attachments which have minimal negative impact. One can be mildly addicted to coffee, alcohol, running, sex, or whatever and not experience serious issues. Addictions only become problematic when they cover over unresolved trauma and damage, or when they have a negative impact on you and those around you. For example, an addiction to coffee only becomes a problem when you drink too much daily, and this undermines your health. Similarly, an addiction to alcohol only becomes a problem when you are a) using alcohol to escape, provide relief from toxic environments or internal pain and anguish and b) cannot control your intake and therefore drink too much. Finally, an attachment to sex only becomes a problem if you’re driven by unresolved trauma, married, in a relationship, and hurting the people you are cheating on and hooking up with.

When it comes to assessing the extent to which an addiction is problematic, there are lots of different things to consider. In the case of running or shopping, you need to consider the fiscal impact and lost time with your family and children, if you have them. In the case of alcohol or other harsh substances, you need to consider the long-term impact on your self, your physical unit (i.e., your mind and body), your family, your work life, and so on. For example, alcoholism can a) prevent you from connecting with and “self-actualizing” your Highest Self, b) cause physical and neurological damage to your body,}

[80 As Maslow would have said A. H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality (2nd Ed.) (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).]
and c) cause you to harm the ones you love, especially when you are a ‘mean drunk’ and you lash out at the ones you love. For all the reasons above, and some more that are not enumerated, attachments to alcohol are almost always a serious problem.

Once you have identified and classified your toxic attachments, the third step in analysis is **clarification**. In this step, you figure out why you became attached/addicted in the first place. To do this, recall that our attachments develop to things, behaviours, and people that calm us, help us escape, make us feel good, and satisfy a need. To clarify your addictions, simply ask yourself the following questions: “What am I escaping from and how does the attachment provide that escape?” “What do I need relief from and how is the attachment providing that relief?” “How is this substance/behaviour distracting me?” “What needs is this attachment meeting?” Finally, “Is the attachment helping me deal with guilt and shame.”

Identification, classification, and clarification are straightforward, if not always easy. For example, I (Mike S.) used to smoke. My attachment to smoking was severe and toxic. I started smoking because, at the age of nineteen, I had no significant attachments in my family (single parent mom, aunts, uncles, and cousins that “looked down” on us) and because I had a consequent unmet need to “fit in” and belong, I found smoking as a way to satiate my unmet need for belonging. I started smoking so I could fit in with friends. Even though it was thirty-five years ago, I still remember the motivation and the wonderful feeling of “fitting in” that I got from smoking the first time. I needed that feeling so bad that I ignored the physical distress (nausea and headaches, etc.) caused by the poisonous cigarettes. I needed to fit in more than I needed to feel physically well. It
was the underlying need that drove me past the poisonous cigarette stick.\footnote{That an emotional need to fit in is more powerful than a physical need to feel well should be no great insight. The people who get paid to manipulate you, i.e., marketers trying to sell you products, know this well. It is why commercials aimed at the young often show a bunch of young friends “fitting in” and belonging with each other. The subliminal message sent is “consume this product if you want to fit in.”}

Or consider my partner Gina R.’s addiction struggles. My partner started smoking and drinking for the same reasons as I did, i.e., not because she liked the taste of alcohol or cigarettes but because she wanted to fit in with her friends and family, and because her friends and family members “pushed” her into consumption. They said things like “if you are not going to drink then at least look like you are partying with the rest of us and smoke.” Continued “pushing” by friends and family, combined with her need to fit in, and the addictive properties of the substances, eventually led to toxic alcohol attachment and toxic nicotine attachment.\footnote{Gina’s account is quite interesting because it highlights the function of PUSHERS. Pushers are people who push you towards the development of toxic attachment. They do this for various reasons. If they are dealers, they do it for money. If they are family and friends, they do it as a way to justify their own addictions \textit{and} to avoid the shame and guilt of drinking/smoking to excess around people who do not. Whether they are doing it for money or because getting others addicted makes them feel better about themselves does not matter. The point is, people push addictions and they are often effective at getting others hooked, especially when the pushing is combined with other “risk factors,” like the toxic environments of a toxic socialization process.}

Continued “pushing” by friends and family, combined with her need to fit in, and the addictive properties of the substances, eventually led to toxic alcohol attachment and toxic nicotine attachment. Interestingly, even when she had committed to deal with her addictions, family members resisted her healing. They “pushed back,” making her feel like if she wanted to be a part of the family, if she wanted to “fit in,” she needed to continue to smoke and drink with them.

To summarize, an LP Addictions Assessment involves three steps, these being:
1. Identification of the addiction(s)

2. Categorization of severity and toxicity

3. Clarification of the cause(s)

Moving towards treatment, you can safely ignore benign attachment (a mild attachment to coffee, wine, etc.,) and focus primarily on your most toxic attachments, if you have them.

As a final note, keep in mind when conducting an assessment on your addictions to see if they are problematic or not, there is a well-established tendency for addicts to lie to themselves and others to downplay their toxic attachments. We'll talk more about the tendency and reasons for lying in the next unit. For now, when conducting an LPAA, you should ask friends and family what they think about your toxic attachments and whether they are toxic or benign. For example, if you drink, ask your wife or friends if they think it is a problem. If they say yes, then regardless of any lies you tell yourself, you have a toxic attachment problem.

**Treatment**

At this point in your reading, you should have a good understanding of the nature and cause of toxic attachments and you should have identified your toxic attachments. Remember, attachments are toxic when they a) cover over unresolved toxicity and trauma and b) negatively impact you, your life, your family, and this planet. Some addictions, like running or coffee, may not be problematic at all unless
you are harming yourself and others in the process. Others, like addictions to heroin or shopping, will be.

At this point, the question becomes, how do you treat the toxic attachments that you and your loved ones deem as problematic? Unfortunately, treating addictions is complicated and difficult not only because the neurological attachment is complex and multifaceted, but also because the addictions can rewire the brain to the point where you develop a **Hard Dependency**. A hard dependency occurs because some substances and behaviours cause damage by rewiring the brain. This brain damage, this rewiring, can make you physically dependent on your substance or behaviour for proper brain functioning. Inactivating and breaking toxic attachments to substances and behaviours is even more difficult when you are dealing with a hard dependency.

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83 As strange as it may seem, it is possible to harm others even when you are engaged in “healthier” addictions like running. We remember years ago driving through Banff in Canada and seeing a young women running through the streets in a fashionable jogger outfit, with her five year old child panting and struggling to keep up behind her. This women appeared to be so addicted to running that she would torture a young child just so she could get her fix.

84 Addiction to shopping, which judging by the ridiculous displays that occur in North America during the Black Friday to Christmas season, and by the constant need to have the “newest, latest, and greatest” thingamabobby just so you can be cool, stand out, fit it, and be “happy,” is a problem for the addict, their families, the environment, and the children who are exploited just so you can have the latest and greatest “iThingy.” Addiction to shopping, which is something encouraged by the manipulations of the marketing industry, is destroying the planet. Shopping is therefore a problematic addiction no matter if you have the money to spend to infinity or not.

At one time, treatments for toxic attachments to substances and behaviours involved “cold-turkey” breaks and complete abstinence. While complete abstinence may be a long-term necessity for some toxic attachments like alcohol, going “cold-turkey” is hard and most people cannot do it without, sometimes quite costly, assistance. This is not because they are weak but because the attachment is strong, the neurological reprogramming deep, and the damage often severe.

Whether or not cold-turkey is something you want to try is up to you. If you can go a week without smoking, a month without coffee, a year without alcohol, etc., you can consider the toxic attachment inactive. Remember, it takes a lot longer to break an attachment. Also remember, until your attachment is finally broken, you are susceptible to reactivation.

In general, we do not recommend a cold turkey approach, not only because this can cause a lot of pain and distress, especially when a hard attachment has occurred, but because cold turkey attempts do not rewire the brain, they simply traumatize the individual and reinforce the addiction because the brain just wants more. We recommend a gradual approach that combines improving your environment, relationships, and behaviours with persistent reprogramming of attachments.

Remember the function of dopamine in your brain. Dopamine rewires the reward structures by attaching you to substances and behaviours that offer relief from the consequences of a toxic socialization process. This original toxic rewiring took place over time and as a consequence of many experiences. If your toxic attachment is drinking, for example, it took a lot of “pleasant” feelings of numbness,

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detachment, escape, sociability, etc., to get your brain rewired and
hard attached to the substance. As William S. Burroughs says, “it takes
about a year and several hundred injections to make an addict. That is
because it takes about that long to hard wire your brain and create the
hard attachments that function as chronic addiction. Unfortunately, it
is also going to take a year, and several hundred new experiences in
non-toxic environments with non-toxic attachments, to break the
hard attachments and rewire the brain. You simply cannot skip these
experiences and go cold turkey. If you do not go through the
experiences, the rewiring never occurs. If the rewiring never occurs,
all you will do is inactivate your toxic attachments. If all you
accomplish is inactivation, the wiring will always remain and you will
be prone to reactivation.

So, how do you rewire your brain and break your toxic attachments?
First of all, complete an LP Addictions Analysis. A form for this is
included in the LP HEALING Map. Completing an addictions analysis
will help you **identify, classify** and **clarify** your toxic attachments.

When you have complete this analysis, look at the causes for the
addiction you have identified and work to improve those. Remember,
addictions start as a way to calm, numb, soothe, repress, escape, or just
feel good. Identify the reasons why you are anxious, why you feel the
need to numb and soon, why you are trying to escape, and why there
is nothing else in your life that makes you feel good. If the cause is
violence and toxicity in your relationships, improve those or find new
relationships. If the cause is stress at work, improve conditions at
work, find a new job if you can, and find better ways to deal with
stress (yoga instead of drinking, for example). If the cause is an unmet
essential need, like the need for love or to fit in, maybe change your
social groups and find healthier ways to meet those need.
Keep in mind here our earlier advice about environment. If you want to heal, you need to clean up and detoxify your environment. In this regard you have two choices. You can either educate the people who make up your life about the consequences of toxicity and the impact it is having on your addictions and ask them to heal with you, or you can exit your toxic relationships and toxic families and begin to build up new ones. The easiest and least disruptive solution is to educate your family and friends about the consequences of physical and psychic toxicity, and request assistance from them in said detoxification. If possible, we recommend you immediately institute a no violence rule and work together to remove all instances of emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual violence and exploitation. There can be no compromise here. If you want to heal and deal with your addictions, you must create healthy, non-toxic spaces within which you can heal and reprogram.

If you do not clean up toxic environments and deal directly with the causes of addiction you will find it impossible to rewire your brain. Getting away to a safe place for a period of time can help; addiction retreats can help; therapy can help; but, if you keep coming back to toxic environments, you will continue to be triggered into your addictions. If you want to reprogram toxic attachments and heal your brain, you have to remove the principle driver, which is toxicity in your life. There is no other way forward but that.

Unfortunately, it has to be said, it will not always be possible to educate your family and friends and elicit their help. Many of you will find that when you point out the toxicity and make an appeal to family and friends for a change, they will resist or even attack. When you point things out, parents, partners, and friends will lash out in anger at you and even engage in violent emotional, psychological, or even physical assault. If this happens, if attempts to educate and enlist the
authentic support family and friends elicit only defence and attack, do not waste your time. Do not hesitate. Break your attachments and find new family and friends. This might sound harsh, but it is a necessary and increasingly common practice, as for example among the LGBTQ community who often experience harsh violence at the hands of their old energy family and friends. If your family does not move forward with you, you have no choice but to remove them from your life, or dramatically limit your exposure to them. You will make slow to no progress in dealing with toxic attachments if you do not detoxify your life.

For your information, detoxification is part of the process of establishing **Right Environment**. We discuss right environment in more detail in *Lightning Path Workbook Three: Connection*, in the section on Alignment.

As you detoxify your environments, the final step to treating addictions is *not* to eliminate your toxic attachments cold turkey, but to **rectify** your attachments gradually. You rectify your attachments by finding better ways to meet your needs, and better ways to self-medicate. For example, if you suffer from anxiety and PTSD and smoking helps calm you down, rectifying your toxic attachment to smoking requires you learn to do something else to calm yourself down instead. Instead of jumping straight to the cigarette, do some yoga and stretching, take a hot bath, or talk to your spouse, family member, or friend. Instead of running off to the casino, do some mindfulness and meditation. Instead of pouring that drink, get some

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love from a loved one, or brew yourself a jasmine tea. Stimulate natural endorphin release with sex, laughter, purpose, giving, exercise, healthy diet, etc.

Putting a healthier activity or substance in front of the addictive response will encourage dopamine attachment to the new activity or substance, thereby rewiring your brain.

You may think it silly at first, especially if your toxic attachments have a loud voice, but you will find that the more you put “something before” the toxic attachment, whatever it is, the more attached you will become to the new thing and the less attached you will become to your addiction. You will still be self-medicating, of course, even if you are medicating with jasmine tea, but that is OK. Given just how toxic this world still is, there is absolutely no shame in that; and at least you will be medicating with *real* medicine (yoga, love, meditation, cannabis, etc.) and not the toxic crap (alcohol, fats and sugars, plastic bobbles, etc.) still on offer by the corporations of this world.

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

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

To summarize, in this unit we have examined toxic attachments. We have seen that both substances (i.e. smoking, alcohol, heroin) and behaviours (i.e. social media, running, etc.) can become toxic attachments. We have learned the difference between active toxic attachments and inactive toxic attachments. We have also uncovered the actual causes of toxic attachment—not “genetics” or “moral strength” but toxic environments and a toxic socialization process characterized by violence, chaos, neglect, destruction of attachments, and indoctrination. We have learned that toxic attachments start as attempts to cope, to self-medicate, escape, or meet unmet needs, but because of the dopamine reward mechanisms of the brain, we eventually develop toxic attachments. We have seen that to treat your toxic attachments, you must Identify, Clarify, Detoxify, and Rectify. You must identify your toxic attachments, clarify their sources, detoxify your environments, and rectify toxic attachments by wilfully reprogramming your brain.

We are not going to lie to you. Even under the best of conditions, this is a lot of work. Unfortunately, we do not always operate under the best of conditions. When we try to heal and move forward we
experience resistance not only from people and societies that do not want to change, but also from inside our own selves as well. Our internal resistance comes in the form of self-deception. That is, we lie. We lie to ourselves. We lie to our families. We lie to our partners. We lie to our doctors. We lie to our workmates. We lie to everybody. No sense in denying it, because we have all done at one time or another.

Why do we lie? For two reasons. **Number one**, because actually changing our behaviours and detoxifying our environments is a lot of work. It much easier to *pretend*, and so that is what many people do. People pretend “it’s not so bad” or pretend they’ve made progress, even when they haven’t. **Number two**, because actually changing our behaviours often requires us to confront all the shitty things we have done, and that confrontation causes us intense guilt and shame. Pretending that “you did the best you could” or avoiding the confrontation altogether by pretending everything is OK, helps you avoid these intense feeling. When it comes to the realities around us, we lie, lie, lie, lie, lie, and when we are done lying, we lie and lie some more.

Unfortunately, if you are serious about treating your wounds and your addictions, if you are serious about healing and reconnecting, you’re going to have to stop lying. If you do not, there is no way for you to move forward. You either face the truth of things and do what needs to be done, or you stay stuck in the old energy world. Don’t worry though, when you identify the reasons you lie, learning to tell the truth is a lot easier than you think. It is to lying, the reasons we lie, and strategies for stopping, that we turn our attention to next.
Study Questions

1. Pause a few moments and reflect upon your life, past and present. What were the two most toxic environments you ever endured? Was it your childhood or your school? Is it a current relationship? Right your thoughts down. Now ask yourself, what “things” (behaviours or substances) helped you cope with the toxic situations.. Do you feel you are attached to any of these “things?” Why or why not? Write your answers down to these questions in your HC journal.

