

Centered and Exhilarated Practice

The Book



by *River Soulshine*

Brought to you by **The Way of 道 Vibrantly Instructors**



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Introduction and Acknowledgements

Centered and Exhilarated Practice is an approach to compassionate communication for everyday social interactions. The practice combines ego-development, empathy building, and empowering discernment, removing any need for a teacher or other such power dynamic. Each exercise opens with you knowing what's best for yourself, while strengthening the access to that innate wisdom through varying levels of difficulty in social interaction. What sets Centered and Exhilarated Practice apart from other compassionate communication approaches is that it fosters a seated meditation-style experience while navigating difficult social situations on the fly. This is great news for anyone wanting a way to continue their meditation practice inwardly, while in the middle of a conversation at the workplace, at home, or even when making small talk at a bus stop. Anywhere there are people to interact with, you can practice Centered and Exhilarated. You can even practice on your own, without a practice partner. In this way, Centered and Exhilarated Practice becomes a type of meditation practice that can last throughout 99% of daily life. The increased ability to remain in a meditative state coupled with the path of ego-development is what allows this practice to lead towards the highest stages of ego-development in self-realization: nondual unitive consciousness¹. As this state of self-realization is arrived at, the journey has already prepared the practitioner to navigate difficult social interactions with ease. There is no longer a need to leave society and live in a monastery or a cave to avoid the stress of living a meditative life in the city. Interactions with others become even more of a joy, sharing the unique gifts of our self with each other, bringing even more love into the world.

To arrive at an understanding of this practice, I had to follow my heart, never knowing where it would lead. That is an important ideal for me and I hope that Centered and Exhilarated Practice will help more people listen to their heart and following their personal illumined path, wherever it may lead. I certainly did not intend to end up here. The decisions in my life have been very short-sighted, each made out of wanting to do what was best for myself and others, across a wide variety of hobbies, friend groups, and career paths. I couldn't have understood they would all add up to lead me here. What I'm trying to say is, I really just want to share gratitude for the inner illumination that shines inside us all, guiding us along our personal illumined paths. It is something far greater than ourselves that is working through us. Our task, I believe, is to simply follow our hearts and enjoy the ride.

That being said, I also want to thank all the miraculous people in my life who helped make this book a reality. With CEO Dialogue, LLC, we have started a non-profit company that is pioneering a new way of bringing our gifts to the world. Anyone who contributes by participating on the team is able to freely use any ideas that arise in the shared field. This way of working together has helped usher in so much societal deprogramming around ideas of ownership and

¹ Sharma, Beena. "Polarities and Ego Development: Polarity Thinking In Ego Development Theory And Developmental Coaching Beena Sharma & Dr. Susanne Cook-Greuter." (2010).

the many paths we can take to share healing social tools with the world. I am also a part of a Seattle-based non-profit called The Way of Vibrantly, a group that gathers bi-weekly to support each other in creating social tools to bring to the world. This group is now switching to a similar model of cross-pollinating ideas without ownership as well. I can't over-emphasize how revolutionary this model of free-idea sharing is. I'm overjoyed to find myself at this point in life where I can contribute to the free flow of information sharing where it can help people. Even this book is licensed under Creative Commons. Anyone can take the tools within these pages and make new tools with them, without needing to ask permission. I owe an immense amount of gratitude to The Way of Vibrantly team and the Centered and Exhilarated team, with whom I was able to explore these ideas in the context of a fellowship. The feeling of support from others who are also working to bring their social tools to the world has made all the difference in arriving at a completed version of this book. It was quite difficult at first for me to be able to explain these ideas of Centered and Exhilarated Practice. More often than not, I found I was miscommunicating many of the core concepts that I could feel but could not put words to. It took countless revisions of this book and working with the staff of the Way of Vibrantly and CEO Dialogue, LLC to see if what I'm trying to convey makes sense and if I'm communicating it intuitively enough for others to understand it. Each of these sessions with the staff at the Way of Vibrantly and Centered and Exhilarated seemed to hold a cherished memory or conversation with a friend and colleague who went out of their way to help me have a second set of eyes for this project. As the book developed, I started to get requests for podcasts, community consulting sessions, and even to have some of my music be used in feature films. It felt like everything was coming together, multi-dimensionally, and it was! But not without the help of everyone who has supported me from their walk of life, to help me in ways that do not come natural to me. While I am perhaps the one who wrote these words down, from a vision and experience of how I knew this world could be, the contents of this book are also the culmination of so many individuals who cared enough to combine their efforts to see what could come of this and to believe in me. There are so many people who have helped that I could not possibly mention them all. I feel similarly about all the communities along the west coast and in Hawaii who have piloted the Centered and Exhilarated Practice tools with me, and even in Panama! Friends, family, and supporters, your kindness, curiosity, willingness, and excitement have nourished me and we have brought Centered and Exhilarated Practice to the world as a collective effort! Beyond all these beautiful people, families, and communities who will have to remain nameless here, I feel the need to name some who have been along for the ride since the first draft of this book.

Kelsey Wyman, thank you so much for taking the time to help me communicate the parts that were confusing and to use more inclusive language. **Daniel Mueller** and **Jordan Lawrence**, I want to thank you for your steadfast listening and intent in understanding the concepts, as well as your reflections back to me in what has served you the most and the aspects of Centered and Exhilarated Practice that you most enjoy. **Soulshine House**, we learned so much during our time together. It is clear now that a living experience like that can exist and now we know we have the tools that can make it happen time and time again. Thank you for being a part of this journey! **The Way of Vibrantly** - As a team effort, thank you for supporting and mentoring me from your uniqueness, to see that my personal pathway and gift of Centered and Exhilarated Practice makes it strongly into the world. **To My Elders**, thank you so much for what you taught me when our paths crossed. It has all added up to supporting me in my uniqueness in order to

bring Centered and Exhilarated to the world. **And to the Family Members** of everyone that has contributed to the culmination of this book, we all thank you from the bottom of our hearts, for the love and nurturing.

Others who I have memories of supporting listening to me speak endlessly about my dreams for Centered and Exhilarated Practice, and who have provided loving encouragement and feedback include Chris Willis, Julian Friedman, Jessica Friedman, Megan Fitz, Kim Borgatta, Robyn Bjornson, Megan Caros, Jory Cuttittle, Kolten Miller, Brandon Brazil, Ryan Hui, Kirk Lenentine, Faces the Wind, Nathan Lander, Brooke Hatch, Mac Dobbins, Katie Vincent, Yasmine O'Shaughnessy, Jasper Crow, Daniel Lauzon, Sebastian Aguayo, Tanner Kline, Sarah Lena Dobson, Kaela McVicker, Jennifer McPherson, Robbie Seager and now that I'm getting going in writing these names I realize there are hundreds more who have contributed in some way or another that I want to list, from the original Soulshine Festivals when it was only Miku, Alex, and I living in a small space together before this all started, to Nina and all those who put Dream Dance together in supporting the wider dream-centered community in Seattle, to David Cates and Alexandra Gordevitch and all the mentoring they were able to bring to communities I have cherished, and to all the men's circles I've participated in and Sunday Cyphers, and so much more! Please know that if I have not listed you here, you are every bit as important to me as those that I have. Most importantly, I owe all the gratitude in my heart and soul to my wife, Miku, for holding on to the dream, for always believing in me to get there, and for being my translator, when no one else could understand the meaning and intention behind my quite alien-like expression. I love you Kupi!

How to Read This Book

This book is designed to take you on a journey that may last over the course of a full year. New tools and resources are introduced in a way that complements the learning goals for each section, ultimately combining into a one size fits all toolkit that empowers you, to help you live the life of your choosing and have meaningful connections with others.

You may have come here looking for information on setting up a **decision making process** for your eco-village or community. You may be looking for tools for **better communication**. You may be looking for a way to transition the flow state you get from **movement practice** and bring that into conversation and social interactions. You may be looking to set up a **restorative justice panel**. In order to cover all these topics and more, this book has been split into five distinct parts that help build on each other. By structuring the book in this manner, we hope to better help you understand each concept, as the underlying principles come together and form new foundations for learning. By starting slow and learning as you go, Centered and Exhilarated Practice can be something you bring into even the more complicated aspects of your community life, workplace, or relationships.

Part I of this book starts with the **TLLR Tool**, a foundational technique that allows us to take a step back in difficult conversations and recognize when we have options. This is the first step in building a mutually empowering platform for relating from a deeply replenishing and connected place, while reducing the emotional recoil that when things get a little rocky. Part II builds an understanding of the **Centered and Exhilarated Approach**. This prepares the foundation for group practice of the TLLR Tool during the **Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share Circle** and also in support groups, business meetings, or any other type of team meeting. Practice methods for development of the Centered and Exhilarated Approach are expanded as the observer is cultivated through the opening orbits (orbits 1 and 2), the orchestrator orbits (3, 4 and 5), and finally the oneness orbits (6 and 7). This leads into learning the methods of integrating Centered and Exhilarated into all aspects of daily life in Part III. If you've come here looking for community tools and you're already familiar with Centered and Exhilarated Practice, you may want to skip ahead to Part IV, where Ceocracy is explored as an approach to process and governance structure within an egalitarian hierarchy that promotes Centered and Exhilarated.

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Part I: Passive Perspective Taking Culture with Calm, Curious and the TLLR Tool

Perspective Taking Culture & The Neurobiology of the Brain

How often in this society do we see an argument going back and forth, without either side truly hearing what each other is saying? Weekly? Perhaps daily? Certainly too often. Why is it that these conversations can seem like they're going in circles, like a dog chasing its tail? To find out, you can either watch the video by clicking the picture above, or follow this two-step process to begin practicing perspective-taking culture right now:

Step 1: **Notice Stress**

A Harvard Business study from 2008 suggests that people are at least 31% more intelligent, more productive, and generally better at listening when they feel good about themselves. I don't know about you, but I definitely feel like a better me, at just about everything, when I'm feeling good about myself. And in the *Interpersonal Neurobiology of the We*, author Dan Siegel goes into a great amount of detail surrounding the breakdown in communication when we're feeling stressed. For starters, the left and right hemispheres of our brain can actually stop passing information back and forth when we're feeling stressed. This can make it very difficult not only to recall memories but even just to feel our feelings and be present with our emotions. The first step in moving towards perspective-taking culture is to notice if there is any stress present.

Step 2: **Look for Calm and Curious**

So what can we do if we're feeling stressed? Here's a little trick I learned from alpha-theta training in neurofeedback: the brain doesn't want to move to a relaxed whole-brain connection if the hemispheres don't want to stabilize a connection over the parietal-ridge, and the parietal-ridge starts and ends just about where the ears are on the head. When we're moving out of stress towards feeling calm, this process actually is coordinated in our brain near our right ear. Just the same, our left ear is where the process of becoming curious begins it's coordination to bring in a more curious experience across the rest of the brain. So you see, if we can notice if we're feeling calm and curious, it's a simple trick to notice if the implicit and explicit memories of the left and right hemispheres are able to connect with each other, and in other words, if you're capable of perspective taking.

In Summary:

By noticing whether each participant is feeling calm and curious you are noticing if perspective-taking is possible in a conversation.

Using Calm, Curious, and the TLLR Tool to foster Passive Perspective Taking Culture

This is the start of perspective-taking culture: knowing what to look for. But then what do you do if someone's too stressed to be calm and curious? Well, first remember: knowing is half the battle! There certainly are tools, such as the TLLR Tool, that can be used to defer the conversation to a later time, if possible, so that each participant can be in a better head space to have the chat. Noticing calm and curious and deferring stressful conversations using the TLLR Tool are both aspects of passive perspective-taking culture.

The TLLR Tool

For use whenever someone is too stressed to be calm and curious.

You can consider using this tool when someone is feeling under-resourced in a conversation. It's great because it allows you to easily bring up the possibility of having a more constructive, replenishing and nourishing conversation about the topic. It's best to bring up the tool using "I" statements. Let your loved one know "this topic feels stressful to **me** and I know this tool will support me. I'm wondering if you would want to do it with **me**?" This helps by offering a way that others can help. Then take a step back from the stressful topic to follow the 4 steps:

1. **Table it.** To table a topic, means to write it down somewhere and return to it later. Choosing to table topics when they get stressful builds trust with your partner. It shows that you care about both of you feeling good and that you don't want to push topics that make either of you feel stressed. This builds trust that you are prioritizing feeling resourced, so that you can support others better. It also reduces feelings of resentment that can build when you feel trapped in a draining situation.
2. **Label it.** Give the topic a cute and humorous name if possible. For example, if the topic has a charge and is sticky, I like to refer to it as a "chicky". If we're having a difficult conversation about eating out at restaurants too much, for example, I might call it the "Restaurant Chicky". That way it is possible to imagine a cute little chicky running around the room that is frustrated about restaurants. It brings some levity into the situation for both parties and invokes feelings of wanting to care for the chicky. .
3. **List it.** The next step is to write it down on a list somewhere, ideally on an ongoing list of difficult topics. I like to call this the "chicky farm", where all the chickies are happy and playing. You might even have some bigger farm animals in there, for the really difficult topics. By having a list, it makes it easier to revisit at a later date.
4. **Revisit it.** It is important to revisit the list of difficult topics from time to time, being mindful to also fit in time for fun positive experiences with each other as well. It is important to space out the emotional work, since stressful conversations can sometimes feel a bit resource depleting, to the point where it might even require some self-care afterwards to repair to feeling our best again. Dr. John and Julie Gottman are world renowned psychologists whose studies suggest that happy couples in long-term relationships have four times as many positive feeling experiences with each other to every negative feeling, emotionally depleting conversation². This "5 to 1" rule can be a great guideline for knowing when to visit the chicky farm together.

How the TLLR Tool Works

When we revisit the difficult topics with each other, and we're feeling more resourced and supportive of each other's experience, it builds understanding of what support feels like. Having a list of topics to go through can help bring up feelings of playfulness, by making a game out of choosing which topic might be fun to visit. We don't need to go into every one of them and it can be fun to realize how easy it is to table all of them again if they're too difficult. Revisiting the list is a great way of picking just the low hanging fruit. Eventually you'll get a lot better at reaching the high hanging fruit too! As you get good at tabling topics, you'll begin to notice how many stressful situations in life are similar to a stressful conversation topic. In a way, they are topical unto themselves and we can see if it is possible to take a rain check and table the situation to a later time when it feels better.

When to Use the TLLR Tool

For anyone who wants to practice thriving, especially in difficult situations, the TLLR Tool is a one-size-fits all tool that actually lowers the difficulty level in life. In the beginning, you may find that this tool is useful whenever you are losing that feeling of thriving. Then you can notice that you are becoming under-resourced and see if it's possible to change the situation to become more regenerative. Even if you are unable to change the situation, the fact that you took notice of something that wasn't supporting you and took the time to label it is already building a strong foundation of you being aware of what is good for you and you will start to make small choices here and there to improve your life. Over time these small choices become big choices and before you know it, you're thriving more often than not. This is lowering the difficulty level in life. About a third of the way through this book, we stop using the TLLR Tool, because as you become accustomed to living from a space of thriving 99% of the time, the tool is no longer useful. You will be hard pressed to find a charged or sticky topic coming from yourself that could actually make you lose that thriving feeling. In situations where the charged or sticky topic is coming from others, you will know if you feel inspired to stick around and supported them and if it does not feel inspiring you will simply move elsewhere. Once you've reached that point you are thriving simply because you are connecting to yourself and to the world around you from your personal illumined path. This is the nature of self-realization and you will be sourcing your feelings of thriving from a regenerative energy surplus that lies within you, that is you, and that is not separate from the universe for that matter. It is unique to you and it is coming from a place of oneness with all things.

The Tool's Origins

In 2006, I was shopping at a grocery store with my wife Miku when we came across a mini-pamphlet sized book in the checkout aisle written by Oprah. It had relationship tips in it and some general advice that can help navigate the times in relationships when a difficult topic might pop up. Our favorite book at the time was *Men Are from Mars, Women are from Venus*³ so this was right up our alley. I remember quickly flipping through the pages of this book with each other, feeling like we already knew everything the mini-book had to offer, until we landed on

³ Gray, John. *Men are from Mars, women are from Venus: Practical guide for improving communication*. Zondervan, 2009.

page where Oprah basically said, “If you’re having a conversation with your partner and it is stressful, you can walk away! You don’t have to finish the conversation when you’re under-resourced. Simply write it down somewhere and return to it later when you’re feeling better.” I’m paraphrasing her words here because it’s been a long time since that memory, but boy do I wish I bought a copy of that book, as a keepsake. That tool has helped me out so many times in so many situations throughout my life, from workplace life to living in an intentional community. Most of all, it has helped our marriage in so many ways. And by pairing the tool with the spectrums of centered and exhilarated emotions, as you will see in the coming chapters, this tool can be upgraded into an honest to goodness path of talking meditation and self-inquiry that can be used in any difficult situation. This extends our ability to bring mindfulness practice into even the more draining aspects of interacting in society, eventually allowing us to live from a space of thriving 99% of the time. So thanks Oprah, for all that you’ve done in this world and for inspiring us to build on the tools you’ve offered us!

Learning the Soft Open

Here is a tip that can help soften the transition when moving away from a stressful topic. After tabling a topic, it’s natural at first for the perfectionist in us to spend the next little while dwelling on how we could have navigated the situation better, so that we could have brought up the difficult topic in a less stressful way. It is at the time when you’re tabling the topic with each other and labeling it and listing it, that it can sometimes feel very supportive to let each other know, for next time, how it might have felt better to have the topic brought up in the first place. This is called learning how to do a “soft open” with each other. You could even write the soft open tips down when you list the topic, so that you can remember for next time what would have felt better when bringing it up. Maybe something like this:

Difficult Topic: Picky Kitty Table Manners

Soft Open: Ask if I’m in a silly mood to joke about the picky kitty table manners, as a way of diffusing it, if it comes up again before we get a chance to discuss further.

Revisit Date: First Friday of any month (our Chicky Farm date night)

Sometimes we just need to take self care because we are experiencing too much stress to meta-process through the difficult topic. If we need to take space from our loved ones, it can sometimes hurt their feelings or they might think it is their fault. In those cases, it can be enough to say “I love you and I’ll be back and connect with you again but right now I have to go into my cave.” That is another tip from the book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*⁴ which came out in 1994. But even to this day, it’s hard to think of a better quote for this situation! We are all such different people with vastly different experiences that it can be very helpful to be informed that connection will happen again when we need to take space. When we don’t need to take space after tabling a difficult topic, it can be lovely to be informed for next time how we could have said things differently. My partner is often texting me what I could have said, when what I actually said resulted in hurting their feelings. This can be such a heaven sent gift! It

⁴ Gray, John. *Men are from Mars, women are from Venus: Practical guide for improving communication*. Zondervan, 2009.

doesn't mean I would have felt resonance to say it, when I was feeling frustrated, but it does mean that they took the time to help me feel supported by giving me the option.

In the end, if our partner won't table the difficult topic and they won't support us in the way we've asked, many times it could be the best option to simply take space for self care. This can really speed up the process of healing by not generating additional resentment and longer repair times. It is not always possible to table the difficult topic and then expect cuddles or some type of union in self care. Often times it is the space that we most need for self care. When taking space, if your partner forgets to remind you that they love you and that they will return, you can just say it to yourself, out loud, in front of them even, to remind them that you would appreciate it next time if they told you they love you and that they will return. This can often bring in a bit of comic levity as well, which is rarely a bad thing.

All in all, the TLLR Tool helps us take steps to reduce stress by creating more support-aware relationships. When we're with someone who understands how we like to be supported, they can help minimize stress in our life, by not adding to it, and by working to understand the stresses when it feels good. We don't have to do it all alone and we can let ourselves feel supported. Once we have created relationships that understand how we like to feel supported, it can feel great! Like sinking into a warm bubble bath.

We hope you make great use of the tool and that you return to let us know how it's going. From here on out, we have laid out helpful advice on integrating the TLLR Tool into group practice through what we call a Centered and Exhilarated Practice Circle, which starts with a Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share Round and moves into dialogue around fun or neutral topics.

The TLLR Tool seems so easy, right? Only 4 steps! Even better is that there is a whole book ahead of you with a lush landscape of ideas on how to expand the tool into everything from hobbies, to small businesses, to intentional living.

Group Agreements

The TLLR tool can be a wonderful conflict navigation system for groups when there is an agreement in place for compassionate communication. For groups who wish to incorporate the TLLR tool, if there is no agreement in place to treat each other compassionately, adopting this as an agreement for the group can become a first step. It can be fairly quick to take a vote in a meeting, to adopt an agreement to treat each other compassionately and to use the TLLR tool as one of the techniques for doing so. From this moment on, everything can change for the positive. In Part II we will show you how to bring in the TLLR Tool to your group with the Centered and Exhilarated Practice Circle. This is a way for friends, family, or coworkers to practice using the TLLR Tool in an easy and safe environment. This is also a great way to watch the culture really take off!

Introducing the TLLR Tool with Skits

It is amazing how quickly a group can adopt the TLLR Tool into practice after playing around with it in skits. Groups can circle around 2 members in the middle, where one member pretends to have a difficult topic and the other member pretends to use the TLLR Tool with them. There are so many expressions of laughter and excitement in the audience as it dawns on the crowd how many problems this could solve. It also gives them a narrative to watch while they are able to take time to integrate their own circumstances into the skit they're observing. If you're wanting to integrate the TLLR Tool into your group, we recommend starting with skits before moving to an agreement.



Codependenceship

As we use the TLLR tool more and more, certain concepts begin to emerge around the idea of codependency. This concept can be seen more clearly over time, when using the TLLR tool, as if a sculptor has chiseled away the rock around the idea to reveal the value within. We soon learn the great value in codependency. By relying on each other for support, it is like we are boarding a ship that we are co-creating, a ship that we are designing with each other over time. The codependenceship! Here we can help each other with support during times of advanced difficulty. There are helpful versions of codependency and there are also unhelpful versions. But to understand codependency we first need to explore the concept of attachment. We will go into the healthy and unhealthy versions of both of these concepts in detail in the paragraphs ahead.

Cultivating Healthy Attachment

There are three types of attachment we differentiate between, throughout this book. It is important to understand which attachment we want to reduce over time as opposed to the good attachment that we want to increase.

1. **Attachment to outcomes** - When things don't go our way, we can lose our calm and curious mental state. This type of attachment is often referred to as the suffering type of attachment and has to do with attachment to outcomes.
2. **Attachment to our Path/Self** - There is also the attachment to our path in life, as it arises in the present moment, where we can feel what's best for us. This type of attachment is great and doesn't even necessarily result in suffering if things don't go our way. If you have this type of attachment to your own path and knowingness, you're likely to get right back on the horse if you fall off.
3. **Psychological attachment** - This third type we're not going to be discussing in this book until much later and so we are going to label it and table it. This third type refers to the way we built our relationships with the world around us based on the parenting styles of our care-givers. If our care-givers practiced contingent-learning style parenting as Dan Siegel likes to refer to it, we might grow up with secure attachment, which just means we tend to feel good about ourselves during stress and capable of clarity in problem solving from accessing our inner experience. If we didn't have it so lucky, we might have picked up one of the less optimal attachment styles, such as disorganized attachment, anxious attachment, or avoidant attachment.

For the purposes of this book and cultivating our mindfulness, we will not need to focus on psychological attachment. All we need to know for this book is that we will be reducing the bad type of attachment (suffering attachment) and increasing the good type of attachment (feeling and knowing our path and what is good for us, in terms of inspiration and decision making). The practice of listing and revisiting difficult topics helps increase our good attachment and reduce the less helpful attachment. We do this by looking at the difficult topics with each other, slowly and over time, as it feels good. We are also learning how to set healthy constructive boundaries around our needs, as difficult topics arise. These constructive boundaries can help us to continue to find ways to work with each other: ways that feel good instead of forcing the old ways to continue working, when they're generating difficult topics. It might feel sad to need to set a constructive boundary. At the same time, it might also feel good to know that we're setting boundaries in order to build new healthy connections and to not generate further resentment. If you're feeling sappy, that's a good thing! Having the feels means you want to find new ways of connecting. Feeling sappy might just be feeling sad and happy at the same time, while building relationship!

Cultivating Healthy Codependency (aka “Showdependency”)

When our emotional state is dependent on the behavior of others, this can be called emotional dependency. When their emotional state is also dependent on our behaviors to align to a certain pattern, this can be thought of as codependency. Keep in mind, codependency can be really helpful as a crutch, especially when we let others know that a particular topic is difficult for us and we request that they change the topic. If we were to go the rest of our relationship expecting them to always change the topic when we feel stress, that would become quite annoying and they might not feel like we are meeting them halfway by working on how we feel around the topic. By labeling the difficult topic, listing it, and revisiting it, a lot of dialogue and understanding can come through. It also shows that we are working on getting better at the topic by setting a timeline for check-ins about this and many other topics. This emotional codependency is different from the codependency for survival, when humans once needed each other for food and shelter, or how a child might need a parent. Emotional codependency is a wonderful tool we can use to make requests of each other that will enable our relationships to be easier and more joy-filled. That is the positive benefit of emotional codependency, so long as there is a timeline for check-ins around any difficult topics that emerge. I like to call this “showdependency”, because you’re not stigmatizing it and you’re actually valuing it, while keeping it out in the open. Codependency begins to lose its value when we stop checking in about it and discussing the related difficult topics. That is why the TLLR tool is so useful in reframing codependency into being a net-positive tool. The easiest way to think about it is that codependency can be really useful when there is a timeline (for check-ins). If a community member lost their ability to bring value to the community, there can be an agreement up front around a timeline for check-ins, or difficult topics can be listed and revisited. This enables the process to be much more supportive and many creative solutions can emerge over time, as the resentment of other community members are reduced through the use of the TLLR tool. Another example might be when one member in a relationship wants to move to another state for an ideal job or better weather, yet it is destructive to another member in the relationship. By choosing to be codependent for a time period of perhaps 5 years, there can be turn taking as an option, either to stay for 5 more years or to move and return after 5 years. In this way, codependency can be seen as crutches that can help to get through the hard times in order to see things out as they get better over time.

Developing Discernment

As we improve at recognizing difficult topics, we also begin cultivating the skill of discernment. This skill helps us see the dynamics present within a connection of

growing intimacy. We can notice who can be present with supporting us in our difficult topics based on their ability to support themselves in their own difficult topics. We can also discern if someone chooses to disassociate from their difficult topics without any plans of working on them over time or growing. This helps us know that they will not be supportive in our growth on difficult topics. Instead, they would likely encourage us to disassociate from the topic instead of learn from it. In fact, the concept of self work might be a difficult topic for them. By using discernment, we can help meet people where they are. After all, we naturally grow as humans when we feel a supportive environment that meets us where we are.

Considering Mutuality

Mutuality is the concept of having clarity around similar goals or interests. When there is not clarity it is usually not a problem. When there is scarcity around our goals or needs, it is much easier to skip past the discernment of mutuality and to jump right to assumption that anyone expressing similar interests might be able to help with our scarcity. This sense of potential can cause a lot of suffering, especially from unmet expectations, so it is important to have clear communication tools when discerning if someone is looking for mutuality.

Considering PDKYFON

PDKYFON is the concept of pushiness or jumping to assumption when there is not mutuality, because of scarcity. It is pronounced “Puhdickyfun” and it stands for Possible Distorted Codependent Fulfillment of Needs. If we’re feeling scarcity around completing a goal on time, or having funding, or enough hands, we might jump to great feelings of relief around meeting anyone that expresses interest in a similar goal. If we find them attractive, we might think it’s a match made in heaven and jump to great conclusions. New relationship energy (NRE) can be ripe with all sorts of feelings around assumed mutuality because we want there to be mutuality, because that would be so great! This is the concept of PDKYFON (Possible Distorted Codependent Fulfillment of Needs). When you’ve spent enough time on the Codependenceship, this concept is like a liferaft. This is especially true when we’ve become seasoned at captaining the Codependenceship successfully through rough waters. It is not uncommon to develop a certain ease and lightness in difficult situations. At times, others might see this as a possibility that we may be able to help: with healing an old wound or easing a troublesome task ahead. We might even look for this same quality in others, hoping to find support in a difficult project or healing in our own life. It is all good and well when we are aware of these dynamics and can communicate them. But when there is scarcity around needs being met in life, it is much more difficult to see PDKYFON when it is influencing the situation. It is when we are unaware of these dynamics that they may be controlling our

interactions with others, disguised as mutuality. The concept of PDKYFON provides great differentiation and discernment, because it calls attention to what is happening in the moment. Oftentimes, the potential for healing can make people do funny things, like glom onto each other with an expectation of mutuality, just because they really want there to be mutuality. By being aware of this dynamic, we can still interact with the world in the same ways, but with a greater awareness that allows us to reduce outcomes that might turn into suffering and emotional turmoil when assumed mutuality is not met. This is why it's great to discern when PDKYFON is happening and ideally to discern it early on. That way, we can jump into more of a healing-level intimacy with reduced expectations and increased clarity around alignment, while helping each other abide in our own sense of integrity.

The Three Selves of Interdependenceship

Interdependenceship is when don't need to rely on others to be our calm and curious self. Certainly we relied on each other for our basic needs as we evolved to the humans we are today. We helped each other find food and to protect each other in fights. We also lived close to the land and in harmony with nature. We would feel each other at rest and rest even deeper knowing so. Imagine, a pack of mammals in a cave, feeling even more safe with each other's presence and able to sleep more soundly. We would be at peace knowing our group was safe. Mammals also inherit the trait of feeling stress when someone else nearby feels stress. If we were in a cave and one of us heard something in the brush and they perked their ears up, they might also have a spike of the cortisol hormone, to help with uniting the body around a stress and engaging an adrenaline response. The other mammals in the cave would also feel the stress in their bodies, through the mirror neuron system, and become alert themselves, even if they had not heard the sound.

The ability to feel deeper peace or more stress through the mirror neuron system when we are in a group is an aspect of our evolution that has benefited us greatly. As we have evolved further to develop the fox-p2 gene (language coordination), we have also evolved a 300ms lag time in decision making, between when our body feels a decision to when the mind confirms it. For example, the body-brain knows we do or don't want to eat a hamburger 300ms before the mind confirms that to be the case. These additional decision making processes help us to create the ego (a complex set of patterns of recognition around what works most of the time when navigating towards pleasure or fleeing from pain). The ego can be a healthy ego or unhealthy ego based on how we nurture it, which will be covered later in this book. The ego is not the unfortunate part of our evolution. It's great actually, when it is in balance and acting in accordance with our deepest divine inspiration. No, it is

actually our inability to shake our bodies after stress that is the sad malady of our evolution. Shake our bodies after stress? Yes. You see, animals are able to shake their bodies after a quick bout of fight/flight, to quickly return to their parasympathetic (stress-metabolizing) whole brain experience. It is unfortunate, that in our 300ms of lag-time, we can choose to postpone the visceral shake response, and continue meta-processing the situation, to the point that we may have forgotten to shake after a stressful event. This extends to where we might wake up feeling refreshed, realize we're late for an appointment, and continue to feel stress until we go to sleep and wake up the next morning, all out of forgetfulness to shake. So what is the solution? Shaking more? Perhaps that could help. But it is even enough to just realize our situation. To be aware of it brings so many solutions to so many problems. This book will teach you how to cultivate the observer to the point where stress only puts you into fight/flight (losing calm and curious) less than 0.001% of the time. But that could take years of developing the skills discussed in later chapters. For starters, we can keep it simple with a tool that can help greatly in this department, called the Three Selves of Interdependence:

- 1. The Escape Self** - This is the self that is in an advanced difficulty situation. In this self, you have lost calm and curious, partly as a protection mechanism so that your body doesn't amplify the feeling of suffering. In this self, we can constrict our muscles to feel less of our own or other people's emotions. Without feeling calm and curious, we're operating out of fight/flight without any of the parasympathetic stress-metabolizing nervous system, so we're burning lots of calories and not receiving a balancing amount of nourishment and replenishment. To make matters worse, this self is in a lot of stress and our fight/flight mind can only think in binary (on/off or yes/no for example). Most of the complex emotional quandaries in life can be solved by having a both/and approach, which we will explore later in this book. But it is nearly impossible to hold the both/and during stress, which makes this self pretty much like "taking the scenic route" when trying to hold empathy for yourself or others, or to troubleshoot any type of matters of the heart. It's like when you could jump on the highway (which is the 2nd self that we will explore next) or you could chase your tail in circles and drive all around the town with each other only to eventually find another on-ramp. It is wise to only stay in this state for 5 minutes and move on to the next (2nd) self, if there is any choice. Unfortunately, we can't win them all and some crises require us to stay in the Escape Self without a way to escape. Through cultivating the observer to witness this reality as it's happening, we magically find ways to create a supportive environment so that we can have more choice in this department, so don't fret!

2. **The Self Care Self** - This is the core of building interdependence. Instead of sticking around in a difficult situation where you're in your Escape Self, you can escape and do self care. Self care includes any activity you find nourishing, replenishing and generally restores you to feeling calm and curious. In a difficult situation, it's better to ask if you can do self care for 20 minutes and revisit if you're feeling better. It helps to:
- return to calm and curious where you can think in both/and and not just binary
 - It burns less calories
 - It builds a sense of empowerment and choice
 - It builds relationship with the self, to discover and expand on new modes of self care
 - It shows your partner you care about interdependency too (remember codependency on others to help you feel calm and curious is healthy when there is a time limit or when it is a conscious decision; interdependence to feel calm and curious without relying on others is where we forge our greatest relationship with our self and build the strength to carry more and more people on our ship!)
3. **The Centered and Exhilarated Self** - This is the part of you that is capable of feeling a lot of things all at once. This self starts when you're feeling calm and curious at the same time and grows more deeply centered and exhilarated the longer you spend in a safe and supportive environment, like the forest, or with ones you love. When you become open hearted and are moving along the calm and curious spectrum towards centered and exhilarated, you can pick up on other's emotions very well. This is because the empathy aspect of the mirror neuron system is engaged when there is whole brain connectivity along the parasympathetic (stress-metabolizing) bridge, which starts when you're feeling calm and curious. You could even say, you might pick up on other's emotions in this state a little too easily sometimes! In fact, this self has two great drawbacks: one of them is that internal feelings are greatly amplified, including suffering. This is why we are so fortunate to have the other two selves we can slip into whenever we choose! If we are feeling at our most relaxed and surrendered and suddenly run into a difficult topic or situation, we can jump to the **Escape Self** (self 1) by constricting our muscles. Remember, constriction helps disassociate from our embodied experience and relaxation/surrender helps to deepen our embodied experience. Some people are still learning to develop the ability to dissociate from difficulty through constriction and so for those people, I

suggest shortening the time you spend in Escape Self to only 1 minute, and moving directly to the Self Care self, where you leave the situation and find a supportive environment to do self care. You can tell your partner that you'll be back soon and that you love them!

I mentioned above, there are two great drawbacks to the Centered and Exhilarated Self. One of them is that your mirror neuron system is open and gravitating towards the emotions of others, or amplifying the felt sense of your own emotions which you may not want to feel. The second drawback is closely related. When your mirror neuron system is open and you're feeling centered and exhilarated, others around you will be gravitating towards your openness but realizing it might not be safe for them to do so. They might not have developed their own Escape Self and Self Care Self so it might not feel safe to them to be calm and curious. In fact, the very sight of you being in your Centered and Exhilarated Self might make them angry, because they want to but they can't. Maybe it hasn't worked out for them so well when they try it. This can bring out the impish nature of others, especially those who are close to you and love you the most. They might think your Centered and Exhilarated Self is fake and try to hurt you the way they've been hurt so that you can fall back into fight/flight and so they can prove it's fake. This whole process tends to only take a minute or two before they give up and realize it's real. Then they tend to feel a lot of shame for being mean and you can support them through it. In the end, I've found this situation ends up in maximum love and feelings of support. It's not even really a drawback once you see it coming and you're prepared to support them through their shame afterwards. It can even become a tool of increasing intimacy when you see it starting to happen. We'll call this little conundrum "knocking you off your horse". They want to knock you off because they want to be on a horse too and they don't get to at the moment. This is very similar to the "fuck you love me" concept I learned from Dr. Eric Dessel, which is when children will be their worst selves temporarily to see if you'll still love them, because they may have received destructive emotions in that area from others and they're weighing whether they should open themselves up again to feeling that part of themselves. When someone knocks you off your horse, deep down what they really want is love and if you can show them love within that 5 minute window they will be so grateful. And if they want to stay dissociated, they won't even try to knock you off your horse, so there is no worry about consent here. In the end, the centered and exhilarated self is always consensual. It is similar to another wise saying taught to me by Dr. Eric Dessel: "You have the right to express and experience joy all the time." We

have the right to feel and express joy all the time. It becomes a matter of skill development to navigate the repercussions and difficulty of living in such a way. Others may attempt to knock you off your horse because they want love too. You'll have to be a little more "thinky" at first, learning how to switch gears more quickly into moving into the Escape Self when necessary. But we all benefit from it in the end. The whole world benefits when someone chooses to adopt such a lifestyle. And the Escape Self and Self Care self happen less of the time the more you use them, like they're both working themselves out of a job. Until all that is left is the Centered and Exhilarated Self.