2. What makes an attachment a toxic attachment? Do you have any problematic behavioural or substance attachments? Write these down in your HC journal. If you like do a full Attachments Analysis by filling out the LP HEALING Map.89

3. What is the difference between an active toxic attachment and a broken toxic attachment? Do you have any active attachments? Do you have any broken attachments? If you have broken attachments, what has helped you to break your attachments? Write your answers to these questions down in your HC Journal.

4. Briefly describe the process of treating addiction. Hint, you identify, clarify, detoxify, and rectify. Do you think this is a good strategy for treating addictions? Why or why not?

89https://www.lightningpath.org/product/healing-map/
“L” is for Lies

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

As we noted in the last unit, treating toxic attachment, though relatively straightforward, is a challenge. To treat a toxic attachment, you must detoxify your environment and then reprogram your dopamine addled brain. Reprogramming your brain is straightforward enough to do, if you know your toxic attachments, how they started, and what needs they meet; however, it can be impossible if you do not know or do not admit you are addicted, or do not know how it all started in the first place.

At this point, you might be feeling this is all common sense, and it is. If you want to treat any wound, you have to clean the wound(s), clean your environments, and determine the nature and source of the wound. If you go to an emergency room, these are the first things they do; they put you in a clean room, make sure the wound is clean, and determine the nature of the wound. Once they know the details, it is
easier for them to determine proper treatment and easier for them to heal the wound.

Unfortunately, when it comes to our toxic attachments or other emotional/psychic ailments, it is not so straightforward. The problem is not because understanding toxic attachments is difficult, nor is it the case that uncovering the source of toxic attachments is particularly challenging. Once you know the truth of toxic attachments to shopping, alcohol, and so on, it usually only takes a few straightforward questions and a few honest answers to figure out the source of the trauma and the reason for the toxic attachment(s). The problem is, we often do not give honest answers about our traumas, their sources, and the psychic wounds and toxic attachments that result. In fact, we tend to lie to ourselves and others about these things. We lie to ourselves and others about our environments. We lie to ourselves and others about the quality of our relationships. We lie to ourselves and others about the presence of toxic attachments. We lie to ourselves and others about the severity of our wounds. We lie to ourselves and others about the nature of our actions, telling ourselves that what we do is OK and alright, even if it is hurting ourselves and our own children. When it comes to assessing our damage, toxic attachments, and actions, we lie, lie, lie, lie; and then, we lie some more.

In our healing practice, we have seen people lie to themselves and others numerous times. No matter how hard we try to get some clients to hear the truth, no matter how hard we try to get some clients to tell the truth, no matter how hard we try to get some clients to see the toxic realities of their lives and their behaviours, often they resist. They resist hearing the truths. They resist seeing the truths. They resist even talking about the truth. Instead, they prefer to criticize others, deflect, deny, and blame. In other words, they lie and
do everything they can to avoid awareness of their realities and the toxicity of their own actions. Why? There are several reasons that people avoid, some simple and some complex, some innocent and some not so much.

**It’s not so bad after all!**

One of the more simple and innocent reasons people lie about their environments, the toxicity in their lives, their toxic attachments, their toxic behaviours, and so on, is that sometimes things do not seem all that bad after all, and so they do not think they have a problem.

A toxic attachment to running is a good example of this. Running is a healthy activity, and it is easy to think that it is not a problem, or that you can never get too much of it. Because running is something we all see as healthy, it is easy to ignore any negativity that might result. Unfortunately, negativity can result. We knew of one individual who would go running all the time, for hours at a time, three to five times a week. This individual spent more time with her running group than she did with her spouse and children. She went on regular trips to compete and was on the road all the time during the running season. This person told herself and her family it was for her health and well-being, and pretended it was not having a negative impact on her family.

However, her running had all the characteristics of a toxic attachment. When her spouse began to open up, we soon realized that she was running to escape from a toxic environment (her home) and a toxic and unsatisfying relationship with her spouse. Like all people with a toxic attachment, she was using running to get away from a toxic environment and to feel good about herself and her life. By getting out of the home, running provided the necessary relief.
Running also triggered serotonin release, which made her feel better. Eventually, through the magic of dopamine attachments, she developed a dependency on running. She soon justified the time, the money, and the neglect of her primary relationships to get the running fix. As “healthy” as this activity was in the beginning, it caused problems. By being out of the home all the time, she was avoiding her problems, undermining her primary relationships, and neglecting her children. As a result, her children have grown up with serious emotional issues, and her family life and relationship have totally collapsed. To be sure, she recognized there were problems in her life, but she wouldn’t see running, or the time it takes away from maintaining a family, as an issue. Running is healthy, after all, and it is her necessary, healthy, self-care, “me” time.

To be sure, self-care “me” time is important, as is exercise, but this does not take away from the fact that she had a toxic attachment to running. When the “thing” we have a toxic attachment to does not make us immediately sick, or when it contributes to our health in some other respects, we can easily ignore the negative consequences and easily find excuses to maintain the toxic attachment; but remember, in assessing your life for healing needs, individual health is not the only thing that is important. Your families, your children, your work, and your social environments play a role in your health and well-being as well. Just because an addiction is not affecting you directly does not mean it is not negatively impacting your life or the lives of the ones you love and are responsible for.

Unfortunately, toxic attachments are not the only things we can justify because it’s “not so bad after all.” That simple, easy to make lie works with a lot of different things, like spanking your children, which
“is not so bad,” or yelling at our kids, which is “not so bad,” or sexually assaulting women, which is “not so bad,” and so on. The truth is, the “it’s not so bad” lie allows a lot of bad stuff to continue to happen. However, if we want to move forward, we must understand, it is bad. Toxic attachments, assaulting our children, assaulting women, and all the other crap of our toxic socialization is bad. It undermines our physical, mental, emotion, and spiritual health and it makes it harder to connect. If we want to move forward and connect, we have to put aside the “it’s not so bad” lie and face the hard truth of our toxic lives, behaviours, and world.

**Look at me, I’m rich and successful**

Besides the “it’s not so bad” lie, another enormously powerful and extremely common way of justifying our toxicities and ignoring our realities, especially in the prosperous West, is to point to our successes, and especially wealth, as an indication that things are alright. This is the “Look at me. I’m rich and successful” lie. In this scenario, we refuse to admit the truth about our life and we refuse to admit a toxic environment or damage from a toxic socialization. Instead, we say “What do you mean I’m damaged from my childhood? What do you mean my IQ is affected? What do you mean I am hurt and diminished by toxic socialization? I have a job. I have a house. I have a car. I’m OK. I turned out alright. I’m rich and successful.

When you are even moderately successful, this is an immensely powerful lie you tell. It would be hard to walk up to someone like Donald Trump, John Travolta, Elon Musk, Richard Branson, or some other “high functioning” alpha and tell them, “Man, you’re messed up and disconnected.” They can easily dismiss such a challenge, simply

by pointing at their private jets, fancy houses, gold toilets, and rich celebrity friends. Because our society puts such value on material success, it is hard for those who are successful to see and admit they are sick, ill, and toxic. From Hollywood diva to middle-class mom, from Corporate CEO to daddy in his man cave, when challenged to face a hard truth we do not want to admit, we point to our fancy lives filled with money and material things and use that to justify, deflect, and excuse.

There is no sense in being hypocritical about it. We all know what this lie is and many of us have committed it. We have all looked at our successes, whatever they may be, and we have all used these successes as excuses to tell lies about our toxic environments, our toxic behaviours, the people we have exploited, and the suffering and the addictions that we endure. If there is a problem, it is with other people because they “just cannot get with the program.”

Be aware, however, worldly success, riches, and fame have absolutely nothing to do with mental/emotional, physical health and healthy and pure spiritual connection. You cannot point to your “worldly successes” and say, “I’m a good person,” “I’m a healthy person,” “I’m a chosen person,” or “I am a connected person.” As many A-list Hollywood actors, top-flight CEOs, and filthy rich people the world over will surely attest, you need to step on a lot of toes while you are clawing your way to the top. The question is, what kind of person does that? As Jon Ronson argues, psychopathy, i.e., total callous indifference to the suffering you cause in the world, may be a requirement of worldly success as currently defined. The uncomfortable truth for you is, only sick and disconnected people are prepared to “do what it takes” to claw their way to the top.

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And besides, as any therapist will tell you, money and success do not buy happiness. Awards do not make you feel warm. A big house does not make you less lonely. Money does not make it more likely you will achieve a connection. In fact, according to some, just the opposite is true.\textsuperscript{92} Just because you are a rich CEO, or a government or religious leader, or the President of your local community club etc., does not mean you are emotionally or psychologically healthy.

Don’t get us wrong, material success, adulation, and awards are all nice to have. Everybody should have a nice house in a safe neighbourhood with enough food to eat, because these are essential needs.\textsuperscript{93} Everybody should find a skill and ability they can master, and they should gain recognition for it as a result. Meeting these needs, meeting all our essential needs, is key and we all need to do that. But do not kid yourself; “things” cannot meet all your needs. Material things can help with basic material needs like your need for food, safety, entertainment, comfort, and so on, but “things” just do not cut it for higher needs like truth and understanding, alignment (i.e. self-actualization), and connection. In fact, hording things, including money, may be a sign of mental illness. You can be the richest CEO in the world, but if your attachments are toxic, if you are out of alignment with your own Highest Self, if you suffer from profound disconnection, and if you exist in an environment of lies and self-deception, at best you will be miserable and disconnected, and at

\textsuperscript{92} As Jesus said, it’s easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven, by which he was politely saying, it is impossible. This is probably why, when asked by a rich man, “What should I do,” Jesus said, “Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” Luke 18:22.

worst you will be on a descending spiral of mental, emotional, and spiritual disease.

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

I got a job

“It’s not so bad, after all” and “Look at me, I’m rich,” are two common ways we lie to ourselves and others; but, there is more. Even if we are not altogether successful, and even if there is clear damage (i.e., even if we’re dealing with a diagnosed mental infection), if we got a job, and especially if that job is a good job, we can still find a way to excuse ourselves, our toxic environments, and our toxic actions. “Sure, I drink every day.” “Sure, I’m at the casino every night.” “Sure, I go running all the time.” “Sure, I’m an ass-hole to my spouse and my kids.” “But I’m no slacker.” “I cannot be that bad. “At least I can provide.”

You will recognize right away that the “I’ve got a job” like (also the “I’ve got an education lie) is related to the “I’m OK” and the “Look at me I’m rich” lies. In fact, all the lies we tell ourselves to avoid confronting the truth about the toxicity in our lives and the damage we have incurred are variations of the simple “I’m OK because...” argument.

“I’m OK because I can still function.”
“I’m OK because I’m rich and successful.”

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

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

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

Seriously. If you’re going to continue to use “I’m OK because” arguments to lie to yourself and others about the state of disconnection you are in, you can put this workbook down and quit wasting your time. If you want to realize your full potential, you must quit using “I’m OK because” arguments and face the truth of your disconnection. Otherwise, what’s the point?

For the rest, the question at this point is, why do we lie? It seems like it takes a lot of wasted energy and money to maintain a lifetime of self-deception, and it does. *Lying all the time is like trying to keep the lid down on a boiling pot. You can do it, but it takes a lot of energy to keep it from boiling over.*[^1] It is the same thing with your physical body. It takes a ton of energy to maintain lies, and this energy adds to your

[^1]: As you get to this point of the workbook you might be feeling a little queasy, even sick to your stomach. At this point, you may start to realize the depth of your self-deception, and this can make you feel a little sick. We are going to ask you to just ignore that feeling. If you keep moving forward, if you start to face your truths and if you begin to take steps to do something about it, any ugly feelings you may have will shortly go away. Instead of dwelling on negative feelings, we’re simply going to ask the question “why do we lie?”
body’s Toxic Burden,\textsuperscript{95} which for most people is already immense. If we could redirect all the energy we put into “keeping the lid down,” if we just woke up and admitted we got work to do, we could then redirect our energies from repression and self-deception to authentic healing. It makes perfect sense; so why cannot we do that? Why cannot we admit we got issues? Why do we continue to lie to ourselves and others despite the obvious costs?

Well, we do it NOT because we are stupid, lazy, unevolved, immoral, evil, or whatever. Quite the opposite is true. There are good reasons we lie to ourselves and others, complex reasons, adaptive reasons, and these reasons are rooted in our evolutionary, biological, psychological, sociological experiences and are the sign of deep and capable intelligence, not a moral or evolutionary weakness. All the complexity comes down to this. Lying is not something we choose to do; lying is something that we learn to do because lying makes our life easier, and making your life easy is what you are biologically programmed to do.

**Learning to Lie: Modelling**

How do we learn to lie? First off, we learn to lie from the people that surround us. From day one, lying is modelled to us by the people around us. Our parents lie, our teachers lie, our priests lie etc. and seeing that we go ahead and lie as well because that is what we see our parents do. That is what our “models” do,\textsuperscript{96} and so that is what we do.

Why do we do that? Why do we copy this behaviour? We do this because that is what our brains and bodies were designed to do. Your

\textsuperscript{95}Toxic Burden\textsuperscript{ is the sum total of all abuse, neglect, chaos, and indoctrination of Toxic Socialization, as it weighs down and damages the Physical Unit. https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Toxic_Burden

\textsuperscript{96} Of course, most of them are not doing it because they are mean. Most of them are doing it because that is what they've learned to do.
brain is filled with these things called “mirror neurons.” Mirror neurons are neurons in the brain which are activated when we observe the actions of others. For example, if I watch you raise your arm, mirror neurons in my brain fire in the same way neurons are firing in your brain. If you lie and I observe that you are lying, mirror neurons in my brain likely fire\(^7\) in the same way mirror neurons fire in your brain.

What do mirror neurons do? Scientists are still trying to pin the full picture down, but almost certainly, mirror neurons serve an evolutionary survival role by priming/enabling learning\(^8\) through observation.\(^9\) Learning through observation is a very important evolutionary and survival function of the physical unit. A species that learns by observing and modelling its parents is more successful than a species that can learn only through (often) dangerous experience. A primate that sees its parents running away from a hungry lion and instantly copies that behaviour is more successful than a primate who must figure it all out on their own.

It is simple. Biological organisms are designed to copy the behaviours of the adults that they are attached too and that form their community (i.e.,

\(^7\) We say likely here because we have seen no evidence or study that suggests we have “lie mirrors” in our brain. However, given the reality of mirror neurons and the evolutionary sensibility of modelling behaviours, it seems quite likely that this is true.


parents, tribe members, church members, community etc.). Most of the time, this is a sensible evolutionary/survival strategy. It is appropriate and right for a baby elephant to be attached to its parents and it is appropriate and right for that baby to mirror (i.e. copy) their parents actions because the parents are attached to the baby elephant and are going to protect it and show it the way to survive.

Think about this.

Most of the time, for most species which are dependent on parents for a period, it is a safe biological assumption that the parents are there to protect the child, and it is a safe biological assumption that the actions they take will reflect that drive to protect. If a chimpanzee sees its mother take a bite and spit out a certain type of poisonous plant, it makes sense for the biology of that chimp child to mirror and copy that behaviour. If a five year old human child sees its mother stop and look both ways at a cross walk, it makes biological sense for the biology of that child to mirror and copy that behaviour.

This is not rocket science.

Children copy trusted adults because the trusted adults engage actions that usually protect and teach the child. Thus, when, as children, we see adults lie, we are primed to copy that behaviour. If we see our parents lie, our teachers lie, or whatever, we do it too because that is what our survival programming encourages. There is no morality here. There is just biology. Our bodies are evolved to learn by modelling, and that is exactly what they do. When, as children, adolescents, and adults we see our parents and other authority figures lie, we model that and learn to lie as well.
Moment of Reflection: Pause for a moment and reflect back on your childhood and adolescence. What adults in your life modelled lying to you? What lies did they model? Why do you think they lied? You may have to revisit this reflection once you have read through the rest of this chapter.

Learning to Lie: Personal Safety

Our life long lying lessons do not stop with modelling. Modelling only works to a certain point. At a certain point, children and adolescents develop the ability to see beyond the rote modelling of the adults around them. At a certain point, adolescents develop the ability to question their modelling and change their programmed behaviours. Once a child’s central nervous system is developed enough to begin to realize the nature of lying and that the adults around them are lying, they will begin to naturally question that. I say naturally because just as your physical unit is programmed to model and copy behaviour, it is also naturally programmed to seek knowledge and understanding.

Unfortunately, when a maturing, child, adolescent, or even adult inevitably and invariably questions the lies and hypocrisy that surround them, they are often silenced by authority figures who, for reasons we will go into shortly, simply cannot admit that they are lying.

The silencing is invariably violent—shaming, yelling, hitting, etc. I’m sure most of us have stories of this. Personally, I remember challenging my mother and being told, in the midst of the beating, that I should simply respect, not question, my elders. A similar thing happened to Gina. One day, as a young adolescent, Gina read a newspaper article on emotional abuse and emotional violence in the
home. She cut this article out, posted it on the fridge, and said to her parents “Hey, this is what we do.” Their response, like the response of many adults to challenges from their observant and intelligent children, was violent. They emotionally and physically beat her down.

We should note, our stories are not particularly shocking. This is the normal reality of everyday lives for many of us as we grow up in this toxic world we ave inherited. We are sure most readers can remember an experience where they told the truth to a parent, teacher, or other trusted adult, and were forcibly put down as a result.

Understand, the point here is not to point fingers at parents, teachers, priests, and others who model lying and reinforce it with violence and abuse. The point is to say that at the moment where we start to question the lies and lying that has been modelled to us, we are assaulted and shamed into silence. When this happens, the message is clear. It is safer and less painful to lie. When we have learned that lesson, we begin to consciously participate in the lying.

Moment of Reflection: Pause for a moment and reflect back on your childhood and adolescence. Do you remember any

Thinking about this and being honest with ourselves about our own negative actions may be difficult. As we will learn in the next chapter, we are embedded in an ideology that encourages us to see violence only in its extreme forms (i.e. physical violence). Because of this, we often do not see (or do not remember) less extreme acts of violence, like shaming, shunning, yelling, unrelenting criticism, etc., as violence; or, if we do see these acts as violent, we say “It’s not so bad.” But, as we have said, it is bad. We recall watching a documentary on learning disabilities where an immigrant child who on his first day of school in grade one was asked to spell his name on the chalkboard. When the child made a mistake or two, the teacher responded by publicly shaming the child. That single experience led to years of learning and psychological difficulties for this person. It was only as a middle age adult, and only after years of struggle and healing, that this person was able to pin down where his self-hatred and self-esteem issues were rooted. The teacher’s public shaming of this child was so violent, and it caused intellectual, psychological and relational trauma so severe, that it took decades for this man to heal.
moments in which you were “violently put down” for telling the truth? Don’t simply look for physical violence. Take emotional violence seriously and look for emotional violence as well. Remember, even single instances of emotional or psychological violence can cause years of fear, anxiety, and dis-ease.

Learning to Lie: Avoiding Guilt and Shame

So far we have noted that we learn to lie because it is modelled to us, and because telling the truth can often be painful, specifically when authority figures and others punish us for telling it. Another reason we learn to lie is because lying, particularly to ourselves, helps protect us from the guilt and shame we experience when we engage in **Wrong Actions**.\(^{101}\)

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

A wrong action is any action that your body takes that is out of alignment with your own Highest Self. Wrong actions include everything from failing to follow your life’s purpose, to not helping another living being achieve theirs. Wrong actions also include any actions that causes, either directly or indirectly, physical, emotional, and psychological harm to your physical unit or the physical unit of any another living being. This includes a wide swath of behaviour, from actual and direct physical harm, to the direct or indirect exploitation of labour, through intentional manipulation of behaviour, to simply making another living being feel bad.\(^{102}\)

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\(^{101}\) https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Wrong_Action

\(^{102}\) It can be a lot, I know, but it is easy if you follow this one simple rule: “Be nice to all life.”
As explained in the book *The Great Awakening: Concepts and Techniques for Successful Spiritual Practice*, wrong actions (or right actions) cause our Highest Self to use **Steering Emotions** to try and realign its bodily vehicle. Steering emotions are like the bridle and bits that steer a horse, or the wheel that steers the car. Guilt and shame are steering emotions. When we do something out of alignment, when we engage in a disjunctive act, we feel guilt and shame.

Steering emotions can be positive or negative. Positive steering emotions are emotions like satisfaction, happiness, joy, rapture, and bliss. Positive steering emotions tell us we are doing something right. Negative steering emotions are emotions like guilt, shame, and regret. Negative steering emotions tell us we are doing something wrong, like engaging in wrong action, wrong thought, or living in a wrong environment.

You can understand steering emotions if you think about a typical paved road upon which you would drive a car. A paved road has smooth lanes where the car drives, and rough shoulders and centre line. When the car is lined up (aligned) and moving forward on the road, the drive is smooth and comfortable. However, if the car begins to drift off course, a rumble strip or a rough shoulder shakes the car and alerts the driver to pay more attention. Guilt and shame, like the rumbling of the road, alert you that you are steering off course. Guilt and shame is a message from your Highest Self telling you to smarten up and act in a more aligned fashion. If you feel guilt, shame, or regret, that is a message to examine your behaviour and your life’s purpose.

The problem is, even minor amounts of guilt and shame are painful. Guilt and shame can become excruciating when actions are

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particularly disjunctive (like abusing children, exploiting others, murdering people), when they build up over time, or when others (like your parents, priests, etc.) weaponize guilt to control behaviour. Since our body’s are programmed to avoid pain, we tend to find ways to avoid guilt and shame.

The one and only effective way to reduce the guilt and shame caused by disjuncture is the change the disjunctive behaviour. That is it. Unfortunately, however, for various reasons, we often don’t stop our behaviour, even if its very bad, like hitting and hurting our own kids, or exploiting 600 thousand or so employees, or more. When that happens, guilt and shame build up. Over time, pain becomes excruciating and the only way to stop it is to construct an elaborate and fantastical lie, often using sophisticated psychological defence mechanisms.\textsuperscript{104} To make a long story short, we force our disjunctive behaviours out of awareness, like to others, and pretend we are something we are not, because this helps us keep the guilt pressed tightly down,

We see it all the time, in our families, friends, and acquaintances.

My mother hurt me a lot growing up and to protect herself from the ugly and painful feelings of guilt and shame that have accumulated over the years, she reacts with violent denials when challenged with the truth of her actions. Gina’s parents are the same. They do not want to hear how toxic their family was and so they say to themselves and others “we did the best we could.” Then, they violently suppress anybody who challenges their self-deception. It is the same for priests who lie to their congregations and sexually assault children, teachers who harm their kids, spouses who are violent and controlling, or even whole societies. People have been acting out of alignment so long and

\textsuperscript{104}\url{https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Defense_Mechanisms}

121
they have accumulated so many bad behaviours, and feel such deep
guilt and shame, that they repress their own awareness, lie to
themselves, react defensively, and beat down others just to prevent
awareness of their disjunctive actions from bubbling up and causing
excruciating shame and guilt.¹⁰⁵

**Learning to Lie: Truth Entitlement**

So far, we have learned that we lie because lying was modelled to us,
because it is often safer to lie, and because we do not want to feel guilt
and shame for our past actions. A question that arises at this point is,
why do not we snap out of it? You would think that given all the pain,
suffering, guilt, shame, and disjuncture, we’d correct our behaviour,
grow up, and move on. You would think—but we do not—so the
question is, why?

The answer to that question moves us beyond individual and
biological explanations for why we lie, into social, political, economic,
and ideological explanations.

Part of the social/ideological answer to why we do not change our
lying behaviours and simply face the truth about things so we can
properly align and move on is that our modern toxic societies have
taught us to individualize truth. Ideologically, we have been taught to
be “truth entitled.” We have been taught that we, as individuals, have
the right to pick our truths. We have the right to “our” truths and it is
OK if these truths may be different then others.

¹⁰⁵ Therapeutic note, if you want to get somebody past their blockages to a place
where they can a) become aware of, b) acknowledge, and c) atone for disjunctive
behaviours, do not invoke shame and guilt. If you do that, you will trigger their
defences and possibly expose yourself to violence. Instead, gently and
nonjudgmentally lead them to a realization of their disjunctive behaviour, and
encourage them to change by showing them a better way.
When we are taught to be truth entitled, we have a tough time even seeing our lies because we have been taught that truth is relative and truth-seeking is an individual process.

We’ve all heard this. You have your “truths” and I have my “truths,” and that is OK. “Everybody has their own truth” and “that is the truth for them.” In modern consumerist societies, we are encouraged to choose truth rather than realize truth, because this supports consumer ideologies. In consumer societies, we pick our truths like we pick products at a grocery store. Anything else is cast as pathological. We have been taught to believe that truth is individual and if others are not okay with “our truth,” then that is their problem, not ours. In this way, we become truth entitled. We have the “right” to our truth and if others do not like it, tough.

Truth entitlement is all about “empowering” self deception and lying. When truth becomes an entitlement like this, we are empowered to select “truths” that we are emotionally and psychologically comfortable with, and not necessarily true and correct. When we choose truths that make us feel good, we uncritically reinforce our current actions, even if they are toxic and unaligned, and even if they involve intense repression. Likewise, when truth becomes an entitlement, we are empowered to reject truths that do not fit our psychological framework, or that make us feel bad about the way we behave.

For example, I was dealing with a mother of three children once who was struggling with the misbehaviour of her children. The problem was, she treated her children unfairly and violently. She would give something to one child but exclude another, thereby generating jealously and hurt feelings. When she punished them, it was excessive and violent. I told her straight, if she wanted to reduce and eliminate behavioural issues in her children, she would have to treat each of her
children the same, and she would have to cease her violence towards them.

She did not listen. She rejected “my truths” and clung to “her truths” which told her that violence towards children built up their strength, and that kids should not whine and complain but just accept whatever it was they were given. She was empowered to do this because, in our societies, we are taught that we are entitled to our truth. She has her “truths” and I have mine and consequently she easily rejected mine. Of course, the real truth is, she was damaging her children. The reality is, they will grow up diminished and with emotional issues as a result or her actions. But, you cannot tell her that because she can easily ignore it because she believes she is entitled to her truths. She’s got her truths and she’ll stick by those truths no matter what the evidence and no matter what the cost to her children and her family.

You can always tell when someone is resisting truth because they have become truth-entitled by their reaction to challenge. The more you challenge a person who has become truth-entitled, the more likely they are to use punitive tactics against you. If you keep pressing them, if you keep trying to show them the consequences of their “truth,” or if you keep showing them another way of looking at their reality, they will not see because they have their truths, and they are entitled to them. Instead of taking the time to consider the fact that their “truths” might be contributing to their own disconnected experiences, or that they might be harming others, they instead get mad and attack. People with individualized truths will assault and not stop until a) you back down, b) you buy into their version of truth, or c) you at least stop trying to challenge them.

We should not have to say this, but truth-entitlement, like lying, is bad for several reasons. For one, it disconnects you from reality. It
ungrounds you by attaching you to fantasies about the way the world works. It disconnects you from the consequences of your actions. If you are not paying attention to the consequences of your actions, if your consciousness is not grounded in reality, you can end up causing and accumulating a lot of damage and disjuncture. Think back to the mother who treats her children differently and uses violence to “correct” what she thinks is wrong behaviour. She can tell herself all she wants that the violence “builds strength” and that she needs to correct her children for “acting wrong,” but the reality is, she is damaging herself and her children by her beliefs and actions. Consequently, her children will grow up with emotional and behavioural issues.

In addition to a disconnection from reality, a second reason why individualizing truth is bad is that it allows you to avoid guilt, shame, and the spiritual necessity of taking responsibility and being accountability for your actions. To avoid guilt, shame, and responsibility, all you have to do is select a “truth” that gives you an out. A good example here is when psychologists and psychiatrists help us “blame the victim” by providing biological explanations of psychological disease, even though there are clear environmental, social, and economic antecedents.

Think back to the mom who treats her kids differently and punishes them harshly. When psychologists and psychiatrists tell her, as they often will, that her children have ADHD and ODD and are “genetically prone,” they give her a “truth” she can easily accept, because it helps her avoid the painful truth, which is she is contributing to their harm. The psychologists tell her that her kids misbehave not because she is a terrible parent, but because there is a gene that is causing their behaviour. In this way, they help her avoid examining her own behaviours and avoid the guilt and shame that would arise if she took
an honest look. Instead of looking at her contribution to her children’s dysfunction, she sees her children as faulty.

Why do psychiatric and psychological professionals avoid sociological context and blame the child for their problems? Part of it is training devoid of sociological content, but that is not the whole story. When you think about it, blaming the victim is easier. Actually fixing people can be hard and requires effort and lots of money. To fix the children you would have to address the family toxicity, school toxicity, and even social toxicity. That is impossible for a single professional. In fact, it would take a whole team of people to really help fix a broken family.

Unfortunately, there is not much societal support for that kind of effort. It is much easier to “choose” a biological diagnoses over a sociological one, because you can prescribe a pill for that. Having prescribed a pill, you have what you need to fool yourself into feeling satisfied that you have done some real good, even when all you have done is masked the problem and put a bandage on the wounds. It is also much safer for the private practitioner. Choosing biological explanations rather than environmental and sociological explanations, choosing explanations that blame the child or the adolescent, is safer. If you challenge a parent’s toxic parenting, they may not like that. They may pay their bill and find another therapist with “truths” they like more to hear. That is not an insignificant loss for a therapist.

We should say that parents, psychologists, psychiatrists, and so on are not the only ones who are “entitled” to their truths. We all do it to one extent or another. From the father who chooses a truth that justifies the abuse and neglect of their children to the CEO who tells himself that child labour in a factory overseas is facilitating economic
development, we all use our entitled truths to fool ourselves and feel better about our disjunctive actions.

Anyway, you can see the issue. We have all become truth-entitled to one degree or another, and we all feel empowered to choose whatever truths we want. From the mother looking for an explanation that makes her feel better to the practitioner who chooses biological explanations because they are easier, to the CEO who exploits children in factories and excuses it because he thinks he’s doing them a favour, our truth entitlement allows us to pick the truths that make us feel good and avoid those that cause guilt and shame.

It is not healthy, of course. Truth entitlement is a real blockage, it can cause real harm, and it prevents healing and connection. If you want to heal and connect, you have to do the right thing, period. If you gash your leg open and the doctor tells you to disinfect and protect the wound and you do not because your truth-entitlement tells you that you can heal your wound with your mind, there is a real risk your wound will go septic and die. Similarly, if you want to heal and connect and we tell you to detoxify your environment and stop acting violently towards others and you do not, if instead you tell yourself you have your truth and we have ours and you use that so you continue to exist in a toxic stew, your mind will eventually go septic and you will suffer and perhaps even die. It is just the way it is. Truth is not relative. Truth is truth. If you want to move forward, heal, and connect, if you do not want your wounds to go septic, you find out the truth of things, period.

**Learning to Lie: System Maintenance**

To summarize what we have said so far, we have learned that we lie because lying was modelled to us, because it is often safer to lie,
because we do not want to feel guilt and shame for our past actions, we and because we have become truth-entitled. The end result of all this is that we spend a lot of time lying to ourselves and to others. This is bad for lots of different reasons, not the least of which is the lies we tell ourselves and others can harm, disconnect, and even kill us. It is unfortunate because we have been doing it for thousands of years.