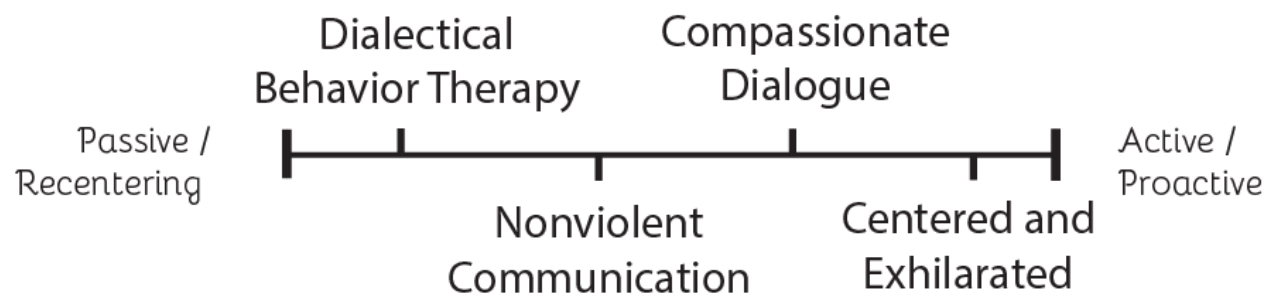
Part II: Active Perspective-Taking Culture with Centered and Exhilarated Practice

Understanding Centered and Exhilarated

“Many compassionate communication tools focus on aspects of recentering once the center has been lost. Centered and Exhilarated on the other hand, is a proactive approach of reducing the possibility of losing center.” - River Soulshine

Imagine having a wonderful conversation with a best friend. Laughter and exhilaration are in the air. There is a feeling of support for each other and it feels like you could talk forever and never want to leave. When we feel supported in conversation, we might notice an embodied experience of our core feelings and inspirations. This experience is oftentimes referred to as being centered. Centered and Exhilarated is the practice of proactively maintaining this centeredness during conversation, so that we might be able to feel centered more often throughout our life and for longer periods of time. In the field of compassionate communication, there are many techniques to help in relating from that place of centeredness within each other, where we are able to truly love and accept ourselves for who we are, while discussing topics that could range from delightful and easy to difficult and stressful. Centeredness is the key component here. In order to understand the practice of Centered and Exhilarated, it is important to understand where it fits on the spectrum of compassionate communication tools. Many compassionate communication tools focus on aspects of recentering once the center has been lost. Centered and Exhilarated on the other hand, is a proactive approach of reducing the possibility of losing center. By practicing Centered and Exhilarated over time, the possibility of losing center can be reduced to nearly 0%, actually spending more than 99% of the practitioner’s waking hours in centeredness. Big shifts take place at this threshold, including beginning the path to self-realization, by pro-actively developing our ability to stay centered at any level of difficulty.

Here is a diagram illustrating some of the more popular compassionate communication practices on a spectrum. On the left side you’ll see passive perspective taking culture, self-care and recentering. On the far right you’ll move all the way over to active perspective taking culture with proactive elements of structural support that can not only reduce the potential of losing center to near-zero, but also provides shared tools to be called on together for teamwork and support.



- Practices such as **Dialectical Behavior Therapy**⁵ (DBT) can focus mostly on building a foundation for centeredness and recentering. DBT refers to this practice as “wise mind”: the balance of reasoning mind and emotional mind. With self-care in place, there is some education provided to successfully navigate interpersonal relating with centeredness.
- **Nonviolent Communication**⁶ (NVC) on the other hand starts with interpersonal relating and focuses on expressing compassionately during stressful interpersonal interactions. This approach is largely successful with the only commonly noted drawback being that it can sometimes be used to create a power dynamic. This power dynamic is explored in depth in Part III of this book, under the chapter entitled Supplementing Nonviolent Communication.
- Somewhere right of the mid-line would be **Compassionate Dialogue**⁷ (CD), where proactive tools are introduced to fortify the centeredness in communication, as well as tools to recenter once the center has been lost. Compassionate Dialogue tools can lead to centered conversations a majority of the time, with many additional tools provided to navigate the uncentered conversations, where there is a lot of treasure to be found.
- **Centered and Exhilarated** sits on the far right end of the proactive spectrum, where the goal is to build trust in the ability to actively support each other’s shining eyes. This skill is taught at a basic level through the practice of promoting the centered and exhilarated emotional spectrums in increasingly difficult topics and situations. This leads to the cultivation of active perspective taking even in the most difficult topics and crisis scenarios.

Centered and Exhilarated also doubles as a practice of trust building, as conversation partners learn to successfully table topics before they become too stressful while demonstrating continuing strength in promoting the feelings of nourishment and replenishment, when there is an option to do so. It is through this practice of using the TLLR Tool that a team can become able to work through even the most difficult topics or crisis scenarios, while still feeling centered and exhilarated. Once this stage is reached, after extended practice, a practitioner can cultivate an environment where they can experience centeredness 99% of their waking life. That ends up being about 10 minutes a day of losing centeredness before quickly and naturally returning to centeredness. This is a godsend even for people who have traditionally had difficulty reading the room. By learning to identify bids for connection within conversation and meeting each bid in a

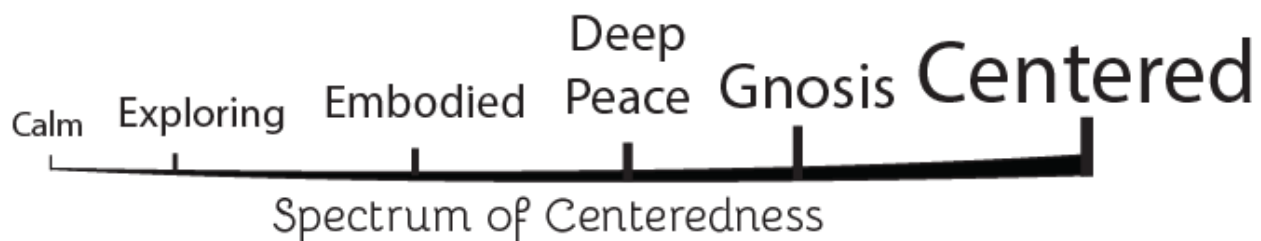
⁵ McKay, Matthew, Jeffrey C. Wood, and Jeffrey Brantley. *The dialectical behavior therapy skills workbook: Practical DBT exercises for learning mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation and distress tolerance*. ReadHowYouWant. com, 2010.

⁶ Rosenberg, Marshall, and Deepak Chopra. *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life: Life-Changing Tools for Healthy Relationships*. PuddleDancer Press, 2015.

⁷ <http://compassionatedialogue.com>

healthy and empowering way, we can help foster each other's core growth, connecting from the part within us that ultimately supports whole-brain connectivity.

C stands for Centeredness, which for the purposes of this practice, we're describing as a spectrum of feelings that starts with calmness and deepens with relaxation and surrender. The experience of the centeredness spectrum tends to grow on a spectrum as shown in the figure below, starting on the left with Calm and moving to the right to become fully Centered as we become more relaxed in our bodies and in our environment::



Calm - To become calm, Dan Siegel has pointed out that it can be as easy as taking a single longer breath, assuming you've placed yourself in a safe or optimal environment for self-care. This act of taking a longer breath creates a bridge from the prefrontal cortex of the human brain to the limbic system of our mammalian brain. As this bridge connects, the parasympathetic nervous system is engaged and our endocrine system can begin metabolizing those stress hormones, called cortisol, that were helping us disassociate from stress. This feeling of calm begins the journey along the relaxation spectrum of centeredness emotions.

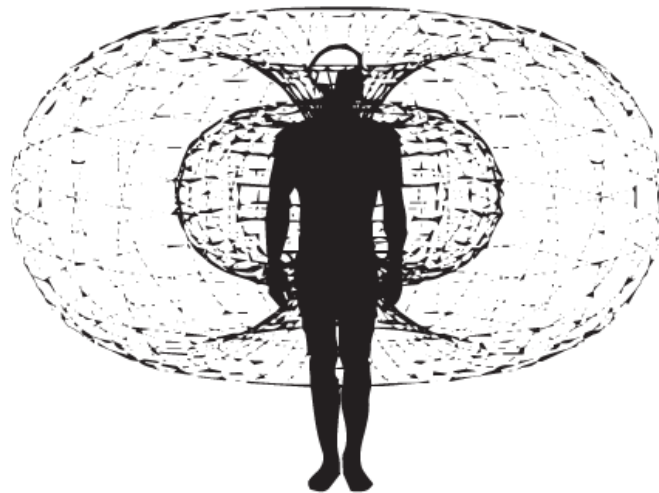
Exploring - Once you're feeling sufficiently calm, if the environment is a supportive environment, you'll find yourself moving to a feeling of exploration. This is your experiential body exploring the surroundings.

Embodied - If you're in a calm space of exploration for a bit, the natural next step of your parasympathetic (stress-metabolizing) system is to return you to a place of embodiment, where you can start picking up on signals from your body again. Perhaps your stomach might tell you that you're feeling hunger, or perhaps an emotion, like sadness, or a desire for connection. It is important to note that feeling information coming from the body can reveal any emotion, even anger or frustration. When this happens, it's possible to leave calm again, as you assess if this is really a good time and place to be feeling the emotions that are coming up. Sometimes it's better to set these embodied emotions to the side until you're really in a good

place to begin feeling and healing. Fortunately, the information that is stored in our body will be there when we're ready.

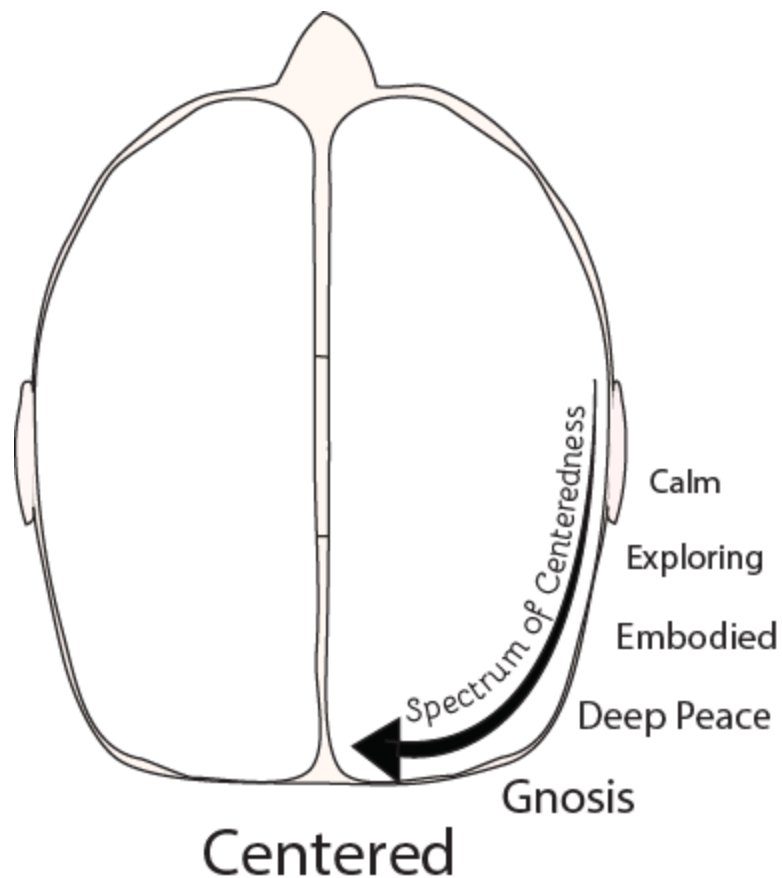
Deep Peace - When we're able to feel our calm, exploring, embodied self for a sufficient amount of time, a state of deep peace will naturally arise. This is a luxurious space of relaxed centeredness. It can happen in the presence of others who we feel deeply supported by, or in a natural space of self-care.

Gnosis - As we relax further, surrendering any tension from our body and allowing good posture to hold us upright, we can begin to feel a deep present moment knowing of our unique path in life. It might only be glimpses of what we might want in the present moment, or what we want to achieve in the near future. We might even get a glimpse of something we want to achieve in our lifetime but without any instructions of how to get there. The magical aspect of this state is that we can subtly feel this knowledge sourced from inside of our self. In the Celtic traditions this intuitive knowing is referred to as gnosis. The sensations feel like subtle fields of energy, often depicted as toroidal fields, as seen in the following image:



Centeredness - We will refer to the deepest state of relaxation and surrender as full centeredness. This is an experience where we have optimal parasympathetic engagement and can often feel the emotions of others near us. This is similar to how mammals can deepen their relaxation by being near each other when the pack is relaxed. Or they can suddenly become stressed when one of the other mammals experiences stress. Out-of-body experiences can occur from this place as well, in addition to psychic phenomenon, deep knowing of other's experiences, and feelings of oneness. We are able to experience such seemingly magical phenomenon because our whole brain is in a state of coherence when we engage our centeredness spectrum. In neurobiology terms, this inter-personal experience that arises from whole-brain coherence is often referred to as attunement. As we gain calmness, the

front part of our brain is building a bridge inward, allowing our middle brain to stabilize and begin opening pathways to our rear/occipital regions, where the more holistic thinking can take place. This is also creating a connection between the left and right hemispheres of our brain. As we move from the front to the back of the right side of our brain, we can not only feel the stimulus happening in our head (oxygen/electricity/electromagnetic fields/etc.) but we can also feel our somatic experience growing more expansive and detailed as we move along the spectrum of centeredness:



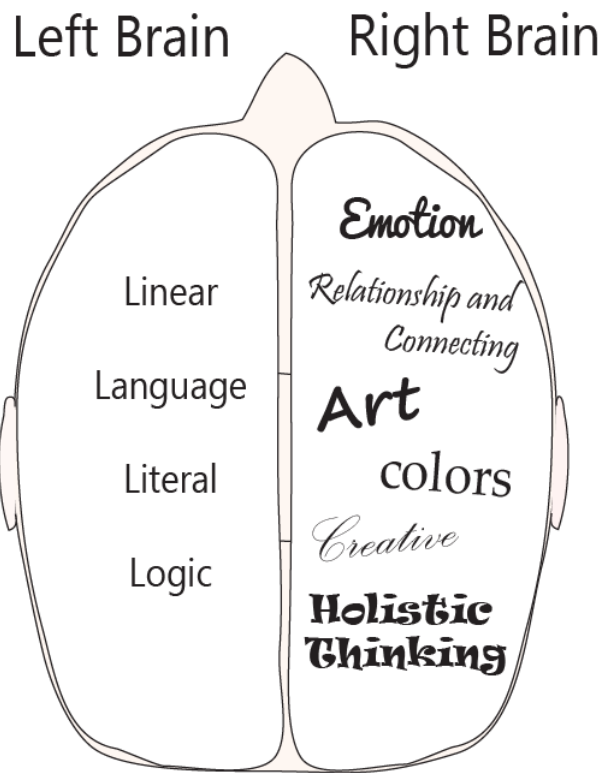
As we move along the centeredness spectrum in this way, we are able to speak in conversation from the parts of us that are most expansive and connected. This allows us to explore more fully the easy topics in conversation and also to begin observing the more difficult topics from a space of integrated perspective. In this way, we can learn to express our uniqueness, which in turn is our unique gift to give the world.

The Left and Right Brain

By bringing conversation into centeredness practice, we are now beginning to engage the verbal cognitive aspects of our left brain in connection with the right brain. It is important to

first understand the differences between the left brain and right brain as they pertain to conversation. Certainly the right brain controls the left side of our body while the left side of our brain controls the right side of our body. However, did you know there has been an additional asymmetry in functions that has existed in our brains dating back to invertebrates that existed around 200 million years ago? Because of this, in the present day, the left and right side of our brains have grown to become quite specialized. The left side of our brain is able to use the concepts of space and time to differentiate the world around us and the experiences that happen to us. The left side of our brain can then ask questions to the right side of our brain to retrieve more data, so that we can analyze our circumstances, and then send a new more complete model of understanding back to the right side of our brain, to be integrated into a neural representation of new understanding. UCLA Professor and Neurobiologist Dan Siegel has a very simple way of explaining the difference, by referring to the Left Brain's functions as generally falling within the 4 Ls: language, linear, logic, and literal⁸. While the right brain is able to relate with objects and experiences, the left brain is able to label these very same objects and experiences and become very analytical about them, storing them as discrete concepts we refer to as language. This is our first L: **language**. After language, the left hemisphere of our brain is able to create lists in a linear manner. We are able to discuss even this list of the 4 Ls right now thanks to this ability of our left brain. This list-making, of before and after, is the second L: **linear**. The third L is **logic**, which allows us to use the concept of time and the idea of separation as tools to analyze the cause and effect relation between objects and experiences. Newton discovered the law of gravity for himself when observing an apple falling must have been the effect of another cause, which he sought out to discover. The fourth L is **literal**. This is the left brain's ability to take things quite literally. When we are not feeling very centered, we can lose our ability to understand context, as that is a right-brain function. In this case, we may be out of balance in using our left-brain to try and make literal sense of the world around us. On the other hand, when our hemispheres are in-balance, it can be very enjoyable to discuss the nuances of literal uses of language and concepts, to add more depth and texture to the metaphorical, imaginative, and creative aspects of our right-brain. Here is a look at these aspects of our left and right brain. Notice how both hemispheres are for the most part separated, aside from the corpus callosum between the two that connects them and transfers information between them:

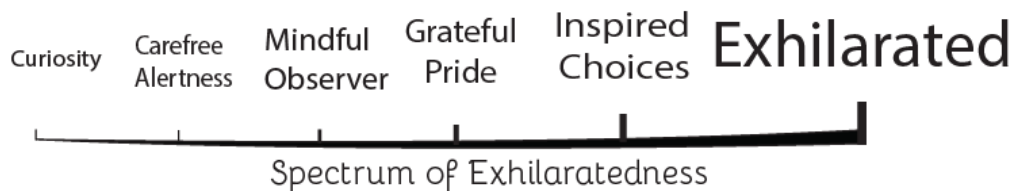
⁸ Siegel, Daniel J., and Stevin McNamara. *The Neurobiology of "we"*. Vol. 7. Sounds True, 2008.



With use of the 4 Ls, we can strengthen our ability to discern what support looks like within conversation, to supplement our right-brain's ability to discern what support feels like. This enables us to consciously build on a system of skills for understanding and creating supportive containers in conversation, helping others to see the option of relaxing and relating from their centeredness, or disassociating and protecting their centeredness. Both of these skills are highly valuable and when used thoughtfully can work to extend the amount of time we are able to be centered throughout our daily life, as well returning to centeredness more quickly once we've lost it. As we strengthen this ability, we are also replacing old habits that many no longer be serving us, with new habits that help us to have more of the whole brain types of social interaction that we would like to be having. This is especially important when interacting within society, as the difficulty level can tend to pick up when we leave the comforts of our warm and cozy home. As we gain strength and empowerment in using the tools of protection and discernment, a new spectrum of experiences emerges, as we reclaim the healthy use of the left side of our brain in connection with our whole being. This new spectrum of left brain empowerment is the exhilarated spectrum.

E stands for Exhilarated. The Exhilarated spectrum picks up once the Centeredness spectrum has been engaged (starting with calm). This exhilarated spectrum maps to our feelings of empowerment in our ability to bring the centeredness spectrum into social interactions as the difficulty level begins increasing. Keep in mind you can still feel exhilarated in easy conversations. The difference here is that the level of exhilaration felt tends to relate to how protected and empowered you're feeling about those yummy feelings of

centeredness continuing. Sometimes there are conversations that are delightfully centered but could easily take a turn for the worst at any moment. These are the “walking on eggshells” conversations that are delightful for the moment, but can tend to feel a little less exhilarated, because you just don’t know what could happen at any moment. The exhilaration that Centered and Exhilarated Practice is bringing forward actually matches that same level of exhilaration you might feel in a deeply moving experience of non-verbal movement, similar to dance or going on a good hike. Except that Centered and Exhilarated Practice is bringing this exhilaration into a conversational space with intention and awareness around this by using the spectrum as a tool to gauge where the conversation might be at. A fun way to think about this is to imagine you’re in a dance class or a yoga class. Here you are not needing to speak at all. The instructor might help guide you through corrections from time to time but for the most part you are not engaging in the 4 Ls to impart meanings beyond what the body is communicating. Now imagine a much more difficult situation, perhaps where you are in the middle of mediating a conflict navigation, and both parties want to repair with each other but they’re having difficulty expressing from the part of themselves that wants connection because they are just so darn angry. Or even more difficult might be when there is no mediator and someone is expressing deep frustration at you for a mistake you may have made. A skilled Centered and Exhilarated practitioner can source from their centeredness to bring connection and repair to even some of the most difficult conversations. The experience of the exhilarated spectrum tends to move like this:



Curiosity - When we feel centered, there is a certain amount of vulnerability present, because we are opened up to feeling so much more in a centered state. If we are not feeling the experience of curiosity, it typically means there is a good reason. Perhaps we are being defensive so that we do not get hurt, by disconnecting from deep relating with the world or the people around us. The first movement onto the exhilarated spectrum is curiosity. If we are feeling centered and curious at the same time, it typically means we’re feeling empowered to deal with the types of adversity or difficult situations that could arise in that moment. When a subtle sense of exhilaration accompanies the curiosity for another’s experience, this is the first movement on the exhilarated spectrum to let us know that we are feeling empowered in this space to bring our centeredness forward in relation with others.

Carefree Alertness - As we learn the tools in this book, we can begin to notice a carefree alertness emerge in difficult conversations, because we feel empowered to navigate the conversation in a way that maintains connection from centeredness. As we begin to lose our carefree alertness, this can be a sign that we are feeling the edge of our empowerment and moving into territory where we are unfamiliar. This can be a great time to ask for support to go

slowly in the conversation, in order to keep the carefree nature of the alertness and curiosity, on top of all that centeredness.

Mindful Observer - The ability to observe our thoughts, habits, and patterns, while they're happening, is commonly referred to as mindfulness. In neurobiology, this state is understood as "dorsal awareness" and Dan Siegel has a lot of great information out there about how mindfulness can be cultivated within the left side of our brain by using the 4 Ls⁹. When you group mindfulness with carefree alertness, curiosity, and the right-brain spectrum of centeredness, you're now bringing the deep connections within you, to a place of observation and on-the-fly analysis, as you are connecting from that place with others in the world around you. When this place is arrived at with feelings of empowerment to hold the container if things get difficult, there is a palpable sense of exhilaration not only in yourself, but can be felt by others.

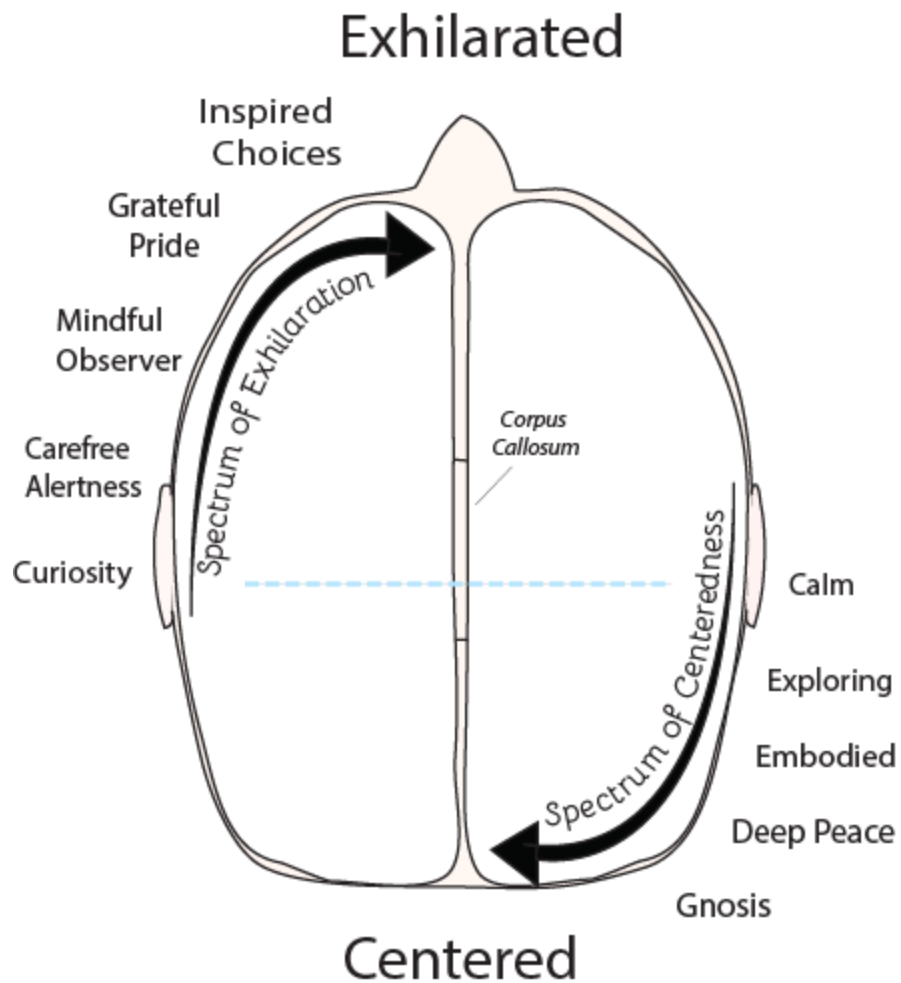
Grateful Pride - As you become increasingly able to connect from the mindful observer area of the exhilarated spectrum, a sense of gratitude emerges in relation to just being you. The exhilaration here is even more vibrant and arises from the repeated experiences of navigating difficult conversations in more varied situations while feeling increasingly empowered to bring centeredness forward and to allow others to experience the options of that same empowerment as well.

Inspired Choices - There is a great sense of exhilaration that tends to stick around once your choices are being made from a place of inspiration. This is deeply exhilarating and happens when you're already feeling gratitude, mindfulness, carefree alertness, curiosity, and empowerment to continue connection from the centeredness spectrum, even if topics get difficult.

Exhilarated - We will refer to the most expansive and freeing state of empowerment on the exhilaration spectrum as Fully Exhilarated. This is an experience where we are feeling equipoise from simply knowing we are fully empowered in the moment to not lose our connection to deep centeredness, regardless of what circumstances might arise. In psychology, the term "approach state" is used to describe what happens when mindfulness is brought forward to the front-left part of the brain, in the prefrontal cortex, which is the center for decisiveness. In this state, you are able to reframe language on the fly for others, in difficult situations, to reflect the true deep intent of connecting that might have been missed or miscommunicated. This is a level of leadership in communication that is highly empowering to the self and to others, so in many ways it is a type of transparent leadership that can almost

⁹ Siegel, Daniel J., and Stevin McNamara. *The Neurobiology of "we"*. Vol. 7. Sounds True, 2008.

seem like it is happening from the background. By taking a look at the Gottman's research¹⁰, we can see their studies suggest that when a good feeling is happening 85% of the time, it feels like all the time. Likewise, if a negative feeling happens 15% of the time, it can feel like all the time. Even if it's just a 3 hour talk with your best friend, discussing your favorite topics, you might have felt like you were deeply centered and exhilarated 100% of the time, which of course couldn't be precisely true, but that helps to convey the sense of a fully exhilarated experience. Eventually, through Centered and Exhilarated Practice, we've found it possible to interact from this fully centered and exhilarated state for most of the day. There still seems to be a good 10 minutes of total time throughout the day when even the best of us can fall out of that full connection, but that's part of the learning process. In the end, staying fully centered and exhilarated 99% of the time is still an awesome milestone to celebrate! Here is a look at the brain map when Centered and Exhilarated are both present:



¹⁰ Gottman, John Mordechai, and Joan DeClaire. *The relationship cure: A five-step guide to strengthening your marriage, family, and friendships*. Harmony, 2001.

Notice how curiosity and calm stabilize the middle brain (parietal ridge) over the corpus callosum, from ear to ear, allowing the approach state of the exhilarated front brain to build coherence with the holistic processing of the centered occipital (rear) brain. This whole brain coherence becomes a gyroscope of stability for the experience of Centered and Exhilarated.

The rest of this book will offer techniques to create a centered and exhilarated container for all practitioner skill levels, even beginners, by modulating the difficulty level of the topics. This way, even early practitioners can experience what fully centered and exhilarated feels like, by knowing that the container has empowered them to keep the topics easy and fun for the time being. As time goes on and more techniques are introduced, the difficulty of the topic can be modulated to increase feelings of empowerment as empathy muscles are strengthened. But before we get ahead of ourselves, it's important to first give you an idea of what fully exhilarated actually looks like. Here are two important examples I want to share with you to really bring it home.

The first example is of a beautiful human with long black dreadlocks standing waist deep in the ocean waves, gently watching over their infant baby, who is joyfully paddling and swimming about without a care in the world. As a wave comes crashing in, sure to tumble the baby about, the adult fluidly lifts the baby up into their arms and gently sets the baby back down on the water just as the wave passes. This experience of joy during absolute protection that the baby is experiencing is on the same spectrum of feelings of exhilaration that can arise in conversation, when the left brain's 4Ls have the tools and savvy to protect the right brain's centeredness. By organizing elements in a coherent manner, as the intellect dances with our internal world of centeredness, the feeling of inspiration becomes palpable.

On the other hand, when others are disempowering in conversation and a power dynamic is present, the exhilarated spectrum slowly goes into hiding. This is why Centered and Exhilarated focuses on the strengthening of discernment, so that centeredness can be increasingly protected for the self and others, even as the amount of power dynamics begins increasing. When a topic is becoming too stressful and we are noticing the centeredness slipping away in conversation, by using the TLLR Tool (table it, label it, list it, revisit it), it can become second nature to discern whether there is an option to defer the difficult topic to a later time when it might be easier to discuss, or when both parties are more fully resourced. Even this simple action of noticing and voicing options around maintaining centeredness begins to build trust, which begins to feel like the unquestionable level of protection that leads to feelings of exhilaration.

In the above example, the adult has an innate awareness of the level of the waves and an instinctive alertness for any subtle shifts. In conversation too, we as humans can develop an instinctive alertness for subtle shifts in the flow interaction. And we can help make shifts before they arise!

Let's go into one last example of exhilaration, to really ground the feeling of the concept. Imagine a situation, say when you are delighted to be with a best friend or favorite family member. It can be quite natural to feel both centered and exhilarated at the same time during conversation with this person. Here, it is our centeredness that arises from feeling supported in

who we are, in our unique expression of ourselves and our personal desires. Now, with this person we have in mind, we can relax, deeper and deeper with each other, can't we? At the same time, we can still feel quite exhilarated. What we may not realize is that an unconscious part of us has built up trust that the centeredness and exhilaration in the container is protected.

As we work through difficult situations or topics together without losing the centered and exhilarated feelings, we add to the trust bank account, feeling even more exhilarated and centered. We feel lucky to have these people in our lives, where the centered and exhilarated feelings are just expected. It is as if there is an unconscious tacit agreement around a sacred space of a whole brain experience. ¹¹There is trust that the conversation will somehow be mutually supportive of centeredness and exhilaration. Now imagine being able to choose this, consciously, with the people you work with, or even the people you meet at a bus stop. With the tools of Centered and Exhilarated Practice, we can learn to notice when centeredness is feeling exhilarating, and to not only support the centeredness, but to also support the feelings of exhilaration. When both C and E are supported actively, something very new occurs: the felt sense of truth. This is the most exciting ingredient to Centered and Exhilarated Practice!

O is a circular symbol used to convey the expansive feeling of the felt sense of truth, an observer that arises in whole-brain connection, when both the embodied observer of the centered right hemisphere is present and connected with the mindful observer of the exhilarated left brain. When we identify with our thoughts and emotions, we do not have an observer. This state is referred to as persona-shadow. Without the observer, we can become attached to our thoughts and emotions, building attachment and experiencing suffering when our expectations aren't met. As we begin cultivating the observer, we are able to shift our identification away from our thoughts and emotions, to a wider experience of intelligence. In this way, we can associate to our thoughts and emotions and gain useful information without identifying with those same thoughts and emotions. As our identification shifts to the observer, we can begin observing when we're feeling stress while noticing if we have any options to reduce the stress. As we practice the tools and techniques in this book, we will find ourselves orbiting around this experience of losing the observer during periods of advanced difficulty and then finding it again. Each time we orbit in this way, we grow our empowerment, we cultivate our observer, and eventually, we are ready to move on to the next set of tools and practices to further cultivate our observer. Eventually, through the connection of both the centered and exhilarated sides of our brain, we can experience our observer shift to an awareness of right discernment, where we are far more capable of steering away from stressful situations, reducing stress when it appears, and creating a life where stress is less likely to get its foot in the door. In time, our observer gains even further expanded awareness as it shifts beyond the centered and exhilarated experience to the experience of consciousness behind centered and exhilarated. We call this the orchestrator observer because it is orchestrating the alternating current of the centered and exhilarated experience for us. As our identification shifts to the orchestrator, our intelligence and capacity for art and communication expands even more. Our growth in this observer moves through the embodiment of internal alchemy, to insight, to actually experiencing the Self as part of the We space in the supportive environment we have created. When there is

¹¹ And we can create conscious spoken agreements too!

enough safety and surrender from all the empowerment that has built up over time, the orchestrator releases into a greater more expansive observer that we like to refer to as “unitive consciousness”, when the fullness of the coherence of the brain is truly working as one, as the majority of the traumas from our younger years have been brought into full connection with the brain and released, so that the brain is truly functioning as one connected whole brain. If you spend enough time in unitive consciousness, you can see that there are further observers to release into. For example, the experience of conscious observing can release into what some refer to as awareness itself. This consciousness is something we refer to as primordial consciousness, since the experience of it feels like something that arises prior to the cognitive consciousness of the more recently developed primate layers of our brain. This brain provides maximum nourishment and replenishment when it is experienced. When there is a need to interact socially it is easy to step down into the unitive consciousness observer as well, in order to use your 4 Ls to speak (language, literal, linear, lists). As time is spent in each observer, as they develop into more expansive consciousness, the feeling of identity shifts as well. Where first, before practicing Centered and Exhilarated, we might identify with our thoughts and emotions, we could experience even our thoughts having their own thoughts, and our emotions having their own emotions. This observer is referred to as persona shadow, in traditional ego development theory. However, as the shift to centered and exhilarated observers occurs, this experience of identity is actually replaced with a new more expansive, nourishing and replenishing sense of experience in identity. A similar shift occurs each time the Centered and Exhilarated Practice helps us to expand to a new state of ego development in identity with our observers. Eventually, we can experience the truth of oneness and that our true identity might indeed exist beyond even the notion of separateness, of life and death, or of the notion of time. This is an experience that will come, as opposed to a logical understanding to be processed. All in all, we could say that O stands for the Observer, but that would lock us into the world of words and when dealing with experiences of identity, consciousness, and observers, it’s really important to convey the experience of the Observer as something beyond words. So for now, let us just think of O as a symbol. Later on, after you’ve made it up to some of the higher orbits, maybe then you can think of O as standing for Observer and it will make much more sense. In the early stages of practice, it can be more helpful to think of the O symbol as more closely representing the experience of the observer taking the form of connection that arises when we bring the exhilarated spectrum of emotions into coherence and attunement with the centeredness spectrum of emotions. Here our mirror neuron systems can feel the “we” of the group as part of our own internal experience. This is one of the ways the human body has evolved, through means of group evolution as explored in Richard Dawkins “The Selfish Gene”.

It seems it is time to explore a more detailed introduction of this new concept of Exhilarated attunement as well, now that we have brought it up. To better understand this concept, it’s helpful to first remember the idea that coherence is the concept of different parts of the left hemisphere of the brain working in coordination with different parts of the right hemisphere of the brain. Keep in mind that it is coherence that helps us to be able to differentiate the world all around us, for the purposes of analysis (guided by the left-brain), while integrating and creating new neural representations of our learnings (guided by the right-brain),

all at the same time. Attunement on the other hand is a word that conveys the interpersonal aspects that we experience when interacting from a state of whole-brain coherence. Remember that whole-brain coherence can only exist when we're deeply relaxed and in our parasympathetic nervous system (stress-metabolizing) so we are also activating the inter-personal capacities of our brain, those same interpersonal aspects of our brain that helped humans thrive together during group interaction; sensing each other's stress or relaxation and so on. Now what do you think happens when we bring the exhilarated spectrum of emotions into coherence? We now have the ability to not only analyze what we perceive but to also juggle up to 9 variables (according to Miller's Law¹²) in our head at a time . This helps us with error-correction, to identify if what we're feeling is indeed in alignment with what we know about a person or situation and visa versa: if what we're perceiving as a pattern that we know about someone aligns to how we feel about the situation. By being able to easily juggle up to 9 variables in our inner experience, we are now able to use discernment for a situation, while monitoring our exhilaration levels, while knowing what to do in a given situation, while connecting at a fast paced verbal cognitive capacity in conversation, while feeling into what's really being said and what really wants to be said in a situation, to help enhance the felt experience of We-space in the group. This is actually a very primal and ancient aspect of our being that we are allowing to come online in the way that it works best. This dual attunement feels like a gyroscope of context and stability. Others will make comments about it as well. It's not rare that I'm told I'm an amazing listener or that I'm really quite a supportive person. I'm actually just connecting from my felt sense of truth and support is naturally arising, easily and exhilaratingly.

So what do we call this circular O symbol that has stood the test of time through the human aeons and that we are now using to denote the felt sense of truth? Well, we call it the "CEO". It makes sense really, because the symbol only really makes sense when you're feeling centered and exhilarated and naturally experiencing it. Lao Tsu is quoted as saying "the Tao that is spoken is not the Tao". It is the same with the CEO. The O emerges when both centered and exhilarated are present and it is a felt experience. As you can see, the collaboration of the left brain and right brain in their full centered and exhilarated states are essential to this experience of coherence and attunement that Dr. Dan Siegel goes into great depth about in *The Neurobiology of "we"*¹³. He even goes as far as to create the following acronym for the feeling and experience of coherence, to help individuals hopefully return to this state more often:

C - Connection

O - Openness

H - Harmony

¹² Miller, George A. "The magical number seven, plus or minus two: Some limits on our capacity for processing information." *Psychological review* 63, no. 2 (1956): 81.

¹³ Siegel, Daniel J., and Stevin McNamara. *The Neurobiology of "we"*. Vol. 7. Sounds True, 2008.

E - Engagement

R - Receptivity

E - Emergence (new and unexpected arisings; freshness)

N - Noesis (deep present moment knowing of one's unique path forward; knowingness)

C - Compassion

E - Empathy

Dan Siegel also explores this acronym in *The Mindful Brain*¹⁴, where he further discusses the qualities of attunement that arise from coherence. This attunement can happen between people (interpersonal) as well as within our self (intrapersonal) as our various inner parts have their own kind of dialogue about how we feel about any given topic or situation. When our brain is in coherence, this attunement can greatly amplify our emotional and cognitive intelligence, as well as our productivity. Perhaps the best part of it all is that all this added productivity is attuned to our unique path. If you think of karma as all the things we have left to learn and experience across many lifetimes, in order to reach our destiny, you can think of the attunement from coherence as the karma superhighway. Of course, sometimes the scenic route is more fun to take. In the state of CEO, feeling the attunement of a fully centered and exhilarated whole brain coherence, we can freely choose the superhighway or the scenic route, however our heart desires.