Of course, at this point the question becomes, if all this lying is bad for us, why do not we wake up and simply focus on the truth. Humans are not stupid, as a species, and we are not the first people to call out this tendency towards self-deception. People have been saying what we are saying here one way or another for thousands of years. By now, you would think we would have learned not to do it. Nevertheless, despite the fact that self-deception prevents healing and connection, despite the fact that it might even kill you in us in the long run, we continue to struggle with this? The question before us is, why?

The answer to this question is simple. Some people simply do not want us to know the truth, and they work hard to prevent that from happening, because doing so helps them maintain The System. We call lying to maintain The System, System Maintenance.

If you are an oil baron, for example, and you make all your money from the sale of oil products, it is in your interest to deny climate change, because acceptance of it inevitably leads to lower sales. In fact, this is what oil barons do. They throw money into think-tanks and advertising that help them deny the reality of climate change. They work directly against apprehension of the truth, they tell us lies, and they encourage us to lie to others, because it is in their interests that we remain ignorant.
It is not rocket science and it is not conspiracy. It happens all the time, though not necessarily for financial reasons. I had a client once whose father molested her as a child. Needless to say, this caused her serious mental and emotional disturbance to the point that she became a psychiatric patient. Her father and her mother, however, denied the abuse and even went so far as to undermine her in front of psychiatrists and other professionals. They essentially called her crazy, and convinced professionals that this was so, so that they would not take her claims seriously! The mother and the father deliberately worked against the apprehension of truth by lying to professionals and undermining their daughter because doing so protected the family breadwinner from jail. It is not so hard to believe and it should not be that shocking to hear; families do it all the time.

We should note, it is not just oil barons and families protecting pedophiles who benefit from, an actively facilitate, error and ignorance. Lots of people in lots of places do it. The alcohol industry benefits if you do not know the dangers of alcohol. They also benefit if you can be convinced that you need it to have fun. The Apple computer company benefits if you do not know the environmental, social, and neurological damages that smartphones cause, and if you can be convinced that you have to buy a new one every year. Abusive parents benefits if you believe that parental abuse “makes you stronger,” because this way they are never held accountable for the damage. People who sell you high fat and high sugar junk food that is specifically designed to addict you benefit if you are not aware how addictive their food really is.

You get the picture.

The reality is, lots of people benefit when you do not know the full truth. Heck, you might even be one of these people. Indeed, almost
certainly, you are. In fact, we all are. Until we make the conscious choice to choose the truth and nothing but the truth, we all benefit in and participate, to one extent or another, from the ignorance and stupidity that abounds. More to the point, we all work, to one degree or another, against the realization of truth. It is what we were taught to do. Truth is often uncomfortable for us and for others. Truth is often not profitable. Truth often requires us to change. Truth can initially be painful. Truth can land us in jail. Consequently, we sacrifice it daily; but, that has to stop, not only because the planet can no longer endure it, but because it prevents us from healing and connecting. Just like there is only one way to heal a bad wound (you disinfect, dress, and protect), there is only one way to heal and connect. You detoxify your environments, you treat your addictions, and you stop lying to yourself and to others.

*Either continue to wallow in a sea of toxicity, addiction, and self-deception, or face the truth of things and make the necessary changes so you can heal and connect.*

It is as simple as that. If you do not do that, you will be permanently and terminally sick and disconnected.

Of course, doing what you need to do to heal and connect can be a challenge, there is no doubt about that. The repressed pain and anguish, the whitewashed guilt and shame, the profound self-delusions, the toxic environments and the toxic attachments they breed, can be difficult to deal with. It can feel like psychological earthquakes, intellectual lightning bolts, and traumatic emotional tsunamis. That is OK. Do not kick yourself too hard and do not judge yourself harshly, no matter what you have done. Just start telling the truth, to yourself, and to others. Start slow. Don’t go crazy. Start by acknowledging the truth to your self, and slowly change your
behaviours. Later on, as your world becomes safer and more accepting, open up and share with others. If you struggle, seek help. We promise you that moving forward will become easier the more you commit to The Work, the more you detoxify your environments, and the more you embrace the truth.

Study Questions

1. In this unit we identified five reasons that people lie: because it is modelled, because it is safer, because we do not want to feel guilt and shame for our past actions, because we have become truth-entitled, and because some people encourage us to lie to ourselves and to others because doing so maintains The System.

   Think carefully about your life. Do you lie for any of these reasons? Reflect and be honest. This question is not here to make you feel bad, but just to help you identify those areas of your life where you need to work on being more truthful to yourself and others. Do not be in a rush to answer. Keep this question in your mind over the next few days and write your answers down in your HC Journal. When you have completed your reflection, come back and answer this question.

2. Think back to your childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. What was the biggest lie you ever heard from your parents, siblings, teachers, or friends? How has that lie impacted you in your life?

3. Are there any situations where you feel it might be a positive thing to lie to others. Are there situations where lying causes less harm overall, or might even be good?
“I” is for Ideology

In the last chapter, we took a look at the problem of lying. There we learned how pervasive lying is and how the lies we tell ourselves and others are obstacles to authentic healing and connection. As we learned, lying is not something that is evil. Lying is not part of our character or something that is going to send us to burn in hell. Lying is something we do because it has been modelled to us, because it makes us safer, because it helps us avoid guilt and shame, and because it is sanctioned by our current economic system, because it helps prop up that system. However, just because lying does not make us evil does not mean it is something we should do. Over the long run, all the lying we do to ourselves and others diminishes us and contributes to disconnection, disjuncture, and dysfunction. This is not rocket science, and we should have realized this long ago; however, as we noted at the close of the last unit, the System depends on dysfunctional and diminished human beings to function properly, and so some people work against this realization. Some people encourage us to lie to each other, and ourselves. Until we, and by “we” I mean the human species, learn to see clearly the purveyors of falseness and untruth, we will be stuck in an endless loop of confusion, self-deception, and disconnection.

Of course, the question at this point is, how do we learn to identify the purveyors of falseness and untruth? That is not such an easy question to answer not only because we all participate in the falseness and untruth, but because we all participate in a web of ideas that not only encourages us to lie to ourselves and to others, but also encourages us to think and act in ways that make it harder to heal and connect. We call the web of ideas that teaches us ideas and actions that make it harder to heal and connect, Ideology. As you will come to
see during the course of your LP study, ideology is powerful, pervasive, and can easily prevent us from healing and connecting.

If this sounds unreasonable, paranoid, or otherwise conspiratorial to you, consider the modern education system for a moment. The modern K12 education system is all about ideology. An article by Jean Anyon entitled “Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work” makes this quite clear.\textsuperscript{106} For her research article, Anyon visited and observed four different schools catering to four different social classes, the working-class, middle-class, professional-class, and executive-class. She found the teaching style and curriculum to be starkly different in each of these schools.

For example, in the working-class schools, she found the ideas and education geared towards turning pupils into factory/cubicle workers. In working-class schools, education focuses on learning ideas and behaviour that teach working class children to follow the rules and engage in rote “assembly line” style tasks, with “very little decision-making or choice.”\textsuperscript{107} The assumption of working-class education is that the students are off to factory jobs or retail jobs with minimal need for decision making ability and autonomy. This assumption is reflected in the basic training, which teaches students to follow the rules and cave to authority.

By contrast, the middle-class schools she observed taught middle-class ideas and skills, and shaped students into middle-class workers. Middle-class training revolved around middle-class things in middle-class jobs. Instead of rote memorization, children were encouraged to

\textsuperscript{106}If you’re an LP student, you can read the full article here

get the right answer with “some figuring, some choice, some decision making, critical thinking” but only “…within the ‘context’ that is given.” In other words, think inside the box and “fit in.” “As one teacher said, “Language arts is ‘simple grammar, what they need for everyday life.’… ‘They should learn to speak properly, to write business letters and thank-you letters…”

Mind-numbing and soul-destroying might be the term for working-class and middle-class educational streams; but, things get better for you the higher up you go. Anyon speaks about what she calls affluent professional schools and executive elite schools. Affluent professional schools train the “creatives” and intellectuals of our society, the people who go on to produce money-making cultural (movies, news, arts, architecture, literature, and so on.) and scientific products. Affluent professional “…schooling is developing in these children skills necessary to become society’s successful artists, intellectuals, legal, scientific, and technical experts and other professionals.”

Children in these schools are taught ideas and behaviours that encourage creative thinking, which will later be exploited in the System.

Finally, children in executive elite schools learn the skills they need to occupy society’s executive positions. In their upper-crust schools, they are taught self-control and to develop their own formulas. They are taught to strategize and theorize. They do not have to respond to a bell as lower class children do, and unlike children in the lower classes, their movements are not strictly monitored and controlled. As Anyon points out, “their schooling is helping them to develop the abilities necessary for ownership and control of physical capital and

108Ibid., 77–78.
109Ibid., 89.
the means of production in society.”

In other words, they are not being trained to be peons in factories or cubicles. They are being trained to take control, maintain control, and prop up the system.

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

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

Is this a good thing or bad thing? It is a mixed bag really. We acknowledge that the System, particular its capitalist variant, has created a powerful system of innovation and production that has brought incredible material wealth and scientific sophistication to the

\[110\] Ibid.
planet. On the other hand, in order to create a powerful system of production and accumulation, humans have had to be treated like things to be used as input into an economic machine. In order to fit you in, in order to ensure you are docile and compliant, and in order to ensure you accept the status quo, the System, through ideology, distorts your thinking, subverts your full human potential, and prevents connection. It prevents you from being who you really are, which is a powerful light of consciousness incarnated in a physical unit. This is most obvious in the case of working and middle class education, where creativity is stifled and submission, rote repetition, assembly line drudgery, and “in-the-box” thinking are taught, but it also occurs in professional and elite classes. In the elite class, for example, compassion and empathy are subverted to ensure managers can “do what it takes” to keep a business running, even if that means harming the planet and its people. This subversion of empathy throws members of the elite class out of alignment, causes intense guilt and shame (which must be suppressed somehow), and generally makes it harder for the individual to be fully connected. High or low, it just does not matter. As a consequence of a toxic socialization process that fits you into the system, as a consequence of the ideology which rules your thinking, you are damaged and diminished as a result.

### Three Challenges

So, what are you going to do about it? If you want to heal the damage caused by this toxic socialization process, realize your full potential, and connect, you are going to have to clear your mind of ideology. Otherwise, ideology will limit your potential and your thinking, and

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undermine your ability to heal and connect. Clearing out ideology is not impossible to do, but it is challenging because ideology penetrates to the very core of you.

If you are going to be successful at removing ideology, there are three challenges in particular that you need to face. Challenge one, you have to understand what exactly ideology is and where it comes from. Challenge two, have to learn how to identify it. Challenge three, after you understand and identify, you have to work hard to remove it from your mind.

**Challenge One: Understanding Ideology**

The first challenge to removing ideology from your mental and emotional systems is to understand exactly what it is. To fully understand ideology, there are three things you have to know about it. One, you have to know what it is; two, you have to know where it comes from; three, you have to know how it gets in our head.

**As for what ideology is**, you already know that, but we can define it formally at this point. *Ideology is a collection of ideas designed to shape, mould, diminish, and disconnect you so you can be inserted as a docile cog into the System in some needed productive role.* This role can range from “wife” to worker bee, sweatshop slave to corporate CEO.

**As for where ideology comes from**, that is a bit more complicated. Ideology is taught to us primarily in our families and in our early school instruction, though it is developed an reinforced throughout your life by media, Hollywood, and such. In other words, Ideology itself is taught to us by parents, teachers, priests, writers, actors, directors, editors, and other Agents of Consciousness. Agents of consciousness are simply people whose job, whether they are aware of

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112https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/gents_of_Consciousness
it or not, is to insert ideology into your brain. My mother, my grade school teachers in Catholic school, the priests I listened to in Church, George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, Quentin Tarantino, all taught me ideology, and as a consequence, are all agents of consciousness.

Of course, the agents of consciousness who propagate ideology are not the original sources of ideology. They simply repeat what they were taught as children and adolescents, or in their secretive temple-lodge meetings. The original sources of ideology are ancient and to be found in what Harold Ellens calls the Master Story. The Master Story is an ideological story, or rather a story template, developed by priests in the ancient Middle East specifically to manage and control the masses. We will come back to the master story and the ancient roots of ideology as we progress through the LP curriculum. For now, simply understand that ideology is taught to you by agents of consciousness who themselves learned it from other agents when they were children, all the way back to ancient times.

As to how ideology gets into your head, ideology itself is inserted into your brain via a process of indoctrination. Indoctrination is the process of teaching a person, or group of people, to accept a set of ideas, beliefs, mores, and values uncritically. The ideas themselves can

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116 https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Indoctrination
be found in multiple mediums (bed-time stories, movies, church sermons, school instruction) and come from multiple sources (teachers, priests, parents, etc.). This teaching is accomplished through repetition (i.e., you are taught the same story multiple times, and in multiple different formats) and reinforcement (either positive or negative). You get a gold star or an A+ if you accurately absorb the ideology, and you are punished in some way if you do not.

You should know that anyone can be indoctrinated, if you repeat and reinforce the same idea enough times; however, children are the easiest targets because they automatically trust the adults in their life, and are thus totally open to accepting whatever the adults claim as truth.

To summarize, ideology is a collection of ideas designed to shape, mould, diminish, and disconnect you so you can be inserted into the System in some needed productive role. Ideology is inserted into your brain by Agents of Consciousness in a process of repetition and reinforcement known as indoctrination.

**Challenge Two: Identifying Ideology**

Now that you know what ideology is, the next challenge is how to identify it. Unfortunately, left or right, Christian or Muslim, Jew or Gentile, Capitalist or Communist, identifying ideology can be a challenge, and this for a few reasons.

**Four reasons ideology is difficult to identify**

The first reason that ideology can be difficult to identify is because indoctrination starts when you are very young. As a consequence, ideology becomes a deeply buried, taken-for-granted part of your being. Throughout your childhood you are fed ideas and concepts, some of which are cultural or science based, but many of which are
ideological. Since your brain is undeveloped, you cannot distinguish between truth and ideology. Since you are genetically primed to model and trust adult “protectors,” you absorb the ideology fed to you without resistance. Since your sense self of self is undeveloped as a child, the ideology you absorb easily becomes part of your character structures. As a result of all this, the ideology you absorb during childhood is buried deep into your psyche and becomes part of your internalized structures of thinking.

The second reason that ideology can be difficult to identify is that ideology is “spun” in a way that makes it look positive and beneficial, when in fact it isn’t. For example, we know that all forms of violence (emotional, psychological, sexual, and physical) harm and diminish children. In particular, even something as common as spanking lowers the IQ of children. This diminishment, which gets worse the more you spank or assault, is functional for the System in the sense that diminished and disconnected young folk are less likely to complain if they have to work out their life in stultifying, soul-destroying jobs. However, you cannot say to parents, “hit your kids so they’ll accept sweatshop jobs and factory/cubicle life.” If you said that, few parents would listen. If you want people to hit their children, you have to “spin” the truth and make it look like something positive. For example, to get parents to hit their kids and diminish their own children so they can fit into factory/cubicle jobs, say “spare the rod spoil the child.” When you spin it like that, parents are more likely to do what you say.

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117 Sosteric, “Toxic Socialization.”