The History of Religion and Coherence and Attunement as a Symbol

It is important to recognize that this field of attunement from whole brain coherence is not new and has been experienced by humans since the days of prehistory. In fact, the circular symbol has been used to represent the divine light of the sun as it illuminates our path, in cultures all around the world, with findings as early as 12,000 BC in Ukraine. The original form was seen on rocks and paintings as the swastika and made it across the world in Mayan, Mexican, Chinese, and Indian ancient cultures. The Celtic traditions used this symbol for gnosis, which translates to knowingness. In ancient greece, the symbol was used for Sophia, which translates to the experience of wisdom that is also the source of all consciousness. According to Derek Bryce¹⁵, "once the Celtic Christians realised that this ancient symbol of the wheel-cross was not incompatible with their religion, they began also to use its more ancient form, the swastika, which is believed to be the symbol of the wheel from the time before the wheel had been invented for locomotion, the bent-over arms of this cross implying rotation around a central point." There are stories of the origin of this symbol being the swinging of a rock on a string, to create a circle. This metaphor was used to illustrate that work needs to be done in order to be on a spiritual path, to move to the center of your divinity, otherwise we will fall to the outside.

¹⁴ Siegel, Daniel J. *The mindful brain: Reflection and attunement in the cultivation of well-being*. WW Norton & Company, 2007.

¹⁵ Bryce, Derek. *Symbolism of the Celtic cross*. Weiser Books, 1995

According to E.B. Havell¹⁶, symbolized not only divinity but also the union of the male and female principles, the dynamic and static, mobility and immobility, harmony and balance. Carl Jung would also refer to the dynamic and static principles of the masculine and feminine when describing how to achieve a state of balance in coherence, which he referred to as the anima. According to Jungian psychology, individuation is the process of transforming one's psyche by bringing the personal and collective unconscious into conscious.

"Individuation is essentially a spiritual journey. Only the man who can consciously assent to the power of the inner voice becomes a personality.(...) If the unconscious can be recognized as a co-determining factor along with consciousness, and if we can live in such a way that conscious and unconscious demands are taken into account as far as possible, then the centre of gravity of the total personality shifts its position. It is then no longer in the ego, which is merely the centre of consciousness, but in the hypothetical point between conscious and unconscious. The new centre might be called the self. [Carl Jung, CW 13, par. 67]"¹⁷

In ancient Greece, Pythagoras' philosophy of Cynicism in 600 BC was to live in harmony with nature, having achieved happiness through mastering one's mental attitude. Stoicism carried this philosophy forward from 300 BC onward by espousing the importance of having a will which is in agreement with nature. This can be achieved by practicing the four cardinal virtues: known as Sophia (wisdom), Andreia (courage), Dikaiosyne (right action), and Sophrosyne (temperance). In terms of Centered and Exhilarated practice, the concept of temperance in Cynicism most closely relates to the faculties made available within the coherence from the exhilarated spectrum. These ways of life would merge with the Celtic ways of connecting with nature, into Gnosticism, a religion which flourished across Europe from 100 - 400 AD, just prior to the Christian Bible being compiled. In Gnosticism, Sophia was worshipped as God and she was thought to be the awareness from which consciousness was created, by a lesser god (Demiurge) that were sourced from her. Gnosis (knowingness) was seen as the only way of connecting through consciousness, back to Sophia, through the body.

As Gnostic scholars became aware of Buddhism the ideas and terms began to cross-pollinate. Contemporary versions of Gnosticism will include Buddhist concepts as well as the Pistis Sophia and other classical gnostic texts discovered from Egypt within the Nag Hammadi¹⁸ (with various texts being written between 100 BC and 400 AD; interestingly it was Carl Jung who was the first to obtain manuscripts from these codices, for the purpose of translation). In the 1970s, Buddhism was combined further into Samael Gnosticism, where scholar Samael Aun Weor cited the Path of the Bodhisattva in describing humility as the path to gnosis. From present day neuroscience findings as well as subjective experience, it would seem that humility is indeed the outcome of achieving a whole-brain coherent state of Centered and Exhilarated. By experiencing Centered and Exhilarated as the path to coherence, we get the added positives of feeling self-confident and empowered in difficult situations in order to access advanced levels of self-support and supporting others, while feeling humility at the same time. It's a win-win!

¹⁶ Havell, Ernest Binfield. *The ideals of Indian art*. Dutton, 1920.

¹⁷ Storr, Anthony. *The essential Jung: selected writings*. HarperCollins UK, 2013.

¹⁸ Attridge, Harold W., ed. *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex)*. Vol. 2. Brill, 1985.

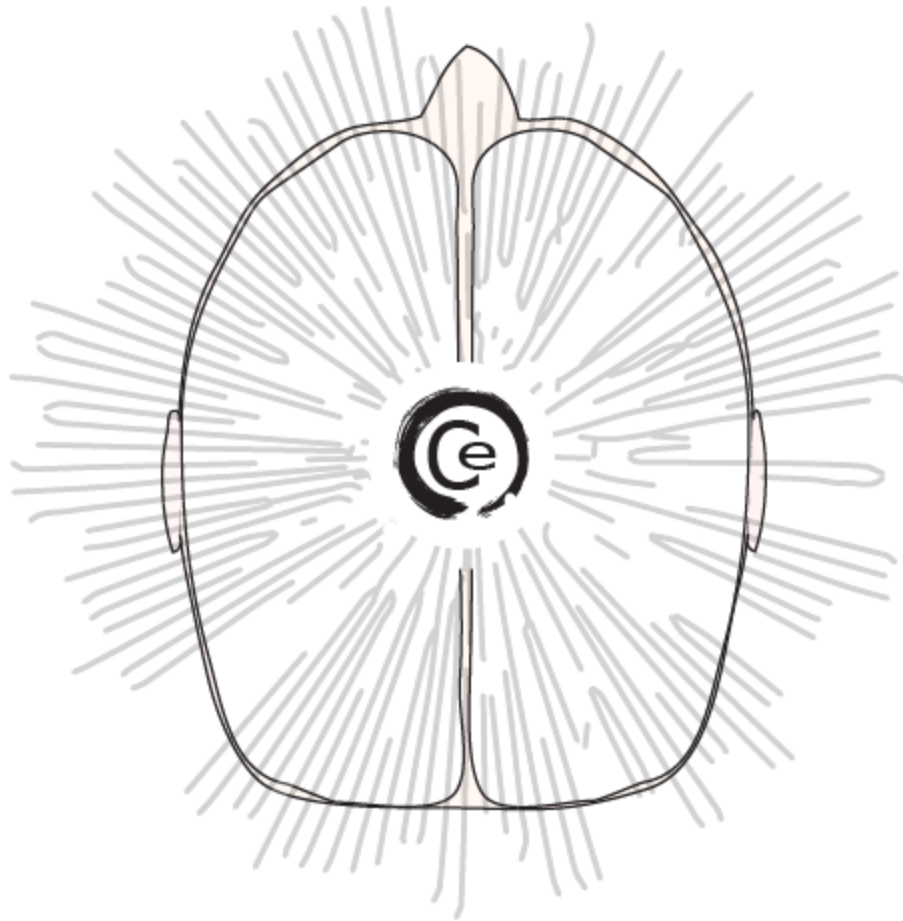
Cultivating CEO

In Orbit 3, we learn about a tool called “CEO”, which can be used in times of great stress, when you forget how to be supportive. The tool helps to focus only on the centered and exhilarated aspects of the conversation. The letters CEO stand for Centered and Exhilarated Only, as those are the only two things you really need to focus on for everything else to work out. In stress, it can really help to have something simple to focus on, like a 3 letter acronym. We recognize it might be confusing that the toolset is referred to as CEO Dialogue and the state of being we’re cultivating is referred to as CEO, where O is a circular symbol indicating the field of the felt sense of truth inhabiting the We-Space. In fact, the O may be referred to by many names, making this matter even more complicated. That’s where, like a zen koan, it’s best to just accept that this symbol has many names. The important meaning, after all, is the experience and not the word. Sometimes we may refer to the O as the observer, the We-Space, or the Orbit, especially because it really does feel like a conversation group can be orbiting around the shared centered and exhilarated feelings in the middle, and being lit up and warmed almost like a sun is shining in the middle. There are many ways to pronounce the O symbol. It has many names because the underlying experience is so vast and permeates through so many aspects of our spiritual life. In Zen Buddhism, the symbol of the circle is known as the Enso and has grown to become the universal symbol of mindfulness and oneness. This experience of increased connection and coherence is quite difficult to put into words. In the Tao Te Ching it is said “the Tao that is spoken is not the Tao”. We like to have fun with this statement by calling the O many different names¹⁹. We might call it the Ensorbit by mashing together the words Enso and Orbit. In the case of the 30 Day Challenge (introduced in Orbit 3), CEO might stand for Centered and Exhilarated Only and you’ll understand why when you get to that chapter. We might even refer to CEO as Cute and Eager Only. At the end of the day, it really doesn’t matter what we call it, because the practice of Centered and Exhilarated leads to a shared vicinity of experience that is beyond words and speaks for itself. This experience is easily repeatable and this book is full of delightful tools we can use to bring this experience into all aspects of our social lives.

This practice even follows us into our alone time when we’re not being social, helping us to feel centered and exhilarated as much as we desire. This is a whole brain state of consciously empowered connection that persists like a gyroscope once it gets going. Dan Siegel suggests that a coherent mind is more likely to remain in coherence during difficult situations because that is the natural outcome of an integrated mind²⁰. It would not be until the brain begins to disassociate that we would begin losing coherence, once we are in the CEO state. When we have the increased empowerment and toolsets to work with from a coherent mind, it is less likely we will find value in disassociating back into a sympathetic fight/flight state. This experience feels less like that differentiated Centered and Exhilarated spectrums depicted in the previous pictures and moreso like a large gyroscopic field of coherence emanating from the core of our beings, similar to the following diagram.

¹⁹ For those into Trivium, you could think of O as grammar for a post-modern logic following K.G. Hursey’s “Phenomenology”

²⁰ Siegel, Daniel J., and Stevin McNamara. *The Neurobiology of “we”*. Sounds True, 2008.



Regenerative Self Healing

The Centered and Exhilarated logo depicts the experience of the O widening, in interpersonal attunement. The exhilarated E spectrum is in the middle, arising to monitor and protect the Centeredness spectrum, in case the difficulty levels in life start to increase. The more deeply we move along the C and E spectrums, the more interconnected the coherence becomes a reality, bridging across the many parts of ourselves, helping the feelings of C and E to become even larger. As the C and E grow larger, the O gets pushed out to be even more expansive. As the attunement of the O feels even more wonderful, our C and E then grow larger in return. This is how each part feeds back into each other. It all sets into motion once that initial coherence is established in a way where our centeredness feels protected. The more time we spend in this Centered and Exhilarated state, the more healing we are able to receive. This too helps the C, E, and O grow bigger.

Regenerative Communities

Then, when others are also present in experiencing Centered and Exhilarated, the field grows even bigger, similar to how mammals can unconsciously feel each other, becoming alert when each other become alert, or becoming more relaxed as the group relaxes. There are tests where brain scans show correlated brainwave peaks and troughs in participants that are sitting in neighboring rooms from each other, as one participant is given varying sorts of stimulus²¹. In this same way, the more relaxed and exhilarating the conversation becomes, the more the orbit of the O widens. This supportive environment also improves our ability to stay in coherence. Cultivating a supportive environment at the community level is one of the great rewards of Centered and Exhilarated Practice. There are also analytical and emotional intelligence boosts gained from experiencing Centered and Exhilarated. To get a preview of what we're talking about, just think of any of those times when you were trying to resolve a difficult situation and you weren't feeling centered and exhilarated. When there are problems to solve, it can be easy to juggle two variables in our heads, even when feeling stressed or defensive. An example might be figuring out how to run a couple errands with enough time to still make it to an important meeting. But when we want to add in additional variables, such as needing to pick up the kids but not knowing what to do with them during the meeting, we might start feeling less-resourced, or as one of my friend's likes to call it: "not having enough spoons". Talking out loud, reaching out to a friend, or reaching for a pencil and paper can help us to think through some of the more complicated puzzles, by helping our centeredness to feel protected. Here, we begin to naturally access our own coherence. When we're coming from a place of feeling fully centered and exhilarated, it is possible to juggle many more variables. From this place, a creative answer might come easily and swiftly. It might seem totally fine to suddenly reschedule the meeting, to ask if you can bring the kids to the meeting, or to ask a friend to watch the kids at a nearby restaurant. The trick is getting to a centered and exhilarated state more often, staying there longer, and quickly returning there. Life feels quite magical when the Centered and Exhilarated experience is present: when the coherence of all sorts of feelings are mapping to labels of systems and thoughts that are easily being juggled. I'm so excited to share these tools with you. You've made it through the mind-bending difficulty of understanding all sorts of new concepts. Now that you've got the hard work out of the way, the next sections will be packed with fun and easy to learn exercises and tools! Are you ready to take the next step into this magical new world? Are you as excited as I am? Well buckle your seatbelt because here we go!

²¹ Giroldini, William, Luciano Pederzoli, Marco Bilucaglia, Patrizio Caini, Alessandro Ferrini, Simone Melloni, Elena Prati, and Patrizio Tressoldi. "EEG correlates of social interaction at distance." *F1000Research* 4 (2015).

Quick Recap: How it all Fits Together

Before we move on to practicing Centered and Exhilarated, let's do a quick recap of what we've learned. The 4-Step TLLR Tool mentioned in Part I is a great way to build in opportunities for supporting each other in a relationship. By adding in Centered and Exhilarated Practice, we begin maintaining a quality of support that is both centering and exhilarating.

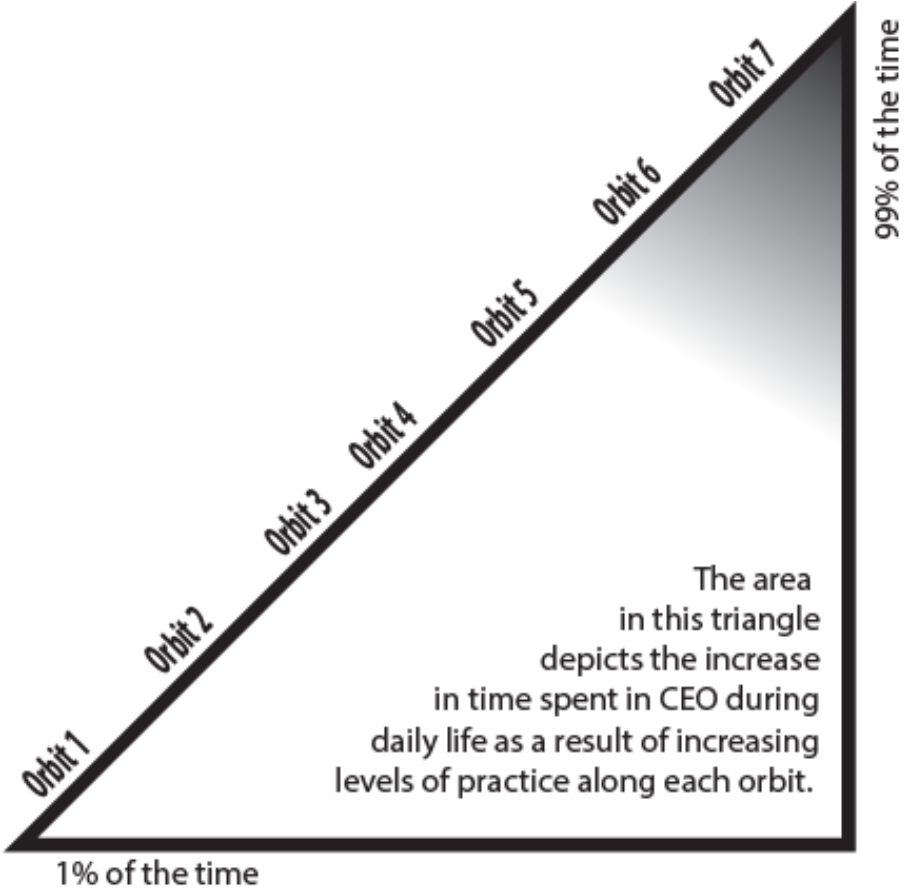
The Six Major Benefits of Centered and Exhilarated Practice

1. **Optimal Growth** - Centered and Exhilarated Practice creates a strong foundation for optimal growth by bringing the monitoring, analysis, and decision making aspects of our brain into coherence with our centeredness.
2. **Empowering Growth** - When we feel supported from a centered and exhilarated place, we tend to communicate from the place inside that feels inspired to try new ideas that we've been nurturing. We tend to find unique and authentic ways for overcoming our obstacles. This level of empowerment helps us to continue to explore, experiment, and build an understanding of the world in a way that feels like thriving.
3. **Supports Interdependency** - When giving advice do we first see if the advice seeker might already have access to their own ideas for problem solving? Far too often we skip this important step, which is why Centered and Exhilarated builds this step into the process. We are first checking to see if the person is already feeling centered and exhilarated and we are holding that space for them. Building empowerment in this way helps community to reach out more often when they need support and to grow more acquainted with their source of inner genius each time they do reach out. After a couple interactions, people who used to rely on power dynamics for the answers to their problems might start coming to you to run their own ideas past you. Pretty soon they won't be needing advice at all! Over the long run, this minimizes attachment based relationships and any unwanted codependency.
4. **Stress Minimizing** - When both conversation partners are supporting each other to feel centered and exhilarated, the risk of recoil from overly stressful interactions is minimized.
5. **It's fun!** For those of us who like to learn in a way that feels playful and replenishing, this is it!
6. **Easy and Useful Self-Realization** - Once the brain finds out that it's safe to drop the defenses of the ego, it does. When you find yourself to be experience centered and exhilarated feelings 85% of the time, you'll notice quickly jumping to living from a centered and exhilarated place 99% of the time. It's as if there is a gravity to this state of inner health that pulls us to release the identification with the ego, faster and faster the closer we get. When 99% of our waking life is spent in a centered and exhilarated state, the brain begins releasing all the unnecessary deep underlying defenses that had us identifying with our ego. We begin simply, joyfully, and naturally moving along the ego development spectrum²² to live from nondual unitive consciousness.

²² Bennet, Angelina. *The Shadows of Type*. Lulu. com, 2010.

Introduction to the Orbits

Each level of practice corresponds to a specific stage of growth in cultivating the observer along a spectrum of egoic development. As the observer is developing, there are certain keystone experiences to each stage that serve as guideposts to help us along our path. Each observer tier along the spectrum is referred to as an orbit. We tend to stay within a specific orbit until we've fully learned the keys to unlock our growth into the next stage of cultivating our observer. As new techniques are introduced for practice, the experience of Centered and Exhilarated felt in the group also becomes more immersive, bringing in many new dimensions of context and connection to a conversation. The centered and exhilarated experience continues to grow as we spend more and more of our daily life connecting from the centered and exhilarated experience. This feeds back into our desire to learn more Centered and Exhilarated practices, until eventually we've cultivated our observer to where we're spending 99% of our daily lives connecting from the centered and exhilarated experience. Before we describe each of the observers, here is a quick visual of the overall idea, in order to give you a lay of the land.



The techniques practiced in each orbit are designed to be fun and energizing. The goal is to learn slowly enough that there is ample time to integrate each learning before moving on to the next lesson. As we learn new concepts and replace old habits, our brain is burning calories and slowly building neural representations to access these new understandings as a foundation to build on. There is great reason to be patient with ourselves: after all, neurons take a while to grow. Think of each learning as a cocoon in which we are slowly morphing into butterflies. It can be a skill to learn to enjoy the patient periods. So often we can fall into patterns of shaming ourselves for not growing faster. Well not anymore! It's time to take it easy on ourselves and enjoy the learning process! Here is a brief overview of the seven orbits, to give you a taste before we dive into each one.

All in all, Centered and Exhilarated is the practice of cultivating the inner observer along a spectrum of seven separate stages of growth. Each stage corresponds to a widening of the brain's ability to perceive consciousness with a refinement of the mind's ability to make sense of the incoming signals. As we've already covered, this practice starts with becoming acquainted with both the mindful observer of the left brain and also the embodied observer of the right brain. As these two observers begin to quickly alternate between each other, they form a stable foundation for further egoic development, as the identity shifts along a spectrum of observers that become more and more useful, as practices continues. The spectrum of seven observers are encapsulated in the following seven orbits.

1. **Talking Meditation** - Here we begin exploring our ability to observe when stress is occurring and to notice that we have options. This first observer is the connecting of the embodied observer of our right brain and the mindful observer of our left brain. This new observer that combines both experiences will be helpful in actually shifting our identifying away from the identity that causes stress, known as persona shadow. This stress is caused when we actively identify with our thoughts and emotions, which builds attachment and suffering. As we cultivate the first observer and we notice both the stress and the options, we begin opening the path to shifting our identification to a broader intelligence, both intellectual and emotional. This intelligence is helpful in healing the stress in our body. In this chapter, the **Memory Share Circle** is introduced, in order to bring the centered and exhilarated state to a group setting by sharing recent memories where we felt both centered and exhilarated at the same time. This is the engine behind the later practices, such as the Centered and Exhilarated Practice Circle.
2. **Right Discernment** - Through the practice of right discernment, the connection between our body and brain experiences healing, which paves the way for healing the connection between our body, brain, and mind. We have grown our observer beyond merely recognizing the feeling of the We space to actually cultivating discernment around the various aspects that contribute to the We space. Here we begin observing the nuances of leaving and returning to the centered and exhilarated experience in the **Centered and Exhilarated Practice Circle**. This is a group experience that starts with the Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share Round and moves into neutral topics. The group gets to

practice using the TLLR Tool as difficult topics emerge. Every 20 minutes, there is also an alarm that sounds to remind the group to share a moment of silence and return to the full experience of the centered and exhilarated memory they shared in the Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share Circle. Through this practice, participants are able to feel their body develop somatic tools of leaving and returning to the full centered and exhilarated state in their own unique way. This is very fun in practice.

3. **Internal Alchemy** - In the third orbit, the practitioner's sense of identity begins to expand, from the space where the mind is receiving healing, in addition to the body and brain, to the consciousness itself that orchestrates this healing. As the practitioner spends more time in this state, this new observer becomes natural and is much more helpful, especially in difficult situations. Both the active and passive aspects of Centered and Exhilarated practice are beginning to differentiate themselves in this orbit. By identifying these aspects and creating options to align with the new tools, it becomes increasingly easy to stay centered and exhilarated. This is further observed along the upper stacks of the **Raise Up** pyramid of Right Action (RA), Insight (I), a Supportive Environment (SE), and being able to place some of our internal energy toward healing the spirit through Unitive-Consciousness (U) and remembering our relationship with nature and all beings in Primordial-consciousness (P). In the third orbit, we now start the practice of **being present** for our Self and also for someone else by holding centered and exhilarated for them when they are unable to. Empathy and support skills are developed in a methodical approach in order to support in ways that create further empowerment and expand the available resources during difficult topics. When our body is experiencing centered and exhilarated more than **85% of the time**, we feel like it is happening all the time²³. This level of trust in our body allows our brain to stop using some of the defensive neuron wiring from our childhood and begins the process of neurogenesis (creating new healthy neuron pathways²⁴) around new open and vulnerable healthy whole-brain wiring, which helps us to feel noticeably more resourced and empowered. This change in the way we feel about ourselves creates a sense of gravity that snowballs by staying in a centered and exhilarated state more often, for longer periods of time, and returning more quickly when we leave. This change in ourselves also brings about new healthy habits and patterns. Concepts are introduced in this orbit to help provide reflection on the changes that are happening and to give a gentle reminder to take it day by day. Neurons that fire together, wire together, and survive together. That means that new neural pathways in the brain are wiring together as old pathways that are no longer used are falling away. This process takes time so we can be gentle with ourselves. The **30 Day Challenge** is also introduced here, where the practitioner can attempt to stay in a centered and exhilarated state, 99% of the time, for 30 days. In order to do so, a wide array of skills are learned, including communication

²³ This parallels the Gottman's research that good things feel like they happen all the time when they happen more than 85% of the time, as discussed in Part II when talking about the Fully Exhilarated emotion on the Spectrum of Exhilaration.

²⁴ Doidge, Norman. *The brain's way of healing: Remarkable discoveries and recoveries from the frontiers of neuroplasticity*. Penguin Books, 2016.

techniques for helping others to feel included in the process and to learn how to better support us. By helping others feel included and connected in this way, a leap of ability takes place in the development of Centered and Exhilarated skills.

4. **Insight (I)** - This is the fourth observer, referred to as the Insight Observer. It emerges when the practitioner's consciousness rests in the very awareness in which the healing of the body, brain, and mind is orchestrated. When the practitioner is in this state, Insight begins to flood into the present moment. This can be helpful in healing relationships with the self, with others, and with our connection to all beings. As we've acclimated to the high level of trust in our body to be in a centered and exhilarated experience, we find ourselves staying centered and exhilarated for **99% of our waking life**. We like to refer to this stage as business level intimacy because business meetings tend to be the most difficult situations to maintain a centered and exhilarated experience. However, once we're able to hold centered and exhilarated 99% of the time, it is possible to get through the rushed pace of business meeting agendas, when there's always one more topic that needs to be discussed by a couple people who still haven't been able to emotionally process through their adverse reactions to the previous topic. In this business level intimacy, we are able to go slow in order to go fast, making time to move through emotions in order to return to centered and exhilarated with the group on each difficult topic, while still making it through the agenda. Tools are introduced in this section to get projects completed in empowering ways, even during crises scenarios. Additional systems of large scale community restorative justice process are also discussed.
5. **Supportive Environment (SE)** - In the 5th observer, known as the Supportive Environment Observer, the very idea of perspective taking is as natural and persistent as breathing. Our ability to discern and cultivate a supportive environment has coupled with the body release of surrender when we acknowledge that we are connected with other beings and we are safe. In this observer, we start to experience the part of the Self that also exists in the We space outside of our body. This expanded awareness cannot help but create a supportive environment with each interaction with others. While each expansion of the observer has reduced the stress of difficult situations, this stage of growth is a turning point where more and more replenishment and nourishment will start pouring in from the world around us to assist when difficult situations do arise.
6. **Unitive-Consciousness (U)** - Up until now, we've focused on healing the body, brain, and mind. This stage of egoic development is targeting the healing of our spirit as well, while nurturing a well-spring of replenishment within our inner experience, even in difficult situations.
7. **Primordial-Consciousness (P)** - This is the state of existing within awareness as awareness itself. This state is very helpful for speeding up the process of trauma, repair, grief processing, rage transformation, and healing the core rift from which it all came. This state is also deeply insightful for preparing us to rekindle our connection with plants, with nature, and with all beings. We can only go so far with egoic development as

humans, if we are isolated from our environment. To truly gain an expansive sense of awareness in the experience of our observer, it is important that we return to our relationship with mother nature.

As we enjoy the practice of talking meditation, we can learn to recognize that with stress we have options, and we can employ right discernment. This pairing is like a double-edged sword, slicing not only through any difficult situation but in doing so we also slicing through our concept of our Self, revealing our true nature. In the later observers, we learn to raise the sword of our discernment, through internal alchemy, insight, and creating a supportive environment. As we enter the final stages, we can heal our connection to spirit in unitive consciousness and also rekindle our relationship with nature, the forest, and with our ancestral roots.

The Opening Orbits

Foundational Practice in Cultivating the Observer

Identity Slowly Shifts from Thoughts and Emotions to the Centered and Exhilarated Observers

Orbit 1: Talking Meditation

Orbit 2: Right Discernment



Orbit 1: Talking Meditation

As we cultivate our observer, we can begin to notice when there is stress, as well as noticing that we may have some options. The brain operates 31% better²⁵ when we feel good about ourselves. When we experience stress, we feel less good about ourselves and our brain does not operate as well. There are things we can do to help experience less stress in our life. Imagine if everything felt as easy as if you were meditation. Wouldn't that be something! What if the conversations we had will people felt like actual meditation? Centered and Exhilarated Practice helps us feel the same nourishment and replenishment from meditation during actual conversation. The more we practice, the more we cultivate our observer, and the more we can feel replenished and nourished during increasingly difficult situations and topics of conversation. We can reach more of our full potential in difficult situations when we feel the support of others. In this book we will be covering many of the proactive tools that can help us get a leg up on the difficulty that comes can seemingly come out of nowhere in life. By having practiced these proactive skills, we can prepare for the difficulty. By having shared tools in place, others can easily learn how to jump in and support during times of difficulty. That is why it is important to have conflict navigation processes, restorative justice circles, business meetings, and one on one interactions that feel supportive and replenishing. Difficulty interactions and situations don't always have to feel draining and we're going to learn how to see the options we have available during these stressful moments.

Exploring the Shallow End of the Centered and Exhilarated Spectrums with Calm and Curious

In Part I: Relationship Tools, we introduced the TLLR Tool as the foundational tool that we will be building on. In Part II: the Centered and Exhilarated Approach, we explored how a conversation can feel quite supportive if both members are even only watching for each other's calm and curious feelings, in order to support each other as the topics become more difficult. This parasympathetic bridge between calm and curious is so important because it connects from the right ear to the left ear across the parietal ridge, allowing us to have access to the centered and exhilarated spectrums on enhanced communication abilities. They are the doorways to all the advanced learning we will be doing in this book. In a calm and curious state, we can feel more of the context behind the words during dialogue, we have more space to feel what is arising from our own inner experience, and we feel more latitude to take the time to express what we're feeling, in a way that translates as supportive to the other person's calm and curious feelings. Certainly, if we lose calm or curious, we will not likely be translating in a way that feels supportive to the other person, but that's ok too. It's fine to take turns supporting each

²⁵ Lyubomirsky, Sonja. *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want*. Penguin, 2008.

other as we learn and grow. After all, not every difficulty level is entirely manageable at the calm and curious levels, but it's a great place to start. You can think of calm and curious as the shallow end of the pool, where you don't need to dive right into the deep end right away and play with the big centered and exhilarated emotions. You can tip toe into the calm and curious area of the pool, get your feet wet, splash around, and have a fun time learning. The first tool we've learned in this area is the TLLR Tool. Remember that one? "Table it, label it, list it and revisit it"; that's the sound of a growing skillset, as we begin practicing managing the difficulty levels that can sometimes stomp out the light of our calm and curious experience. New tools will be introduced in each of the coming chapters, not only to provide more ways to splash around in the shallow end of the pool, but also to upgrade your existing tools as you learn them. By the end of the book, you'll be pretty much using the same tools you started with, but they'll be supercharged in a way that can provide buoyancy and support to most of the situations life can throw at us. For now, we will begin building on the TLLR Tool for identifying not only stress, but stress with options. In each of the upcoming chapters, as we lay the foundation for a more expansive toolset, dealing with more advanced difficulty and wading into the deeper end of the pool.

Jumping into the Deep End (with a Life Jacket) using the Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share Tool

While we're busy learning the ins and outs of navigating calm and curious during difficult topics, it can be deeply helpful to also have some context of where this practice is heading. For this reason, it is entirely practical and deeply helpful to explore and experience the deep end of the pool, even in the early stages of practice. In order to share these insights while reducing the risk for any emotional recoil, we've found a tool that can be quite helpful, similar to a life jacket. We call this tool the Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share. For starters, it helps us with the process of individuation, where we can separate from our immersion in all the world around us for just a moment, feeling into our centered and exhilarated parts and transition into a whole brain expansive experience where we feel good about our self and can think much more clearly and supportively. Wherever you are, whoever you're with, the Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share Round seems to do the trick in safely dropping a group into the deep end of the Centered and Exhilarated experience right away. We like to refer to the Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share Round as "Talking Meditation" or as "The First Orbit", because it allows participants to bring the Centered and Exhilarated experience into conversation in a reliable way, possibly for the first time in their life, as the group orbits around their own centered and exhilarated memory shares. This can be thought of as similar to the white belt in karate, useful for whenever it feels like a group of new students are curious and eager to learn about the deep end of Centered and Exhilarated Practice but don't know where to begin. You'll want to stoke the solar fires of the Centered and Exhilarated experience to burn as brightly as possible and in this manner, Orbit 1 is closest to the sun, so to speak. Here's how it works:

The Centered and Exhilarated Memory share starts by gathering two or more people together and explaining that each person gets 4 minutes to share a recent memory where the

felt both centered and exhilarated at the same time; the more recent the memory the better. That's really all there is to it, in terms of simplicity, though you'll quickly see the experience opens up many emotions in an empowered way, where deep learning about ourselves and each other starts to bubble up faster and faster. To navigate these waters, there are three important aspects to remember:

1. Anyone who wants to share gets 4 minutes²⁶, although time can vary with group size. The share is best if it is a memory from their recent or past experiences where they felt both centered and exhilarated at the same time. The more recent the more vivid the feelings will be in the person relating their memory. This revisiting of a centered and exhilarated memory brings the Centered and Exhilarated state present and becomes the start of practice for new practitioners.
2. Remind the group this is a game that is meant to be fun and playful and they don't need **give** a memory share in order to play: they can simply **receive** by listening to others' shares. This helps bring more empowerment in, to support each individual choosing what is best for themselves. In this way you can remind each member before they start by asking "would you like to be a giver and share a story, or a receiver and listen? Both are important."
3. As soon as each person shares their story, ask if they would like to be asked "the four follow-up questions". The four questions are outlined below, but before you read them to the person, be sure to remind them that they can choose to accept or decline each question. This is really important for building the exhilarated qualities of saying "no" to things just for fun. If they accept, these questions can really help in integrating the learnings that are arising from this process, including the building of neural pathways to start accessing deeper levels of our centered and exhilarated experience on our own, without relying on the Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share Round. The four questions are as follows:
 - a. (1) What part of that memory felt centering to you and (2) what part felt exhilarating to you, now that you've shared it with us?
 - b. (3) What part of you feels centered right now, in the way you felt in the memory, and (4) what part of you feels exhilarated right now, in the way you felt in the memory, now that you've share the memory with us?

The focus of the facilitator here is to let the group experience the feelings of Centered and Exhilarated that emerge, as each person feels centered and exhilarated. The orbit grows wider the more we let the feelings snowball, so if you want to experience this aspect, it is important to request that all cross-talk wait until after the full round and everyone has had a turn. It can help to have a stopwatch counting to 4 minutes for any members that are afraid they might talk too long. Most people do not want to overtalk but are not skilled at stopping talking and could easily talk for 20 minutes and we have found the stopwatch helps them to feel more relaxed and playful with the experience.

²⁶ Some people enjoy actually setting a timer on their phone as they take turns.

Advanced Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share Round (Orbit 1)

If you have time, it can be really fun to add on an advanced difficulty round, where each person tells another centered and exhilarated memory and answers the 4 questions, but this time also attempts to keep their eyes open and spot signals from the body language of the listeners, to notice the field of the We-Space ringing like the resonance of a bell, and transmitting across bodies. See if they can remember spotting a signal from each listener once their memory share has completed. This turns out to be quite difficult but a lot of fun! Many of us have never taken the time to observe how others respond to our stories while we're talking. For example, "While I was sharing I noticed Shawna gazing intently, Ellaine nodding, and Jose laughing." Even if you are already skilled in this area, it can still be good to practice observing the quality of connection and sharing the insights. Although it might be difficult at first, this is one of the early methods for building the bridge between the 4Ls (language, linear, literal, logic) of speaking with the relational connectedness to others of right brain centeredness. This skill is what we refer to as tensegrity, the ability to support the centered and exhilarated experience in yourself and others. In later stages of practice, when there is a moderate amount of trust in tensegrity that has built up, we get to begin playing with the difficulty level of the topics. Taking a phased approach in this way is what allows us to strengthen our ability to hold tensegrity in increasingly difficult topics with a minimized risk of emotional recoil. By reducing the time spent on repair and self-care from emotional recoil, we not only shorten the time it takes to integrate new skills, but playful manner in which we're learning actually shortens the time our brain takes to build the neural representations for new ideas. In the neuroscience world, this is what is referred to as "going slow to go fast".²⁷

Group Meetups in the Coffee Shop (Orbit 1)

For several years, we have been meeting in coffee shops on Sundays in order to explore our conversational tools with others. There are a couple things we've found that help to bring the Centered and Exhilarated experience to a group of strangers in any location. In other words, the coffee shop Centered and Exhilarated experience closely mirrors a Centered and Exhilarated experience with strangers at a workplace, a bus stop, or a house party, to list just a couple examples.

When there are strangers, we stay at Orbit 1, using a stopwatch. It is enjoyable to watch the eyes light up in each participant as they laugh and play, sharing centered and exhilarated memories and getting in touch with the parts of themselves that enjoy replenishing social and verbal interaction. Learning to identify when others are feeling centered and exhilarated during a Centered and Exhilarated memory share can bring up feelings of exploration. Eventually the skill becomes like second nature.

²⁷ Rock, David, and Jeffrey Schwartz. "The neuroscience of leadership." *Strategy+ business* 43 (2006).

When a group has all participated in the advanced round of Orbit 1 enough times, it might feel right to move on to Orbit 2. With the wider orbit, there is the opportunity to build more empowerment.

We have created a weekly meetup for our coffee shop shares. For information on how to join us or start your own, come visit our calendar and resources section at <http://centeredandexhilarated.org>.

Self Practice: The Alarm Clock and the Bell

Centered and Exhilarated Practice is all about strengthening our ability to hold centered and exhilarated during difficult topics, by delaying the difficult topics when they are too difficult. This works surprisingly well and often much faster than we tend to expect. As this growth in empathy builds, other side effects are also happening. By feeling more empowered, we tend to feel more exhilarated in general. This helps our minds to use the 4 Ls with parasympathetic engagement (stress-metabolizing nervous system bridging the right brain) so that we can hold and juggle up to nine variables in our head, where before we might have only been able to handle two at a time. This also helps our body reach increasingly more empowered thresholds, where some of our larger defensive patterns can feel at ease that they are not needed constantly anymore, and can become somewhat more of an option for future situations. When this happens, we can feel a sensation of energy arise and flood our body, as these neuron trunks are outmoded and no longer needed. Some of these breakthroughs can be described as kundalini awakenings. The thing to keep in mind is that we are upgrading our operating system to be more empowered, from feeling more empowered, more often.

This is where self practice can also have an important role: we can still do a lot of work in our alone time in order to increase the length of time in a day that we are feeling centered and exhilarated. This can be done with a morning meditation, a bell, and also an alarm clock throughout the day. There are likely plenty of other ways to go about it as well and we will include future exercises into future versions of this book as we learn about them. For now, here are some of the exercises we have found most useful:

Sacred Morning: The Morning Meditation

Many of my close friends still choose to wake up as the sun rises for a morning meditation. My wife has been calling this time Sacred Morning, since she lived in Burnaby, Canada, working on her Masters degree. In The Way of Vibrantly, a non-profit that we're both a part of, Sacred Mornings are a core part of our culture and morning rituals. This is a time when we can put on some gentle music, light candles, and get in touch with our gentle rhythms as we allow our bodies to our natural waking cycle. After 20 minutes or so of stretching and sipping tea during this meditation, the mind will begin a process called "selfing", where the default mode network is actually planning out "what if" scenarios to the events that may occur throughout the day. This is a perfect time to recognize if you're feeling centered and exhilarated and just make

a mental note to lock on to that feeling in your body, in order to recall it throughout the day. If you're feeling crummy, it can be just as helpful to think of a recent centered and exhilarated memory and bring that experience into the body. However you do it, the important piece here is to take that mental snapshot, so that you can revisit this place in your body again, throughout the day, if it starts slipping away. Remember that this centered and exhilarated experience actually heightens intellectual capacity, empathy, and conversation with others, so this state of being will naturally become more frequent, stick around longer, and come back sooner, until you're feeling this way 99% of your waking life. In Orbit 1, we're just taking the baby steps to get this process started.

The Bell

In college, my friends and I would strap a small gentle sounding bell to our backpacks in the morning. As we walked to school, we could hear its music reminding us to be embodied and to feel empowered in our ability to protect this space of centered and exhilarated within ourselves. The bell held another purpose too, as we would navigate throughout the day and forget ourselves. The bell's chime could be heard at unexpected times, reminding us to remember our empowered and fully engaged parasympathetic (stress-metabolizing) state of centered and exhilarated.

The 1 Hour Reflection (Alarm Clock)

This may be the most useful tool, so we're saving it for last! The goal here is to set a small tibetan bell chime as the alarm clock sound on a mobile phone, or any other sound that is soothing. Then set the alarm to go off each hour at the top of the hour. At first, this alarm can be a reminder to return to centered and exhilarated, either by remembering our state from our sacred morning meditation, or by remembering a memory where we felt both centered and exhilarated at the same time. Taking a minute for this meditation at the top of the hour can be greatly beneficial to our peace of mind and to our health. After about a week of this practice, it becomes similar to the alarm clock practice you will find in the next chapter about Orbit 2, where you will naturally be recognizing that you have stayed in centered and exhilarated longer and longer each hour. You can set your alarm clock to 30 minute increments or even 15 minutes if you like, but that will most likely be unnecessary. Before long, you will be noticing that you have not left the centered and exhilarated state for the entire hour. This leads to going complete days where you've only left the centered and exhilarated state for 10 minutes. That's about 99% of your waking life! We'll be getting there soon enough.

Empowerment - Orbit 1



It is wonderful to begin experiencing the intelligence and productivity boosts that come with feeling centered and exhilarated. As we participate in centered and exhilarated memory share circles, it is like we are boarding a small sailboat with each other, breathing into our own sails, traveling the seas and sharing adventures with each other. The more we do it, the more we feel empowered to get in touch with the parts of us that feel centered and exhilarated. This practice begins appearing in our life outside of the memory share circle as well. We'll notice the more difficult aspects of life, such as grief processing, begin to feel less difficult and even more productive at times, when we're feeling centered and exhilarated. As we build our practice, we will be able to hold the option of supporting more and more people with their own life jackets, and eventually helping them to build their own sailboats, to learn to captain their own ships (developing their own author-ship of their life), and so much more! As we move through the orbits, we'll find our capacity to hold centered and exhilarated energy for ourselves and others grows quite impervious to the higher levels of difficulty in life. In the higher levels of practice, it truly can begin to feel like you've grown your boat so large that you can hold more people onboard than you had ever thought possible.

Socrates - Our Philosopher for Orbit 1

Each orbit in this book will end with a philosopher whose life mirrors the many aspects of the related Orbit. Someone from the foundations of philosophy who was operating from a similar sphere of understanding and was able to come up with some helpful frameworks that can be applied to this orbit's level of operating. I hope that by including these tidbits, it can help to deepen your immersion with Centered and Exhilarated Practice.

For Orbit 1, it is somewhat of a no-brainer to choose Socrates. He lived in his life helping the citizens of ancient Greece understand that they already had a wisdom body within them, that knows everything they need to know. He called this wisdom body "Diemonionn"²⁸. When he would enter into connection with this wisdom body, it would give him all the advice he needed. This can now be understood from yet another perspective, one of neurobiology, that Socrates was living from a space of I/You relationship from the centered right brain, in parallel with the I/You relationship of the exhilarated left brain, which gives rise to the I/We relating of the orchestrator. Let me explain it again in a different way. As we begin to identify with our centered and exhilarated whole brain connection, we begin shifting our identification away from identifying with our thoughts and emotions (the root of suffering), yet we are staying associated with our thoughts and emotions for very helpful information. Similarly, as we spend more and more time in connection with the orchestration of our centered and exhilarated parts, we begin shifting our identification away from our centered and exhilarated parts, yet staying associated with them for helpful information. In this space of identifying with the orchestrator, it feels as if our wisdom body is floating around us, giving us all the advice we need, whenever we choose to move to a centered and exhilarated whole brain parasympathetic bridge. Some call this shift a movement from identifying with consciousness as consciousness, to identifying with awareness as awareness, in association with consciousness. In other words: the movement from Brahman to Atman. Over time, in the later orbits, we will see that even this sense of identification with Atman begins to shift toward what some have referred to as Om, the source of even awareness. But more on that later! For now, we are celebrating the contributions of Socrates, in being among the first in recorded history to proclaim within the court of a chieftom that he has a direct tap on his wisdom body. He even proclaimed in this court that he did not consider himself god, but that he had access to the wisdom of god. For this reason, they gave him the death sentence, which he politely accepted. It might have provoked them a bit that he added he considered it a great service he had done for the citizens of Greece, that he had provided them with the tool of Socratic questioning, so that they could see they already have the answers to everything within them, if they were to only continue with their self work and practice of self inquiry. They did not like hearing this one bit. But in any case, go Socrates! As we will learn in later chapters, Plato, the beloved student of Socrates, was in so much grief over Socrates' execution, that he travelled to the middle east for 12 years, spreading the message of Socrates far and wide. Surely he would have met up with the Essenes during his travels! And remember, this is all happening in the 5th century BC, 500 years before Jesus! Truly amazing!

²⁸ <http://philosophizethis.org/socrates-sophists-episode-3-transcript/>

Orbit 1 Review

Each chapter will have this box at the end of it, highlighting some of the traits and stretch goals for the current orbit. Keep in mind that a trait is anything the tends to occur 85% of the time or more. A stretch goal is what the next step would be, to turn a practice into a trait.

Orbit 1 Key Takeaways

- Centered and Exhilarated Practice is a practice of acclimation to thriving. For example, when we do the Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share, we're trying to going to the centered and exhilarated aspects of the memory in order to help our body acclimate to the feeling of thriving. This is the beginning of preparing the body to be able to take on more and more difficult topics from a space of thriving. This acclimation to thriving starts quietly perhaps but eventually leads to feeling this way 99% of the time, along with all the benefits that comes with, even during the most difficult topics and situations.

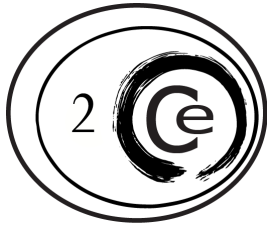
Orbit 1 Traits

- Is able to notice stress as well as whether there are options, 85% of the time. This creates a gravity towards living from this observer. When we feel something good happening 85% of the time, our body feels safe that it will continue to happen and our mind feels like it's happening all the time. This is the threshold of identification shifting away from persona-shadow to observing our Stress with Options (SWO).
- We tend to notice an experience where we feel both centered and exhilarated at the same time, perhaps up to an hour each day.
- We like the idea of win/win solutions, where both people gain something from an interaction.
- We begin having a hope that people can learn to stand up for themselves and assert constructive boundaries in a gentle way when needed. This type of support helps so that we do not need to be as vigilant in observing the shining eyes in others before offering or interacting. It allows us a little more leeway before topics or situations jump into advanced difficulty. This leeway is useful in allowing the body to relax.
- We may lose calm or curious within the first 20 minutes of conversation, even if there are no advanced difficulty topics. That's ok! It may even happen within 20 minutes of sharing a centered and exhilarated memory. That's ok too! It's all part of experiencing the observer and noticing the parts of our body that still don't know we're becoming more empowered.
- Calm and curious are good reminder words for how to return to our resting place when we feel stress.

- In general, we're experiencing feelings of centered and exhilarated about 20% of the time in our waking life. That's about 4 hours a day, or roughly 30 hours a week! That's amazing! Your practice is really moving right along!

Orbit 1 Stretch Goals (*Helpful when wanting to move the observer towards the next orbit*)

- Here we can try on the idea of replacing win/win solutions with feeling the We. This way, solutions are "felt" to be good for both parties and not just understood. This is what Martin Buber calls an I/You relationship trait.
- We can begin noticing our ability to maintain support of centered and exhilarated feelings during neutral conversation. See if you can go a full 20 minutes!
- Next time you're looking for the words to remember how to return to your resting place, instead of thinking Calm and Curious, try thinking of the words Exploring and Carefree Alertness.
- See if you can experience feelings of centered and exhilarated about 50% of the time in your waking life. That translates to losing calm or curious (or both) roughly 8 hours a day, on average, or roughly 50 hours a week.



Orbit 2 - Right Discernment

Orbit 2 is a threshold in the mapping of neural pathways that occurs when living from a centered and exhilarated experience more than 50% of the time. This chapter introduces tools to help you get there.

How to Explain Centered and Exhilarated Practice to Others

If you've made it this far into the book, you're likely enjoying what's becoming of you and how these changes are reflected in the world around you. You may even be attempting to share your experiences with others, only to realize how difficult it is to explain Centered and Exhilarated Practice. At the most basic level, you're strengthening both sides of the brain, which do separate functions, in a way that links them together in order to develop coherence between the left-brain exhilarated observer and the centered right-brain observer, culminating in the arising of yet another observer, called... the orchestrator observer. Complex right?! Well, here's the simplest way I've found to explain it:

Easy Explanation

"A Harvard study from 2008 suggests that people are 31% more productive and intelligent when they feel good about themselves. It just so happens that the centered spectrum of feelings maps to the right side of the brain and the exhilarated feelings map to the left side of the brain. By bringing up a centered and exhilarated memory in a group, you're reverse engineering the brain to feel good about yourself. You're also spending an hour or more with others who are feeling good about themselves, which allows our mirror neuron systems to receive community level healing. This also helps develop empathy and discernment so that we can feel centered and exhilarated during even the most difficult topics of conversation. This self empowerment grows simply by switching the topic of conversation to something more fun when someone loses calm or curious."

That's about it. You can even leave off the second part, about tabling difficult topics, if the person is already getting overwhelmed with the first half of the explanation. Alright, now that we've got that out of the way, on to the group practice exercise for Orbit 2!

The Orbit 2 Circle (Group Practice)

In Orbit 1, a centered and exhilarated memory is shared to help a group arrive at centered and exhilarated. In Orbit 2, we will explore group dialogue scenarios that maintain

centered and exhilarated through use of the TLLR Tool (**T**able it, **L**abel it, **L**ist it, and **R**evisit it). The key ingredients are as follows:

1. **A Centered and Exhilarated Practice Circle.** This is a circle where you can gather to experience the centered and exhilarated container with others, while discussing any topics that arise in dialogue. Weekly circles are a great cadence noticeably builds skill in practicing Centered and Exhilarated. Just remember to keep the attendance optional so that participants can exercise choice. Mandatory attendance does not go over very well. If you are living in an intentional community or wanting to bring inclusivity practices to your workplace, this is a great way to do so, while doubling as a space for everyone to catch up on each other's lives. I prefer to join in Centered and Exhilarated Practice circles on a Monday at my workplace, so we can all talk about our weekends. Then I like to join in Centered and Exhilarated Practice circles on a Friday with my friends, so we can all talk about how the week has gone. That's just what I seem to like and everyone will have their own preferences. Next we'll go into the important steps for successfully holding a centered and exhilarated container, even for those who have not participated before.
2. **Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share Round** - You'll want to start with a short Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share round to help everyone arrive at centered and exhilarated in the room (even those who come late can do a quick Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share Round before jumping in with everyone). Just like in Orbit 1, there are givers and receivers. Both roles are equally important and not everyone needs to share for the circle to be successful. There is no need to ask the four follow-up questions if the person has already hinted at which aspects of the story were centered or exhilarated and if they're clearly feeling it now. If you're not sure though, it can be helpful to ask those questions. More often than not, when I've skipped those questions out of uncertainty, it's come up as feedback after the second alarm that the person didn't really feel very centered and exhilarated during the memory share in the opening round, which could have been addressed at the time by simply asking those four questions, which really do the trick. When in doubt, you too may find it's better to have just asked the four questions.
3. **A Phone Alarm** - You'll want to set a phone alarm to go off every 20 minutes with a nice tibetan bowl sound, or something soothing to evoke a moment of mindful reflection. Let the group know that each time the alarm goes off, everyone will be taking a couple breaths to revisit the centered and exhilarated memory that was shared in the opening round. After the third alarm (60 minutes) the circle can come to a close. For the receivers who didn't share a memory, they can revisit any centered and exhilarated emotions that they felt when listening to others share. see if you can return to the high levels of centered and exhilarated that you felt when you shared the memory. Participants will find it fun during these alarms to observe how much they've left centered and exhilarated during neutral topics or how much they've been able to retain it, as well as how it feels to bump it back up to full centered and exhilarated. This is how each participant develops the skills of calibrating the experience of centered and exhilarated in their body, in their own unique way.

4. The **Centered and Exhilarated TLLR Tool** (Table it, Label it, List it, Revisit it; with thriving defined as centered and exhilarated) - Now individuals can practice identifying stressful topics and choosing to table them, to support the centered and exhilarated in each other. This is where the wider orbit of Orbit 2 becomes very empowering, furthering trust in the discernment of mutual support, and relaxing into a deeper and broader centeredness. When we introduced the TLLR Tool in Part 1 of this book, the idea was to return to the feeling of thriving. Since then, we've elaborated on what thriving could feel like, bringing in a full centered and exhilarated experience. This tool really helps the group prioritize keeping the centered and exhilarated experience of the container. This will mean the group will typically choose to stay on neutral topics or fun topics, while learning to use the TLLR Tool to table any difficult topics before the group loses centered and exhilarated. If the group loses centered and exhilarated, that's ok too. It's an opportunity to see how the group chooses to proceed, most likely by finding another topic that's easier to discuss. There's not much to fear because the alarm clock will typically ring to save the day!
5. The **Centered and Exhilarated Canary** - It can also be helpful, at the beginning of an Orbit 2 dialogue, to ask if anyone wants to practice being Centered and Exhilarated Canary. The canary role is someone who notices when a group might be losing the centered and exhilarated experience of the container, before it happens. A way to do this is with the following sentence: "As the Centered and Exhilarated Canary, I'm noticing this might be a difficult topic." At that point, the group can assess if it is a difficult topic for someone. If so, the individual can change the focus toward how they wish to proceed with the difficult topic. It is also easy to lose centered and exhilarated in the beginning if a lot of new information is being relayed while someone in the group doesn't have a system of understanding already in place for that topic. For example, if someone was learning about car mechanics for the first time, or music theory, or astrophysics, and they didn't have a base for integrating the new knowledge, they might be rapidly burning calories in order to build neural representations in their brain. They might quickly hit mental fatigue (sometimes called cognitive load) or just become hungry and need food . In all cases, the canary is getting great practice in discernment and awareness for group centered and exhilarated We-space. In this way, the Centered and Exhilarated Canary is learning to sense tensegrity, which is the trust a group has for each member to be able to support themselves and each other during difficult topics.

At the Workplace

Orbit 2 practice is a very effective practice in the workplace. You can call for a Centered and Exhilarated Practice Circle on the first day of the work week, as a chance for members to catch-up with each other. You can call it the Centered and Exhilarated Catchup Circle, since that tends to make more sense in terms of its purpose. As each co-worker arrives and sits down, you each share a story of a centered and exhilarated moment from your weekend, or previous week, if the weekend was rough. Sometimes people might not have centered and exhilarated memories and that is a perfect time to remind the group that it is important to have givers who

share the memory and receivers who listen; both roles equally help create the culture we want to see. You then set the stopwatch on the phone to go off every 20 minutes for that important moment of silence where everyone feels the centered and exhilarated feelings from their memory. And that's it! The meeting can go for an hour to an hour and a half typically, depending on how many memory shares there were in the opening round. Doing this once a week at the start of the week is more than enough to bring the workplace culture moving squarely towards the strong egalitarian work ethic of a Ceocratic organization. This will be covered more in Part IV.

With a Relationship Partner

It is common in relationships for couples to catch up with each other when they haven't seen each other for a while. Some couples do this each week as a check-in. In *The Seven Principles for Making a Marriage Work*, Dr. John Gottman refers to this as the process of sharing Love Maps²⁹. This is a fun and easy way to inform each other about what is new in each other's lives, with a focus on even the small stuff. After all, for the most part, we tend to change in small ways over time. In *Centered and Exhilarated*, a great orbit 2 tool is to kick off your weekly relationship check-in with first sharing a memory of when you were most centered and exhilarated. This helps both partners settle in to listen from a more expansive place. More connecting can happen in this way and more nuances can be teased out and discussed from each other's stories.

Right Discernment (Self Practice)

Right action is a term we use for any actions we take that arise from having true discernment. Knowing if a topic is too difficult to be able to stay calm and curious is one form of discernment. It's kind of a big deal, because calm and curious is the ground floor for being able to communicate with our mirror neuron systems. We have an acronym for R.I.G.H.T. Discernment that can break the discernment process into chunks, to help think through the difficulty that arises in life, so that we can move from a space of right action more often, for longer periods of time, and to return to right action more quickly when we've fallen off our path.

R.I.G.H.T. Discernment is an acronym of questions to ask. It stands for: **R**esourced, **I**nvested, **G**ood, **H**ealing, and **T**itrating. Each of these words are actually a prompt for a question. If the answer to any of these questions is "no", that is a signal that we're already in an advanced difficulty level and maybe it's time to consider our options. Here are the details and context for each question:

Resourced - Am I resourced? Are they resourced? This the ground floor of the centered and exhilarated spectrum. Am I at least calm and curious? Are they at least calm and curious? If no

²⁹ Gottman, John Mordechai, and Nan Silver. *The seven principles for making marriage work: A practical guide from the country's foremost relationship expert*. Harmony, 2015.

to either of these questions, it is probably time to change the topic for a bit, since conversations are rarely productive when one member isn't curious. And if they aren't calm, there's a risk that introducing more ideas and concepts will add to their feelings of overwhelm, and to you as well if you are mirror-neuronning them.

Invested - Am I already invested in this situation? Are they invested in this situation?

Sometimes we can enter into less than ideal situations because it is our day-job and we are receiving a paycheck, so the investment in the conversation might be worth the paycheck at the end of the pay period. Or perhaps you're speaking with someone who is family or someone you care about deeply and are deeply invested in? This is just an additional piece of data. If you are invested, than it might make sense sometimes to bite off more than you can chew. If you're not invested, it becomes a much easier decision to walk away, if you're feeling under-resourced. Sometimes we just forget to ask the question of whether we're even invested.

Examples of Invested include:

- Getting your PhD - When we're investing in something that is very time consuming, such as getting a PhD, we may not have much free time left over to partake in events where we can feel the We in each other, such as community healing circles. Since we know we are Invested, we can reconcile in our mind at least, why it is worth it in the long run, perhaps to temporarily forgo some of the other aspects of discernment, such as community level Healing.

Good - Do they want what's good for me? Do I want what's good for them? Can they demonstrate a pattern of success in redirecting us toward topics that are healing and empowering? Or does it seem like they're careless about what's going on with other people and merely expect others to speak up if they're not having fun? Or worse yet: if they're feeling miserable? Some people may not even notice if you're feeling miserable within a conversation with them. So you can see why it's good to even ask the question, are they demonstrating success in keeping things **good** for both parties? Once this skill is practiced, it can quickly turn towards keeping things good for the We.

Healing - Is this healing our deep need for centered and exhilarated group connection? The part of us that evolved in groups to become the humans we are today? Will this situation have that type of healing for me? How about for them?

Tensegrity - Tensegrity is the concept of having a sturdy system of support if stress is applied. The questions to ask here are: If they lose calm and curious from an advanced difficulty topic, will I be able to support them by holding centered and exhilarated? If I lose calm and curious on a topic and can't find my way back, will they be able to support me by holding centered and exhilarated? In this situation, are they able to moderate difficulty levels to prevent losing support to begin with? In this situation, am I even able to moderate the difficulty level for myself? Once we've lost the exhilarated spectrum, we've also lost the ability to be aware of whether we're titrating or moderating the difficulty levels. This is an opportunity to consider changing the topic or activity, so that we can begin titrating again.

Once each of these questions have been asked, the next action you take will be right action, because it will be made with a greater awareness of the choice you're taking. In this way, the more often you return to right action, the more you are accessing that part of your life experience and building on your hopes, plans, and dreams for a better future.

Moderate Difficulty Levels are our Dojo

In the introduction to this book, we spoke about being able to table a topic if the difficulty level is too advanced. This can be thought of as a responsive approach to difficulty, using the TLLR Tool. The more proactive approach to moderating the difficulty level be thought of as using discernment. When we lose our ability to be calm and curious, we can no longer feel our felt sense of truth and we're waiting for our neurons in our brain that we've been cultivating to remind us that something is wrong. As our brain grows in its ability to recognize that something is off and that we're normally feeling more expansive and replenished, it will help us snap back into calm and curious, so that we can begin thinking more creatively and constructively.

So if Centered and Exhilarated is practiced during times of difficulty, in order to build our strength to handle more difficult topics, but we can't practice during advanced difficulty levels, then when can we practice? Well, we can practice during moderate difficulty levels. In the Merriam Webster Dictionary, the word moderate is defined as: "observing reasonable limits, not severe or intense, limited in scope or effect". It is the moderate difficulty level then that is our dojo. This is where we can begin building the neural pathways to help us accelerate to higher skill levels. The word Gong in Gong Fu literally translates to a high ability of skill that was cultivated through practice. We are developing a high level of skill at moderating the difficulty level, by using proactive approaches such as discernment, but also the reactive approaches, such as the TLLR Tool. With these two tools, we can climb to the highest ranks of our ability in moderating difficulty levels, in part because what was once an advanced difficulty topic quickly becomes child's play. It's not that we get better at solving problems so much as the problems seem to go away as we become more effective at moderating and yet less attached to outcomes. The higher we move up the orbits, the more our identity expands in our whole brain connectedness to the point where we are naturally practicing the inherent non-attachment of living from a healthy ego.

Discernment in the Centered and Exhilarated Practice Purpose Statement

A purpose statement can help organizations align their processes, so that everyone is rowing in the same direction. It can also help decide outcomes of disputes, in the case that someone's actions are destructive to the established purpose of the organization. In intentional communities, the purpose statement can be an invaluable anchor for the conflict resolution process.

The purpose of Centered and Exhilarated is in many ways simply the two-fold path of the supportive masculine: "(1) Cultivating a mutually supportive environment using the tools of

discernment in order to begin (2) strengthening our capacity for holding centered and exhilarated support (divine feminine) in all difficulty levels of topics.”

In the case of interpersonal communication tools, it is likewise important to understand the direction the tool is intended to help you head in. This purpose can also help shine a light on situations that might be destructive to the intended outcome.

The Importance of Keeping Exhilarated Slightly Higher Than Centeredness

One such situation is the traditional ideal of trying to keep your knowingness in a stressful situation. When you try to keep your knowingness, what you're doing is you're building and strengthening neural pathways to the idea that you are deserving of love. This concept that you are deserving of love can arise from centeredness (which opens access to divine feminine and goddess energy), or can arise as a memory from having spent enough time in centeredness to firmly establish a neural mapping that you are always deserving of love.

Because of the prevailing societal culture at this time, it seems very counterintuitive to say this, but this can actually interfere with making progress along the purpose of Centered and Exhilarated for two reasons.

Reason one: when you over-strengthen your knowingness in stressful situations, out of balance with your empowered exhilarating spectrum of discernment, you end up feeling like you can handle the heat, but you haven't exercised discernment to realize why the stressful topic is actually a bid for connection and how to use divine masculine tools to help support the topic to alchemize into the centered and exhilarated topic that it really wants to be. As you get better at this, you end up feeling success which reinforces going to knowingness as a successful skill instead of going first to discernment of where this person is coming from and why they're orbiting on disempowering topics. They want help and commiserating seems like their only tool for connection which misses the opportunity to build trust in co-creating a centered and exhilarated platform for discussing the topic. That's the first reason.

Reason Two: The second reason is that it creates neural pathways to avoid discernment because it uses the left brain's 4 Ls which can feel like they're making the task so much more difficult when they are not exhilarated, which is often the case if you're just trying to recover your knowingness and potentially keep it. You're actually building pathways to suppress your discernment. Wow, right?! It's so remarkable to first observe this happening. It's so empowering to realize that discernment can come first in this process, which in itself becomes imbued with the characteristics of knowingness, to where you don't start losing your knowingness to begin with. You're More so trying to figure out how to say the topic back to the person in a way that helps them remember their discernment and knowingness. If that becomes too much if a struggle and you're starting to lose centered and exhilarated, politely rescheduling the meeting can be a very supportive option for both parties. Then you can return to your knowingness in a safe space instead of building the pathways of submission that arise with rekindling knowingness in a stressful situation of adversity.

If we revisit the purpose statement of Centered and Exhilarated, we can see that at the end of the day, this is really a practice of remapping our centered brains to not only value or left brain, but to prefer bringing it in, for all the additional growth and safety that can come from discernment. That purpose statement again is:

“Cultivating a mutually supportive environment using the tools of discernment in order to begin strengthening our capacity for holding centered and exhilarated support (divine feminine) in all difficulty levels of topics.”

Ego and Egotism (aka Healthy Ego and Difficulty Ego)

It's important to compare ego and egotism, since the two often get confused. In the beginning, Ego is our identity, where our inspiration and motivation arises. Our personal strengths come from our ego and they are what help us through difficult situations. Over time, we learn to use our ego as a toolkit of strengths that make life better when applied in the right situation. We also learn that our ego has weaknesses, where we might be applying our “strengths” in the wrong situation or in controlling ways. When we are stressed and we lose centeredness we might misread the situation, as we lose centeredness, and instead begin identifying with our thoughts and emotions. Now we are no longer in control of our ego, because we are no longer identifying with our true self (the source of our centeredness). We are purely identifying with thoughts and emotions in egotism, instead of associating to them and getting helpful info from them to read the situation. In Egotism, our ego has become our identity and it is controlling us and limiting our options. From this point, our thoughts and emotions can have their own thoughts and emotions, which is referred to as persona-shadow in ego-development terms. In this way, our sense of identity becomes caged in ever smaller boxes. In such a state, how can we reach our highest ideals?

The ego is amazing and helpful when we are centered, because that is when we are identifying with more than just our thoughts and emotions: we are identifying with feelings, with inner context, with parasympathetic rapport between the beings near us, and so on. As ego-development unfolds, we eventually are identifying with consciousness itself, and beyond that, with pure awareness. Just remember, the ego is not the problem, it's our point of awareness/identity that creates the issues. In reality, when we feel egotistical, so often it is simply because we notice our strengths, skills, and superpowers are being misused and getting in the way. We might not know how to return to a more helpful state. Sometimes we may want to control the situation in order to make it possible to be able to use our strengths, skills, and super powers. This is where good intentions instead are coming from a place of lost centeredness. This is where we can feel “egotistical” and this is where egotism gets a bad rap.

It is fine to take natural pride in our strengths because they are our unique way of solving problems and helping bring joy to the world around us. It is also true that we might become over-reliant on our strengths at times. When this happens, begin by asking yourself any of these questions:

“What is the skill or quality about myself that is usually a great strength of mine, that is perhaps being mis-applied in this particular situation?”

“How is my strength sometimes also my weakness?”

The following list is for you to return to and jot down your thoughts when you might feel you’re being egotistical. This helps reframe the word “egotistical” into celebrating an important part of you.

Superpower	How it Serves Me	When It Doesn't Serve Me	Next Steps
Example: Being Critical	Helps me make great music.	Difficult to appreciate my friend's music as much as I'd like to.	Notice when it's good to be critical and when I don't need to be. Separate the carefree artist from the ruthless editor, both are important.

Empowership - Orbit 2



Our ship has become quite an egalitarian sailboat. As we practice feeling the We with others, maintaining centered and exhilarated during neutral conversation topics, we are helping each other to all become equal captains of the ship that we're sailing in together. We can typically hold the We in a small circle at this point. Our sailboat can now hold around 8 - 10 people. We have the skills we need to create the Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share Circle and we can set sail with others whenever we like. In the upcoming orbits, we'll find our ship growing much larger in size, fitting many more passengers onboard. We'll also improve our ability to help others learn the egalitarian ways of captaining in a shared sea-going vessel!

Plato - Our Philosopher for Orbit 2

Just as Socrates was our philosopher for Orbit 1, so is his student, Plato, our philosopher for Orbit 2. Socrates was executed in the court of Athens, 500 years before Jesus walked the earth, for confessing that he had a connection to god, which was a wisdom body within him, that floated around him, named "Diemonionn", that gave him all the advice he needed. He spent his life developing the technique of Socratic questioning, whereby he could show the citizens of Athens that they too had access to their god/wisdom body and could have all the advice they need already within them, if they just continued on the path of self inquiry. Upon his death, Plato travelled for 12 years, spreading the ideas of Socrates far and wide throughout the middle east,

and developing some amazing ideas of his own. The ideas presented in this section can all be found in Stephen West's renowned podcast, Philosophize This!³⁰.

Platonic Love

Among his many incredible ideas is the idea of Platonic love, which he saw as the highest form of love, where you were so complete in your relation to the god-body and wisdom body within you, that there was no codependency on outside objects (external alchemy) or others in order to meet your needs for self-love. He viewed this as arriving later on the spectrum of romantic love and enhancing the romantic love, so that you could still enjoy the romance, while being complete unto yourself and unreliant on romantic love for the fulfillment of any of your self-needs.

Aristocracy and Utopia

Plato wrote a whole book depicting an ideal government to help govern from our wisdom bodies, as what he termed Guardians. The highest form of this government he referred to as an aristocracy, whereby the children are raised to live from a place of self-love and reason, in order to have access to their wisdom bodies. As they grew to adulthood, the child among these who displayed this highest acument for leadership and governing was then selected as the Guardian, to lead the citizens, similar to a ruler, but ruling from the We. Keep in mind men and women were seen as having equal rights in this society, which was an unprecedented belief back then, so it could either be a male-bodied ruler or female-bodied, or androgynous (seen as the third sex back then) who could become ruler some day. Plato spelled out the warnings, to notice when the government is falling apart, due to choosing a ruler who was not ruling from the We (their wisdom body, with self-love and reason). The aristocracy could be seen to be slipping away through the following hierarchical fashion: Aristocracy, Timocracy, Oligarchy, Democracy and Tyranny. Stephen West explains this best in his podcast, cited above, so let's hear how he explains this process: "The aristocracy is the best form of government and devolves into a Timocracy when someone misjudges who a good candidate for the guardian position would be...so instead of getting someone who's completely removed from their own ego and rational, you get someone who may still be incredibly smart and rational, but their main driving force is not the acquisition of knowledge...its the acquisition of honor. still pretty noble, but not as noble as knowledge. also known as a military dictatorship. This love of conquest causes them to allow themselves to own property. Usually through military conquest right? and this was actually the system of government in Sparta...Then the Timocracy devolves into the oligarchy. uh and Plato saw that happening because as the desire for honor comes into play... doing something in one's self interest always keeps going and doing things in desire of money is the next logical step... the people in power want to protect their financial interests so they make it a rich ruling the poor sort of dynamic and that's what an oligarchy is...they still have some morals, they're thrifty, but only for the cause of saving money, not being wise or for the benefit of the city necessarily... the people in the oligarchy admire power and money, so they put the rich in office and despise the poor...this form of government is destined to fail because eventually class warfare will erupt and the rich will be against the poor and there will always be more poor than rich...so then what

³⁰ <https://philosophizethis.org/plato-episode-4-transcript/>

inevitably happens is the poor revolt and the oligarchy devolves into a democracy, or a society ruled by the masses...uh...in a democracy, freedom is seen as the supreme good...and back in Plato's time people in a democracy were seen as self indulgent, focused on immediate gratification, of food, sex and other short term pleasures and he saw the democratic state, as an undisciplined pandemonium. when freedom is the most important tenant of society, eventually, Plato thought, through policy dictated by the masses laws cease to exist and then democracy devolves into a tyranny where there's still all the self-indulgence of democracy, but then there are no laws either...society is in chaos... and then a tyrant seizes power”.

Orbit 2 Key Takeaways

Each chapter will have this box at the end of it, highlighting some of the traits and stretch goals for the current orbit. Keep in mind that a trait is anything the tends to occur 85% of the time or more. A stretch goal is what the next step would be, to turn a practice into a trait.

Discernment

- In situations or topics that are **moderate difficulty**, if we bypass our discernment and go straight to our knowingness, we are exponentially building secure neural pathways to avoid using discernment in the future. If we're successfully in our knowingness bringing us replenishment and self-care without using discernment:
 - We've looped in a dopamine and serotonin rewards for going straight to our knowingness, as well as possibly endorphins and oxytocin, depending on the situation.
 - We've built neural pathways that lead away from our discernment as the first action. The existing pathways that led towards discernment as the first action begin to fall away, because they're not firing together, so they're not wiring together and surviving together.
 - We've missed the opportunity to build positive neural pathways, including dopamine and serotonin rewards, when we see how well the situation plays out using discernment.
- It is not possible to build discernment pathways during **advanced difficulty**, because when we lose calm and curious, we lose our centered and exhilarated parasympathetic bridge. So it is really only in situations of moderate difficulty that we can even begin building and strengthening our discernment pathways.

Thriving

- Higher percentages of thriving actually don't come from being better able to solve problems. It is more true that the problems begin disappearing, exponentially so, when we choose to thrive. This is because we are resetting our neural pathways through centeredness and preparing the parasympathetic nervous system for difficult situations through exhilarating discernment. When we do this, what used to be a problem more often simply is no longer even a problem. In short, our lives become less problematic,

not because we're persevering through more problems, but because the problems are just becoming less problematic.

Orbit 2 Traits

- Win/win solutions are no longer the ideal. Now the ideal is feeling the We, so that solutions are "felt" to be good for both parties and not just understood as win/win. This is what Martin Buber calls an I/You relationship trait.
- Ability to maintain support of centered and exhilarated feelings during neutral conversation.
- Exploring and Carefree Alertness become helpful words to return to, when losing calm and curious.
- Feelings of Centered and Exhilarated are happening 50% of the time in one's waking life. Losing calm and curious happens roughly 8 hours a day, on average, or roughly 50 hours a week.

Stretch Goals for the Next Orbit

- If you're wanting to move towards the next orbit, try practicing a concept we call Centered I/You and Exhilarated I/You. In orbit 2 we have cultivated the ability for our centered right brain to feel the We and our exhilarated left brain to notice when it is losing exhilaration. Now try splitting your focus on both sides of your brain to support both the We as well as the shining eyes of your conversation partner. When we send them empathy we support the We from our centered right brain. This is a feeling in our body. We call this a centered I/You relationship, where the I of your observer can feel the I of their observer. Now we're going to add in the Exhilarated I/You relationship, where you support their exhilaration using the 4 Ls of your left brain (language, literal, linear, lists), so that there are multiple aspects of supporting the We. Over time, both parties can begin building trust that each other wants what is good for each other and knows how to tell if an advanced difficulty topic is emerging before it's too late. As both parties learn to do this for each other, it becomes like a gyroscope, supporting the We with tension from multiple sources, so that the structural integrity is more sound. We refer to this type of gyroscopic mutual support as Tensegrity.
- How is your ability to maintain support of centered and exhilarated feelings during topics of frustration in conversation? Try journaling about what you notice happens during topics of frustration.
- The Embodied and Mindful Observers are great for returning to your resting place, during stress. From there, you can begin entering into your Stress with Options observer and the Right Discernment Observer. Try using the Embodied and Mindful Observers as your return words when losing calm and curious.
- In Orbit 2 we learn how to apply right discernment to differentiate and understand situations or relationships that are not replenishing. This awareness leads to right action, where we can set constructive boundaries with others in order to be around others in ways that do not generate resentment. Try journaling about the actions that

arise after moving from a space of Right Discernment during advanced difficulty. Also, try journaling about the actions you notice yourself taking as you apply Right Discernment more often in your life. This leads to Right Action.

- In Orbit 3, feelings of Centered and Exhilarated are happening 85% of the time in one's waking life. This means losing calm and curious for less than 2.5 hours a day, on average, or roughly 15 hours a week. Try noticing where you're at and seeing if you can bridge that gap.