Besides childhood indoctrination and spin, a third reason that ideology can be difficult to identify is because it is often disguised as sacred in some way. Sacred ideas are just ideas which have been made “special” in your mind. It is not hard to make an idea special, or sacred. The easiest way to make an idea sacred is through repetitive ceremony and ritual. An oft-repeated church service, an intense Satanic ritual, a stylized Masonic rite, even a daily repeated “pledge of allegiance” are all rituals that are designed to make whatever ideas are being presented “special” in your mind. It is not rocket science, and it is not hard to do. Any idea can be made sacred, even very silly ideas, if you attach enough ceremony and ritual to them. Once an idea is established as sacred in your mind, you are no longer free to question it, and in fact you might defend it from those who do.

Finally, a fourth reason that ideology can be difficult to identify is because it is often presented as if it is traditional wisdom. Remember, ideology is a collection of ideas designed to shape, mould, diminish, and disconnect you so you can be inserted into the System in some needed productive role. Some of these ideas are passed on in family and cultural traditions. It might seem strange to think that our cherished cultural and family traditions contain ideology, but they do. There are quite a few areas where tradition is pulled in to obscure ideology and the harm it encourages. Everything from traditions on how to potty and bed train your kids, traditions on how you treat boys and girls, holiday traditions of emotional violence and threat (be a good boy, or else Santa won’t bring you a present), and so on, can encourage thoughts and actions, like spanking, shaming, yelling, preferential treatment, and neglect, which diminish and disconnect.

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141The Italian/Slavik Krampus tradition has to be the worst of the worst of the worst.
The ideology in our traditions can be quite harmful. The ideology in our traditions can also be quite difficult to spot and challenge. Indeed, these ideas can be particularly difficult to see and challenge because they are part of our cherished family and cultural identities and are often defended as such. Whether you are Italian, German, Bosnian, Chinese, or whatever, your traditions constitute your identity, and if you question and reject the ideology those traditions, it will feel like you are rejecting a part of your self. You will experience both internal and external resistance. Internally, you will feel like you are rejecting your identity, even soul. Externally, you might be scolded, shamed, and even ostracized for questioning and rejecting your traditions. It will be hard to argue and defend against this because you will be characterized as ungrateful, even dysfunctional, and told something to the effect of, “well, that is the way our family or culture has always done it.”

We call the ideologically rooted toxicity and violence that percolates down to us through our family and cultural traditions, Intergenerational Toxicity120 to emphasize the primary source of this toxicity, which is family and cultural ideas and traditions passed on from generation to generation.

Toxicity passed on through the family can be particularly difficult to sort out and eliminate because of the way adopting an idea or behavioural pattern into a familial or cultural tradition normalizes that idea or behaviour. Normalizing toxicity and violence means making violence something natural and inevitable, and nothing does that better than making it part of a respected tradition. When we say things like “That is just the way humans are,” or “we are violent and aggressive apes,” or “we all have a “dark side inside,” or “That is just

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120https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Intergenerational_Toxicity
the way we have always done it,” or “That is the way it has always been in our family,” we are normalizing dysfunction and providing inter-generational justification and excuse.

To summarize what we have said so far, ideology is a collection of ideas designed to shape, mould, diminish, and disconnect you so you can be inserted into the System in some needed productive role. Ideology, which is rooted in ancient elite stories, is taught to you by parents, teachers, and other agents of socialization. Although ideology exists and is harmful, it is difficult to recognize as such because it is taught to us as children when we are uncritical and defenceless, because it is “spun” in a way that makes it look beneficial, because it is wrapped in a facade of sacredness, and because it is often disguised in family and cultural traditions.

You can understand why this all makes ideology so difficult to identify if you imagine that you have been stuck in a room that is filthy, dirty, and heavily polluted, from birth. When you are very young, you cannot see the filth in the room because it is your normal existence. You may be aware, but you do not understand what you are looking at, and you do not see why it is a problem. It has always been there and consequently, you do not question its existence. And besides, your parent(s) do not seem to be bothered by it at all. They do not mention it, they do not talk about it, and if you naively point it out, they just ignore you and point at something else to distract your attention from the filth.

However, as you grow, you gradually become more aware of the pollution, and more aware of its impact on you. You begin to recognize that it is making you sick, and you begin to see your parent(s) in a new way. Despite the fact they seem oblivious or consciously blind to the pollution, nevertheless, as your brain
develops and your eyes open, you begin to see the filth is impacting them as well, sometimes in horrible ways. The pollution has undermined their health and made them weak and sick. At some point, you just cannot take it anymore, and you point out the mess, and what it is doing to you and to your parents. What happens then?

It is at the point where you finally question the toxicity and grime that surrounds you that the “fun” begins, because it is at that point that you find out the power of spin, the sacred facade, and intergenerational toxicity. In order to divert your attention from the grime in the room, your parents will spin, invoke “sacred truths,” and point to family and cultural traditions, all in order to dissemble, deny, justify, and dismiss your concerns regarding the family’s toxic ideas and behaviour. They will say the filth is good for you or that it builds strength and character. If violence is a tradition in your home, they might even lash out at you, physically, emotionally, and psychologically, in order to push you back down. If you press long and hard enough, if you challenge them to change and refuse to back down, they will put up a wall. They will say things like, “if you do not like it, get out of room.” Of course, the threat of banishment will probably terrify you, especially if you are young. What might be outside the room? And what if you do try and leave? If you actually do try to exit toxic traditions, if you do try and exit the room, expect heavy-duty emotional manipulation, guilt, and shame. emotional bullying, shunning, ridicule, and so on,. Family members will try everything they can try in order to manipulate you into closing your eyes to the pollution, and staying in the toxic soup.

It really can be quite the show.

*Four ways to identify ideology*
At this point, it should be relatively clear that ideology is something you have to pay attention to and remove, because ideology contains thoughts that diminish and disconnect. If you want to heal, manifest your full potential, and connect with your true Self, you need to a) identify the ideas that diminish and disconnect you, and b) clear that ideology out.

As we have seen, identifying and challenging ideology can be difficult. However, it can be done, and there are at least four ways to approach it. You can do it scientifically. You can look for it in your sacred ideas and stories. You can look closely at your spiritual and cultural traditions. Finally, you can pay attention to points of resistance that emerge when you try to discuss and challenge the ideology. We will take a look briefly at each of these in turn below. Note, however, that these strategies are not mutually exclusive. If you want to really get at the ideology buried in your brain, you should identify the most problematic ideologies first, and work towards removing them bit by bit. You should research and read on ideology, you should examine your cultural and spiritual traditions, and you should watch for resistance to ideological challenge. If you do a bit of all of this, you will gradually excise ideology.

The first approach to identifying ideology that we will look at is a scientific approach, and by that I mean through scholarship, reading, research, and critical analysis. To be sure, there is nothing novel in this; scholars, especially social scientists, have been searching out ideology for a very long time, and we have certainly found it in many places. Harold Ellens, for example, has discovered what he calls the “Master Story,” or what we’d call the old energy Creation Template. The old energy Creation Template, which has existed for centuries,

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but was perhaps first written down in the ancient Persian empire, in
the Zoroastrian faith,\textsuperscript{122} consists of a set of spiritually flavoured
ideological statements. These ideological statements, this template, is
used as at framework by artists and agents of consciousness when
they tell their stories. Artists and agents basically plagiarize the
statements and use them as “formulas” in their own work.

What are these template ideas? It is complicated and we need more
than a few words to lift the lid off. We will go into significant detail
concerning these ideas in \textit{Lightning Path Workbook Four: Archetypal
Study}. For now, let’s just say these ideas revolve around notions of
good and evil, hierarchy, deference to authority, exclusion (some are
chosen, some are not), judgment, and punishment. For example, one
common old energy creation template idea is the notion that there is a
cosmic battle between good and evil going on. This cosmic battle is
not just between humans on one side or the other of some moral or
ethical rift; this idea is actual, God sanctioned violence that continues
for all eternity, or until the “good guys” totally destroy the bad guys.
You find this idea in church teachings, represented on the Masonic
chessboard, and even in popular culture like Star Wars and Marvel
movies.\textsuperscript{123}

By now, the “spiritually flavoured ideological statements” are
everywhere, in our religions and in almost all of the stories we are
told. Thee ideas of good versus evil, hierarchy, deference to authority,
judgment, and punishment find their way into police dramas, into
Marvel movies, and into children and adult fairy tales, like Star Wars.

\textsuperscript{122}Sosteric, “From Zoroaster to Star Wars, Jesus to Marx: The Science and
Technology of Mass Human Behaviour.”

\textsuperscript{123}Sosteric, “Star Wars Is a Religion That Primes Us for War and Violence.”
They even find their way into the modern Tarot deck,124 where the template ideas were used to create, as one group of tarot scholars put it, the “…most successful propaganda campaign ever launched.”125 If you want to start identifying ideology in your brain, read about those ideas that scholars have identified as part of the creation template, and start looking for those ideas that support and promote these common ideological statements.

The second way to get at the ideology in your brain, in addition to looking at the scholarship of it, is to look for the ideas and things that you and the ones you are close to hold as sacred. Looking for the ideas you hold as sacred is a good place to start because, as already noted, ideology is often obscured behind a sacred facade. To be sure, sacred ideas can be hard to identify because they are often introduced in childhood and they come to be taken for granted as such. However, you can do it. There are a couple of ways to dig it all out.

Number one, pay attention to the rituals and ceremonies in your life and ask yourself about the ideas represented there. Look for the rituals you participated in as a child and an adult (e.g., going to church, etc.), and examine the ideas presented in these experiences. For example, I went to church every Sunday as a child and this ritual, i.e., sitting in pews and listening to a white-male priest explain to me brief excerpts from a book I was to consider sacred, presented, amongst other things, an ideology of submission and deference to authority. Through this weekly ritual I learned that God was a king in the sky and that


priests where the fountain of “his” wisdom and as such, I should listen to them.

In addition to examining the scholarship and looking at the rituals you participate in, a **third way** you can **identify ideology by looking at your answers to life’s big questions**. Big questions are the ultimate, existential questions of our being and our cosmology and include questions like “Who am I?”, “Where did I come from?”, “What is my purpose?”, “Why am I here?”, and so on. Answers to these questions are almost invariably ideological. Answers include things like “I’m an evolved ape and I’m here to survive.” “I’m a rejected soul and I’m here on this Earth to learn lessons.” “I’m one of the chosen ones and I’m her to manage and rule,” and so on. Once again, we’ll examine this sort of ideology in more detail in LP Workbook Four. In preparation for that work, for now, you can identify these ideas by simply asking yourself the big questions, and writing down your answers.

Finally, you can also identify ideology by looking for triggers, resistance, and both internal and external resistance. **External Resistance**[^1] is resistance you receive from friends, families, and others who resist challenge and new ideas. For example, if you grew up in Catholic home and you start to challenge the idea that hitting your children is a good thing, you may get strong resistance and push back. Maybe you will be shamed and ridiculed. Maybe you will be told to go read the bible. In some cases, in families where interpersonal violence is the norm, you might even be physically harmed. If that happens, if, when you question or challenge an idea you are met with forms of resistance and push back, that is a good indication that your dealing with some sort of ideology. Make a note of those ideas or write those ideas down in your HC Journal.

[^1]: https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/External_Resistance
In addition to external resistance, when you track an ideological statement, you may also experience **Internal Resistance**. Internal resistance occurs when you yourself question ideology, and when that questioning raises self-doubt, anxiety, fear, and even panic. If you question an ideological statement, for example the notion that God is a white male patriarch king in heaven whom you must slavishly bow before and obey, you may experience self-doubt, anxiety, and even fear that you will go to hell for daring to think such blasphemy. It might not be as visceral and powerful as that, but when you uncover ideological ideas, you may experience forms of internal resistance. Pay attention and be aware of that because, like the presence of external resistance, internal resistance is a red flag that tells you

To summarize, ideology consists of ideas which diminish and disconnect you so you can be inserted into the System in some needed productive role. Ideology is inserted by Agents of Consciousness in a process of repetition and reinforcement known as indoctrination. Ideology has existed in template form for many thousands of years. The ideological template, the creation template, or the master story as Ellens calls it, is used to create new ideologically informed stories for each new generation. To identify ideology, a) read and research, b) examine your “sacred” cultural and spiritual traditions, c) look for those ideas that answer big questions, and d) pay attention to triggers, resistance, and push back. If you do that, you will take steps towards understanding and identifying the ideology that has been cooked into your brain.

**Challenge Three: Clearing Ideology**

At the point where you start to understand and identify the ideology that has penetrated your life, you are going to start to ask yourself, how do I remove it. On the one hand, that is not so hard. Once you
understand ideology, once you have clearly identified it, removing it really just a question of thoughtful persistence. Think about the ideology, pay attention to it when it rises in your brain, and then replace it with a new idea. For example, when I was clearing out spiritual ideology, every time I recognized and felt the presence of judgment, I would recognize it was there, make a note of it, tell myself it was merely ideology, gently push it out of my awareness, and replace it with a different idea, usually one of inclusion and forgiveness.

It sounds simple enough, and at one level it is; but really, it was a challenge because the idea of judgment and exclusion came with fear, anxiety, and a host of other very negative ideas purposely inserted as part of the “master template.” Am I going to be excluded from reward and heaven? Am I going to be judged and punished severely in hell? In order to think about it and replace it, I had to accept I had the idea, and I had to think about it. But when I thought about it, I felt anxiety and deep fear.

My natural response was to avoid pain and anxiety, repress the idea itself, and try not to think about it. This, however, does not work. Trying to repress old energy ideas and ideology, especially during a powerful connection experience, heightens fear and anxiety. Trying to resist and repress can lead to a Nadir Experience\(^{127}\) which, if powerful

\(^{127}\)A Nadir Experience is a negatively felt Connection Experience. Nadir experiences are unpleasant moments of stress, anxiety, anger, confusion, fear, paranoia, and even psychosis caused when Connection occurs, and the individual is unprepared, damaged, or embedded in a toxic milieu. A Nadir experience is the opposite of a Zenith Experience.

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

150
enough, can become what LSD researcher Stanislav Grof and his partner Christina called a *Spiritual Emergency*.

To think about an old energy ideology long enough to replace it, and to avoid nadir experiences and spiritual emergencies, I had to overcome anxiety and fear so I could face the ideas and reject them as such. That was the hard part, overcoming the anxiety and fear. I had to take deep breaths and remain calm. I had to keep telling myself over and over again the new ideas of inclusion and forgiveness. I eventually succeeded in getting rid of the various ideological statements burned into my brain, but it took discipline, persistence, and several attempts. Each time the ideas came up, I would gently push them away. Each time I did that, the ideas got weaker and weaker. Eventually, they simply disappeared altogether and I was no longer bothered or influenced by them. It was a challenge, however. It took thoughtful persistence, courage, and discipline to face down and reprogram unpleasant ideologies.

**The Four-Step Basic Blueprint**

This, then, for your reference, is the four-step basic blueprint for removing old energy ideology from your brain. First, **identify it**. Then, **face it** no matter what anxieties and fears it brings up. Finally, gently and persistently **push it**, i.e., the diminishing and disconnecting ideology, out of your mind. Finally, **replace it** with something uplifting and connecting.

We have to say, this four-step basic blueprint sounds simply enough to apply, and it is. It is also a strategy that works. Unfortunately, it can

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be a challenge to implement, not only because of the internal and external resistance you will face when you confront old energy ideological statements, but also because a) old energy ideology is complicated, confusing and deeply entwined in the individual and collective consciousness of this planet and b) it can be hard to identify alternative ideas that do not diminish and disconnect. If you identify the idea of judgment, for example, as an old energy archetype, what do you replace that idea with? You can figure it out on your own, but as noted, it is complicated, and sorting it out on your own can take a lot of time, and can be quite difficult to do, especially if you are dealing with anxiety and fear.

Thankfully, you do not have to figure it out on your own. As already noted, we deal quite extensively with old energy archetypes and ideology in Lightning Path Workbook Four: Archetypes. There we help you identify old energy archetypes and ideas and we offer you a replacement New Energy Creation Template, which we call the Triumph of Spirit Archetype System (TOSAS). In Lightning Path Workbook Four, we will teach you how to use the TOSAS system to replace old energy ideology so you sanitize your thinking and more efficiently heal and connect.

And that, finally, brings us to an end of this section on ideology. As we have learned, ideology consists of ideas which diminish and disconnect so you can be inserted into the System. Ideology is inserted by Agents of Consciousness in a process of indoctrination. To identify ideology, read and research, examine your cultural and spiritual traditions, look for those ideas that answer big questions, and pay attention to triggers, resistance, and push back. When you have identified ideology, get rid of it using cognitive psychological techniques to help you focus on and replace the ideological ideas. If you do that, you will take steps towards understanding, identifying,
and replacing the diminishing, debilitating, and disconnecting ideology in your head with more suitable ideas that heal, empower, and connect.

**Study Questions**

1. What does it mean to say the school system is social class based? What does this mean for the education you get and the kind of people it turns out? Reflect on your education? What social class (upper, middle, lower) where you trained for? After reading this unit, can you identify any ideology in your training?

2. What is ideology? What are Agents of Consciousness? Where does ideology come from? What is Indoctrination? Why, in terms of healing and connection, is it important to identify and remove ideological statements?

3. Why are the four reasons ideology is difficult to identify? What are four ways you can identify ideology in your own life spaces? Having gone over this material, are you beginning to suspect there is ideology in your life? If so, where?

4. What is the four-step basic blueprint for removing ideology from your brain? Have you tried to do this with any ideology you have identified? Have you experienced internal or external resistance? If so, discuss.
6. “N” is for Needs

So far in this workbook we have looked at key aspects of human development and pathology that have to be addressed if one is to proceed forward towards healing and connection. As identified in this workbook, the most important things to do are a) get help if you need it, b) detoxify your environment, c) analyze and address your addictions, d) work on removing self deception and lying so you can be honest with yourself and others about what needs to be done, and e) identify and remove ideology. Of course, all this does not have to be done at once. These five healing items represent a considerable amount time and work. It is impossible to accomplish all of them in a short period of time.

We should note, it is not just that these focus points require time and effort. Most important to understand, each of these aspects of healing require ongoing and iterative personal and collective change. To put this another way, all the work does not fall to you. For the planet to make progress towards healing and connection, you need to make personal change, that is true; however, these personal changes must be accompanied simultaneously by incremental collective change as well, otherwise only limited personal progress can be made. You can make improvements in your home environment, for example, but if you go into a toxic soup at school, work, or in your social environments, you will take ongoing damage all the same.

Put another way, you can only go as far and as fast as the world around you is going. For you to make full progress towards healing and connection, the world has to improve as well. Keep this in mind if sometimes you feel like your progress is not as fast as you like. Do not carry all the weight and responsibility of change on your own two shoulders. Ultimately, it is a collective effort.
With that said, it is now time to turn our attention to a more positive aspect of the healing and connection process, and that is our human needs. It is very important to understand, we all have human needs. It is also important to understand, if you want to heal and connect, heck, if we want your kids to grow and realize their full human and spiritual potential and not become sick, diminished, and stunted human beings, it is important to make sure that all your human needs are met, in full, one hundred percent of the time.

We realize that some people may think this is a strident statement; nevertheless, it is true. The human physical unit, like other physical things on this planet, is a growing thing. Growing things have needs and if the thing is going to grow up healthy and strong, all its needs must be satisfactorily met, period. If you do not meet all the needs of a growing thing, that thing will not grow to its full potential, and in fact may become stunted, or even die.

This is not rocket science and should be obvious to anybody who grows any thing, like plants, poultry, or even human beings. If you do not meet the nutritional needs of plants, for example, if the plants you are trying to grow do not get enough sunlight, nitrogen, water, and oxygen—if, in other words, you do not satisfactorily meet all their needs—they stunt and die, period. This is not open to debate. Either you meet the needs of the things you are growing, or they do not achieve full potential. It is as simple as that.129

When it comes to plants, it is easy to specify what they need. Plants need proper soil PH, sufficient sunlight and water, nitrogen, oxygen, and so on. The needs of humans, on the other hand, are not so easy to understand. Humans are more complex than plants. Humans have

many things that plants do not have, like muscles, internal organs, nerve cells, brain structures, and so on. Consequently, human needs go beyond the simpler, primarily physical needs of planets.

Of course, at this point the question becomes, what are our human needs?

When asked this question, psychologists and would probably turn to the work of Abraham Maslow for insight. Maslow, who was a psychologist active in the 1940s through 1970s, had two lists of needs, two hierarchies of human need, that he used to specify our humans needs, these were the Hierarchy of Basic Needs, and the Hierarchy of Cognitive Needs.

Maslow’s first hierarchy was his hierarchy of basic needs. This hierarchy initially included five sets of basic needs, including our physiological needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Later on, Maslow added the high level need for “transcendence,” which on the LP we simply define as the need for connection. We include a graphic of the basic needs below.

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130 https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Hierarchy_of_Basic_Needs


Maslow’s second hierarchy of needs was his hierarchy of cognitive needs. In this hierarchy, Maslow placed two needs, the *need to know* and the *need to understand*. According to Maslow, the *need to know* is our basic, biologically rooted need to know things, like why is the sky blue, what’s 2+2, what are the sparkly lights in the sky, do I have a soul, etc. Maslow said our need to know was powerful, but it wasn’t

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our only cognitive need. Maslow said that once we know something, we also are impelled to understand that thing. According to Maslow:

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

**Hierarchy of Cognitive Needs**

Maslow would say these cognitive needs, like all needs on both hierarchies, were rooted in the evolutionary biology of the organism. That is most certainly true. The biological nature of our needs is obvious in the case of the physical needs for food, shelter, and safety,

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\(^{135}\)Ibid.

\(^{136}\)Ibid.
which are clearly required for the biological health of an organism; but it is also true of the higher needs, and our cognitive needs as well. Knowing and understanding your environment is most definitely a survival thing, and an instinctual thing. An organism that does not know and understand its environment, an organism that cannot meet its needs and adapt, is an organism not long for this world. Therefore, Maslow felt that the need to know and the need to understand are biologically rooted and instinctually driven, just like the more basic needs, like the need for shelter, or food and water.

It should be noted, Maslow was not saying anything particularly revolutionary or new when he said humans have cognitive needs. For example, way before Maslow, Einstein said that “There is a mystical drive in man [sic] to learn about his [sic] own existence.” To be sure, Maslow based his belief in these cognitive needs on his clinical research work, and rooted that in evolutionary biology, but even without that, the existence of these needs is self-evident. Everyone with a child above the age of two can see that the need to know and understand exist and are powerful drives. Whenever a child asks the questions “What is that?” or “Why is that?” or “Why am I here?” they are attempting to know and understand.

Over the decades since its conceptualization, Maslow’s hierarchy of basic needs has come under fire, not because he was wrong about the needs themselves, but because the needs as they actually operate are not really organized into a hierarchy, as Maslow suggested. You do not meet the bottom needs first, and then only work on actualization and transcendence later on. If you want to be healthy and whole, you have to work on all the needs simultaneously.

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37 See William Hermanns Einstein and the Poet (Boston: Branden Books, 1983), https://amzn.to/2n8MjnC.
Another problem with Maslow’s hierarchies is that over the decades, Maslow’s second hierarchy of cognitive needs has been totally ignored by psychologists and others. When you look up Maslow’s hierarchies on the Internet or in scholarly journals, you inevitably find only the basic hierarchy of needs, and only the earlier one, without the need for transcendence. Psychologists seem to be unaware of the second hierarchy, and often seem to ignore transcendence, for reasons we will not go into here.\(^{138}\)

Maslow’s two hierarchies of needs are interesting and surely useful for conceptualizing human needs, but the conceptualization needs requires an update.

For one, the notion that these needs are organized into a hierarchy has to go. The needs are neither hierarchical nor prepotent.\(^{139}\) Instead, our needs are equi-potent, meaning we have to meet them all at the same time.

For two, separation of basic and cognitive needs into two separate hierarchies has to end, not only because there is really no good reason to separate them like that, but also, as we can see, separating them allows people to ignore the important cognitive needs. For these reasons, i.e., in order to eliminate the hierarchy and in order to avoid the avoidance of cognitive needs, we reconceptualize Maslow’s needs into a single integrated list of **Seven Essential Needs**. They exist and

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\(^{138}\) We can speculate why this might be. We think it is because of the uncomfortable implications of this hierarchy for personal therapeutic, and wider economic, political, and social practice. See Mike Sosteric and Gina Ratkovic, “What Does It Mean to Be Human: Abraham Maslow and His Hierarchies of Need,” 2018, https://www.academia.edu/35635479.

\(^{139}\) Maslow said that the needs in his hierarchies were “prepotent,” meaning that you had to fill the lower needs before you could move and fill the “higher” needs. Psychologists have criticized this idea over the years and now believe that the needs are filled concurrently. That is, assuming you are not starving to death, and have basic shelter, you can work on satisfying all your needs at the same time.
need to be satisfied all at the same time. The complete list is provided below.

**Seven Essential Needs**

1) **Physiological needs** — The needs for food, water, air, sex,...
2) **Safety and stability needs** — The needs for safe and stable environments
3) **Love and attachment needs** — The needs for unconditional love, support, and belonging. The need for attachment to a family, group, society.
4) **Truth needs** — The need to know and understand the world
5) **Self-Esteem/Power** — The need to feel good about oneself, to feel powerful and efficacious in the world. Meeting this need requires freedom and support.
6) **Alignment** — The need to be in alignment with your Highest Self. The need to express who you truly are. The need to actualize our inner self and potential.
7) **Connection** — The need to make a strong and pure connection with your Highest Self.

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A little more detail

The seven essential needs listed above are, indeed, essential needs. Some of the needs above are, however, categories of need. The categories themselves can contain several needs. Most of these categories are self-explanatory, but it is worthwhile looking at them in a bit more detail.

The physiological needs, for example, are the biological needs of your body for food, water, air, etc. These are important needs because without them you cannot physically survive.

The safety and stability needs are your biological needs for security, stability, steady finances, steady work, the resources you need to get by and live, etc. These needs are important not only because not meeting them (i.e. not having a good job, not having a stable environment) causes toxic stress which damages your physical unit, but also because if you spend too much time working and struggling and fighting against chaos, you have no energy left for other things, like family, love, alignment, and connection. It goes without saying that if you are working sixty or seventy hours per week, if you do not live in a stable environment, if you do not have enough money to live comfortably, you will not have a lot of energy for other things. Safety and stability also means an environment without violence of any sort. As noted in the chapter “E” is for environment, this means no physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, economic, or spiritual abuse, period.

Your love and attachment needs are your needs for unconditional love and support, your need to belong to and be attached to a solid family (ideally), or a supportive group of friends (second best). This is a biological need just like all your other needs. Humans are biologically wired, for survival reasons, to need to be a part of families, to need to
be part of groups. This is not only because children remain dependent on adults for at least three decades, but also because it impossible for a person on their own to survive “out in the woods.” Even a sole-survivor type of guy still needs things like shovels, guns, bullets, axes, and so on, that can only be produced with the help of a society of some sort. Humans need a family, a community, and an economy, to survive, they need to be attached to groups, and this need has been programmed in by evolution.

Of course, love is not just biology and attachment. As you will learn later, your Highest Self is a part of a powerful, compassionate, expansive, loving, and connected Fabric of Consciousness and the love in that is intense and cosmic. Thus, your need for love is not just a need to receive love, but also a need to express that love. Your body has biology that allows you to fully express that cosmic love, though it is shut down in most people by toxic socialization. It can be restarted, however, as part of healing and connection practice. As part of your psychological and spiritual growth, you will restart it. Just keep in mind, when that love starts to flow, do not cut it off for any reason. Allow the love and compassion to push on through.¹⁴²

Moving right along, your truth needs are your human need to know and understand the world. As we have seen, these needs were suggested as important by Abraham Maslow in his second hierarchy of cognitive needs. Maslow suggested two needs there, the need to know and the need to understand, but we feel these two needs are really reflective of a single need for truth, which is self-evident. You can see this need express itself even in very small children as they grow up with questions about this and that, and you can see it in adults as they struggle to understand the world and get at the truth.

¹⁴²There is a great song about this by the Bellamy Brothers called “Let your love flow.”
Just like all your other needs, your truth needs are biologically rooted needs important for individual and collective survival. An organism that does not know and understand its environment is an organism not long for this world.

In addition to your love and attachment needs, you also have self esteem and power needs. These are your needs to feel good about yourself, like you are a good person, that you have competence and skill, that you are growing and manifesting your full potential. Again, this is a biological need, a programmed instinct. We are all driven to be good at things, whether that is hunting, gathering, or corporate finance. The need to be good at things, the need to build talent and competence, makes survival in the world more likely. In earlier times, this would have meant getting good at hunting, gathering, growing food, and making the things we need to survive. In the modern world, there are many more things to get good at, like engineering, psychology, teaching, and so on. It does not matter what you get good at. In order to fulfill this need for self-esteem, you just have to get good at something.

The need to be competent and feel good about yourself extends and is part of your need to have power in the world. All living organisms need to feel confident in their self and existence, and they need to have the power to work and create the world that they want. When you have power, you have the ability to survive, thrive, and create the world you need. This is an important and programmed biological function. Even amoebas have the power to influence and create the world they live in.143 Humans have the same need.

After your self-esteem and power needs comes your need for
*alignment*. Alignment is your first, how shall we say, fully spiritual
need. This need is essentially the need to be “synced-up” with your
Highest Self, to be in alignment with your Highest Self.\textsuperscript{144}

It can be hard to wrap your head around what alignment actually
means, but alignment is easiest to conceptualize by using an
autonomous vehicle metaphor. An autonomous vehicle is a car with
an artificial intelligence (AI) capable of monitoring and driving the
car. In this metaphor, you think of your body like it is the car and you
think of your bodily ego like the car’s AI. You think of your Higher Self
(your soul, or Atman) as if it is the driver of that car.

To be in alignment, the car and its AI must do what the driver wants.
If the driver turns the wheel left and the car goes left, the vehicle is in
alignment. If the driver programs the car to go to Costco and the car
goes to Costco, the car is in alignment. On the other hand, if you tell
your car to take you to Costco and instead it drives you downtown to
the park, your car is out of alignment. To be in alignment, the car
must be doing what the driver wants it to do, one hundred percent of
the time.

It is the same with your physical body. For your physical body to be in
alignment with your Highest Self, your body must do what your soul
wants it to do and be what your soul wants it to do.

This sounds like something that should be relatively simple, but it is
not. Just like there are reasons why your car might be out of
alignment with the intent of the driver (malfunction, breakdown,
etc.), there are reasons why your physical unit and your bodily ego

\textsuperscript{144}If you haven’t read LP Workbook One, now would be good time to do so.
might be out of alignment with the consciousness the drives the physical unit.

For example, if your Highest Self, your soul, took a body to be a musician and you are spending your life working as a mechanic, perhaps because your parents did not have the time or energy to support your early training, or because you have to work a hard job to support a family, you are out of alignment.

On a more psychological/spiritual level, if your physical vehicle is damaged by toxicity and abuse, and if as a consequence of that abuse you are angry, resentful, and lashing out violently towards others all the time, you will also be out of alignment, because your soul wants none of that. Your soul, your Highest Self, is a loving, compassionate, being of pure light and consciousness. Just like you do not want your car suddenly veering off into a crowd of bystanders and hurting them, your soul does not want its body being hurtful and mean to others.