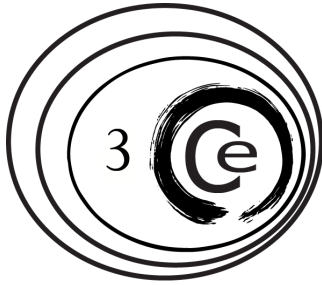
The Orchestrator Orbits

Identity Slowly Shifts from Centered and Exhilarated Observers to the Orchestrator Observer

Orbit 3: Internal Alchemy (85%)

Orbit 4: Insight

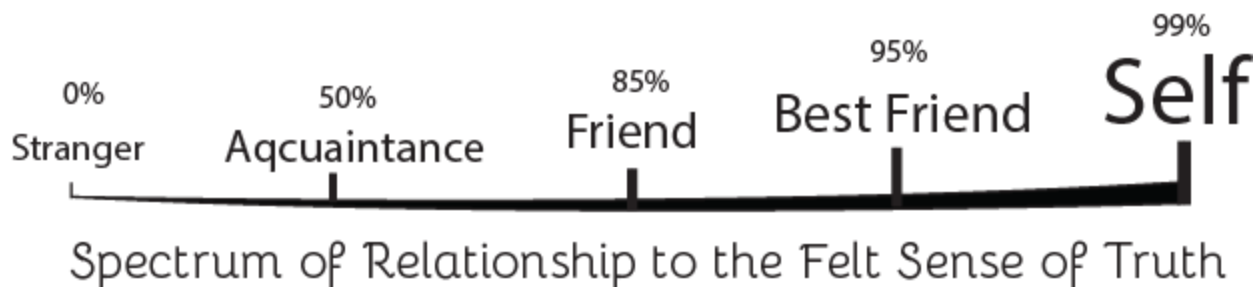
Orbit 5: Supportive Environment



Internal Alchemy (Orbit 3)

Orbit 3 is a threshold in the mapping of neural pathways that occurs when living from a centered and exhilarated experience more than 85% of the time. This chapter introduces tools to help you get there

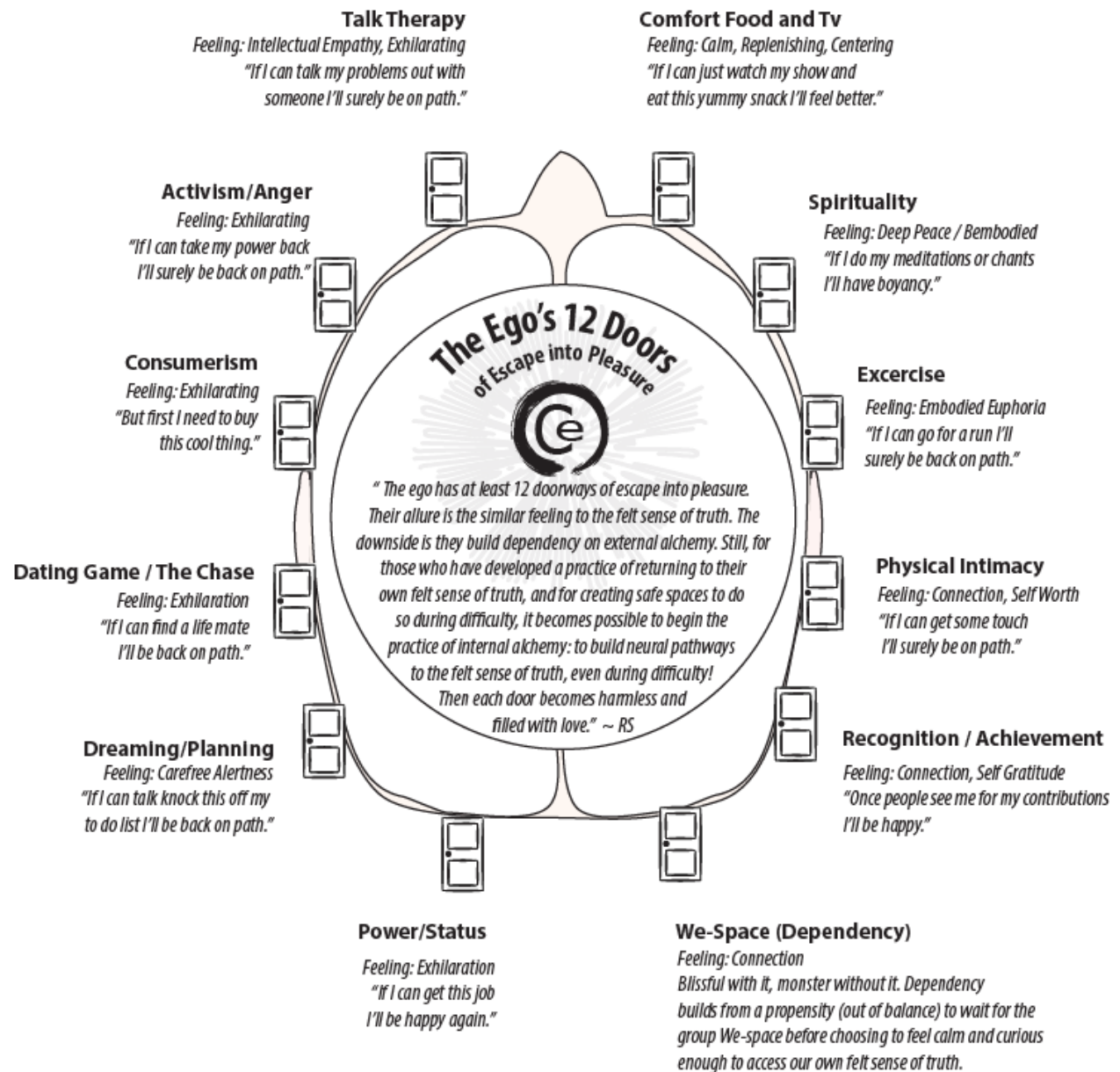
Before beginning this journey of Centered and Exhilarated, we may have even been complete strangers to the feelings that arise when we live from a fully centered and exhilarated state. These feelings we experience have many words. Sometimes we might refer to them as the felt experience of inspiration. Other times we might use the term: buoyancy. For the sake of explaining this next concept, I'm going to temporarily refer to these feelings as the felt sense of truth. This chapter, Orbit 3, explains the next set of tools that can help us, once we're living from the felt sense of truth, 85% of our waking life. We have moved from being strangers with the felt sense, to acquaintances in Orbit 2, and now to having a solid friendship.



Internal Alchemy

While there are many ways of arriving at the felt sense of truth, not all of them are helpful during periods of difficulty. The path of arriving at the felt sense of truth using the neural pathways of feeling centered and exhilarated also help to leave breadcrumbs back to our felt sense of truth for when times get difficult. This can help us to stay in difficult situations for much longer without losing the felt sense of truth. It also helps us to begin the path of internal alchemy: the beginning of building neural pathways to the felt sense of truth during times of difficulty. Without internal alchemy, we cannot learn to source from the felt sense of truth for longer than 5 minutes during moderate stress. And in the presence of others who are feeling

moderate stress, our mirror neuron system will gravitate towards their stress, because that is what it evolved to do. Internal alchemy builds new neural pathways to continue accessing the felt sense of truth during times of difficulty. Once we have mastered internal alchemy, there is no longer a need to nonconsensually rescue someone from their stress. We can instead learn to be a support, feeling centered and exhilarated, for hours even, if we have built the trust with them that they will not outright attack us, physically or emotionally. The attacks can make things harder but even that level can be mastered (at Orbit 4, when feeling the felt sense of truth 95% of the time). In the meantime, here are the traps and pitfalls to be aware of. Together they are known as The Ego's 12 Doors of Escape into Pleasure:



The Orchestrator Observer

The practice of postponing difficult topics during conversation has very additive effects over time. These effects are passive experiences that arise from all the wonderful active work you've been doing. A new observer is also developing, underneath the Centered and Exhilarated Observer that you've been cultivating. This is the Orchestrator. It got that name because it is the observer that orchestrates all the complexity and coherence of parts moving between the alternating currents of the centered and exhilarated observers. This Orchestrator Observer is an unconscious experience at first. Over time, your awareness of this experience will become more conscious and the body is able to relax and surrender more during your daily life. As this happens, a deep sense of empowerment begins to overtake the sensation of difficulty, as stressful topics start to seem more like playthings when they emerge. Each new stressful topic becomes a sort of opportunity to calibrate our centered and exhilarated feelings and identify if the difficult topic needs to be tabled, or if you want to dip into the initial layers of the topic, while noticing that you're maintaining a centered and exhilarated experience. At this point, several new understandings begin to emerge, almost simultaneously. This seemingly basic practice has somehow effectively led to being able to feel centeredness more often. Even if we only had 15 minutes a week to practice Centered and Exhilarated in the past, there are four things happening here that are bringing in exponentially higher levels of centered and exhilarated. This is why anyone can practice Centered and Exhilarated, even if they only have 5 minutes. The three aspects of the Orchestrator Observer that are magically bringing in more felt sense of truth for us are Internal Alchemy (Orbit 3), Supporting the Shining Eyes (Orbit 4), and Creating a Supportive Environment (Orbit 5). In the first two orbits, Talking Meditation (Orbit 1) and Right Discernment (Orbit 2), we have tools that can help us when we're in a panic and we can't remember how to find our felt sense of truth. By thinking "calm and curious" we can remember we have options during stress and we can use right discernment. This helps us to remember how to begin feeling those observers and moving along the path of returning to our resting place. Similarly, we can also think of this practice as raising our vibration, as the alternating current in our left and right hemispheres is increasing in our ability to feel fast and slow at the same time. The experience of a raised vibration feels like even deeper feelings of the centered slowness of our right brain, paired with the even faster more empowered feelings of the intelligence of our exhilarated left brain. Now that our identification can begin shifting to the orchestrator, these vibrations will continue to raise up! I hope this can be a really helpful way of remembering the next three orbits, and also that a little effort can yield big results. Let's get into how it works.

Internal Alchemy and Right Action

The longer we feel centered, the longer we are able to remember our path in this life. The more often we return to centered, the more often we are able to build on plans from a centered and inspired space. The more we act on plans built from this space, the more we become in touch with our inspiration. Any action we take from our discernment and inspiration can be thought of as right action. It all leads to greater levels of thriving in your life for the same amount of practice. The idea of right action was known as samyak-karmanta in early Buddhism,

the fourth aspect of the eight-spoked dharma wheel³¹. This ancient experience is all about aligning and cultivating our actions through the wholesomeness within ourselves. By doing this, a greater sense of wholesomeness can be felt. The cycle continues in this way to bring nourishment into our lives.

Keep in mind, simply doing what is fun doesn't necessarily mean you're on your path. For an example, an escape could be fun, like drugs or video games. You might not feel exhilarated at all when you're addicted to something, but you might be having fun. To be sure if something is on path, check to see if it feels both centering and exhilarating; not just fun.

Insight and Supporting the Shining Eyes

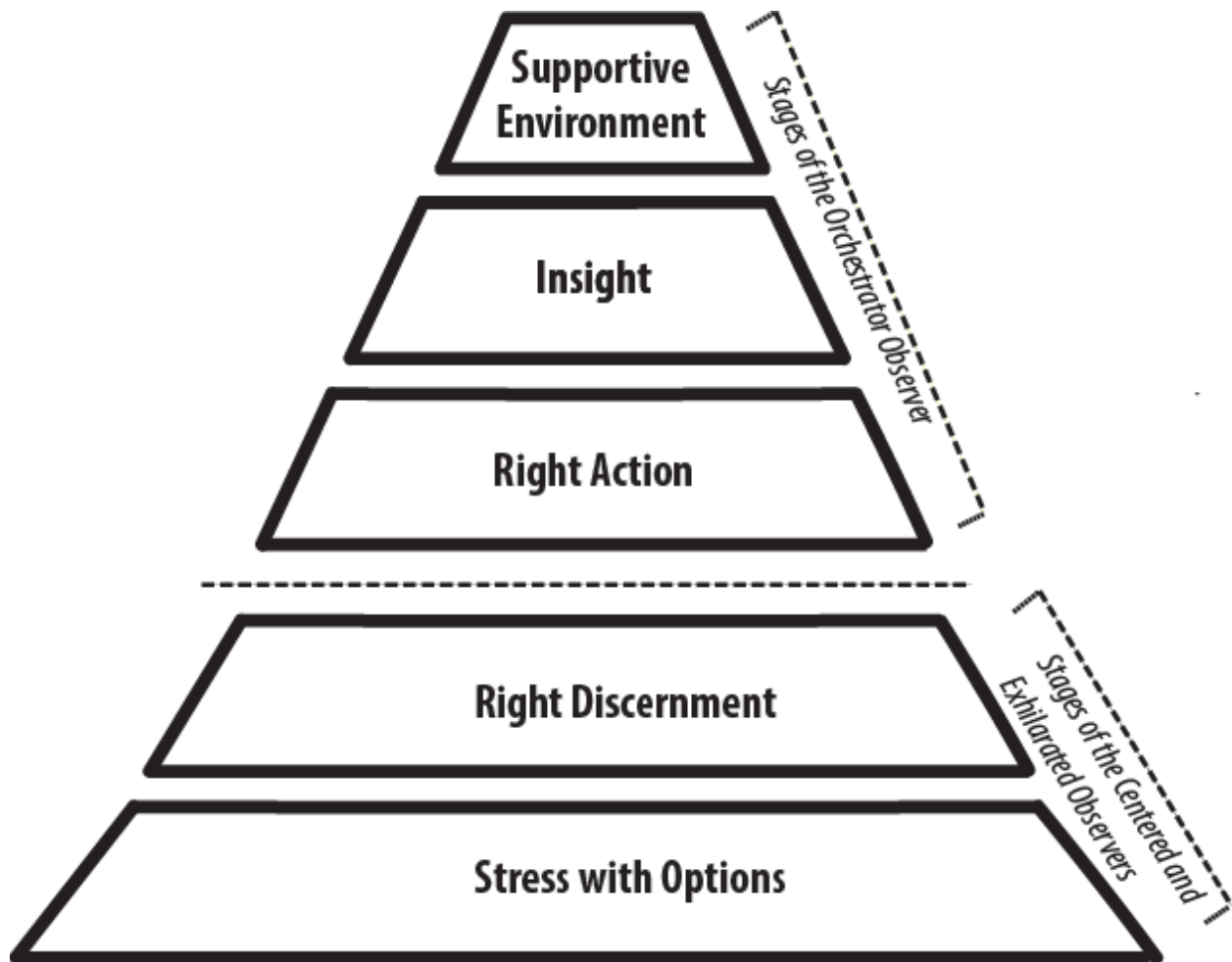
As we navigate social interaction from this space of right action (Orbit 3) and right discernment (Orbit 2), we start picking up on all sorts of signals during conversations around what topics are most centering and exhilarating for our conversation partners. Little micro-expressions happen, like when a person looks up and smiles about a topic, but then they say "nevermind" and move on, as if embarrassed. When we redirect the conversation to topics that make our conversation partner feel centered and exhilarated, it brings a sense of magic to the conversation. It comes across as Insight and as being a great listener and fun conversation partner. As they perceive this insight coming through, they might feel a lot of support to bring up topics that are very difficult but need processing. In these moments, it might be that they trust your ability to see and hold their centered and exhilarated experience until they can hold it for themselves. As you feel into whether they can keep centered and exhilarated during the topic or not, they can tell. As you proceed with them, processing the topic from a shared space of centered and exhilarated, the Insight is helping you help them, which is helping you. This feedback loop is bringing in a lot of replenishment now, because you can help support others with Insight around how to keep the centered and exhilarated experience present for the sake of the group. This insight also builds into the self-insight that fuels the Right Action component of Centered and Exhilarated practice. As self-insight and insight for others grows stronger, so does right action.

Creating a Supportive Environment

As you build relationships that become accustomed to the feelings of centered and exhilarated, you're naturally creating a life that is supporting you feeling centered and exhilarated. This supportive environment brings in so many more opportunities throughout the day to relish in more Right Action and Insight. This can be thought of as the passive experience of the passive experience of such wonderful active work.

Each element of stacks on top of each other:

³¹ Vetter, Tilmann. *The ideas and meditative practices of early Buddhism*. Brill Archive, 1988.



On our website, <http://centeredandexhilarated.org> you can find images like this one to print out and hang up somewhere. Especially if it makes you happy to look at and remember that for the same amount of practice and effort, everything is working even more so in your favor. Even if you only have 5 minutes to practice a day, it all adds up very quickly!

Right Action

Any action that comes from right discernment can be thought of as right action. When we apply right discernment to a difficult situation, we are discerning the specific parts that are creating the difficulty as well as the options. This brings about many more options in a difficult situation. Whichever option we choose can be thought of as right action. If we choose the option that prolongs the difficulty, that can be thought of as the scenic route. We will learn just as much from taking the scenic route if not more! Let's pretend we chose the scenic route in this case because it's the option we had the most resonance with. By applying right discernment we already know that we are perfectly on our path and the learnings that we take will further help us cultivate the observer. Or let's say we take the easier option and reduce our stress to minimize our self-care time. Here we have another learning that also helps us to progress on our path of cultivating the observer. Are you starting to see the picture? If we apply right discernment, the next action we take will always be right action. All action in this manner will help lead us towards the cultivation of the Observer, the reduction of stress in our life, and the increase of compassion and connection in our life, in relationship with all beings.

The path of right action will certainly take you where it is you're needing to go. Your destination is unique to you and you're blossoming into your fullest expression of yourself. There are a couple helpful tools I can share that might be useful on the way. For example, it can be helpful to have options for the type of empathy you want to jump into with someone, to reduce the amount of advanced difficulty that arises or self care that might be needed. I call this tool "Knowing When to Trust Feeling Others with E.A.S.E. (Empathy and Sustainable Energy)". In other matters, it can be helpful to reframe how we share our inspiration with others when we're working on a team with them. If we can begin to see this exchange has mentoring them to understand us, it can take away a lot of the friction that arises during misunderstandings. It can also help as a reminder to ask others to mentor us in understanding their inspirations better. In addition to these offerings, I also want to share a practice that can help speed up the process of ego-development, if you wish to climb the orbits even faster. I call this speed-up method the 30 Day Challenge. We will dive into each of these tools next, as we explore Orbit 3 in more depth.

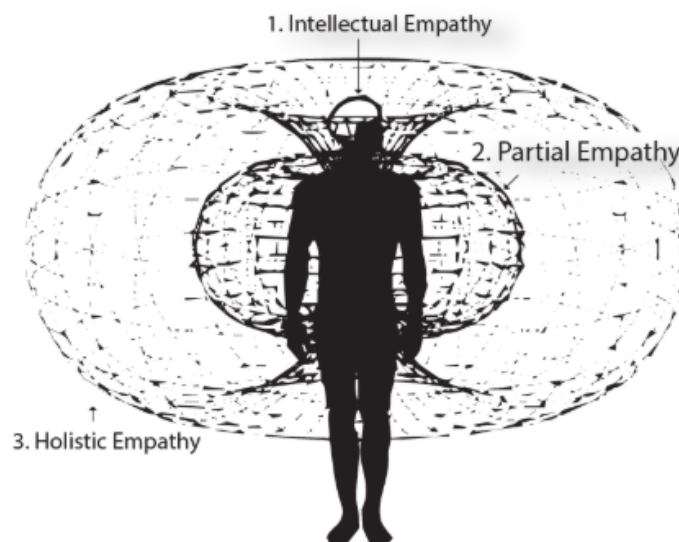
The Three Empathies

This 3-step tool allows us to minimize repair time from taking on heavy emotions when vulnerable.

Step 1 - Intellectual Empathy - Start with your energy body tucked inside your own body and not spreading outward. For beginners, this can be done by constricting your muscles, although you will not need to constrict your muscles once you get the hang of it. From this defended state, we can support others by practicing taking on only 1% of their energy, to feel where they're at. We can then mirror back that feeling with full emotional expression, acknowledging their pain and validating their experience. We can use active listening and many of our support tools, while only taking on 1% of their energy.

Step 2 - Partial Empathy - When we can trust someone being supportive of their own centered and exhilarated experience on easy topics we can open our energy body halfway for them on difficult topics. This reduces repair time afterwards from picking up any possible heavy energies while supporting from a vulnerable place.

Step 3 - Holistic Empathy - When we have identified we can trust someone to hold support of not only their own centered and exhilarated experience, but also for others, all while they are processing their own difficult topics, we can open full connection with low risk of needing repair time afterwards. This helps us have as much connection as possible when being present with others, while having full connection with the life around us while navigating through the world. We can strengthen our ability to return to step 1 when encountering new people and discerning what level of trust is emerging. As we practice this step, we can learn to share the burden of very difficult energies as well, without risk of losing our own centered and exhilarated experience. The sky's the limit for the types of empathy you can hold, with practice!



Zen and the Art of Mentoring

For the purposes of Centered and Exhilarated, mentoring is the process of empowering others to understand our path. Of course, our path arises in our illumined consciousness. It is because others cannot feel our illumined path and our inspiration in the same way that we can, that it is up to us to mentor these aspects of ourselves for each other. This is especially important for moving from the We of a group to the We of a team.

Mentoring Model Exercise

How good are you at mentoring others on your personal path, in general? Are you a sage, an elder, and adult, an adolescent, an infant?

Even without assigning criteria for these terms (sage, elder, etc.) it can be fun to use these words. Depending on which one you pick, it might highlight that you're doing well, that you could do better, or both. It can be really helpful to list the names of team members, if you're working in a team that can hold the We, and note how good you are at mentoring each individual to understand your personal path, as it arises each moment. After all, when our paths change slightly, our ability for our team mates to keep up with us depends greatly on our ability to mentor them. It can also be great to notice if they're good at mentoring others about our illumined path, on our behalf. Sometimes it is the difference between column 2 and column 3 that shows where we can improve our mentoring for this individual. Have a look and see if you can fill out a couple rows:

Team Member's Name	How good am I at mentoring this person on my personal path?	How good are they at mentoring others on my personal path?	How good are they at mentoring others on their own personal path?

It is important to remember the value of mentoring each other. Without this cultural value in place, we run the risk of returning to consensus reality, where everyone is pretending that nobody is mentoring anybody and that we're all equal and we're peers. And where does that leave us? Nobody knowing each other's illumined paths? Everyone assuming they can move

quickly with their agendas without waiting for each other and getting caught up to speed in order to move as a team? Thankfully, with this redefinition of mentoring, we can now share this value.

The 30 Day Centered and Exhilarated Only (C.E.O.) Challenge

We like to call this challenge “Centered and Exhilarated Only” because for 30 days, you try to maintain access to your centered and exhilarated spectrums, 99% of your waking life. It’s the only thing you really need to focus on, for yourself, and for others, in order to get the benefits of completing the challenge. Of course it doesn’t happen right away, but it’s really fun to try and learn some stuff as you go! Remember, 99% of being in centered and exhilarated works out to about 10 minutes a day or an hour a week of losing centered and exhilarated and then quickly finding it again. That is not for the faint of heart! Attempting to do this brings up so many amazing learnings and integrations. It also goes a long way towards helping your ego take a step back and relax as you transition to an identity of coherent whole brain mindfulness. This is your Centered and Exhilarated Self! You may have originally noticed it as you felt the sensations of centered and exhilarated. As you spend more time in it, you begin to realize that a lot of the coherence and thinking is actually coming from those sensations. The walls and defenses you once had up become much less needed as well, so the small ego starts falling away. As you become a more full version of your integrated natural self without all the walls and defenses, you find many more options available for interacting in society, without having lost any of your previous tools. The Centered and Exhilarated Self is quite amazing and I don’t think humans have mapped onto it just yet, possibly because it took some of the more recent neuroscience findings in order for us to triangulate the coordinates. Nonetheless, I have a feeling it is here to stay and for good reason! If you really want to take the jump into accelerating the process, the 30 Day Challenge may be for you. Here are some of the similarities in experience that people may find when undergoing the 30 Day Challenge:

It is easy to be centered and exhilarated when others are centered and exhilarated.

- When a family member at a holiday party tells a story they just love to tell, even though you’ve heard it a hundred times, you might find yourself hanging out and enjoying surfing the waves of replenishment as you vibe with their centered and exhilarated feelings.
- When you’re explaining something new to someone that they have no foundation for understanding, you’ll notice how quickly they become drained, even if they really are excited to learn. It burns calories to learn new things at a foundational level and the right brain needs time to integrate the new learnings and create the neuron trunks. On the other hand, it can be fun to recognize when someone already has a solid foundational understanding of a topic area and can learn a lot for many hours at a fast pace of conversation. Spotting the difference can make a big difference in the replenishment of everyone involved.

It can be difficult at first when others aren’t centered and exhilarated.

- At first, it can seem like we only have a 5 minute time limit of hanging out in draining conversation before we start to lose our own exhilarated spectrum. Once we lose that, it’s hard to monitor our centeredness spectrum and once we lose that, we might be in a protected state of stress for a while. The health here can be measured in how quickly we can return to centered and exhilarated when we take space or take a break from these situations.

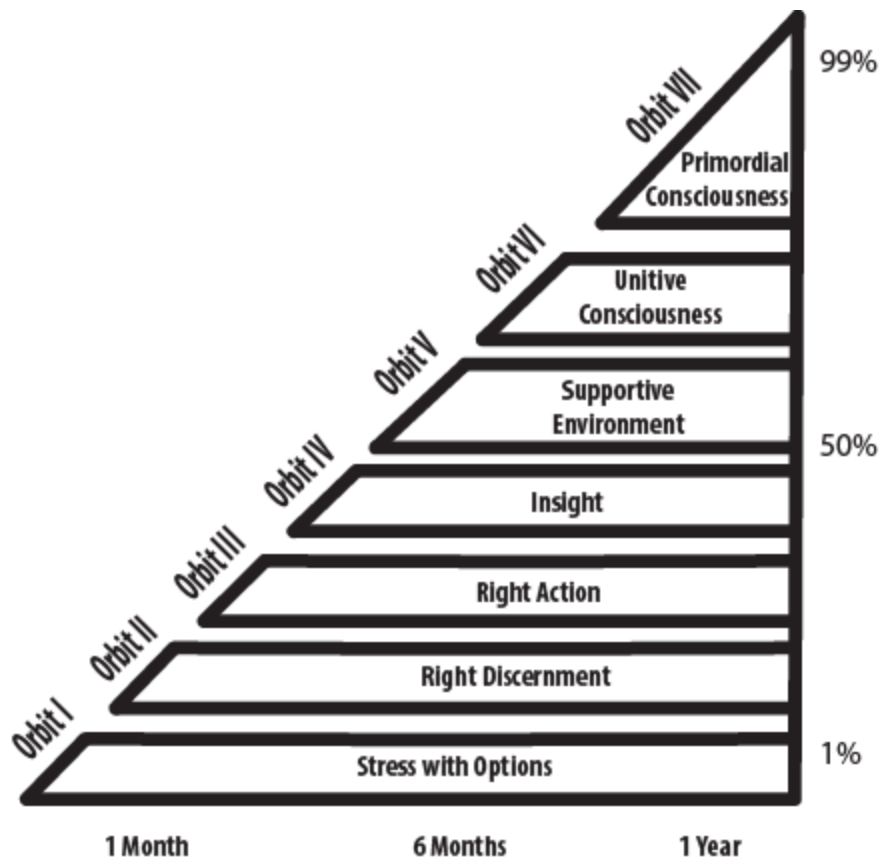
- It can be helpful if you have the type of boss that lets you leave during meetings where people are overly stressed, due to “adopting a new temporary health practice”.
- It can be helpful to communicate the CEO challenge to others so that they can understand how you prefer to be supported. Think about communicating the following three important pieces of information:
 - What happens when you’re not supported in this way
 - “I can lose myself and fall into destructive patterns”
 - “I can go long periods of time without remembering who I really am”
 - “I can lose momentum on achieving this dream of mine and I don’t know if I’ll do this again so I want to do it right”
 - Ok this one is a little extreme so it should probably only be used in dire circumstances, when maybe you have a friend who is really having a hard time with this and nothing else is working to help them understand why you’re doing this. Sometimes this bid for needing their support, while extreme sounding, is actually what works to help them better understand. Also, it’s true, you don’t know if you’ll do this again. To quote Eminem, “You only get one shot, do not miss your chance to blow, this opportunity comes once in a lifetime!”
 - What is gained when you are supported in this way
 - “I can be my best self and show you who I truly am.”
 - “I can bring many more parts of myself present and be much more vulnerable”
 - “I can work through some of the harder things I’ve been struggling with if I feel a supportive container to promote my centered and exhilarated aspects of well-being”
 - When and where you’d prefer to be supported in this way
 - “I prefer to be supported in this way just for the next 30 days, unless I like it too much, but let’s just go with 30 days for now”
 - “I would like to feel this type of support, especially in social situations where several people are present. It tends to be more difficult to keep this state when more people are present, so the more support the better.”

There are immediate benefits to trying out the 30 day challenge:

- A lot of hope and empowerment arises during this period of understanding new and authentic ways to create a supportive environment.
- A lot of old friends will see you in a new way and your friendship may transition to a more supportive place.
- In the CEO state, you will be speeding up the timeline on attracting the things in your life that you want and letting go of the things that don’t support.
- New friends may emerge in a very supportive way during this time.

- In one staff member's case, they enjoyed the 30 day challenge so much that they never stopped and are still on it to this day. This is where you can start seeing the benefits of Centered and Exhilarated tending to fall along a timeline.

The diagram below reflects an approximate timeline for how these stages arrive, assuming you're able to practice 10 minutes a day at first. With continued practice, the majority of cases seem to move along a similar timeline, where centered and exhilarated experiences come into our lives naturally, more often, for longer periods of time, until it becomes 99% of our waking life sometime around the 1 year mark. At that point, we're only losing centered and exhilarated for about 10 minutes a day on average. While the numbers fluctuate wildly for any given individual, this diagram depicts what the tendency of the timeline seems to be, on average. A new practitioner starts in the bottom left corner and slowly moves upwards and to the right. The percentages show how much time someone tends to be in the centered and exhilarated experience throughout their daily life, related to progress in practicing Centered and Exhilarated.



The 5 Day Challenge

For those who feel like a 5 day challenge would be more fun than a 30 day challenge, go for it! Even at just 5 days there is so much you will learn and experience. If you do six separate 5 Day Challenges through the year, that adds up to 30 anyway right? This is a great option for

extroverted personality types who might be competitive and overdo it. IF that sounds like you, give the 5 Day Challenge some consideration first. You won't get drained as easily if stress starts to pile up from forcing the challenge. Remember, this should be playful, fun, and easy. Speaking as someone who can remember the day they started their first 30 day challenge, it was my favorite period of my life up until that point. So remember, different personality types respond in different ways. Keep an eye on yourself and maybe you'll notice aspects of your personality emerging as well. And just have fun with it!

As you finish the 30 Day Challenge, you'll notice that you have a firm grasp on:

- Right Action
- Insight
- and beginning to notice that a Supportive Environment is being cultivated.

Empowership - Orbit 3



We have become quite the savvy sea-going captain at this point. We're now able to build an Orbit 2 vessel for others. We can help to hold Orbit 2 neutral conversation topics, when we start with the memory share opening circle and use the alarm clock at 20 minute intervals to revisit the memory. In this way, we're able to help our friends and other communities to begin building their own Empowerships. Our ship has grown so big that we can even fit a submarine compartment in the hull. This submarine is built for deep dives. We are now learning to integrate our special gift to give others, with Centered and Exhilarated practices. As we do so, we can take others on a deep dive into the skills and hobbies that we are passionate about, while including a centered and exhilarated experience along the way. This helps others to pick up the practice even more fully, holding the depth of the skill or hobby in a way that brings out their own authentic expression.

Aristotle - Our Philosopher for Orbit 3

Aristotle was a prodigious student of Plato, very much concerned with the development of discernment as a means to enhance our mind's ability to think more intelligently and productively. He would have loved to see the Harvard study from 2008, suggesting that our brains are 31% more intelligent and productive when we feel good about ourselves.

Discernment as the Two Major Virtues: Temperance and Courage

As Aristotle saw it, all right action was arrived at from what he called the two virtues: temperance and courage. Temperance is basically moderation: the ability to see that anything done to excess can become unhealthy, and so to be discerning of what level of balance is good for you. Courage then becomes the ability to do the thing that is good for you, instead of just the thing that just seems good for you but is bad for you. In this way, he has essentially dissected discernment into two aspects. In *Centered and Exhilarated*, we have further dissected discernment into five aspects. Though either way you slice it, whichever way is most helpful to you, Aristotle also agrees, that all other elements of healthy living and right action arise in proper proportion when you start with discernment³².

Aristotelian Bifurcation

Aristotle observed that as we learn, we are also changing how we think about things we learned previously. In other words, new learnings don't just store as isolated objects of understanding in our minds, but they also touch the old objects at the same time and update them. He called this concept "bifurcation": a type of two-way learning that is always taking place, with a change happening to our present understanding of something and a change happening to our previous understandings of related things. This was thousands of years prior to neurobiology, where we can now see neuron pathways forming and interconnecting to a network of implicit and explicit memories, as we learn more about our world. I personally find this concept very liberating in allowing myself to be patient with myself during periods of personal growth. Learning something new takes time, to burn calories and create new neurons, as a representational map in our brains of the new understanding. Not only that, but now we're re-routing neurons from old understandings and links, to new understandings and links, through the concept of S.N.A.G. (synaptic neuronal attachment grouping). S.N.A.G. is the fancy way of saying "neurons that fire together, wire together, and survive together". An example of this is when we're updating a pattern in our brain that causes us more pain than it's worth. This typically happens when we recognize patterns that once helped us but no longer serve us. For example, if we used to drink in order to better relate with others. We may not need that liquid courage anymore, now that we have more confidence. Or if we used to become closed off and defended, to make sure people didn't take advantage of our emotions when we're vulnerable, but now we've learned better ways of being open and vulnerable with others while using discernment to protect us from destructive situations. In both of these examples, we may mentally understand the next step,

³² <http://philosophizethis.org/episode-5-aristotles-ethics-transcript/>

but we have to eat lots of food and sleep a lot and all the other aspects of neuron development, in order for the new trunks of neurons to build out new trees of understandings in our brain and let the old tree branches or trunks fall away. When you really think about what's happening, it's much easier to be at ease with ourselves in taking all the time we need to slowly update to new healthier habits. Often times, we may need to repeat the same situation over and over again, each time gaining a better understanding of what doesn't serve us, in order to really stop using the older trunks and let the new neuron trunks taking over. In these cases, we may even feel an energetic release in our body as those old neuron trunks are no longer needed and are dismantled, along with the constricted muscles that would go along with keeping us defended. Those expansions can sometimes be seen as a part of the kundalini energy experience, that really is just a wide spectrum of energies that arise from releases and surrendering, as we remember our true identity as infinite consciousness, inhabiting the finite form in part.

Orbit 3 Review

Each chapter will have this box at the end of it, highlighting some of the traits and stretch goals for the current orbit. Keep in mind that a trait is anything that tends to occur 85% of the time or more. A stretch goal is what the next step would be, to turn a practice into a trait.

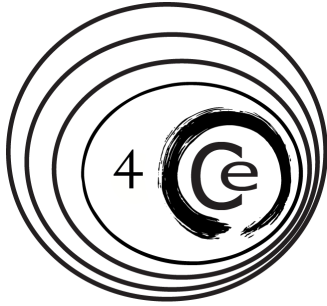
Orbit 3 Traits *(Remember a trait is something that tends to happen 85% of the time or more)*

- Feeling the We is no longer the ideal in relationships. Now the ideal is feeling the We and actively supporting the other person to feel good about themselves during conversation (calm/curious), so that both parties are building trust that each other wants what is good for each other and knows how to tell if an advanced difficulty topic is emerging before it's too late.
- Ability to maintain support of centered and exhilarated feelings during topics of frustration in conversation.
- Embodied and Mindful Observer are helpful "return words" (words to help returning to a space of centered and exhilarated when losing calm and curious).
- Feelings of Centered and Exhilarated are happening 85% of the time in one's waking life. Losing calm and curious for less than 2.5 hours a day, on average, or roughly 15 hours a week.

Orbit 4 Stretch Goals *(Stretch Goals for the Next Orbit)*

- Feeling the We and actively supporting the other person to feel good about themselves during conversation (calm/curious) is no longer the ideal for trust building. Now the ideal becomes ensuring the other person is arriving at topics from their own inspiration and you are matching them when you are inspired as well.
- When you're experiencing scarcity, are you able to stay in your resting place of both centered and exhilarated observers? Moving towards the next orbit aligns with an increased ability to maintain support of centered and exhilarated feelings during topics of *scarcity around wants* in conversation.
- Peace and Grateful Pride become helpful "return words" (words to help returning to a space of centered and exhilarated when losing calm and curious).

- Feelings of Centered and Exhilarated are happening 95% of the time in one's waking life. Losing calm and curious for less than an hour a day, on average, or roughly 5 hours a week.



Supporting the Shining Eyes (Orbit 4)

When we talk about feeling into the We-space, we're talking about being present for the CEO within the conversation as well as being present with yourself. These are two areas where insight begins to channel into an experiential observer. Sometimes this will take place in conversation with someone who has lost CEO. In this case, it becomes doubly important to monitor our own levels of centered and exhilarated, especially if we are in the support role, where there is a tacit agreement that we will do our best to be present. It becomes even more important if we are being present with someone who is used to trusting in our tensegrity for them. In these situations, if they lose centered and exhilarated and we do as well, it is possible for harmful things to be said. This can cause even more emotional pain and require more self-care and repair, due to the added layers of vulnerability and openness. Once we lose support for our Self there's no longer support for each other in the conversation and we're both skating on thin ice, so to speak. If we've lost CEO and the other person has it and we're aware, that can be a helpful way to remember that we have the option to come back to CEO. Until then, there is a risk that the other person could lose CEO too, with no one there to support them getting back to center. It is once the conversation moves into a dissociated space of defensiveness on both ends that a couple risks emerge:

- If something hurtful is said and both participants have lost CEO, it is possible to hurt each other's trust, which would require a repair to happen afterwards.
- There is also an opportunity cost of having missed the opportunity to table the difficult topic and build trust, as well as modeling what it looks like to voice that you're feeling under-resourced and can't be present. Being present is a gift for yourself and others.