Alignment is a very important spiritual concept and we will talk more about alignment in LP Workbook Three when we focus in on the need for awakening, accountability, atonement, alignment, and some of the other key aspects of connection. For now, just keep in mind that your body has a built in need to seek alignment with your Higher Self. Just like you have to put energy into meeting all your other needs, you also have to put energy into meeting your need for alignment. As we will see in more detail in LP Workbook Three, this means not only finding out what you came here to do and doing that, but also acting and thinking in concordance with what your Highest Self wants you to do.

Finally, in addition to your spiritual need for alignment, you also have a spiritual need for connection. As explained in LP Workbook One, connection means a connection between your bodily ego and spiritual ego. As always, this essential need for connection is biologically
programmed, for several reasons, most important of which is that being connected makes you smarter, more capable, and more adaptable.

For some this might be a radical statement, and in a way it is. Although scholars have researched connection (i.e. mystical experience) over the years, there hasn’t been much focus on how connection might enhance creativity, mental health, and even intelligence. Even so, commentators have, over the years, pointed out that connection brings insight, enlightenment, and even enhanced cognitive ability. This makes logical sense. If your higher self is an entity of vast cosmic intelligence and wisdom, which I would argue it is, then making a connection to that higher consciousness is definitely going to make you, or rather, your bodily ego, smarter. Obviously, anything that makes your body smarter enhances your ability to survive and thrive. Thus, because it enhances adaptability and survival, over the course of evolution, your body has been programmed to seek and establish connection. Your body has a need to connect.

And note, no matter what you might have heard in the seminary, secret temple, or Masonic lodge, this is not something that only a “chosen few” can do. Connection enhances survivability and so, as many scholars and mystics have commented upon over the years, the ability to connect is a natural talent of human beings. All living

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physical things have the ability and need to connect with Consciousness, even something as simple as amoebas.

Put another way, connection is never a question of talent or ability. It is just a question of the natural and healthy development of the physical unit. As long as you meet all the needs of the physical unit, connection happens automatically, in little snippets when you are younger, but more fully once your brain and central nervous system is fully developed, typically in your late 30s or early 40s. I say “usually” here because, as will become clearer as we progress through our study, on this planet, your ability to connect is thwarted by a toxic socialization process that, among other things, is violent, neglectful, and often chaotic. Toxic socialization causes physical, mental, emotional, psychological, and spiritual damage to the physical unit. It is this damage, and not some superstitious notions of “chosen ones,” or “grace,” or whatever, that is what prevents the adult from achieving a strong, consistent, and pure connection to consciousness.

To summarize what we have said up until this point in this unit, humans have seven essential needs. These needs are essential in every sense of the word. If you want to be healthy and whole, if you want to be happy and content, if you want to develop and express your true power and potential, if you want to enter what we call “Growth Mode,” which we will discuss in more detail in the final unit “G” is for Growth, you must have all these needs satisfied.

It is not rocket science.

If you are gardener, you know that if you want your plants to grow up healthy and strong, you must meet all their essential needs. Similarly, if you are growing humans, you must meet all their essential needs. If

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147 Lin Edwards, “Brain Is Not Fully Mature until 30s and 40s,” Medical Express, 2010. Since your brain is the primary site of connection.
you do not, the physical unit will not reach its full potential and may even, in the worst cases of violence, neglect, chaos, and indoctrination, stunt, diminish, and even die.

To be sure, a lot more could be said about the consequences of toxic socialization and the failure of human society to fulfill all our essential needs. As we will see when we explore the LP model of mental health, these consequences are severe and include Primary Damage, Secondary Damage, and long-term biological and behavioural adaptations to the chronic trauma of violence and neglect. You can find more in depth discussions of the LP model of mental health on the LP Readings page. For now, it is important to understand three things.

**Number one**, understand that meeting all the essential needs is not an individual, maternal/paternal, or even familial challenge. That is, you cannot meet all your essential needs on your own, and you certainly cannot meet the needs of your children (if you have them) on your own. The essential needs are comprehensive and require ongoing service and attention. In order for human needs to be fully met we need an advanced economy and an advanced society geared towards satisfaction of these needs.

It is a question of efficiency and economies of scale.

Unless you want to live as a hunter gatherer out in the woods, in which case you will only have time to meet your most basic of needs, for food, shelter, and security, you need others to help you meet your needs. Having others involved means you do not have to spend your days struggling to meet your basic needs. Instead of spending all your time hunting, gathering, maintaining your shelter, and so on and so forth, you can buy food from the store, hire a carpenter, and otherwise
engage in trade, thereby freeing up some time up for other pursuits.
Having others involved means you do not have to cut your own trees,
make your own wood, and build your own home, you can rely on
others to help you with that. Having others involved means you can
create efficiencies of scale.

Having “others” involved in the satisfaction of your human needs is
what an economy and business are all about. A business is ideally
created to meet some sort of need, like the need for bananas, or bread,
or entertainment. Businesses exchange goods and services in an
economy that is, also ideally, geared to meeting our collective human
needs In an economy, we all work together doing the things we are
good at in order to efficiently provide for each others needs. You
might work as a nurse, tending to people’s healing and other needs. I
might work as an educator, attending to your needs for education.
Others might work as carpenters or electricians, attending to people’s
need for shelter and things to sit on. Working together we efficiently
meet our needs.

Number two, understand that the human species currently has the
productive, technological, economic, financial, and administrative
expertise to create a system that can provide sustainable satisfaction
of the essential needs of all the billions of human beings now living on
the planet. The only thing stopping humanity from turning its
amazing technological, economic, financial, and administrative
expertise towards full satisfaction of humanity’s seven essential needs
is, and this is the third thing you need to understand, that our global
society is currently geared not towards satisfaction of essential human
needs, but towards facilitating the unfettered accumulation and
wealth and the private enrichment of a few very addicted, very


Without going into a heavy-duty analysis about the old energy System of accumulation and how it distorts human activity, frustrates human needs, and creates addicts of us all, let’s just say that while this old energy System remains in place, nobody can have their needs fully satisfied. This is so not only because the System as it is currently setup impoverishes the many in order to enrich the few, but also because the System distorts human needs and undermines human development in order to preserve itself and the accumulation that it enables.

Full satisfaction of our essential human needs requires humanity to move beyond the current economic system. Full satisfaction of human needs requires an advanced and integrated global economy that is geared not towards private accumulation of abstracted labour (i.e. money), but towards satisfaction of humanity’s essential needs. As long as the planet remains in the hands of a few increasingly destructive addicts who have hijacked the collective resources of this planet to serve their own private greed, it is going to be a challenge for all of us. This challenge is something to keep in mind so that you do not get too frustrated, and do not descend in a negative spiral of blaming yourself or those around you. Remember, do what you can to improve your environment, address your addictions, move yourselves towards truth, clear ideology and satisfy your needs. Even small and incremental changes in our lives and the lives of our children and loved ones can make a big different. Just remember, the System needs
to change as well. The only way to move this planet forward and end the suffering, strife, frustration, and damage is to combine your individual efforts with our collective efforts to confront the addicts, heal the damage, and swap out the System so that we can all heal, connect, and save the proverbial planet.

**Study Questions**

1. What are the seven essential needs? Briefly describe each in your own words (10 points).

2. Thinking back on your childhood and adolescence, where all these needs consistently met? If so, describe your wonderful childhood and how all these needs were met. If not, what needs were not met? Reflect upon how failure to meet these needs may have impacted your personality and behavioural patterns. (10 points)
“G” is for Growth

From these and similar observations, we may generalize and say that the average child in our society generally prefers a safe, orderly, predictable, organized world, which he (sic) can count on, and in which unexpected, unmanageable or other dangerous things do not happen, and in which, in any case, he has all-powerful parents who protect and shield him from harm.\(^{150}\)

In the last few chapters, we have examined the LP HEALING framework. This framework provides a template or map which you can use to address the things you need to address in order that you might heal and, subsequently, connect.

The advice we provide here is simple. Get help if you need it. Make sure you create a non-toxic environment where you can heal and connect. Address any addictions (toxic attachments) to substances, activities, people, and so on that you may have developed along the way. Learn to be truthful with yourself and others. Examine any ideology that may keep you from moving forward, and understanding. Finally, work towards satisfaction of your seven essential needs. If you do these things, you will build a solid foundation for the healing and connection work you will do.

Once you have built a solid foundation, what’s next? Keeping in mind the limitations imposed on human society by the current System, the next step is what we might want to call **Growth Mode**. Growth mode is simply a mode of operation of the physical unit where almost all the organic energy (the energy your body uses to live in the world) is directed not at defending against injury, meeting needs, healing damage, covering up lies, fixing your environment, dealing with toxic

attachments, and so on, but rather at achieving full growth and full human potential, as your physical unit was designed to do.

To understand what growth mode is, consider a flower. If you give a flower all the food and water it needs, if you give it lots of sun, if you protect it from pests, if you do not stomp on it, all the biological energy it has will go into growing into a strong and healthy plant with a beautiful, perfect flower on top.

Obviously, putting a flower into growth mode is what every competent gardener tries to do. In growth mode, the flower can become strong and beautiful because all its energy is directed towards manifesting its full potential. Sometimes it does not work out though. Sometimes, there are problems with the soil. Sometimes, the plant gets too much rain, or too little rain, or whatever. When that happens, the flower goes into what we might call **Deficit Mode**. We can understood deficit mode as simply what happens to a living organism like a flower when

a) it does not get all its needs met or

b) you expose the organism to some form of assault.

When either of the above occur, energy that would normally be directed towards growth becomes redirected. When you do not meet an organism's essential needs, a substantial portion of energy goes towards a struggle to meet those essential needs. A flower needs sunlight to grow. If you do not meet a flower's need for sunlight, for example, it will wilt and die. If you meet only some of its need for sunlight, if you put a plant under low intensity LED lights that do not provide enough light, it will grow tall and spindly as it desperately reaches to be closer to the light source. It will still be a flower, but it will look weak and distorted. It's root structure will be weak, and its flowers will lack lustre and colour.
Similarly, when you expose an organism to assault, then a substantial portion of its energy goes towards protecting itself from assault, and repairing any damage that occurs. If you put a flower out in your garden and it gets stepped on, it might die. If it does not die, it will take a lot of energy to straighten up and rebound. The energy spent on rebounding is energy not directed towards growth. This redirected energy impacts the final outcome. If you step on a plant once, it might recover without too much difficulty. However, if you step on the plant repeatedly, it may continue to bounce back, but like the flower that didn’t get enough sunlight, it will be much smaller and weaker as a result.

**Human Growth**

The difference between growth mode and deficit mode should feel pretty straightforward at this point, at least when it come to flowers and other vegetable life forms. It is a little more complicated, however, when you give life legs and let it move around. This is certainly the case for humans. Humans, like all living thing, also have a growth mode and a deficit mode. In humans, growth mode emerges when

1. Your body is not wasting energy on defence and repair.
2. All your essential needs are satisfied.

If you look back over the content of this workbook, you will see that much of the advice is geared towards putting you into growth mode. Creating a safe environment where you are safe from assault, dealing with your addictions, learning to tell the truth, learning to reject ideology and wrong thought, and learning how to satisfy your own needs is all about creating the conditions whereby you can stop
wasting energy on defence, repair, or desperate attempts to meet needs, and start directing your energy towards growth.

Just like a flower, when in growth mode, you devote a large portion of your energy to becoming a strong and beautiful human being. In flowers, this means growing healthy roots, healthy stalks, healthy leaves, and beautiful and colourful petals. In humans, this essentially means developing your mind and body (your physical unit) to its fullest potential, so it is strong and can handle and properly express your own Highest Self.

Of course, the question at this point is, how do you develop your physical unit so that it is strong and so that it can handle and express your Highest Self. It is not rocket science and you already have the answer to that the question. To develop your physical unit so that it is strong and can handle and express your own Highest Self, you must meet all your essential needs. Get enough rest. Get enough nutritional food. Protect yourself from assault and violence. Make sure you have a partner or friend group that is supportive, nurturing, loving, and non-violent. Focus on the truth. Make sure you are in environments that support your self esteem and need for healthy power. Work on alignment. Practice connection.

At this point, it should be all pretty straight forward, except perhaps for the last two items, alignment and connection. While humanity understands, for the most part, how to meet physiological, safety, love, truth, and power needs, the same cannot be said for alignment and connection needs. When it comes to alignment and connection, things can be very confused. This is because alignment and connection needs are what you might think of as “spiritual” needs, and these spiritual needs are typically handled within esoteric and exoteric religious frameworks. As I discuss in my Sociology of Religion
class, religions tend to be corrupted and confused by environment, politics, personal pathologies, and so the advice they give on alignment and connection, if they give it at all, tends to be wrapped up in the politics and personal pathologies of the leaders, priests, and gurus of the religion. The confusion and corruption can be minor and easy to overcome, or it can so bad that it can be used to incite hatred and even genocide.

We are not going to go into detail about the confusion and corruption that surrounds our collective understanding of alignment and connection here. However, because there is considerable confusion, we do need to spend more than a short chapter on presenting, discussing, and clarifying your needs for alignment and connection, and how to satisfy them. We spend this extra time in LP Workbook Three: Connection. There we introduce the LP Connection Framework. The LP Connection Framework, like the LP HEALING Framework, is a collection of focus points that you can use to engage in alignment and connection practice. These focus points are things you can think about, and areas that you can work on, to improve your alignment and connection to your own Highest Consciousness. We are not going to talk about these focus points here; however, we can get you started on this next phase by getting you thinking about alignment practice and connection practice.

Alignment Practice is, like the name implies, practice at achieving alignment. Alignment is, as you already know, the extent to which your physical unit is “synced-up” with your Highest Self. You are in alignment when your physical unit does what your Highest Self wants it to do. You are out of alignment when your physical unit does things,

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151 https://www.athabascau.ca/syllabi/soci/soci287.php

152 https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/LP_Connection_Framework
like harm others, that your Highest Self does not want it to do. Alignment practice is the process of moving yourself towards greater alignment with your Highest Self. It is a process of becoming more like who you really are, deep inside.

How do you practice alignment? That is the topic of the next workbook, but basic advice is simple enough. Practice doing what make you feels good. Avoid what makes you feel shame and guilt. Practice doing what you feel is right. Avoid what makes you feel sick and unhappy. Practice doing what makes you feel joy and bliss. Avoid what makes you angry at yourself and others. It is straight forward enough. If playing guitar gives you joy, play guitar. If working as an accountant gives you joy, work as an accountant. If helping others gives you joy, help others. There are very few absolute right or wrongs here, although there are some. You should not steal from others, for example. You should not exploit workers. You should never kill other people. You should never tell people lies. In other words, never harm other living beings. Beyond these few basic things, however, follow your joy.

Telling you to practice alignment and saying that an aligned act is one that makes you feel good seems like straightforward advice, but achieving alignment can be a challenge because, frankly, there's a lot of bad advice out there. This bad advice comes from the usual sources, like priests and gurus, but from some surprising places as well, like marketers and the capitalists they work for. The job of marketers, the job of advertisers, is to get you to do things that you you do not want to do, that you should not do, that are often bad for you and others in various always, and that are often out of alignment. Christmas advertising is a great example of this. Christmas is a holiday that is bad for the environment, bad for your mental health, and bad for your families. These days it is a corrupted celebration that for many is
about little more than unfettered consumerism, waste, and destruction. As currently practised, the solstice holiday teaches children to be consumers and drives adults mad with stress and anxiety. Christmas, as currently practised, is a disjunctive holiday that has very little to do with human spirituality and aligned action and everything to do with supporting a predatory Capitalist system. However, marketers never display the reality of Christmas; they always display a family fantasy that encourages you to pretend while you are purchasing more and more things. In order to make their clients money, marketers push you to do things and to buy things that are often not in alignment with who you are inside. Marketers are powerful and sophisticated and when we give in to their power, we fail in our alignment practice.

Of course, the point here isn’t to bash Christmas. The point is simply to say, practising alignment can be difficult because there are lots of powerful influences that push you away from your alignment goals. Even if you identify what is right for you, even if you say to yourself “I know I should not celebrate Christmas in an unaligned and disjunctive fashion,” you may still have a hard time because you will experience both internal and external resistance to alignment.

**Internal resistance** is resistance to alignment that comes from you. There are lots of reasons why you might resist acting in a more unaligned fashion. One such reason is that you have unmet needs and acting out of alignment helps you to meet these needs. What kind of unmet need makes you resist changing Christmas to a more aligned holiday? The need for love is one possibility. Giving presents is a nice thing to do and it generally gets you love and appreciation. If you are not getting enough love and appreciation in your life, or if you did not get enough love and appreciation in your childhood, then Christmas can become a very important time to you because it is one of those
times in your year where you get the love and appreciation you crave. Of course, using Christmas gift giving to satisfy your needs for love and attention is not exactly what Christmas is supposed to be about, but that does not matter. You will not think about the hypocrisy of that because you will be too focused on meeting your unmet needs for love. You will also resist changing Christmas because you will not want to lose the opportunity it provides you to meet your unmet needs.

In addition to internal resistance to alignment, you may also experience external resistance. External resistance is resistance to alignment that comes from outside. We can use the Christmas holiday as an example here once again. If you try to change Christmas into a more sustainable and aligned celebration, you are going to experience a lot of external resistance from parents, siblings, friends, teachers, and so on. Many people are not going to like your critical commentary about Christmas. They are going to try change your mind, or at least shut you up, and probably not in a nice way. You will try challenge their consumerism, their waste, their gluttony, and they will put you down, ridicule you, and even ostracize you.

Why do you experience external resistance to alignment? Why do people resist? For the same reasons you do. One reason why people might not want to change their Christmas behaviour is because it selfishly meets their needs. Another reason they might resist is for ideological reasons, because they have been thoroughly indoctrinated by marketers and others into believing that consumerism is spiritual.

Our family just watched a Christmas show, *Klaus*. It was a good movie, but it unabashedly propped up gift giving as a psychological and spiritual good. Klaus and similar movies infused gift giving as the solution to human misunderstandings, grief, loss, and alienation, but it is not. Klaus and similar movies further distort gift giving by making
making consumerism the symbol for attachment to your family, and joy. Again, it is not. The distortion is so bad in the end that Christmas becomes about giving and getting the most stuff, and it shows in the struggles, stress, and fighting.

All Christmas movies, and all Christmas advertising, attach spiritual and psychological significance to the giving of gifts. In so doing, they create an ideological framework that says, essentially, that consumerism is a spiritual practice. This makes it very hard to argue against the practice because if you do, you are a scrooge. The ideology of Christmas is a very powerful prop that not only encourages people to defend the consumerist practice, but also gives them the ammunition they need to do it. Everybody who has seen a Christmas Carol knows that nobody wants to be called a scrooge.

Christmas is just one example of the type of internal and external resistance you can get when you try to act in more aligned fashion. The examples could proliferate. Consider the #metoo movement. Women and men who speak out against sexual harassment and toxic culture are working to create more aligned spaces. When they speak out, they experience both internal and external resistance. Internal resistance comes from self doubt and damage done by the toxic socialization process we all endure. Internal resistance is all the negative and disempowering self-talk we engage in that prevents us from making change. External resistance comes from a patriarchal culture which views sexual assault and violence against others as an entitlement. When you speak out against a toxic culture at work, when you stand up against sexual harassment and assault, you get push back and resistance from those who are guilty of the act themselves, or who have bought into the ideology of patriarchy which excuses this sort of behaviour.
There are lots of different reasons why you might resist acting in a more aligned fashion, and why you might struggle in your alignment practice, and we will talk about this more in LP Workbook Three. At this point you have enough to think about. When you meet all your less spiritual needs and start your alignment practice, you are going to experience resistance. If you want to make progress forward, you need to be prepared for that.

As noted, when your physical unit goes into growth mode, you start spending more and more of your energy on alignment and connection practice. Alignment is process of syncing yourself up with highest self and alignment practice is the practice of such. If you think of this using an automobile metaphor, alignment is the process of making sure tires are filled, making sure oil is in the car, making sure the tank is filled with gas, making sure coolant is in place, making sure all gears are working properly, etc. What happens when all that work is done? When the car is tuned up and everything is in order, you “make the connection.” You turn the ignition key, start the engine, and give it some power. You press the gas and you go out driving on the road.

Turning on the key and pressing the gas pedal is an apt analogy for connection because this is exactly what you do with your physical unit. When you make a connection with your physical unit, you are turning the ignition key and stepping on the gas. When you do that, you give power to the physical unit.

**Turning the Key**

How do you turn the ignition key of your physical unit? Intent, basically, coupled with some connection practice and, if you are so inclined, connection supplements to help facilitate the connection.
Intent is basically you saying you want to do it. Something like “I want to make a connection with my Highest Self” or “I want to draw Consciousness into the body” will do. If you are more of a visual person, you can facilitate connection using a visualization like Water Glass Visualization. To do this visualization, simply imagine water filling a glass. Now imagine that the water glass is your physical body and that the water pouring into the glass is consciousness. This visualization immediately starts the process in a slow and controlled fashion.

For reasons explained in LP Workbook Three, the Water Glass Visualization, or simple intent, works to initiate connection. These are low key processes that give you a soft connection and that work gently over time. If you want to move faster, you can avail yourself of Connection Appliances or even Connection Supplements.

Connection appliances are, like the name suggests, appliances that can help you make a stronger connection. There are several connection appliances you can use. You can use things like mindfulness apps, Tibetan singing bowls, and even archetype cards, like the Triumph of Spirit Archetype System, to help speed up and strengthen the process. There is a list of connection appliances available on the SpiritWiki page.

For those wanting to speed up the process, connection appliances are often used with various Connection Practices. A connection practice is any practice that helps you make a stronger connection. This practice include things like cocooning, drumming, fasting, Holotropic

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353 [https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Water_Glass_Visualization](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Water_Glass_Visualization)

354 [https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Connection_Appliance](https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Connection_Appliance)
Breath Work, and so on and so forth. You can find a list of connection practices on the associated SpiritWiki page.

Finally, if you really want to jump start the healing, growth, and connection process, you can use Connection Supplements. Connection supplements are exactly that, supplements that help you make a stronger connection. These include all sorts of natural substances, like cannabis, psilocybin, etc., which open up pathways in the brain that allow for higher connection. This also includes certain synthetic substances, like LSD for example. We would not include cocaine, heroin, opiates or other such drugs in the same category. You can find a list of connection supplements on the associated SpiritWiki page.

Driving Practice

What happens when you make a connection, either the soft connection you make with simple intent, or the stronger ones you can get when you use connection appliances, practices, and supplements? Consciousness pours in and the body powers up. When that happens, you have to practice. Nobody gets into a car for first time just drives. You have to practice. To practice driving, you usually have a guide, a teacher, in the passenger seat. With your teacher there you press the gas pedal a little bit and drive forward slowly. As you practice, you get a feel for it. You learn to turn corners, you learn to park, you learn to drive safe, and so on and so forth. Learning to drive takes practice.

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156 https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/Connection_Practice

157 https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Connection_Supplement
Like driving a car, learning to be connected also takes practice. The only difference between driving practice and connection practice is that learning to be connected takes a lot more practice and there is a lot more involved.

What does connection practice involve?

That’s complicated and we talk more about it in LP Workbook Three. Here we can say that connection practice is exactly like practising guitar. When you practice guitar, you are doing three things. You are programming your brain, rewiring your neurology, and developing your muscles. When you practice guitar, your brain changes. When you practice guitar, your create new pathways in your brain and these pathways improve your abilities. Your muscle coordination improves, your listening skills improve, and so on. When you practice guitar, your muscles change as well. They strengthen and, coupled with neurological development, fine motor coordination improves. The neurological and muscle development that occurs when practising guitar is the same for every single human skill, from down hill skiing to programming computers to making a connection to your own higher Consciousness. When you practice connection, you are rewiring your brain. Practising connection leads to neurological development, strengthening of your intellectual and spiritual “muscles,” development of your ability to discern, changes in your life habits, and so on and so forth.

Once again, connection practice is a big topic which we will discuss in more detail in Lightning Path Workbook Three. Before moving on to that, here are a few additional things to think about and consider.

**Number one,** just like a single experience behind the wheel of a car will not make you into a professional race car driver, a single connection experience, or even a dozen, will not make you a guru or
avatar no matter how profound your experience. And this goes even if you experienced total enlightenment or Nirvana or whatever. A single practice session does not make you an expert, it only makes you an “initiate.” If you want to be an expert, you have to practice connection.

**Number two**, connection practice requires discipline. My own personal practice for the past ten years or so has involved getting up every morning, usually around 5:00 a.m., making a connection, and writing. Writing is my way of practising connection. When I write, I take the ideas that come from connection and think about, research, and express them. This process is connection practice. Note, this isn’t just an intellectual process as sometimes. Especially in the early days, I was learning not only to process and integrate the ideas and insights that flowed from connection, but also how to handle the powerful Consciousness that I (that we all) connect to when we open our connections wide.

Of course, you do not have to get up every morning at 5:00 a.m. and practice connection like I do, but you do have to engage in regular, disciplined, practice. Gina, for example, practices connection when she is working with clients. When she works with them, she working a connection that helps her find out who they are, what their strengths and weaknesses are, what it is they need immediately in order to move forward and heal.

Whether you are writing in the morning, practising connection as part of human service, or writing music, or whatever, does not matter, as long as you practice. You can do it during the course of your regular daily life, by taking fifteen minute “mindfulness breaks” for example, or you can do it during specialized connection sessions, three times a week or so. During connection sessions you would isolate yourself in a
cocoon (a safe place where you will not be interrupted) and practice connection, using a connection appliance, practice, or supplement. You will need to explore this. Find a system, a supplement, an appliance, or a practice that works for you and do that.

And keep in mind, the point in these final few words of this work book is not to provide detailed guidance on connection practice, the point is to say that once you start, it is important to be regular and disciplined about it. Whether that is getting up at five in the morning, taking regular mindful breaks throughout the day, or engaging in regular connection sessions from the safety of your private cocoon does not matter. What matters only is that you engage in regular and disciplined connection practice. If you do not, if you engage in connection practice for a while but stop, or only give it a few minutes here and there, then just like practising guitar, skill development will be slow, and any skills you do develop will degrade every time you stop practising.

Finally, number three, connection practice isn’t an all or nothing sort of affair. Connection practice is a variable process and a learning experience. Sometimes your connection will be weak and gentle, as it is during mindfulness practice. Other times, your connection will be strong and you will get glimpses or even gushes of a powerful cosmic Consciousness “on the other side.” Similarly, the ideas that come to you will differ. Sometimes the ideas and insights will involve personal healing and personal insight. At other times, the ideas and insights will be about the universe, creation, and so on. Sometimes, connection will be joyful and empowering. At other times, connection might make you realize you have done harm to others, and this might lead to incredible pressure to make amends, i.e. atone. It really is a mixed bag and when you start your connection practice, you should be prepared for that.
To summarize, in this unit we have talked about the difference between growth mode and deficit mode. Deficit mode is a mode of operation of the physical unit whereby most of your available energy goes into protecting your physical unit from assault, repairing damage done, and meeting unmet needs. On the other hand, growth mode is a mode of operation whereby most of your energy goes into growth and development. This mode engages naturally when you are not wasting energy on meeting needs, defence, or repair.

What do you spend your energy on when you are in growth mode? Lots of different things. When in growth mode, you are developing your artistic abilities, your intellectual abilities, your bodily strength, and so on. When in growth mode you also, ideally, work on alignment and practice connection.
Conclusion – The Benefits of Health and Spiritual Connection

Alignment and connection are big topics, and we need more than a few words at the end of a healing workbook to address them. For this reason, we pick up the topic of connection in *LP Workbook Three: Connection*. Before ending this book, however, we need to address one more thing, and that is the work involved in healing and connection. If you have read through the workbook to this point, you will see that this process of healing and connection is a lot of work and effort. Healing alone can take a lot of effort as you modify your environment, deal with your trauma, clear your mental spaces, deal with resistance, and so on and so forth. Connection itself, which we pick up in the next workbook, also takes time and effort.

At this point, you might ask why bother with all this work. It is a reasonable question. Humans have been living their lives in various states of disconnection for thousands of years and we seem to have got along just fine. It is much easier just to sit back and enjoy your life, especially if you already have a pretty good one. So, why bother with being a better person? Why bother with advanced growth and development? Why bother with healing and connection?

There are lots of reasons we could give for that. We can give psychological and emotional reasons for healing and connecting, like better mental-health, freedom from fear, anger, and disillusion, well-being, longevity, developing your own voice, and being able to have real and authentic relationships. We can also give you collective and societal benefits, like economic savings, the reduction of consumerism, the construction of meaningful institutions designed to
optimize and improve our lives, the elimination of racism, sexism, and hatred, and so on and so forth.

While all the above reasons are valid reasons, the best reason we can give is that being healthy and connected means being free of damage and “clear” of trauma. It means being present, **empowered**, and most important, really and truly who you are deep down inside. Anything else is a state of diminishment at best, and dysfunction at worst. Anything else is not your full power and ability. Anything else is not the full state of you. When you heal and connect, you become who you were meant to be. So, the question you have to ask yourself is, do you want to live out the rest of your life a mere shadow of your true and powerful self? If the answer to that question is no, then that is your best reason to do the work. You do the work, even if it is tough, because you do not want to live your life as a shadow of who you truly are.
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**Key Words**

affirmation of self........................................................................................................67, 78

agents of consciousness..............................................................................................138p.

alignment...................................................................................................................17, 25, 62, 101, 112, 120pp., 137, 162

Attachments...................................................................................................................

  Active Attachment ......................................................................................................88

  Broken Attachment ....................................................................................................88p.

  Inactive Attachment .................................................................................................88

big questions...............................................................................................................148pp., 153

Big questions..............................................................................................................148

Connection:....................................................................................................................8, 10

creation template..........................................................................................................147p., 150

Creation Template.......................................................................................................146

deficiency mode............................................................................................................11

disjunctive action..........................................................................................................120, 123

enablers.........................................................................................................................48pp., 90

external resistance........................................................................................................143, 149p.

growth mode................................................................................................................11p., 18, 21

hierarchy of basic needs ..............................................................................................157p., 160

hierarchy of cognitive needs .........................................................................................157, 159


indoctrination................................................................................................................14, 25, 82, 103, 139pp., 150, 153p.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>intergenerational toxicity</td>
<td>51, 143, 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>internal resistance</td>
<td>104, 149p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>master story</td>
<td>139, 146, 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neglect</td>
<td>12, 14pp., 19, 21, 26p., 37, 82, 84, 89, 103, 106, 109, 127, 142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Energy Creation Template</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical unit</td>
<td>12pp., 19, 21, 23p., 28, 46, 79, 93, 103, 116, 137, 156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pushers</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right environment</td>
<td>48, 56, 60p., 77pp., 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seven essential needs</td>
<td>11p., 16p., 19, 22, 161p, 173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SpiritWiki</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>steering emotions</td>
<td>73, 121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering emotions</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering Emotions</td>
<td>73, 121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the work</td>
<td>9, 29, 35, 113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Work</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The work</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toxic Burden</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toxic socialization</td>
<td>13pp., 21, 23, 25, 27p., 33, 35p., 56, 82, 87, 90, 98, 103, 106, 110, 137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triumph of Spirit Archetype System</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wrong action</td>
<td>12, 25, 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wrong thought</td>
<td>12, 25, 51, 60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>