Insight

As we navigate social interaction from the space of Internal Alchemy (Orbit 3) and Right Discernment (Orbit 2), we start picking up on all sorts of signals during conversations around what topics are most centering and exhilarating for our conversation partners. Little micro-expressions happen, like when a person looks up and smiles about a topic, but then they say "nevermind" and move on, as if embarrassed. When we redirect the conversation to topics that make our conversation partner feel centered and exhilarated, it brings a sense of magic to the conversation. It comes across as Insight and as being a great listener and fun conversation partner. As they perceive this insight coming through, they might feel a lot of support to bring up topics that are very difficult but need processing. In these moments, it might be that they trust

your ability to see and hold their centered and exhilarated experience until they can hold it for themselves. As you feel into whether they can keep CEO during the topic or not, they can tell. As you proceed with them, processing the topic from a shared space of CEO, this insight is helping you help them. By supporting their shining eyes (the discussion topics that help them to feel good about themselves) you are helping to make a safe space for open and undefended conversation. This is also helping you, while you're still developing the capacity for your mirror neuron system to not totally gravitate to the stress of others when deeply rooted in the open and undefended experience of your felt sense of truth. This feedback loop is bringing in a lot of replenishment now, because you can help support others with Insight around how to maintain a presence of centered and exhilarated experience for the sake of the group. This insight also builds into the self-insight that fuels the internal alchemy component of Centered and Exhilarated practice. As self-insight and insight for others grows stronger, so does right action.

Noticing the Option: Two Roads Diverged in a Yellow Wood

A powerful way of bringing the centered and exhilarated experience into conversation starts with first noticing when a conversation could go one of two ways, depending on which path you head down. This also leads to the cultivation of the insight observer. The two paths are:

1. when someone mentions a topic that makes them feel uncomfortable
2. when someone mentions a topic that they'd feel centered and exhilarated to discuss



Did you notice the option you have here? Sure, you could ask them about the topic they just mentioned was difficult, to see where that goes. But you could also ask them about the topic they quickly brushed past, when they made that face of looking upwards and flashing a smile, before looking back down again. Did you notice that micro-expression of joy? That topic might be centering and exhilarating for the person to talk about and they may have even secretly wanted to talk more about it. It's incredibly important to acknowledge the negative topic if someone is expressing it and not feeling acknowledged. The object isn't to avoid the negative topic: it is to find a way to acknowledge the negative topic while still bringing up the option to talk about the more immediately uplifting topic, if that's where the person really wants the conversation to go. Sometimes they may want to dive into talking about a traumatic topic, which means they trust you and they feel supported by you. By bringing up the option, where the two paths diverge, and validating the more difficult topic, you've now brought a sense of

empowerment to your conversation partner. This will typically translate to them feeling more resourced immediately because you've just expressed that you believe in their own style of medicine, you've given them an option to redirect to the lighter topic they may have not thought you'd be interested about, and you've generally showed them that you are most interested in connecting to them in whatever way they want to connect. When we don't notice the option of two roads diverging, we can miss out on so much opportunity and we can fall into old habits of assuming what the other person wants to talk about or wants to hear.

Offering the Option: Negative and Positive Mental Rehearsal

It can also help to be aware of the concept of negative mental rehearsal, which just means that when people talk about a difficult topic, they're also revisiting a lot of those emotions related to the most difficult part of that topic. If someone was in a traumatic situation for example, by talking about it when it's fresh, they're putting themselves back into the emotions of that situation somewhat. While this can be a wonderful medicine and grief healing process, it can also be further supported by acknowledging some of the lighter topics throughout the conversation. Bringing attention to the smaller joyful moments is an invitation and offering. You'll know right away if the person doesn't enjoy the lighter topics being called out and then you can back off and let them take full control of the direction of the conversation. But in those cases where they are appreciative for you offering some options of levity and perhaps laughter sprinkled throughout the conversation, as long as it is their path that they are choosing and you are just pointing out the option, they will feel so deeply supported and thankful for your active listening skills. This approach of sprinkling in the options for positivity here and there might as well be called positive mental rehearsal, since any time we bring in centered and exhilarated, we are bringing in a more expansive pool of resources to deal with all emotions. In this way, the word positive can be reframed to highlight that shame, anger, frustration, depression and other generally stigmatized emotions are equally valid and healing to dive into. They are positive! The act of bringing in the option to feel centered and exhilarated is actually creating a more expansive feeling of resources to look at these emotions head on and from every angle. By bringing in some positive mental rehearsal here and there, your conversation partner might feel so much internal support that they walk right into the difficult topic themselves without all the difficulty and without losing CEO. All that being said, it's equally important to remember that this is only the Centered and Exhilarated approach to bringing options up in conversation. If somebody is wanting to disassociate from their centered and exhilarated space so that they can discuss their grief in a way that is closer aligned with their medicine, positive mental rehearsal is simply not the appropriate path at this moment. If that is the case, as long as you are able to maintain centered and exhilarated support for yourself and you can hold that space for them when they can't, you may be surprised at the depths of support in other people's medicines that you're capable of taking on. Some people prefer exposure therapy by purposely dipping into a trauma state where they are feeling under-resourced and then popping back out again, deeper and deeper each time. At the time this book is being written, research shows exposure therapy is the most effective tool for working with PTSD. So remember, the CEO approach in conversation is to offer the option when it is feeling supportive to your conversation and to not

offer the option when it is not feeling supportive. This helps build trust that you respect the incredibly powerful medicine that each person already has within them.

Good Look

When rushing through conversation, do you ever notice when someone offers you this same option? When you brush past a difficult topic and a delightful topic and they ask you to talk more about the one with positive mental rehearsal? If you appreciate the feeling of support that brings you, this is a great time to express gratitude. Try saying “good look!” when this happens. “Good look!” is really short for good looks, good looking, or good looking out, all slang that originated from the phrase “thanks for looking out for me”. The first time they might not understand what you mean until you explain it, but everytime after that it can be a fun way of reinforcing gratitude for the support they give you. You could also say “good catch!” or “nice one!”

I Got You

Here is another fun thing to say, to express gratitude for supportive conversation. You can say it when someone is searching for a fun topic to talk about. As you check in with yourself to see where your inspiration is to match them on a topic, you can say “oh! I got you” as soon as you feel the inspiration to discuss the topic. This is especially fun for when you’re being interviewed and the interviewer is working their butt off to ask questions that you have inspired answers for. When they say “why do you keep saying I got you”, that’s your chance to let them know it’s your way of saying that you can feel the inspiration to say something on the topic. That is so reassuring for a conversation partner to hear that you enjoy the topic and that you only discuss topics anyway when you’re actually inspired. What a load off the questioner this is. It’s like a sign that says “don’t worry, I’m not a people pleaser, you can trust me to join in only when it’s good for me”. This can be especially helpful for people who tend to dominate conversation and don’t hear about it until their conversation partner either snaps and expresses resentment or simply doesn’t return the person’s bids for connections any more without any explanation.

When to Not Table the Difficult Topic

We can all think of that time when someone said something we didn’t want to hear. Except that by them telling us what we didn’t want to hear, it made all the difference in the world and helped us correct a really bad habit or behavior pattern. If we went around supporting the CEO in each other all the time, wouldn’t we lose out on all those beautiful opportunities and important self growth of being told difficult things that we didn’t want to hear? Because of the society we live in, this question seems to make a lot of obvious sense at face value, to the point where it almost answers itself. But the answer is not what you might first think. If we supported the CEO in each other, can you imagine the amount of positive behavior changes we would make, in addition to the trust we would build up to be able to tell each other anything within a lens of centered and exhilarated supportive language? If we supported the CEO in each other at work, can you imagine how much easier it would be to learn from our failures? To take the time to really look at what went wrong and what could be done better, because we know what people

care most about, is that we're experiencing ourselves in our fullness, first and foremost. Could you imagine the type of trust that would build, to tell our boss or our coworkers just about anything? We could reach out for support anytime we feel like we could use it, not just when we absolutely need it. If everyone supported the CEO in us, could you imagine how big our dreams might become? The positions of growth we might shoot for and the versions of ourself we would allow ourselves to realize, to explore, to try on to see if we like it even? You've also been building up a larger reservoir of support for people in situations where they too might be under-resourced. Your ability to keep CEO and support them when they've lost CEO has lengthened greatly. You don't actually need to table a difficult topic until you've begun losing exhilarated. As long as you're feeling exhilarated, you can be told things you don't want to hear, you can learn from them, and you can grow from them. In this CEO utopia that we're imagining, remember that we're asking the question now: if we supported the CEO in each other all the time, wouldn't we lose out on the important self growth of being told a difficult thing that you didn't want to hear?

Can you see how this becomes a sort of apples and oranges comparison? Let's say that when people are supporting you feeling centered and exhilarated it is the apple a day that keeps the doctor away. In this world, the self growth is through the roof. And it's likely that the same difficult things someone might tell you, the same hard to hear things, wouldn't come close to knocking you out of centered and exhilarated, because you're used to so much support coming at you from every angle that shame wouldn't likely be a common emotion to fall into. The orange of course is the world where we didn't support CEO in each other and we don't even really need to go into that, because I think the point is clear. Rampantly supporting the CEO in each other, whenever, wherever, without cause or concern, is the clear winner if you're looking for a paradigm that promotes self growth.

The crux of this question might really be getting at an underlying concern around the possibility of always tabling difficult topics and never getting to go right into them. For anyone who hasn't practiced Centered and Exhilarated techniques, it can be a foreign concept to think that it's possible to feel exhilarated when discussing difficult topics. So certainly there is no need to ever table a difficult topic if you're feeling centered and exhilarated. The whole point of calling something a difficult topic and seeing if there is an option to table it is to build trust in each other that you support each other feeling centered and exhilarated more than diving into difficult topics where you don't feel centered and exhilarated. But how about when you get to the point where you rarely ever lose exhilarated anymore? Well there just isn't a need to table difficult topics anymore because you won't even feel them come up. What used to be an intensely difficult topic might now be simply a fun problem space to explore with someone. What used to be ways of putting yourself down just aren't seeming to have the same hold on you after having practiced Centered and Exhilarated for several months, or years even. When people first hear about tabling difficult topics, they don't have a frame of reference to realize that difficult topics simply go away, for the most part. When there isn't a risk for losing exhilarated, it's no longer a difficult topic. The point of keeping exhilarated, is that once you lose it, you won't be able to notice if you start losing centered. That's what makes the exhilarated spectrum the thing to look out for when

discussing difficult topics. It is really the first checkpoint for monitoring your CEO when holding space.

The Joy of Using the TLLR Tool

The TLLR process (tabling, labeling, listing, and revisting) needs to be mutually agreed upon in order for it to be constructive to both parties. If someone doesn't understand the process, it can sound much less fun to table the difficult topic and much more constructive to simply go into it right away. In this case, it can be a lot of fun to go into the difficult topics, assuming we're still able to hold CEO, of course. This is a great milestone because it means you're developing the ability to hold CEO even when your partner isn't, when the topic is stressful, and when you're not being supported. In this chapter, we're going to focus on the ins and outs of the process of holding space. After all, the method in CEO of being present is quite powerful, but it requires a bit more awareness at first than many might realize. Tabling a difficult topic can be especially aggravating for someone who does not let go easy: if you've been doing a good job at being present and suddenly find yourself beginning to lose CEO, you'll need to ask for support as well, from the person you're supporting, so that you can slow down, or come back to the topic later. This can be a delicate situation. Let's talk about the nuances of being present in these situations.

Being Present During Difficult Topics

In 1911, Sigmund Freud laid the groundwork for grief processing³³, noting the importance of embracing and expressing painful emotions, such as anger, guilt, pre-occupation, and numbness. This has stayed mostly consistent for the most part even through to present-day. It also sheds insight on the process we go through when we've lost our basic human needs for self love or connection. Browse through social media and you can see many examples of topics being debated from all the different stages of grief processing: proclaiming numbness to an important issue, expressing anger or contempt, perhaps not participating in the discussion from feelings of fear or guilt. All of this without anyone seeming to understand each other's perspective. This is where a basic understanding of these painful emotions can be so helpful in building connection in our daily life. By seeing where someone is within the lens of processing their grief, a difficult topic can become a doorway to increased connection and shared understanding. By opening stressful topics when it feels empowering, we can understand and acknowledge those feelings. In many cases, these feelings were there to begin with as a form of medicine. It is important then, to explore the internal medicine we have within us, to process our grief, by bring a candle to these emotions, ideally with the support of others whom we can trust.

³³ Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and melancholia." In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, pp. 237-258. 1957.



So let's go into it a little bit, how each of these emotions are incredibly positive, good, healing, emotions, to be celebrated. We'll also look at what supportive actions we can take when we recognize these emotions.

- **Shock/Numbness/Dismissal/Denial/Avoidance** - These emotions are what help us to not look at a topic that is too difficult for us, if we're not ready. In essence, the neurons in our body are protecting us from processing something that we might not be able to handle processing yet, so it is shielding us. If someone is in denial around a topic, take notice that continuing to bring the topic up and being pushy about it can't actually help this person to grow, to receive the education you wish for them, or to change their beliefs. The denial is built into their neurons at this point and is protecting them because they're not at a place yet where they could grow in this area. Deep down, humans really do tend to want to make the world a better place and are trying their best. If we support each other where we're at, even in the denial stage, we'll begin to see optimal growth emerging, whatever that may look like for the individual.
- **Anger/Rage** are incredibly healthy and helpful emotions that are really a way of standing up for ourselves, especially if there is any feeling of powerlessness. Through this process, we can continually revisit a sense of empowerment until we can feel that we are not powerless, at a body level. When this happens, we begin to start taking constructive action that takes into account the feelings of others, beyond ourselves. When we're able to engage in dialogue around a topic, we can bring about true progress and change. When we're not feeling our power to engage in a successful dialogue, we risk disempowering ourself further and experiencing more trauma and emotional recoil, which leads to the need for more self-care, support, in medicine. Here it is best to be present and support for any expression that feels important to the individual, so long as you are able to hold CEO for yourself in the process.

- **Being Preoccupied** at its core is about hyperfocusing with what we could have done better, or could still do better, to resolve the problem. When the problem is related to a very traumatic experience, the self-talk can be very hurtful. Even overhearing someone preoccupied with negative self talk can be difficult. Being present with someone around a topic when they are preoccupied can seem difficult at first, especially if you bring in the idea of holding CEO throughout. But keep in mind that you are holding CEO for yourself and also for them, because they can't hold it for themselves, but they can feel the strength of that space when you hold it for them. As you hold this space in support and you listen, you'll likely notice empowering plans being made around actions that could still be taken. This sense of direction is an important stage in our growth around traumatic topics. The point here isn't to move to acceptance, because remember there's going to be a lot of sliding back and forth between these phases: the point here is to support whatever direction feels empowering to the individual. If you lose CEO in the process, this type of support might be much more difficult and there might be a risk of even disempowering them if you disagree with their choice, or if you start promoting your own idea that is disempowering to the progress they're making. If the bargaining phase is surround an irreversible situation, remember there is nothing that can be done and that the point is not the solution here. I think you might be starting to see a theme here. In each of these cases, all that is needed is to simply listen and be present by holding CEO for yourself and for the other person. That in itself is an amazing gift.
- **Depression** is when someone has finally reached the belief that their terrible situation is actually irreversible; that nothing can be done. Whether or not this is true, it is there belief that is important here, and so they start cutting themselves off from support from others. This stage of grief can best be viewed for how it is helpful by seeing where it sits in relation to having overcome denial and anger/rage, if only temporarily. This stage can come across as a lot more subdued because of the new reality that has set in. Not only is a terrible situation irreversible, but if you believed your situation was irreversible, wouldn't it feel like you were being a drain on people you loved each time you received support from them? Feeling like a drain is what makes people with depression not want to receive support; it feels even worse when you also feel like a drain. It is really helpful that there is a name for this, because people can see that they're in depression and realize that is leading them to cut themselves off from support and from the people that love them, which is all the more reason to join support groups and to let people continue supporting them. Why is it important for you to understand this? Because when you know what's going on in their mind, that they feel like they're just a drain, you can change the conversation. They're only a drain if you're trying to get some certain result, right? If you love them for just who they are, and you're not supporting in order to get any type of change, it's a lot easier to communicate that you're supporting them because it's what you most want to be doing. You love them. When you know that they still feel like a drain, then they don't have to hide that feeling from you. It can be on the table. When you can be present for your CEO and for theirs for them, when they can feel seen and express what they're going through without holding back, there is a lot of release that can happen that actually in its own way IS helpful. It's not easy to keep everything bottled up inside. Humans need connection.

It's important to remember that it's possible to feel any of these stages of grief and also feel centered and exhilarated at the same time. The CEO experience does not preclude certain emotions from entering in and in fact can make the emotion more expansive, to feel more parts of the emotion. Holding CEO during light traumas can totally be done and can make the experience feel more connected. Holding CEO during deeper traumas is more difficult and can feel similar to holding CEO during some of the more difficult topics in conversation. Holding CEO during intense grieving is not impossible either. In fact, it's not even impossible to hold CEO for yourself, while going through intense grieving, while holding CEO for others! This is a level of CEO mastery, certainly, but not impossible, and may even be something to strive for, if you find yourself in the grieving process.

Grief Tending and Shame Rewiring

"The ten thousand rages come from the hundred griefs that come from the ten traumas that come from the one rift. Heal the rift and each suffering becomes our friend, holding our hand to show us the unfolding gift of compassion in all things. As we learn compassion, our rages become few, our griefs become few, our traumas become few, and all our parts soon become connected to the whole." - River Soulshine

We experience grief whenever we suffer a loss. Eventually, as we tend to the grief, it can also hold the beauty of the connection we have with that thing or that being, and also of the connection to the bigger picture that we all share. On the other hand, shame arises when we don't feel we deserve to be loved because of something we perceive is wrong with us, or that perhaps we did something wrong. While grief is a wholly natural emotion, shame is quite unnatural and quite unnecessary in the grand scheme of things. If you've made it to Orbit 4 already, you might notice that you rarely experience shame at this point, if ever. By living from a connected whole brain experience, we have healed the rift that once separated us into our fight/flight state. Healing this rift, indeed heals shame over time to where it no longer returns. Notice how this has happened as a result of your identity shifting to the orchestrator observer. You now have the mind, body, and spirit observers, of the left, right, and whole brain respectively, operating in a trinity of coherence and complexity. In chaos theory, we learn that a system is healthy as it moves towards complexity and coherence. This level of health protects the system from teetering into rigidity or chaos, while gaining further health from emergence. In the case of the human experience, rigidity can be seen as controlling behavior or avoidance and chaos can be seen as being preoccupied with a topic or flooded. In the cases of grief or shame, it is possible to find a support group, where these topics are explored in a supportive environment. Typically, others will offer reflections to support the process of grief tending or shame rewiring. If someone begins expressing feelings of micro-rage around the grief or shame, before long, someone in the circle will inevitably jump to problem-solving. The problem solving will often take the form of socratic questioning, which is very helpful. The problem-solving arises because we all know what it feels like to have micro-rage, and we don't like the feeling, so naturally, we want to take away this person's micro-rage for them, by asking helpful questions. This helps us to not have to feel it either, so it's a small victory in both cases. The problem

solving is so effective because the rages in our life often times arise from our grief that we have not been able to fully tend to. Often times this grief is arising from traumas we have suffered as a byproduct of living in a corrosive society. Unless you are a people of place living in harmony with the land, you likely are living in a “civilized” system of rules, a system that lacks the education for living from a whole brain connection. This is especially traumatic as we grow into our adolescence. A trauma is a separation created in our brain to protect us from feeling into something, or remembering something, that is too sad, scary or difficult to process. It is in our early childhood when these traumas begin occurring. When we feel like our joyful exuberance is overwhelming our parents and they make us feel bad about ourselves, that creates a little trauma. Anytime we do not feel we are deserving of love, it has the potential of creating a new trauma or further entrenching an existing one. As these micro-traumas occur, our brain learns to create a rift, carving out our identity to live from a smaller space in our fight/flight nervous system, either prefer the left side of our brain or the right side, but never the connected whole. This saves us from having to feel the loss of our full whole-brained we-space existence, until we are in a safe environment to recover the we-space and live from it again. In this way, our traumas are wonderful tools, as well as very painful and sad reminders of where we are in this society. Our griefs hold the beauty of the loss for us and we can have much grief from our traumas. Our rages hold the anger of our power being taken away from us and the desire to take our power back so that we might be able to confront the grief. This is why the Socratic questioning of problem solving works so well in a support group. The ten thousand rages come from the hundred griefs that come from the ten traumas that come from the one rift. If you ask what, when, or how questions around the topic of someone’s rage, in a supportive environment such as a support group, that type of socratic questioning will quickly unravel as the rage connects to the grief from which it is related. If there is enough time in the group, the grief might even connect to the trauma. If there is enough self-work or practice in one’s life, the trauma might even connect to the rift within that support group. And if there is enough self-work or practice outside of the support group, the rift might even be healed within one’s life time.

At Orbit 4, the rift is healed. It is newly healed, so there will still be unraveling that occurs, some highs and lows as the traumas connect to the rifts, but in this space of living from the orchestrator identity, it will not be long before all traumas are no longer separating the implicit and explicit memories of the left and right hemispheres. and the griefs are felt as beauty, and the rages are nowhere to be found. Have you ever sat in a support group where grief or shame was expressed and transformed into beauty simply by being in the we-space, without problem solving? When the left and right hemispheres are connected, feeling calm and curious, if we go slow enough, we can actually connect the rage to the grief to the trauma quite quickly, on our own, without any problem solving or troubleshooting assistance from our neighbors. When we help each other with problem solving in a support group, it is certainly effective. Though it does have two downsides. Firstly, it builds a sense of dependency on the group for support when the person may already be learning to find their own we-space of calm and curious, so that they can transform their separated parts into connection on their own, without the group. This is especially helpful when leaving the group, back to the real world, where new griefs can emerge. We can think, “oh, I transformed that grief or shame in the support group by being calm and curious and feeling into it. Maybe I can do that now too, to make quick work of

it.” Secondly, these are opportunities where someone can be learning their own path of ego-development, moving from persona-shadow to living from the observer. These support groups can be opportunities to build a life-long practice of whole-brain connected experience in shifting the identity to the observers. When we problem solve instead of supporting the calm and curious experience and letting the person sit with their experience and explore it at their own pace, we take away the opportunity of them building their practice. Certainly there is a helpful balance of moving between problem solving and just listening, but how often do we sit in support groups and notice this balance isn’t even considered? By bringing this balance into the thoughtfulness of the group’s container, amazing progress of self-discovery and joy recovery can occur.

Tone Policing

When we are frustrated and speaking from a place of anger, it can hurt very much if someone asks us to stop. Depending on where they are at in the moment, it could add to the anger or worse: it could make them feel like they aren’t deserving of love³⁴. Tone policing is a very real thing and it is very harmful. It can even feel abusive if someone is trying to make you feel wrong for feeling frustrated or feel wrong for speaking from your frustrations. At the same time, it is totally acceptable to dialogue with people to find ways to collaborate that doesn’t bring up their frustrations, so long as you are not trying to make them feel wrong. Their rage and anger is their path and their process.

There is also the case of mistaken tone policing. There are times when you might excuse yourself from a conversation because you are about to lose your centeredness in being present with someone’s expression of volatile emotions. This is a really important part of the support process in being present and there is nothing wrong with excusing yourself. You might instead ask for support to change the topic, if that seems like an option at the time. In either case, this request might result in the other person feeling wrong for expressing their frustration and there’s no way you can avoid them feeling wrong. You can try to better understand how to collaborate better in the future in order to support yourself in excusing yourself while having some plan of action to support the other person to not feel as wrong, if that is something they’re interested in collaborating on. In either case, you can rest assured you’re not being abusive, and yet it is also understandable how that could feel like abuse to the person. This would be a case of mistaken tone policing. The reason it’s important to bring up is that it’s possible in the situations to get accused of tone policing in an abusive manner where you’re expected to stick around and feel wrong. This is great too. This is just the anger/rage stage of grief processing, doing it’s healthy thing. It seems like a complicated scenario but it can be navigated when you can first recognize that you do not need to stand there and be made to feel wrong. In fact, it can feel abusive if they’re asking you to stand there and take their destructive energy against your will as you continue to feel drained. Where the go to strategy here might normally be to hold

³⁴ This feels bad because deep down it feels like not acknowledging our right to exist. Not leaving love is a big jump for most people.

CEO for yourself and the other person who can't hold CEO for themselves at the time, it won't work here. There's no CEO left to hold! This is why we would excuse our self from the conversation to begin with. So the goal here is simply recognize the difference between making someone feel wrong for speaking from frustration and what we will call "mistaken tone policing", which is simply that we chose to not be present any longer because there was an arising need to do self care and someone thought we were tone policing. If we are scolded for setting up constructive boundaries and requesting space for self-care, we can know that is just because of where they are at in our stage of grief processing on that particular topic. We don't have to take it personally. This is where the word "fragility" can become a useful term to explore.

Strengthening our Fragility

Fragility is a term used most often to measure our ability to be present for anger/rage expression. It is most commonly reframed in regard to "white fragility". Once we can stop feeling shame for our fragility (aka our level of being present for a given topic) in being present for rage expression, we can begin to recognize that we're already practicing the tools that can help us to replace our perceived fragility with perceived strength. By practicing Centered and Exhilarated, we can become amazing at being present with rage expression, even when it's directed at us. On the Vibrantly team and in Soulshine, there have been times when rage was acknowledged and validated several times, maybe even up to 20 times, on a given topic, before we all broke up laughing. The secret was that the person being present with the rage expression knew how to be present from CEO and because they could tell the conversation was moving in a constructive direction. This is the CEO way of celebrating milestones as we strengthen our ability to be present . Yay! Also, if it isn't obvious already, the word fragility sounds like a less ideal word to be using, since it focuses on the negative and does not focus on the positive. For the purpose of collaboration, it is important to frame words in the connecting positive sense, because when we give them a negative framing it puts us back into negative mental rehearsal and limits our options and resources. That being said, the word is thrown around a lot in the social sphere so it is important to know what it means in case you hear it used. In short: our fragility is our capacity to be present with others during difficult topics and it grows with awareness and CEO practice.

Recognizing Abuse as Actually Healthy for One Person

There are so many different types of abuse and many of us are in relationships that can feel abusive to some degree, right now, and that is ok. Especially if it is your choice to be in that situation: then it is more than ok, it is great! If you didn't want to be in that relationship, you'd have already done something about it or you'd be hatching a plan of some sort to do something about it. The goal of Centered and Exhilarated is not to suddenly shake up existing relationships in a disempowering way, because that can often times lead to emotional recoil, leaving people in an even worse off situation. The goal of Centered and Exhilarated is moreso to provide you with an awareness of the dynamics that are happening in a conversation, and to provide you with tools, so that you can begin replacing destructive patterns with healthy connections, slowly, over time.

Short disclaimer

If you do find yourself in an abusive relationship that you want to leave and are having trouble leaving, that is an important matter to become aware of. If you don't know what is keeping you in the relationship when you clearly know you need to leave, it might even be related to the amount of power dynamics that are in play. For that type of a situation, it can be helpful to make a long list of each power dynamic that is making it difficult for you to leave. Sometimes just looking at the list on paper can bring about creative solutions or clarity of what should be done next. It is quite possible the power dynamics are stopping you from leaving and if you can see that is what is happening, it becomes a lot easier to recognize the urgency in setting up constructive boundaries and finding a way to leave. This is a case where no contact equals no new hurts.

Now with that disclaimer aside, assuming you're choosing to continue working on the situation you're in right now because you believe it is overall healthy for you, Centered and Exhilarated has a clever technique for navigating conversation that feels abusive. First, let's look at it in terms of being present with someone who is making you feel wrong for your actions; not that your actions were wrong, but that you yourself are wrong. This act of removing someone from feeling centered and exhilarated and replacing it with making them dislike themselves is the core of what can feel like abuse. When someone is making you feel wrong, it is likely because they are in their own specific stage of grief processing and that is their medicine and is great for them. It's just not great for you and so it's time to look at it perhaps and see if there are tools that can be applied. From a Centered and Exhilarated perspective, this becomes very easy to recognize and to redirect the conversation to a more constructive place. If someone is asking you to be present for their unmet needs and you have lost calm and curious, you can set up a constructive boundary, either by asking if there is an option of taking a quick break to recharge, or postponing the topic, or excusing yourself to find a safe place to return to CEO. In each of these cases, it is important to recognize that in the abuse dynamic this will feel like breaking connection but that in healthy supportive relationships it can build connection and trust, creating a closeness by taking space.

When we've lost calm and curious it doesn't serve anyone. At that point we are isolated, in a defensive fear state. If someone attempts to make us feel bad for not being able to be present for them, this is perfectly valid for where they may be coming from on the 5 Stages of Grief. The both/and here is that it is also landing as abuse and that might not be a healthy thing and certainly we have tools for just that situation, as we've outlined above. The more they shame you and the more the power dynamic, the more abusive it can feel. And the more valid it is! What I mean is, they're not necessarily in the wrong, because this might be where they are at in their process and they may not be capable of anything other than destructive behavior at this point. It is not their job to save you from them, when they're in full on rage expression. It is important to remember that even if their actions are wrong, they are not wrong themselves and it is just where they are on their path. At the end of the day, you now have the tools to recognize when you are losing your exhilarated spectrum and choosing to set up a constructive boundary and politely remove yourself from the situation.

It is also important to remember that while Centered and Exhilarated is not intended to be a healing circle in the way it deals with trauma, that doesn't mean it can't invalidate or deny people who are in trauma. A lot of people who are looking for these tools might not understand that it is really really ok for people to be in an abuse dynamic or trauma cycle and that there are compassionate ways of gently addressing the desire for more healthy connection in these areas. We began this section of exploring being present with noting the importance of acknowledging where someone is at. It is important that we wrap up Orbit 4 with a quick recap of this principle. You can be centered and exhilarated and experiencing hard emotions all at the same time. They are not mutually exclusive and a lot of healthy connections and healing can start to come in from this space. As we start to express our desire for support in taking breaks from conversation, it is important to remember to acknowledge the negative emotions that have come up, that they are real, that they are important, and that they are perfect as they are. When brushing past topics that might make a conversation dive into negative mental rehearsal, it's important to first feel into whether those topics could use some acknowledgment first. Acknowledgement is always more important. It can't be overstated: it's really important to acknowledge the negative topic if someone is expressing it and not feeling acknowledged. In offering options for positive mental rehearsal, the object isn't to avoid the negative topic: it is to find a way to acknowledge the negative topic while still bringing up the option to talk about the more immediately uplifting topic, if that's where the person really wants the conversation to go. By bringing up the option and validating the more difficult topic, you've brought empowerment in and you've signaled that you are ready to support in all ways, which includes supporting yourself so that you can support others.

Empowership - Orbit 4



Not only is our boat big enough to hold many others onboard, not only are we able to take others down to the depths of sharing our gifts in a centered and exhilarated way with our deep dive submarine, now we can teach others how to build their own deep dive submarines. We have stepped firmly into mentorhood at this stage. We will frequently find ourselves tested by arguments and difficulty breaking out on deck and we will find that we easily have the answer at hand to settle everyone down, helping them to recognize the option of approaching difficulty when we're feeling good about ourselves and supported. We have become a master of tabling difficulty until a container can hold the topic with all members maintaining calmness and curiosity. The waters are getting rougher and the crew are feeling more at ease to unleash their true feelings. It's as if we have pirates on board sometimes. Cute pirates. The cuddly kind who just need to be reminded of their inner treasures from time to time in order to settle down.

Epicurus - Our Philosopher for Orbit 4

Epicurus was a student of Aristotle. He believed that every human is able to get in touch with their knowingness and wisdom body (the "Diemonionn"³⁵ of Socrates) through the path of following one's bliss. This was quite an advancement to the path self-inquiry and self-reflection outlined in the practice of Socratic questioning. Epicurus considered bliss to be the simple living that arises from following your heart's calling, while setting aside the pleasures that only cause pain in the long-run. It's easy to see the two virtues of Aristotle at play here, only guided now down a path of following one's bliss. When you add it all up, Epicurus intuitively understood the Harvard Business study from 2008, that we are smarter and more productive when we feel good about ourselves. Not only that, but we have everything we need already to know our path of bliss and follow it. It is a marvel that Epicurus was able to live this way, on a commune he called "The Garden", with many others who held similar beliefs, all encouraging each other to follow their hearts and live from their wisdom body, in 300bc. That's incredible! With Centered and Exhilarated, we are now able to map the path of bliss not to one path, but starting with two paths, as the left brain exhilarated path arises in connection to the right brain centered path. Beyond that, the path of the Orchestrator also arises, and so on. In honesty, I don't know if I would have discovered the centered and exhilarated paths to be distinct and separate, yet connected, if I wasn't raised in a Christian church. The beliefs espoused in Christianity are influenced directly by the schools of Socrates as well as Gnosticism, which viewed Aaron's Rod as a metaphor for the chakras³⁶. A wonderful example of one of the many gnostic metaphors

³⁵ <http://philosophizethis.org/socrates-sophists-episode-3-transcript/>

³⁶

<https://gnosticteachings.org/courses/gnostic-moses/3750-moses-the-exodus-and-the-staff-of-aaron.html>

throughout the bible is Psalm 23:4: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” Thou was used as the word for the experience of oneness with all beings: in other words, the centeredness spectrum of the right brain. Having access to the systems of chakras in the face of difficulty would also be exhilarating, no doubt. Masters of martial arts can train for decades to cultivate the ability to access their energy bodies during fearful difficult situations, as yet another example of how lofty a goal this is. Yet Epicurus had not brought in the aspects of cultivating our centered and exhilarated practice during increasingly difficult situations, as a means of honing our ability to live in this world. He chose to live in a commune separated from society in order to reduce the difficulty level of following his bliss. And who can blame him? That is why we’re placing Epicurus as the patron saint for Orbit 4. This is the level where we’ve mastered reducing our difficulty levels to where we can easily follow our path of bliss 85% of the time. This is the level where we are testing our edge by being present with difficult situations in small doses. As we move into the later orbits, we will see the difficulty level increase exceedingly, something Epicurus may have never imagined possible or even ideal.

Orbit 4 Review

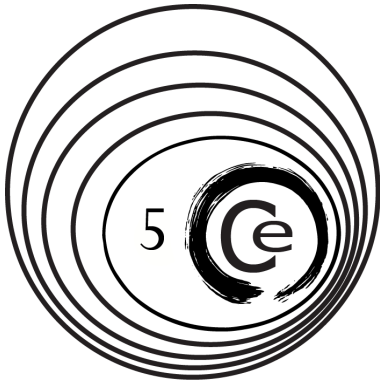
Orbit 4 Traits

- Feeling the We and actively supporting the other person to feel good about themselves during conversation (calm/curious) is no longer the ideal for trust building. Now the ideal becomes ensuring the other person is arriving at topics from their own inspiration and you are matching them when you are inspired as well. The Insight observer is active in this experience and much more support is able to be brought forth.
- There is also now the ability to maintain support of centered and exhilarated feelings during topics of *scarcity around wants* in conversation, more than 85% of the time. This additional area of maintaining access to the felt sense of truth has brought us up to feeling centered and exhilarated 95% of the time.
- Peace and Grateful Pride become helpful “return words” (words to help returning to a space of centered and exhilarated when losing calm and curious).
- Your ability for trust building is so present that you could be put on a pedestal easily, with codependency and disempowerment building as people defer to you. To diffuse this, you’ve learned to only show your skill or ability or knowledge when someone is asking out of shining eyes and inspiration. You’ve learned to no longer show the amazing sides of you when someone has lost their shining eyes, and instead, to empower them to do what they need, in their own unique way, to get back to their happy place.
- Ability to maintain support of centered and exhilarated feelings during topics where your conversation partner’s actions is the reason you cannot meet your core needs. This may be due to them following their inspiration and so this may be a permanent situation. You would not lose your centered and exhilarated in these conversations.

- Centered and Exhilarated themselves now become the most helpful “return words” (words to help returning to a space of centered and exhilarated when losing calm and curious).
- Feelings of Centered and Exhilarated are happening 95% of the time in one’s waking life. Losing calm and curious only happen for roughly 10 minutes a day, on average, or an hour a week, etc..

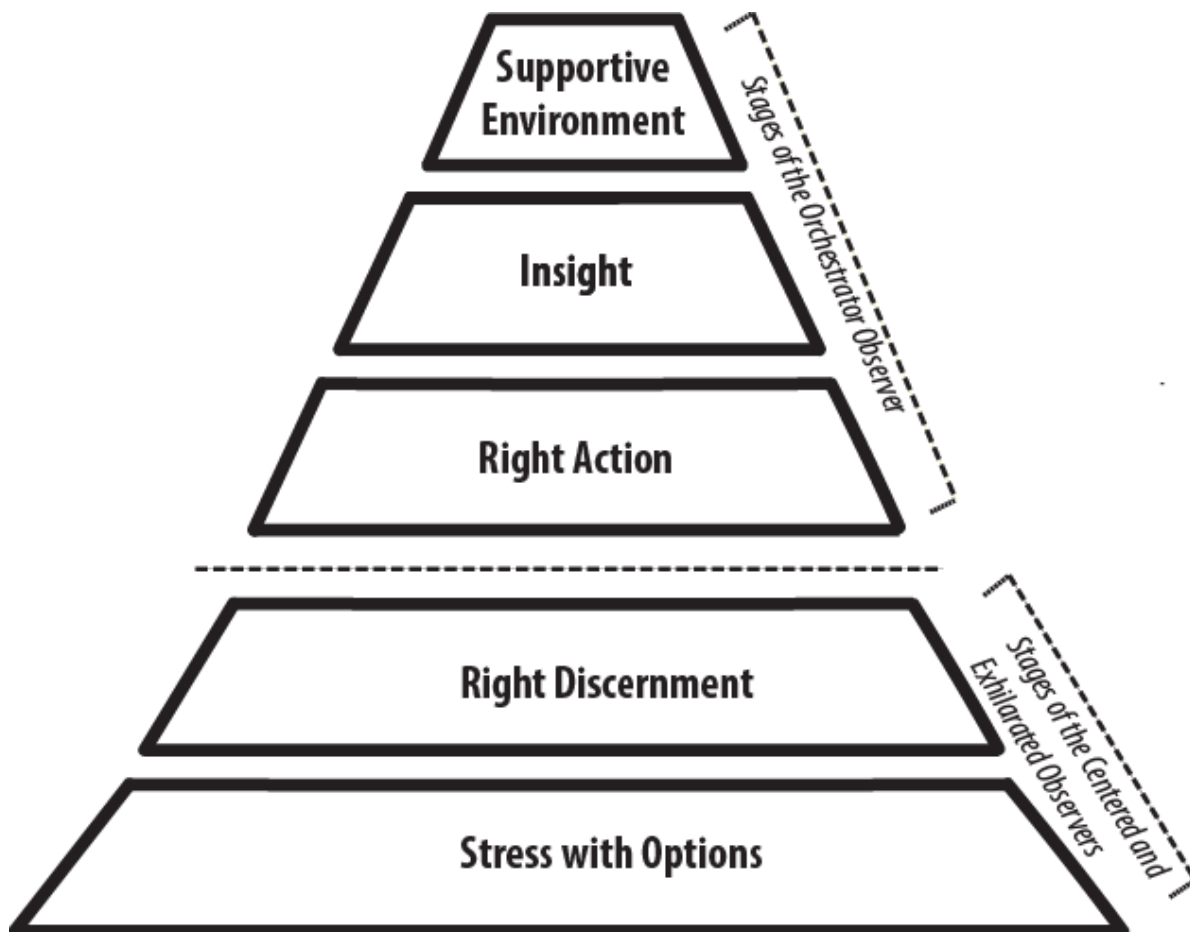
Orbit 5 Stretch Goals

- In the next orbit, the ideal for trust-building becomes ensuring not only that the other person is arriving at topics from their own inspiration and you are matching them when you are inspired as well, but you are also demonstrating that you will not bring up disempowering topics that build codependency in order for the container to be inspiring. Instead, the inspiring container is arrived at from the other person easily following their joy because you are so good at redirecting any advanced difficulties without showing off (which builds a power dynamic and in turn, codependency begins building).
- Ability to maintain support of centered and exhilarated feelings during topics of *scarcity around needs* in conversation.
- Knowingness and Inspired Choices become helpful “return words” (words to help returning to a space of centered and exhilarated when losing calm and curious).
- You’ve developed the ability to become invisible almost, to where your conversation partner is having the time of their life and they have no idea you’re actively a big part of the reason.
- Ability to maintain support of centered and exhilarated feelings during topics where you’re asking someone to leave the tribe, or you’re being asked to leave the tribe. This may be due to them following their inspiration and it being destructive to the well-being of the tribe. This could also be due to a misunderstanding where someone thinks you are the reason something destructive is happening to the tribe and so you’re being asked to leave. A tribe in this sense is any group of people that feel like home, or in the case of an intentional community, it could quite literally be your home.
- Having acclimated to centered and exhilarated feelings more than 99% of the time, those words “centered and exhilarated” no longer serve you as helpful, compared to simply allowing your body to go where it knows is the healthful place to be, where inspiration emerges and where the I of the left brain is in balanced coherence with the We of the right brain. Here, the I of the left brain is not nearly as identified with the stories of who you are, yet is still benefiting from the usefulness of all the exhilarated left-brains tools and skills, to channel centered inspiration through your body/lifetime to benefit yourself and others.



Supportive Environment (Orbit 5)

As you build relationships that become accustomed to the feelings of CEO, you're naturally creating a life that is supporting you feeling CEO. This supportive environment brings in so many more opportunities throughout the day to relish in more Right Action and Insight. This can be thought of as the passive experience of the passive experience of such wonderful active work. Remember that each element of Sword Raise stacks on top of each other:



Our ability to create a supportive environment wherever we go has added deeply to the experience of surrender and relaxation we have in our body, almost all the time now. Our ability to recognize an environment when it is supportive has also made life easier, helping us to find more situations where we can open up our replenishment and nourishment through the We-space. This is a far cry from the old paradigms of ego-development, where the We-space we removed completed from the picture. In those traditional modes of ego development theory, Healthy Ego would tend to be listed as the next stage just after Persona Shadow. Remember that Persona Shadow is the state where we are identifying with our thoughts and emotions, so that even our thoughts and emotions are having their own thoughts and emotions. The next stage, the movement to Healthy Ego, is about taking that step back into the observer, to associate with your thoughts and emotions without identifying with them. We're redefining Healthy Ego here to actually include the We-space. To recognize and acclimate to the experience that parts of our inspiration, our nourishment, and our replenishment actually exist outside our bodies, arising in the connection we have with all beings. In this chapter, we will go deeper into this awareness, as it is the final cultivation of the orchestrator observer and the RAISE stages (Right Action, Insight, Supportive Environment) that prepare the transition to unitive consciousness in the following orbit. So let's begin by looking more at the traditional ego development model, in order to have a baseline for comparing and contrasting. While there is some disagreement in the models with more than 4 stages, they each tend to include at least the following four stages:

1. Persona Shadow
2. Healthy Ego
3. Transpersonal
4. Unitive Consciousness

Again, Persona Shadow is seen as the state of identifying with thoughts and emotions. As we shift our consciousness to identify with our centered and exhilarated parts, we no longer identify with our thoughts and emotions. Instead, we associate to them for meaningful information, but the seat of our consciousness is clearly abiding in the experience of an observer. This shift in itself creates much more ease in life, rendering much of the previous difficulty as neutral, or easily navigable. The traditional paths of arriving at Healthy Ego have included such painful practices as ascetic mindfulness. With centered and exhilarated practice, we have arrived at Healthy Ego not only in a painless way, but in a way that is built to continue moving through the final stages of ego development: Transpersonal and Unitive Consciousness. These next two stages will come on their own when it is peaceful and easeful for the body/mind to allow it. The shift will mostly go unnoticed at first. It is not until looking back and understanding the shift from the new identity that one realizes the shift even occurred. These two remaining shifts in identification can be thought of as the shift to pure consciousness, followed by the shift to pure awareness. In shifting to pure awareness, there is no need to worry. You will not lose any of your cognitive faculties, because you've practiced staying exhilarated throughout this path of ego development. You will simply have more ease, less difficulty, more happiness, and a much greater capacity for insight to support others.

In Orbit 5, we have become an additional force of stability in any environment we enter. This seemingly magical occurrence is in large part due to our natural state of perspective taking. The very nature by which we think creates trust in a foundation of perspective taking to occur at any difficulty levels. This quickly leads to others seeing us as possible leadership figures, yet at the same time wanting to give us space, as a token of gratitude. Because of this strange paradox, we are able to offer much help to others, wherever we go, without having too much burden placed on us, to encumber us or tie us to any specific course of action. It as if the universe is reconfiguring itself to make our lives easier and more effective. And no place is that effect more pronounced than within teams, where we're working together to accomplish a common goal. That is why this stage of our observer cultivating and inhabiting a supportive environment is synonymous with what we will refer to as business level intimacy.

Business Level Intimacy

In Orbit 5, your identity is with the pure light of inspiration that can communicate clearly all the inspiration joyously bubbling forth from within. The centered and exhilarated sides of the brain have acclimated to a complete trust in your discernment having paved the way for safety in all situations. The seat of your consciousness has even shifted from identifying with the centered and exhilarated observers, to identifying with the Orchestrator Observer in which both centered and exhilarated observers arise. Wherever you go, there you are, almost regardless of the setting. Even in business meetings! For some reason, it is often the business meeting that presents the most challenge. It's something to do with the agenda and the time constraints and the culture of problem solving, all of which heavily leverage the fight/flight nervous system if we're not practiced at maintaining our parasympathetic bridge between the left and right hemispheres. Have you experienced a difficult business meeting? You could be in your workplace, working with friends on a team project or perhaps in a community living situation. No matter what your situation, business meetings will continue to bring up some of the most difficult topics. This is especially true if the business meeting is with people you live with. The thing that makes these topics so difficult is not only the added time element and the agenda of important topics to get through, but the fact that you all care so much! This seems to make everyone want to rush to get through the topics and suddenly, when it's already too late, there is this realization that all of the emotional work we could have been making space for actually got the short end of the stick. But you know what, nobody puts baby in a corner! That's a Dirty Dancing reference that I just love. It's important to remember our connection and empathy during difficult topics. These topics can range from the dishes continuing to pile up, or someone continually forgetting to buy toilet paper, all the way to needing to hold centered and exhilarated for a restorative justice process where the outcome will lead to you or someone else leaving the community. Regardless of the situation, if everyone is at Orbit 5, it really isn't stressful; instead it can actually be inspiring, nourishing, and replenishing to work through challenges with each other, no matter the difficulty level, when we can all hold centered and exhilarated.

You see, at this stage, difficult situations like these are not likely to make us leave our CEO experience anymore. Having acclimated to the trust in our bodies of feeling like we're in

CEO all the time, we have literally arrived at **being in the CEO experience more than 99.99% of our waking life**. So much so, that we may even forget what it's like to *not* be centered and exhilarated. You may even notice in situations where you lose calm and curious, it becomes surreal, as if we forgot how to use those muscles. It feels like our brain's intelligence is shutting down and we can't think straight. Because you know what? We're actually just that used to the expanded intelligence and capacity of the brain when we're no longer identifying with the small ego. We're just finally seeing clearly what was happening to us all those years, when we didn't have the added 31% of brain functioning talked about in that Harvard Business Review study in 2008. Sure there might be at most 10 minutes in a day where we lose CEO: perhaps driving when traffic becomes overly stressful, or working through a rare harrowing experience that brings up a lot of buried emotions. But it is amazing how quickly we return to CEO even in these intense situations. In Orbit 5, we have reached a place of trust that holding centered and exhilarated for ourselves and others is just as natural as breathing. We can even hold this supportive energy for the community during business meetings, when there are tight deadlines, an important agenda, and a room full of neighbors moving through difficult topics at a fast pace. This is what we call **business level intimacy**. This is an entirely new frontier. When this skill is mastered, a community can begin building connections for emotional intimacy during each and every business meeting. After all, this is where the difficult emotions come up and the most important work gets done at a community level. This is when the important topics that really matter to people are actually being discussed, sometimes when they've been put on the back burner for too long. Being able to do this work is a beautiful thing.

As difficult topics are met by a room that feels centered and exhilarated through and through, the concept of a difficult topic becomes increasingly rare for the group. When we can begin taking on difficult topics without losing CEO, we begin feeling into many more dimensions of information and context within the room. The concept of a community also takes on a couple new dimensions of support and emotional connecting. This type of community might be referred to as a *treibh* (pronounced "trave"). This is a word that comes from ancestral social knowledge in the celtic heritage. This next section will examine this concept of *Treibh* in relation to Centered and Exhilarated.

Treibh Level Intimacy vs. Just Operating

In Celtic heritage, *treibh* was the most widely used word for a group of people sharing in certain assets, responsibilities, and in some cases inheritance³⁷. The *treibh* typically consisted of the various families (*derbfhine*) and neighboring families who would pay rent to share the land and farming responsibilities. When families formed a cooperative in this way, the *treibh* was referred to as *Comaitches*. In matters of disputes, each *derbfhine* had their own unique way of settling disputes. If a dispute arose at the *Comaitches* level, the conflict resolution system of the *derbfhine* who owned the land would take precedence.

When we speak of difficult topics, we're talking about the types of charged and sticky topics (chickies) that can come up on a daily basis, some more difficult than others. At the *treibh* level,

³⁷ Ní Dhonnchadha, Máirín. "The guarantor list of Cáin Adomnáin, 697." *Peritia* 1 (1982): 178-215.

there are times when matters of high priority suddenly arise and with great urgency. Thankfully, there is restorative justice process for dealing with even the most challenging issues, such as removing someone from community for a time period, setting up a healing circle for them during that time period, and scheduling a reintegration circle for a future time period. Often times, if someone is sharing land, paying rent, and helping with responsibilities, but their actions are seen as destructive to the purpose, having a restorative justice process in place can be just the thing to do save the day! A facilitator at Orbit 5 could integrate CEO into the Restorative Justice Process, keeping a centered and exhilarated experience for all through even the toughest emotions. In the next section of this book, we'll take a look at the restorative justice process so you can see for yourself.

The 7 Habits of Highly Centered and Exhilarated People

1. **By nature, we're always wanting to support the centered and exhilarated qualities of a conversation** - We benefit greatly from conversation that feels centered and exhilarating. As a result, I simply would never say something with the intent to make a conversation lose the centered and exhilarated qualities. It goes too much against the grain of everything I'm striving for. I am very good at changing the topic or doing whatever it takes to keep the centered and exhilarated buoyancy in communication with others. So you can trust there is good intent, even when something seems difficult (unintended), because it is coming from a highly centered and exhilarated person.
2. **Centered and Exhilarated memories are no longer necessary for arriving at full whole brain health and integration.** That has become a natural state of perpetual healing, a part of the identity through which the world is perceived. Although centered and exhilarated memories are still a lot of fun for dialing up the inspiration. I don't think that ever goes away.
3. **You can no longer imagine a situation where you wouldn't want to repair with someone if a difficult topic came up in the relationship, so long as that someone is able to hold centered and exhilarated for them self and you while discussing the topic.** When both people can hold CEO for a difficult topic it becomes quite unnecessary to let too much time go by if someone wants to repair.
4. **You will always be honored by getting credit, but will never need it.** Even if several people steal each other's ideas of medicines to bring to the world, they'll be doing it out of inspiration and they'll naturally develop different audiences from each other, as certain types of people gravitate to their different personality types. You're now nurturing each person's inspiration without the slightest consideration of scarcity around idea theft.
5. **You've developed the ability to become invisible almost, when it is for the sake of empowering others,** to where your conversation partner is having the time of their life and they have no idea you're actively a big part of the reason.
6. **You now have unconditional love for all beings;** yet at the same time you no longer have friends in the way society views the word. It is really the orbit of the person that determines how inspiring and replenishing the relationships are now. Anyone Orbit 3 and higher is gold, pure gold! Orbit 2 can still be a lot of fun and deeply replenishing. Orbit 1 you just need to be resourced enough to hold the scaffolding to keep things centered and exhilarated. Roy Baumeister wrote a book called Willpower where he believes we only have 1.5 hours of willpower in us for holding space for things like an Orbit 1 circle, before we start to feel drained. So far, that seems to be about right, before food, a break, or some type of recharge is needed.
7. **Ultimate self confidence has become old news** - We are feeling extremely self confident 99% of the time, and much of that time in this society we are effortlessly hiding it, so as to not draw unneeded attention. It's just crazy to think that lack of confidence is a think of the past, forevermore.

Empowership - Orbit 5



Ok, obviously the boat is way too big now. We're likely throwing large community gatherings monthly, because it's easy to let others feel the We in a large setting. We're also likely hosting Centered and Exhilarated circles weekly, because it's easy and fun. Where once we lacked confidence, we've now forgotten what that feels like. Where once we may have read books or magazines for how to entice romantic relationships with members of the preferred sex(es), we're now putting quite a bit of energy into appearing invisible to those around us in order to reduce the difficulty levels from people falling in love with us and thinking everything is perfect only to be let down when the discussion arises that we only are looking for friendship. Our ship is now becoming the stuff of legends, and perhaps the captain is becoming a legend too, yet all we want is for others to get along. We no longer pine for validation because we have infinite validation within. World peace would be so much nicer than receiving affection. Hopefully, we have others at Orbit 3 at least, that we can hang out with and feel supported by. If you are Orbit 5 and there is no one at Orbit 3 for you to hang out with, I truly understand. I was there once too. It's not that bad, and it used to be way worse, before you were Orbit 5, I get it. But wow, what a difference it makes when others start reaching Orbit 3! In any case, I wish you further happy sailing, because the next two orbits are nothing less than magical, as if you've found the edge of the map and kept sailing.

Seneca - Our Philosopher for Orbit 5

In 49 AD, Seneca had become famous in Rome for espousing his founding views of an emerging philosophy known as Stoicism. This philosophy believed that Right Action came from Right Discernment. Each morning, a Stoic practitioner would remind them self in meditation that there will be advanced levels of difficulty throughout the day. As the difficulty arises during the day, they would then say to them self, “this is what I’ve been preparing for; this is what I’ve been practicing for”. After that, they would meet the situation with what was known as “positive indifference”, whereby they would not lose calm and curious. Positive Indifference was the idea that it is not helpful to lose our knowingness over matters of advanced difficulty that are out of our control. It is better to see them as neutral and in so to overcome them by not losing our self. This is similar to how someone might get angry for the rest of the day if their favorite football team loses a game. Did they have any control over that football team winning or losing? So why would they willingly sacrifice their knowingness over such an external occurrence. Positive indifference was separated from the concept of negative indifference, whereby someone has apathy to their own detriment. It was encouraged to cultivate positive indifference and not negative indifference.

Orbit 5 Review

Orbit 5 Traits

- The ideal for trust building has turned into ensuring that the other person is arriving at topics from their own inspiration and you are matching them when you are inspired as well, while demonstrating that you will not bring up disempowering topics that build codependency in order for the container to be inspiring. Instead, the inspiring container is arrived at from the other person easily following their joy because you are so good at redirecting any advanced difficulties without showing off (which builds a power dynamic and in turn, codependency begins building).
- Ability to maintain support of centered and exhilarated feelings during topics of *scarcity around needs* in conversation.
- Knowingness and Inspired Choices become helpful “return words” (words to help returning to a space of centered and exhilarated when losing calm and curious).
- Feelings of Centered and Exhilarated are happening 99% of the time in one’s waking life. Losing calm and curious for less than 10 minutes a day, on average, or roughly an hour a week.
- You’ve developed the ability to become invisible almost, to where your conversation partner is having the time of their life and they have no idea you’re actively a big part of the reason.
- Ability to maintain support of centered and exhilarated feelings during topics where your conversation partner’s actions is the reason you cannot meet your core needs.

This may be due to them following their inspiration and so this may be a permanent situation. You would not lose your centered and exhilarated in these conversations.

- Having acclimated to centered and exhilarated feelings more than 99% of the time, those words no longer serve you as helpful, compared to simply allowing your body to go where it knows is the healthful place to be, where inspiration emerges and where the I of the left brain is in balanced coherence with the We of the right brain. Here, the I of the left brain is not nearly as identified with the stories of who you are, yet is still benefiting from the usefulness of all the exhilarated left-brains tools and skills, to channel centered inspiration through your body/lifetime to benefit yourself and others.
- Your ability for trust building is so present that you could be put on a pedestal easily, with codependency and disempowerment building as people defer to you. To diffuse this, you've learned to only show your skill or ability or knowledge when someone is asking out of shining eyes and inspiration. You've learned to no longer show the amazing sides of you when someone has lost their shining eyes, and instead, to empower them to do what they need, in their own unique way, to get back to their happy place.
- The 7 Habits of Highly Centered and Exhilarated People, as noted earlier in this chapter, now hold true

Orbit 6 Stretch Goals

- As time passes in this state, all those neurons in your brain that created the original rift are slowly disappearing. New neuronal representations of healthy connected thought patterns are now being used. The trunks of neurons that built detours to navigate around feelings of connectedness are no longer useful. As they go away, the rift will heal further. Remember, the ten thousand rages comes from the hundred griefs that come from the ten traumas that come from the one rift. Neurons take time and calories to shift about so patience is all that is needed here for the stretch goal. The hemispheres of the brain are on the threshold of unitive consciousness already.

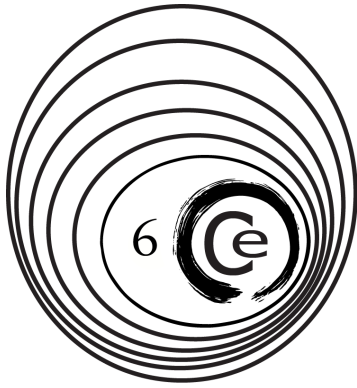
The Oneness Orbits

Oneness Practice in Cultivating the Observer

Identity Slowly Shifts from the Orchestrator to Oneness-as-Consciousness and then to Oneness-as-Awareness.

Orbit 6: Unitive Consciousness

Orbit 7: Primordial Consciousness



Orbit 6 - Unitive-Consciousness

"You have to ask yourself the question, Who am I? This investigation will lead in the end to the discovery of something within you which is behind the mind. Solve that great problem, and you will solve all other problems thereby." - Ramana Maharshi

"Individuation is essentially a spiritual journey. Only the man who can consciously assent to the power of the inner voice becomes a personality.(...) If the unconscious can be recognized as a co-determining factor along with consciousness, and if we can live in such a way that conscious and unconscious demands are taken into account as far as possible, then the centre of gravity of the total personality shifts its position. It is then no longer in the ego, which is merely the centre of consciousness, but in the hypothetical point between conscious and unconscious. The new centre might be called the self." - Carl Jung³⁸

A New Perspective on the Exhilarated Spectrum

When our body experiences CEO more than **85% of the time**, we feel like it is happening all the time³⁹. By taking a look at the Gottman's research⁴⁰, we can see their studies suggest that when a good feeling is happening 85% of the time, it feels like all the time. Likewise, if a negative feeling happens 15% of the time, it can feel like all the time. As we begin to feel CEO in our bodies more than 85% of the time, we enter into a new level of trust and our neurons get the signal that it's ok to stop using our old defensive neuron pathways. These protections were put in place when we would get emotionally wounded in our childhood while exhibiting a significant amount of vulnerability. For example, if we were deeply curious about something wonderful that we were sharing and a parent yelled at us because we were stressing them out. Depending on the dynamics, that type of an incident can make us feeling like our joyful actions resulted in loss of connection and a parental figure showing signs of weakness when we need them to take care of our needs. It is difficult as a child to imagine that a parent might not be able to take care of all our needs so in this type of circumstance, there is doubly a

³⁸ Storr, Anthony. *The essential Jung: selected writings*. HarperCollins UK, 2013.

³⁹ This parallels the Gottman's research that good things feel like they happen all the time when they happen more than 85% of the time, as discussed in Part II when talking about the Fully Exhilarated emotion on the Spectrum of Exhilaration.

⁴⁰ Gottman, John Mordechai, and Joan DeClaire. *The relationship cure: A five-step guide to strengthening your marriage, family, and friendships*. Harmony, 2001.

need to build neuron pathways that help us to not be so open and emotionally vulnerable next time, so that we aren't as hurt if our parents react in the same way. These are the types of neuron patterns that the body begins to let go of when we have been experiencing CEO more than 85% of the time. Instead of using the old defensive neuron pathways, we are able to begin the process of neurogenesis⁴¹ around healthy new neuron pathways, which help us to be more emotionally available in more difficult situations. This also helps to promote well-being and we tend to feel noticeably more resourced and empowered. This change in the way we feel about ourselves creates a sense of gravity that snowballs by staying in CEO more often, for longer periods of time, and returning more quickly when we leave. This change in ourselves also brings about new healthy habits and patterns. Concepts are introduced in this orbit to help provide reflection on the changes that are happening and to give a gentle reminder to take it day by day. Neurons that fire together, wire together, and survive together. That means that new neural pathways in the brain are wiring together as old pathways that are no longer used are falling away. This process takes time so we can be gentle with ourselves.

Once the brain finds out that it's safe to drop the defenses of the ego, it does. When you find yourself to be in CEO 85% of the time, it doesn't take long to suddenly find yourself living from CEO 99% of the time. You've experienced that already at this point! It's as if there is a gravity to this state of inner health that pulls us to release the identification with the ego, faster and faster the closer we get. When 99% of our waking life is spent in CEO, the brain begins releasing all the unnecessary deep underlying defenses that had us identifying with our ego. We begin simply, joyfully, and naturally moving along the ego development spectrum⁴² to live from nondual unitive consciousness. The speed of this process is in part due to the increasing capacity for complexity⁴³ from the exhilarated spectrum being brought into coherence. It is because this complexity has been arrived at through means of increasing difficulty in socialization that any difficulty in the transition from identifying with the ego to living from the source of awareness will go unnoticed. It's already been accounted for and overcome, slowly and over time, through the practice of Centered and Exhilarated. There is also no need to live out the remaining years of enlightenment in a cave in a mountain: the very path that brought us here was a path of social interaction and as such, society no longer poses a meaningful difficulty level. The exhilarated path prepared us to live in society, easily, and with compassion and love abounding. Enjoy!

At this point in our growth, difficult topics aren't much of a problem anymore. In fact, we may even look forward to them. This typically means we've made some progress in cultivating a supportive environment, to help stay in Right Action more often. This is the point where we're no longer losing CEO during difficult topics and we're essentially on a never-ending version of the 30 Day Challenge. We are basically masters at using discernment and it is truly a choice to be present with people. We can watch difficult topics come up several times a week, watching as

⁴¹ Doidge, Norman. *The brain's way of healing: Remarkable discoveries and recoveries from the frontiers of neuroplasticity*. Penguin Books, 2016.

⁴² Bennet, Angelina. *The Shadows of Type*. Lulu. com, 2010.

⁴³ Sharma, Beena. "Polarities and Ego Development: Polarity Thinking In Ego Development Theory And Developmental Coaching Beena Sharma & Dr. Susanne Cook-Greuter." (2010).

we start to get constricted, noticing our experience of CEO and relaxing into it, and all without ever losing the exhilarated spectrum. This is quite an achievement, since the exhilarated spectrum is typically the first thing to go in stressful social interactions, soon after followed by centeredness. **The exhilarated spectrum is the empowered aspect of our mind and body that can protect centeredness in stressful social interactions.** What that means is, when we lose the experience of the exhilarated spectrum during a difficult situation, we also risk losing centeredness without even knowing when it left or remembering to bring it back in.

Bridging the Old Way and the New Way

At this point, the Centered and Exhilarated Observers have been subsumed into the Orchestrator Observer as one Unitive Consciousness. From here, there are many new possibilities, as well as moving into Primordial Consciousness at will, as we will explore in the next chapter. This is all very similar to what Nisargadatta Maharaj would speak about in the transition of ego from Mahadakash to Chidakash and finally to Paramakash⁴⁴.

- **Mahadakash** is the egoic state of identifying with your thoughts and emotions.
- **Chidakash** is the egoic state of identifying with your full Unitive Consciousness, where both hemispheres of the brain have healed the rift and are acting as one. Since we have arrived at this experience through the practice of centered and exhilarated, we also have the added benefit of an easy playful way of facilitating others to reach the same state of ego development, without needing the safety of living away from society. With CEO, the difficulty of society poses no threat to our ability to nurture the state of unitive consciousness.
- **Paramakash** is the third movement in identification that Nisargadatta speaks of. This is what we refer to as Primordial Consciousness, a place of vast experience and awareness immersed in oneness. We will explore this more in the next chapter.

When there is a gravity to this CEO Self the concept of identity is still present yet it is emanating from the source of consciousness instead of identifying with consciousness itself. These are movements of ego development that have been talked about for thousands of years and are only now being understood from a neuroscience perspective. Having this new understanding of the old way can even bring about additional insight. In the ancient ways of understanding ego development, many gurus would dive very deeply into the centeredness spectrum where the brain is capable of observing the universe from a sense of oneness. Nisargadatta was one such guru who was magnificently capable of even speaking from that space as well. When you combine these ancient yogic systems of ego development with UCLA Professor Dario Nardi's work with EEGs to map the Jungian Functions across the Left and Right sides of the brain, as well as UCLA Professor Dan Siegel's research into the 4 Ls of the Left Brain, it then becomes clear, the neural representations of at least a part of the experience

⁴⁴ I Am That by Nisargadatta Maharaj

Nisargadatta must have been referring to. In his book “I Am That”, Nisargadatta even states that while he is talking to the questioner, he is talking from a state of Paramakash, yet he is even beyond awareness of the body or of separation. A state that experiences oneness with the universe. This is a nondual state. Yet how could he be talking? To no longer have awareness of the body there would not be an exhilarated spectrum to make sense of things from the left brain. Most likely the right brain has no concept of time or space; those qualities comes from the 4 Ls of the left brain (linear, logic, language, and literal). It also functions with the Default Mode Network sense of Selfing. Yet it is completely possible, as you are readily aware when experiencing CEO, to feel the part of you that does not sense separation (right brain; oneness with all beings and the universe; centeredness) while also completely acknowledging the separateness (left brain; 4 Ls). This is where people can sometimes refer to quantum experiencing: they are experiencing the finite tools of the 4 Ls in coherence with the depth and complexity of a centered experience. Tantric practitioners are also well familiar with this experience, as they link deep centeredness to tools and applications. One such application is a foundational understanding of tantra that the brain is able to become aware of stimulus to a much broader and richer experience when the body moves slowly. Through this understanding, non-verbal movement can become greatly healing. Or the zen master of archery⁴⁵, who is able to draw the bow back perfectly with just a breath and release an arrow across a distance of 100 yards into the bullseye of a target while blindfolded, all from their coherence of spirit and mind. Or any other discipline where a master is capable of performing with systems of intense left and right brain coherence. With examples like these, it could very well be possible to bring even a piece of this Paramakash ego identity into social interaction, by dialing back the centeredness and bringing in the exhilarated experience. It is possible that if the yogis of yore also had access to recent neuroscience learnings, such as recent understandings of the Default Mode Network⁴⁶ and the two separate subnetworks of Selfing⁴⁷, that today’s social tools could be even more inspiring and powerful! The Default Mode Network is a recent finding that our brain is actually burning a large portion of calories when we are at rest. What is it doing? As it turns out, there are neural impulses called cortical avalanches that are suppressing our muscles from twitching, now that we are using our verbal cognitive layer and other aspects of our brain in new ways. When we using the same areas of our brain that have separate functions, the electromagnetic field and energetic pulses could trigger all sorts of involuntary spasms if it weren’t for these cortical avalanches. Yet these waves of spasms-suppression across our brain serve another function because they arrive in the form of thoughts. Some people refer to it as the monkey mind: all those thoughts in our head, seemingly useless as if they were monkeys in the forest chattering away. Further study has revealed that those thoughts have evolved within two distinct subnetworks of our default mode network and they perform a function called Selfing. Those thoughts are actually helping us organize our response to events that have not yet occurred. One of the two systems is outside of our concept of time and space and is on the right side of our brain. The other system is more linear and helps with analytic reasoning. Perhaps if the

⁴⁵ Herrigel, Eugen, Richard Francis Carrington Hull, and Ralph Blum. *Zen in the Art of Archery*. New York:: Pantheon Books, 1953.

⁴⁶Self in time and Self in Other <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2848443/>

⁴⁷*The Default Mode Network and The End of Suffering* by Gary Weber

ancient wise sages were around when these studies were being performed they could get excited, jump in, and assist with the experimenting! With all that brain power it might even be possible to someday achieve the fullest states of paramakash while also having awareness of the body! Who knows? There's only one way to find out!

Equipose and the Difficulties of Awareness

In the past, caves and monasteries were popular places for practicing centeredness. It is no wonder these remote locations were separated far from society: it's hard to keep centeredness during the social interactions that occur in city life. In addition to the lack of support for CEO in our society, there is also the mirror neuron system (MNS) which is transferring the feelings of others into our own body. These feelings can be hard to handle, when someone is experiencing the feelings of self-shaming or feeling not worthy, or not deserving of love. If a conversation brings up a difficult topic and someone in the room feels shame, if you are feeling centered, you will actually be able to pick up on their shame as constrictions in your own stomach. This problem may even be a bigger problem for female bodied people, as Dr. Yang's studies at the Institute of Neuroscience⁴⁸ suggest the possibility that women may tend to have a larger mirror neuron system than their male bodied counterparts. The mirror neuron system (MNS) is the system responsible for mirroring other people's emotions in our own body!

Thankfully, with the exhilarated spectrum we can have conscious access to tools that bring in separation from specific feelings if needed, while maintaining connection with our centeredness. Having this manner of filtered access to our own centeredness in social interactions is very valuable and we're lucky to have this as adults. We can help us support the CEO in others during difficult situations and it feels great. It makes sense then that childhood can be so hard sometimes. Without education in our society on how to access these whole brain experiences in protected ways during difficult situations, children can quickly put up walls and not remember to take them back down when the coast is clear. Of course, this is a great ability children have, to put up the walls in the first place. The walls protect us from feeling vulnerable experiences when we are little. This typically happens when we experience shaming behavior during expressions of curiosity at a young age. For example, if we're really excited and we want to show a butterfly in our hand to an adult who is under-resourced and needs a break, they might say something hurtful in a moment when we are most open and vulnerable. The good part here is that as these moments add up, what's actually happening is we're building neuron trunks in our brain as representations for patterns and habits that can protect our centered experience against further shaming behavior. The bad side effect is when we forget to take the walls back down. As we grow past puberty, we begin to have the capacity for understanding how to bring in the exhilarated spectrum in social interactions, to begin recovering our full centered experience. We begin to make these connection, this time, with the exhilarated spectrum present. We can still take the walls down now, when we want to, because we have a choice. Because we have discernment and we have tools. We protect our vulnerable true self because we know deep down that it is an experience worth protecting. And we can

⁴⁸ Yang - MNS larger in women: [2009 study at the Institute of Neuroscience](#); [larger TPJ system in men](#)

uncover our true self when it is time because we've been able to hide it and protect it all this time. That is truly worth celebrating. Life isn't any easier necessarily, because you can now see things from a wider perspective and have more empathy for the suffering of others. You can also more clearly see the responsibility we have as humans to take care of each other and to create systems that support collaboration culture. Life can be more difficult along the way as the process is unfolding, but it is also more manageable because you now have so many more options and tools to help out in difficult situations. This ability to deal with increasing difficulty as it emerges in our awareness can feel like an experience of equipoise; an expression of our divine being.

The Identity Shift from Orchestrator to Unitive-Consciousness

In Orbit 5, your identity was with the pure light of inspiration that can communicate clearly the inspiration constantly bubbling forth from within. The centered and exhilarated sides of the brain have acclimated to a complete trust in your discernment having paved the way for safety in all situations. The experience of the orchestrator has become more helpful as a portal to returning to center, than perhaps the separated experiences of centered and exhilarated had once been. It is only through those separated experiences that the orchestrator could arise, so they certainly served their purpose! Even now, the orchestrator experience is less-expansive than the state of unitive-consciousness that we are now abiding in. Leaving this state of unitive consciousness to fight/flight is extremely short-lived and rare. Such flare-ups typically signal the emergence of an early-life trauma that hasn't been revisited in years. Even revisiting it now is merely shining a light on it, that the deeper connections as traumas from our early life no longer serve any purpose, so the quick dip into fight/flight is like saying goodbye for the last time, as the disconnect between hemispheres around a topic that once posed advanced difficulty is now repairing it's connection to the whole. In this way, all our disconnected parts are reclaimed and brought into the coherence of our vibrant beingness.

Lao Tzu - Our Philosopher for Orbit 6

Lao Tzu lived in the 4th century BC and wrote a whole book of poetry juxtaposing centered and exhilarated concepts, to illuminate the path of living in balance with both the soft and the firm, the yin and the yang. You can quickly see in his prose how he is finding the benefit of harmonizing the linear and rigid elements of the left brain with the yielding and filling elements of the right brain. In so doing, this became the cornerstone to a way of life known as Taoism.

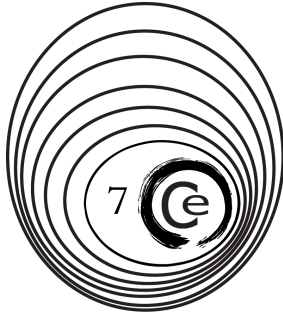
Orbit 6 Review

Orbit 6 Traits

- Having more than acclimated to centered and exhilarated feelings more than 99.99% of the time, those words (centered and exhilarated) no longer serve you as overly helpful, compared to simply allowing your body to go where it knows is the healthy place to be. Where inspiration emerges and where the I of the left brain is in balanced

coherence with the We of the right brain. At Orbit 6, the I of the left brain is not nearly as identified with the stories of who you are, yet is still benefiting from the usefulness of all the exhilarated left-brains tools and skills, to channel centered inspiration through your body/lifetime to benefit yourself and others.

- You now have the ability to maintain support of centered and exhilarated feelings during topics where you're asking someone to leave the tribe, or you're being asked to leave the tribe. This may be due to them following their inspiration and it being destructive to the well-being of the tribe. This could also be due to a misunderstanding where someone thinks you are the reason something destructive is happening to the tribe and so you're being asked to leave. A tribe in this sense is any group of people that feel like home, or in the case of an intentional community, it could quite literally be your home.
- In Unitive Consciousness, you are beginning to grow more awareness around the spidey-sense. This is an immediate experience of what is helpful or not helpful to the We-space, in an experiential way, as you move about. In the next chapter, this sense will be more as it becomes louder and is observed to be actually a basic part of our core functioning as humans once we've healed the rift between our two brain hemispheres and they can function in optimal complexity and coherence as they are quite good at doing.



Orbit 7 - Primordial-Consciousness

In Orbit 6, your identity is with the pure light of inspiration, clearly communicating the inspiration from within. Both centered and exhilarated sides of the brain have acclimated to a complete trust of your discernment, creating safety in all situations. The experience of the orchestrator has become even more valuable in helping return to center than the separated experiences of centered and exhilarated had once been. It is only through those separated experiences that the orchestrator could arise, so they have certainly served their purpose! Yet even the orchestrator experience has proven less valuable than the state of unitive-consciousness.

In unitive consciousness, any experience of fight/flight is like a distant memory, appearing rarely and short-lived at that. Such flare-ups signal the emergence of an early-life trauma that hasn't been revisited in years and is now healing in the safety of the light of the tao as it is experienced fully throughout the body, mind and spirit. From this place, the traumas from our early childhood no longer serve any purpose in protecting us. We no longer need the protection. So the quick dip into fight/flight is like saying goodbye for the last time, as the disconnect between hemispheres around the topic is repaired and the rift is healed. The meaning is more clear now when I say: "The ten thousand rages come from the hundred griefs that come from the ten traumas that come from the one rift." In unitive consciousness, all our disconnected parts are reclaimed and brought into the coherence of our vibrant being as we live and communicate from the tao.

In Orbit 7, we are now visiting and acclimating to a shift in identity from unitive-consciousness to awareness itself. As this process occurs, the experience will feel very much like consciousness, just without the faculties of separation in sight, hearing, thinking, and so on. These faculties of our healthy ego will "zero out" as I like to say, or in other words, the concept of separation will disappear, leaving only oneness and awareness. In this state of awareness, the energetic capacity to discern what is healthy or what will cause difficulty is surprisingly still omni-present. Even more-so in fact! With the ego out of the way, there is no longer a 300ms lag time from the abstracted decision making process that used to help us in discerning between what is healthy or destructive and the impulse to take action. In fact, even the type of action to be taken arises immediately in this state as part of the tao. This is the primordial consciousness. It certainly is consciousness! Just without any lag time and without committing to any certain type of action.

Speaking and Moving from Primordial Consciousness

Speaking from the Primordial-Unitive State (aka the Hybrid State)

When you are immersed in primordial consciousness, the inspiration to speak can arise. Embedded in that inspiration is certainly the content to be spoken: the meaning that will resonate once it has been spoken. This inspiration is the tao which cannot be spoken. However there are ways to use words and convey context that are close enough to the tao that much can be communicated and a shared vicinity can be arrived at. To do so, it just means pulling in some of the faculties of the unitive consciousness of our whole brain experience that is capable of finding words and speaking them. Since you have arrived at this state from a centered and exhilarated path of practice, you will also undoubtedly be pulling in the faculties that are aware of how each being in your vicinity likes to be supported. If you already have a relationship with them, you will also know which words are better choices for communicating the meaning/tao that will likely find resonance in the We, once spoken. When the inspiration/tao comes to be spoken from the primordial state, it is almost always coming from the We, so what it is spoken, if there are other beings around, they too will resonate with it in a way that furthers their connection to their own access points of the We. There are many beings who have spoken from the primordial state in this way, for such a long time, that their immersion is grand and the inhibitions that might arise from the unitive state are reduced to barely imperceptible. Nisargadatta Maharaj is one such being. Over time, this hybrid state of unitive-primordial consciousness grows further from appearing like unitive and closer to appearing like primordial, though they are both present.

Acting Solely from the Primordial State

There are also many actions that can be taken in this state without stepping back to unitive-consciousness. These primordial actions can be taken more often and for longer periods of time as the body acclimates to movement that is aligned with primordial-consciousness itself. In this chapter we will explore:

- primordial consciousness in sitting and standing meditation
- primordial action
- plant-dieting and other ways to enhance our omni-present health radar in our body and in our connection with all beings
- rekindling our connection to natural living, in oneness with mother-nature and in a separateness that honors, cherishes, respects, and nourishes that connection through primordial action and unitive-consciousness based integrations of new concepts learned from the spirit-world.

Primordial Consciousness Meditation

Meditation

Step 1- Give it a try!

Lying down, sitting, or standing, simply allow yourself to stop breathing. What I mean by that is to stop the act of choosing when to breathe and instead sit back and watch your body choose the fullness and duration of your inhales and exhales. It takes a couple breaths before the body catches on that you're handing over the controls, so your exhale may seem to just sit and linger for far too long on your first couple breaths. Soon the body will start to breathe on it's own. Your only job here is to watch what your body is doing with your breathing and surrender to it. In order for your body to have the maximum range of breathing options, it will also be important to relax any constricted muscles. Whether you're lying down, sitting, or standing, it can be helpful to notice which muscles are constricted whenever your body chooses to inhale. Then you can relax that muscle on the next exhale. As your body inhales you can notice if that muscle is still tight, or if maybe another muscle is seeming tight. As you exhale, relax the next muscle, and so on. Before long, your body will be in a deeply relaxed state, even though you are splitting your attention between watching your breathing and watching the constriction and relaxation of your muscles. Ok, your turn now. Give it a try!

Step 2 - What did you notice?

After watching your breathing for 20 - 30 minutes, it's good to take a break to journal and reflect on what you noticed. You can have a journal set aside specifically to jot down what you notice in each meditation practice. Or if you're not the journaling type, you might want to just read the next section of my reflections on the practice and see how it compares to your own.

My (River's) Reflections

Maybe you noticed this: Once the body realizes I'm letting it choose the duration and fullness of each inhale and exhale, it will tend to initiate with a couple max capacity inhales in the upper chest area. This is a pattern I often observe. Did you observe this too? If so, perhaps you will begin to notice that your body/brain seems to have a mind of its own when it comes to how it wants you to move the muscles that surround your lungs. The intercostal muscles, for example, are muscles on the back side of your rib cage that control the openness or contraction of your upper rib cage. As you surrender your intercostal muscles to allow your rib cage to expand fully, your lungs will want to fill up as much space as possible. Then after a couple of these breaths, the body seems to be entering in a sort of password, with short breaths and long breaths, each targeting different areas of the upper and lower lungs with short shallow breaths, or long full breaths that only fill up the upper part of the lung and don't even require much of an exhale before starting another long full inhale, and so on. It's as if your body was entering into what I like to call a cheat code. That's a term from video game culture where you enter a code that

unlocks some super power for your character. Except in this case, it's like our body is entering a cheat code with strange patterns of short and long breaths. Surrendering fully to what is happening is the first step for your body to begin really registering that you are letting it take the reigns.

The next step is to start assisting the body, to help the brain realize that not only is the mind complying, but it is actually being supportive.

Wiggle Assist

I find this assist to be the most helpful. You can practice it by breathing in and out as small a breath as possible and as quickly as possible. Try it in your lower abdomen and also in your upper chest. Now dial it back to maybe 5% of the total energy expenditure, to where the mind is asserting less of a force than the brain, so that the stomach can actually breathe the way the brain wants it to, as you surrender to the body/brain's wants. In this case, you're simply adding a bit of a wiggle to the process, in order to feel if pushing the expansion is helpful or destructive. The same goes for increasing the speed of the chest's collapse, or the collapse of the lungs. With the wiggle, you can support what wants to happen by giving it a little umph where it's wanted, and you can also be aware of what direction is actually unsupported. Once you get the hang of it, you can dial it back to 1%, where it's more a matter of your imagination than anything, wiggling right along with your breathing and the expansion/contraction of the musculature in your torso. This level of support allows the mind and brain to dance with each other while the brain has the lead. The next step is to zero out the mind.

Zeroing Out the Mind

As human beings, our five senses have evolved over time to pick up on specific frequency ranges of energy. The energy might be transmitted as a pressure wave, such as how our tympanic nerve can translate the frequency of pressure differentials pushing and pulling the medium of air/water/etc. in our ears to create sound. Light and sight are also a frequency based phenomenon, though this time the frequencies are waves of light and energy. When we touch an object, it's solidness is a perception created in our mind in relation to how slowly the matter is vibrating. Gas vibrates at a very quick frequency. Solid matter vibrates at a very slow frequency. Now imagine all of the other living creatures in the world having their own senses with their own frequency spectrums. At the end of the day, we've evolved to focus our mind to make sense of the frequencies most helpful for our survival and to discard the frequencies that are redundant, less useful, or simply unused. When we lived as people of place, we had senses that could help us translate signals and connect with the nature around us in order to find food and nourishment as well as safety and wisdom from communion. Now that we no longer make use of that data, our mind is not listening for those senses. Interestingly, our brain is still picking up on all that data before it is discarded, so we can still tap into those senses if we want to. We will go into this in great deal later in this chapter. For now, I'm only bringing it up to help give a sense of what we're going for. We're wanting to recognize our five senses as aspects of our mind that arise just as our thinking arises, or our focusing on our breath. When we can see that these are all elements of our psyche, we can witness that all this stimulus is actually much different in reality than we perceive it. For example, our eyes turn our vision upside down for us but the

actually eyes are physically perceiving images in the energetic sense as inverted images. In order to begin to feel our primordial-consciousness we will firstly need to zero out the mind. It is quite simple to do so. As you're meditating and allowing your body to simply be, let your vision and the sounds you are hearing and the thoughts you are thinking and the experience of your breathing simply all become one. Keep the seat of your conscious experience aligned with the sensations of your breathing for now, since that is the easiest place to maintain oneness for longer periods of time, as the breath is an underlying process in the evolution of our brain. Let all these aspects of your psyche flow together, while you experience your body breathing, in oneness with the breath, the sounds, the vision, and the thinking. As this occurs, you'll notice you can still feel the experience of the observer. The thinking tends to disappear here, which is our first hint that our thinking requires the perception that our psyche has an aspect of separateness within it. Separateness of our sights, of the sounds we hear, and so on. As the quality of separateness disappears and we experience only oneness of all our senses, we are now in a state of primordial consciousness. You can simply rest in this state for healing and nourishment whenever needed, as it is greatly nourishing. You can zero out to allow the subconscious to process through the events of the day. You can also integrate this primal-consciousness with societal interaction! Thanks to all our work in developing the centered and exhilarated path to unitive-consciousness, we can actually mingle in society in a state of pure energy. Our primordial-consciousness is maximizing the flow of our spidey sense to our brain. From this state we can feel in our stomach the same signals that come through in unitive consciousness, though much more loudly in this state, as there isn't anything else to muddy the signal. The only trick is to learn how to move our body in a way that doesn't lose the primordial-consciousness. We will explore primordial movement next.

Primordial Action

Movement from primordial consciousness can quickly enter into unitive consciousness and lose touch with primordial consciousness in the process. It is easy to feel an intention or intuition from primordial consciousness and then move to unitive consciousness to speak it out loud. This works because you're staying in connection with the energy of primordial consciousness. Unfortunately, there is no monitoring system in place, yet, to know when you have lost that connection. Can you recall your practice in Orbit 2, when you were first learning about the Exhilarated Observer acting as a monitoring system for the Centeredness Observer? Do you remember learning how losing the experience of exhilaration meant there is no way of knowing when you're losing centeredness until it's already gone? Well we're back at the same concept, except now it is the dance between unitive consciousness and primordial consciousness. How can we have a monitoring system to know when we're losing our connection between unitive consciousness to primordial consciousness? As it just so happens, there is a lineage that exists in the world that has already solved this problem for us. There may be many lineages that still exists to this day, but I have only come into contact with this one specific lineage myself, so I will list it here in some detail. It is known as Qigong. I bet you were expecting something much more extraordinary than that, weren't you? Nope, that's it, simply Qigong. The lineage I am familiar with is Hunyuan Qigong, which comes from the Chen lineage of Qigong and Tai Chi.

Here's how it works:

There is a specific type of energy known as Chi, that arises from primordial consciousness, and can act as a method of staying in touch with primordial consciousness during movement. In fact, once you become acquainted with the feelings and experiences of your chi energy, they can even direct your body to move in a way that is in harmony with your primordial consciousness, so that you are moving in a way that is in total flow with oneness, in connection with all beings.

I spent a good 20 years practicing qigong before I first felt my chi. In the early part of those 20 years, I had mastered the experience of opening my 7 chakras and feeling the electromagnetic energy between my hands. I still had not felt my chi at that time, though I thought chi was pretty much all the energy I was playing with. About half way through, at the 10 year mark, I had learned to circulate my energy in the small microcosmic orbit as well as the large microcosmic orbit, both forwards and in reverse. The sensations were so profound and obvious that I was certain I was feeling my chi. I was not. As time passed, I had an out of body experience, a 4 day period of kundalini awakening where I lost my personality, and more strange phenomenon that I was certain was related to chi opening up my body. At the 15 year mark I had begun practicing the Condensing Breathing technique, bringing the energy inwards to my bone marrow on each breath, converting the chi into jing so that I could circulate it up to my crown and convert it into shen energy. Or so I thought. I was not feeling my chi. As it turns out, I was merely bringing the electromagnetic energy from my body into my bone marrow and circulating it around my microcosmic orbit. Don't get me wrong, this is still a really healthy thing to do! But I was not yet in touch with my chi. And then one day, while practicing the condensing breathing technique, I noticed a separate energy that was flowing inwards and outwards, almost like a breath within my body. It was moving in relation to my breathing but in an entirely new way, with a very vivid and magical feeling that I had not felt before. I thought I had discovered a new energy and I was elated! However, as it turns out, I had happened to locate the experience of chi for the first time, and I now had to understand that everything I was doing prior to that was not actually practicing qigong or tai chi. I'd love to say that I was practicing tai chi and qigong quite well, just without the chi. Although I have since learned from my tai chi masters that tai chi was actually invented from "the hidden ones" who lived in the forest who were devising ways of staying with their primordial consciousness during movement by letting the chi guide the movement. "The hidden ones" were members of society who chose to maintain a strict diet and live in the forest away from people so that they could cultivate their connection with spirit and with nature. There was a time when the hidden ones would rarely if ever come into society if they maintained a strict lifestyle of practice. As time passed, some of the hidden ones would enter into society on purpose and live in brothels, or as thieves, or any other type of despised lifestyle, as a means of testing their ability to maintain living in a virtuous consciousness without falling victim to the vices they surrounded themselves with. Although when the hidden ones lived in society, they did not practice tai chi in public. They chose to remain hidden. Some would meet in the dark hours of the early morning and practice tai chi until the sun would start to lighten the sky and then they would stop their practice. Over time, several schools developed from these hidden ones. The first school was the Chen school, from which came the Yang, Wushu, and several other popular

schools of tai chi, including the Hunyuan school, which is the lineage that I practice. This school was created within the last hundred years by Grandmaster Feng Zhiqiang as a way of helping students to quickly learn to feel their chi so that they could incorporate it with their form.

Hunyuan translates to the oneness of undifferentiated primordial consciousness (Hun) as it allows us to perceive its intent for expression in circles (Yuan). The thought here is that from Yuan can arise separation firstly in the form of opposing forces, which are known as yin and yang. But just prior to this shift in identity to the perception of consciousness in separateness, it is possible to behold the expression emerging as a circle, out, and back into itself again, continually, just prior to ever emerging in the world of separateness. This is Yuan, the mix of all the circles that exist of all intents dormant in the present moment, just prior to expression. Hun is the origin of all ideas, the vast, ubiquitous oneness of primordial consciousness, in connection with all beings.

So you can see, there is indeed a way that is well charted with a full lineage behind it, to learn how to sense chi, to feel the circles arising in the body, to train the body to move in ways that can become a conductor to any circular pattern of expression that arises from within, and to ultimately stay connected to primordial consciousness when moving about the world. With the added benefit of having arrived at primordial consciousness through the centered and exhilarated path of ego development, there are so many added benefits that arise in the meeting of Hunyuan Taiji and Centered and Exhilarated:

- *Community* - You can support others in an empowering way that helps them more quickly arrive at their own spiritual path to feeling their own chi. This is a step up from simply speaking to others from unitive consciousness (as informed from primordial consciousness), blowing their mind, and then moving on, to where they might feel dependent on wise gurus or religions for their path forward. You can show them that they already have the steps of their path forward within them. As a mobile force of primordial consciousness, now you can support others more effectively than ever before.
- *The Workplace* - You can support organizations to learn to move from primordial consciousness with a structure for organizational process that aligns to facilitating this rich experience in all aspects of workplace life.
- *Conflict Navigation* - You can be a supportive force in conflict navigation that not only translates to honest support in the present moment but does so in an empowering way, so that others don't need you in order to continue moving in a healthy direction.
- *Family Life* - I'm sure families love to feel centered and exhilarated, especially when it's supported by someone in a position of authority. Having the added context for support that arises from primordial consciousness is an added benefit. Think of it as the cherry on top when it comes to supporting others in an empowering way that does not reinforce dependency!

How to Feel Your Chi

If only it were that easy and I could tell you right now! I do believe this will be the first time in this book (but not the last; there is another) where I will need to direct you to a lineage that can help much better than I can. It's not that I can't offer some assistance, but there are Hunyuan

masters out there who have more than 60 years of experience cultivating their connection to chi as it is defined in the Hunyuan sense. Their ability to guide you in truly cultivating your relationship with your chi is far more than I could ever manage with words in a book. An especially easy entry point would be to take Damo Mitchell's online course. While he is not specifically coming from the Hun Yuan lineage, his lineage is more than sufficient to take someone through the first three years of developing the lower dan tien (not actually the dan tien, more like the chi bowl, the actual dan tien development is significantly advanced and comes in a much later stage, which he can also teach, but we'll call the chi bowl the dan tien for now, since everyone else seems to). Having a lineage with a person who can give you feedback is quite helpful, especially for correcting bad habits that could delay your progress. It's also because my words might lead you to think you're feeling your chi when you might simply be feeling one of your many energy bodies or nadis, like Ren 6 (aka "the near enemy" because people mistake it for the lower chi bowl and it ends up sapping their energy when they mistakenly attempt to amplify the felt sense of that location) for example. So I will instead leave you with a brief layout of terms that will help you get the lay of the land, so that you can identify an instructor that can actually help you.

Wu Ji - This is the standing posture used to cultivate the experience of chi. If your instructor is an expert in various long forms of tai chi but does not emphasize the importance of the Wu Ji stance for cultivating chi, it is possible that they too have never felt their own chi. You may want to move on to another instructor.

*"When I stand, the earth is in my hands. The universe is in my mind."
- Wang Xiangzhai*

Fan Si Gong - These movements are designed to cultivate a foundation for chi to flow. This is the core of Gung Fa (foundation training). Many teachers will ask the student to practice Fan Si Gong for 5 years or more before learning the forms. Otherwise, the forms could be learned devoid of chi and thereby lose their meaning.

Chan Si Gong - These movements are designed to cultivate a foundation for allowing chi to express itself fully in the body through the inherent dynamics that emerge within the interaction: expansion/contraction, raising/sinking, circular outward and circular inward. Here too, a Hunyuan instructor who has mastered the expression of their chi will likely request that you study Chan Si Gong alongside the study of any form, such as the beginner's simplified 24 form. After all, it is the Chan Si Gong that instructs the form to flow in the proper way and allows you to surrender fully to the expression of the chi, which then takes over the movements within the form and leads you. Without practicing Chan Si Gong, the form will be very stiff, forced, and will not be working to cultivate the chi expression within you as the form as originally designed to do.

Finding a Teacher

There are many incredible teachers out there. Searching your local listings for Hunyuan Taiji is a great place to start. Signing up for Damo Mitchell's course works well too. If an establishment is

dedicated to teaching Hunyuan it is more than likely that you will find a disciple of Grandmaster Feng Zhiqiang teaching there. He is the founder of Hunyuan Taiji. Aside from creating Hunyuan Taiji, Feng Zhiqiang is also known for creating the 48 movement form of the Chen style. He has cultivated many taiji masters around the world to be able to properly instruct the Hunyuan style of chi cultivation and movement in connection with primordial consciousness.

Rekindling our Connection to the Forest

When we were people-of-place, we knew what to eat and when to eat it. We knew where our food was coming from based on the myriad experience of our connection with all beings. As we created tools to facilitate more abundance, our separateness did not entirely overtake our immersion in the experience of oneness with the land and all beings. As abundance grew, we slowly forgot our need for relationship with nature and all beings. Many of us didn't notice the rift being created in our brains as we became controlling, avoidant, preoccupied, or flooded, when things didn't go our way. We no longer had the We space with all things to help in maintaining a connected whole being. We no longer existed in both oneness and separateness with mother-nature, in a way that honors, cherishes, respects, and nourishes that connection. We began to only exist from separateness. The experience of primordial action began to disappear. The usefulness of speaking and relating with language from unitive-consciousness became a lost art. The We space was beginning to hibernate in mankind, just beneath the snow of a long winter.

Many cultures today have been able to hold on to these experiences and beliefs in some way, but they have been decimated over and over again by the distorted actions of the modern world. We refer to these cultures as "cultures of memory". They can remember what it is like to live in relation with all beings as a whole society and are struggling to keep fanning those embers and flames, to hopefully light again in the not-to-distant future.

Now that we have found primordial consciousness. Now that we can speak from our hybrid unitive-primordial consciousness. In this experience, we can also abide with the beauty of what is possible, of what once was, and of the grief that is inextricably bound with the loss. We can feel deeply into this experience without losing our Self, because our traumas and griefs are clear enough now that we see the beauty, oneness and timelessness whenever we perceive grief, separateness and time. This primordial consciousness is the widest and deepest experience we've yet known of our true self; of what it means to abide in the tao. Of what it is like to realize we are coming back into relationship with nature, with the land, and with the forest. Now when we take a walk through the woods, it is different. We are the woods. We hear messages on the inner. We are able to diet plants and be in even deeper communication. We can care about preserving these experiences by helping to protect the rainforest and any other effort of activism without losing our Self. We can return to a quiet home and lifestyle in the forest. We may have found the means to retire in abundance. We may live in elegant poverty. But now we have the option of living in nature once again, of building a village to live with, of

apprenticing in lineages and cultures of memory to facilitate the journey. We can return to a diet that is informed by our connection with the circadian rhythms and interplay between our bodies and the land, the climate and weather patterns, the biodiversity and the changes with each season. This is where the book of Centered and Exhilarated ends. The purpose of this book was to find a way to communicate this experience to you, the reader, with words and practices that allow you to engage in the gravity of love that will guide you through the slipstream of observers. I wish you well as you continue to follow your unique journey. I give you this hug and kiss on the forehead as I connect to you across time and space through the We of all beings. I send you this love as I connect from my own beauty, grief, oneness and separateness, to you, the reader. And I share with you this smile of knowingness, the laughter of the cosmic giggle, and a wink for the magic yet to be discovered.

Carl Jung - Our Philosopher for Orbit 7

Carl Jung not only created systems for psycho-therapy out of the dynamic and static aspects of the masculine and feminine, but he also linked them to his personality type functions. He spent his life moving from a centered and exhilarated mindstate to bring about as many tools to the world as possible. He also recovered the Nag Hamaddhi from Egypt and translated it, so that the world could have an understanding of early Gnostic philosophy. This also helped modern society to uncover that gnostic societies were referring to the same wisdom body as Socrates, when he referred to his wisdom body as "Diemonionn". We have since learned that the Gnostic societies referred to this wisdom body as Sophia. She was said to originate from the highest planes of existence and even created consciousness herself. The consciousness she created was then cut off from the awareness planes in which she lived, but the human body is said to be able to connect directly with Sophia, to become aware of consciousness while being consciousness itself.

Summary

It seems that once we reach business level intimacy, we certainly have our work cut out for us! Thankfully, the work is joyful to the core and all the effort and difficulty can be shared with fellow *treibh*. The basics of the seven orbits have now been covered. Up next, we will be jumping into what an organizational structure might look like when it includes roles, processes, policies, and decision making structures that reinforce the self-growth and CEO experience of it's members. This new type of organization is known as a Ceocracy (pronounced: see-ock-racy). Up ahead we have laid out the blueprint to setup a Ceocracy for yourself.

Orbit 7 Review

Each chapter will have this box at the end of it, highlighting some of the traits and stretch goals for the current orbit. Keep in mind that a trait is anything the tends to occur 85% of the time or more. A stretch goal is what the next step would be, to turn a practice into a trait.

Orbit 7 Traits

- Operating at Orbit 7 often looks like moving slower than the world around you, as if you're more in touch, more connected, more in relationship with the world around you and within you. For the most part, this is actually true. When we move to quickly, we lose the sixth sense that comes from our relationship with nature and presents itself through our mesentery, or in other words, our second brain. The mesentery can be easily disturbed with jostling, so it's natural to adopt more of a glide when moving about the world.
- We know when to navigate away from situations, or when to turn towards a situation, not only based on our unitive consciousness in connection with all things, but also because we have aspects of mother nature moving through us and directing us in a way that our bio-organism body and brain can pick up on and make sense of.
- We are in a constant conversation with life, using not only our 5 senses and our spirit access through unitive consciousness, but also through our newly developed 6th sense of conscious organic life abiding as itself.
- As Krishnamurti once said: "Nothing to say or do, no way to interfere, acting in accordance with nature, being itself". You can now visit the experience of these words whenever you choose. It also informs our understanding of what is, as we navigate the world from Unitive Consciousness in hybrid with our Primordial Consciousness.
- We don't need to live in a cave or removed from society in the forest to have the fulness of this experience. Though we still might choose to do so, for the learning involved of being with the forest in that way.

Orbit 8 - Nothingness in Everythingness

Update from July 2023:

I've learned the experience I went through in Orbit 8 (2020) as completely normal on the path of self-inquiry laid out by Bernadette Robert's book *The Christian Contemplative Journey*. It is actually merely a transition period, one that feels chiefly ecstatic to be sure, but as it turns out, there are many later stages I have not even arrived at yet. She (Bernadette) clearly outlines the stages I had passed through, with the black hole in my center swallowing me up into the bliss body and then eventually evaporating into my new awareness. I think there is a certain benefit to the Centered and Exhilarated system for being able to triangulate the state of self-realization and arrive there through the practice of cultivating compassion and self-love. But once you've arrived at self-realization, there needs to be a new approach. It is now time to bring on the advanced difficulty! More of that in Orbit 9, but for now, I will leave you with these overly ecstatic words from my experiences in 2020, in case they resonate with someone else who happens to be feeling similarly:

Original text from 2020:

It seems in June of 2020 I've moved to a new state of being. I gather this new consciousness arrived from simply experiencing the world from an Orbit 7 perspective for one and a half years. I will soon describe this new place, but first I must explain that I have not written a word in this book since that time, and it is now February of 2021. With my new consciousness, I truly realized how everything is perfect and nothing needs change. Everything is already in its rightful place. And this is a present moment experience that reinforces itself every waking moment. The difference is that my container fell away as an illusion last June and it never came back. By container I mean my body and my mind as being "me". Certainly we all have a body and a mind, but if you truly are able to let go of your constrictions while still being able to function in society, for long enough of a period of time, you learn that the illusion of identity with this body and mind is what causes all the suffering and the desire to control or change the way things are. I'm now, in February, at even a newer state, which I suppose I will just refer to as Orbit 9. However, it is finally in this even newer state that I am able to reflect on describing Orbit 8, and also to realize there may be some value after all in offering my experiences for those who might be interested.

So what is Orbit 8 and how did I get there?

Orbit 8 is simply a more connected state of our true self. The illusion of that which disconnects has now fallen away at the identity level. On Orbit 7 it had mostly fallen away but there was still a thin film of a container, and that container was an assumption: that at the end of the day I still must be this body and mind to some degree. Some degree that is more than 15% perhaps? It's hard to describe that feeling or experience in words. But the truth of the matter is that this body and mind is certainly me, but only as much as perhaps 0.0000000001% and

even that is just a number I'm guessing at "for funsies". We all are born into this life, using our 5 senses to observe our hand reaching for the breast for nourishment, and soon we begin this assumption that since we are able to control the hand, and to experience life from this body and mind, that certainly this must be "me". And that assumption is not wrong, but we do not get the education at that early age that EVERYTHING ELSE IS ALSO ME. I am the great I am, as are you, as are we all. The fact that we have a body and mind to experience reality from this "node" actually just means that there are 10 billion nodes of human-like awareness, the same way we might have 10 billion nodes of cells in our bodies that recycle themselves. The same way that ecosystems rely on death as a mechanism to increase resilience towards handling emergence in the permaculture sense. And I know I could be describing these concepts in more detail, but patience for writing is one thing I no longer have the desire for. In fact, anything of effort, if it is not sustainable, just really has no inspiration behind it anymore. I would much rather just BE in the present moment, in joy and bliss at all times, without any suffering, because that is just such a natural wonderful state. I often sit in samadhi for hours at a time and this first started in June when I entered into Orbit 8. It is worth noting that there is no more suffering at Orbit 8. Certainly our body/mind still pursues pleasure and flees pain because that is what all organisms are hardwired to do. But we watch it knowing that it an extremely small fraction of all that I am and is a beautiful node within the ecosystem. So whatever comes my way is exactly what it is supposed to be for this little node, and that awareness is the reason suffering no longer exists. The games of suffering we all play come from thinking the illusion that we are this body and mind alone. The more we have constrictions, the more we suffer, because the more we think we are this person. Haha! The more we use discernment to create environments where we can release our constrictions more often and for longer periods of time, in a sustainable way that can still function in this world, the more our inner light shines through and dispels the illusion which causes suffering.

Yes but how did you get there?

Well I got there from choosing to be centered and exhilarated at least 85% of the time, approximately 2.5 years prior to the emergence from my cocoon of illusion. It just naturally happened. But that is not to say I didn't worry I would lose it again. After all, I had experienced this same awakening when I was 23 years old, in June of 2003, and it only lasted for 4 days. At that time I was thinking the new perspective was here to stay forever. But my constrictions came back in after 5 days and I learned I had a lot more work to do if I wanted to live without illusion sustainably. And for that matter, each time I took the medicine Ayahuasca it taught me this same thing. It taught me how much constriction was still laughably in my body. That is why I waited 5 years between each time of taking Ayahuasca, over perhaps a 15 year period now. It showed me the next tier of constrictions that I would have to do my homework around and learn how to live in a way that allows me to release these constrictions. As a child I was quite the empath, and so for me, I've learned that my homework in this lifetime was to find a way to not take on the stress of others. My mirror neuron system is very active and can pick up on the stress of others from even perhaps 8 feet. So I had to find a way to live with others while letting go of my constrictions. This meant I needed to be in a teacher role, educating others who wanted to learn, on the basics of Centered and Exhilarated practice. I could live with my wife who was at

Orbit 2, because even when she constricted and tried to control the life around her, she was pretty good at bouncing back right away into a natural released state. This node of my body and mind, what is referred to as the “Jeeva” in Vedanta I believe, was very lucky to meet her in this lifetime! But beyond her, I rarely have ever come across another human that can bounce back from stress so quickly. So for the rest of the humans, I had the privilege of surrounding myself with only those people who cared to learn their own version of a Centered and Exhilarated practice.

All this to say, when I finally transcended the illusion of thinking I am this body and mind alone, I still had a film of constriction with me that thought I might lose this new state, sort of like how I lost it when I was 23 years old, after 5 days of pure bliss and equipoise. My salvation at the time of entering into Orbit 8, or so I thought, was my ability to access the dark side of the chakras, learned from my time being in Orbit 7. I don't know if I described this phenomena much in the Orbit 7 but I also don't care to go back and read Orbit 7 to see if it was there or not, haha! I've moved on, plain and simple. So I will just describe it here.

The Dark Side of the Chakras

When camping in July of 2020, soon after reaching Orbit 8, when that film of illusion left me, I noticed the knots on trees around my campsite. These knots looked like little vaginas but in the middle of them was a flat piece of wood that appeared distinct, in relation to the rounded organic labia-like curves of the opening of the knot. It was like a flat euclidean surface hidden beneath the lips of organic life. Like yang and yin; masculine and feminine. And what struck me is that I noticed whenever I release the translation of my 5 senses and I go to the place beneath psyche, beneath interpolation, it feels like that tree knot, in my heart. It feels like a black hole the size of 2 inches, but with the shape of a tree knot, and those lips expand outward in the blackness until they are suddenly the size of the entire universe (because the understanding of distance is really an illusion as well and ALL distance can be covered through the release of the perception of distance if you expand the dark side of the chakra in this way). And well, I realized that in this absence of everything that expanded to cover all things, this nothingness in everything, it was stemming/birthing firstly from the location of my heart chakra. I did this for a month or two, whenever I was worried I would lose this new consciousness, and over time it reassured me that I will never lose this new consciousness. Because I can always access this nothingness in everythingness from the tree knot vagina in my heart chakra. You can see here that words fail me and so I've given up on trying to use the perfect words. The Tao that is spoken is not the Tao. Well in any case, I soon realized this nothingness in everything could also arise from my other chakras. That was when I realized all 7 chakras have a light side and a dark side. The light side is like everythingness, a beautiful flowering of felt sense energy bodies. The dark side was like antimatter, a total absence of anything. And so this nothingness would arise from everythingness and I could be all of me at once through this nothingness, in pure bliss, without any suffering for months on end. It was only recently that I reached Orbit 9 and realized that it's not just from the 7 chakras that this nothingness can arise. Those were the training wheels that I needed perhaps to arrive at this new place. But in Orbit 9, I am now able to bring a fractal like

fountaining emergence of consciousness from every smallest possible point in not only my body but my surroundings, to expand in every possible directions with new fractal consciousness, and even in directions that don't exist: all of them! In this new place where I have recently arrived, I now really see there is very little importance I place on my body or mind anymore. I certainly needed them to arrive at this new experience of reality, yet now that I'm here, their only purpose is to keep this node alive. But my new consciousness seems to arise from an expansion whose origin is outside of the body, or further inside than the word inside can connote. In Hinduism they call it "Om", the source of all consciousness. That seems to be where my new experience of the present moment is arising from. I'll go into it in more depth in the next chapter.

Orbit 9 - Everythingness in Nothingness in Everythingness

Update from July 2023:

I've learned the experience I went through in Orbit 8 (2020) and Orbit 9 (2021) was completely normal on the path of self-inquiry laid out by Bernadette Robert's book *The Christian Contemplative Journey* and there are many later stages I have not even arrived at yet. She (Bernadette) clearly outlines the stages I had passed through, with the black hole in my center swallowing me up into the bliss body and then eventually evaporating into my new awareness. At this time I'd say I'm in the stage known as "riding the ox" which is actually a stage where I need to be putting myself in situations of new experiences and difficulties while being of service to others, in order to ensure my ego keeps coming up. Each time it comes up, now that my center has been replaced with the circle of light, it is that light that will update my neurons to map to the light instead of the ego. But those updates will never be complete if I keep staying in circles that are already comfortable. I was born with autism and hypersensitivity (I hear the majority of people with autism spectrum disorder actually have hypersensitivity so perhaps for me they are one in the same), but suffice to say, my tendency is to avoid stress, so if I had not come across Bernadette's book, I may have never made it past self-realization into the lands of no-self that lay ahead. Thanks Bernadette! And I do want to move to the next stage. It is something I have knowingness around, like I was born to navigate to the final stage of No-Self, or at least to give it a good go! So I will leave my initial writings from 2021 below, which read like gibberish to me now, in case they feel like a healing reflection to anyone experiencing similar:

Original text from 2021:

It's as the title says. My new consciousness has no sense of a container. It is more of an awareness of all fractals expanding in all directions from all zero points everywhere all the time. An everythingness that blooms from nothingness that was arrived at through everythingness, and perhaps so on, ad infinitum. These holons are self-evident and follow some sort of natural law, though I have no concern at all in understanding if there even is an origin. It is obvious, plain and simple, that the concept of "me" relies on the concept of "not me". It is the "not me" that is the illusion. That is why you might hear some sages say that "me" is an illusion. Now that I live from this state, in pure bliss, I live clear from suffering 99.999% of the time. It is extremely rare that a constriction arises where stress makes me lose calm and curious. Perhaps once every 6 months? Yet when it happens, I can easily see, within 5 minutes, that it is a constriction from a cluster of neurons in my body that just hadn't had a chance to release yet, perhaps because the appropriate challenge hadn't arisen for so long. Our bodies need challenge to let those old traumas come up so that they can release and the constriction is merely a result of the explosion, so to speak. It's just how the body works, and make no mistake our mind follows our body first and foremost when you get down to the hardwired level. However, at Orbit 9, there is also no longer a concern for how my personality appears. So if I were to have a constriction, or to act stressed about some topic in a public way, it no longer has any bearing on my ability to keep my current level of consciousness which still pervades 99.999% of the time. Because of

this, there is just no longer any concern for how I “show up”. Instead, I show up in social relations in whichever way is effortless and natural which for the most part is simply following the nourishment, replenishment, and inspiration in the present moment that stems from living a liberated life in a body liberated of constrictions. When others come around to vent their stress at me and commiserate in hopes of having some level of connection, I really don’t worry. I instead simply do what is compassionate and interact with them until my body might start carrying too much of their constrictions and then I politely request space. After all, they’re playing their own game of suffering which comes from a core misunderstanding of who their true self is. There is only so much I can do to help them with that. Every human is at where they’re at, moving towards their next best step, pursuing pleasure and fleeing pain. I might be able to suggest ideas that help them pursue less short term pleasure in exchange for something more nourishing in the longrun, perhaps on some certain topic. But one cannot hope to assist any more than that. At the end of the day, if a human wants to awaken to their true self in a way that is sustainable, you’re talking about several years of lifestyle adjustments and social calibration with developing discernment. The other ways of arriving at enlightenment include having a stroke or living in a cave in isolation, but neither of those paths are as savory as being able to articulate your needs so that your body/mind node can live in relation and connection with all the rest of the ecosystem and life around you.

And so there it is. These may be the final words I write in this book. I can see there is a Part IV after this chapter, going into Ceocracy, and many other parts of this book that I wrote long ago. And I still believe they hold true, if you’re looking for a path to someday arrive at Orbit 9. But I also think there are a lot of typos, grammar mistakes, and just poorly worded sentences that will have to stay as there are, until some kind soul comes along and spruces this book up a little bit. That is why I offered it as Creative Commons to begin with. This body of knowledge could either be lost to time, or perhaps resurface in 2,000 years like Confucious’ analects. Or perhaps simply live on as an emerging fractal in all directions, being re-written by all the scholars and sages to come. At the end of the day, there is no end of a day. There is no thing that is not me. As Nisargadatta says, “I am that”. So cheers, bon voyage, and all that. Much love awaits and always is the foundation, even underneath the obvious compassion of the Group Evolution and mammals feeling more nourishment from each other when at rest. There is something underneath it ALL that is also love. And all is already perfect. As Krishnamurti says, “nothing to say or do, no way to interfere, acting in accordance with nature, being itself.” And as I always say, “the 10,000 rages stem from the 1,000 griefs, and those from the 100 traumas, and those from the 1 rift”. If you pursue the centered and exhilarated life, you can watch all of those numbers reduce until the 1 rift is healed. The rift of left/brain right brain. The rift of me/not me. The very idea of rift, in all senses, of separation, is healed, once it is seen as illusion.

Part III: Integrating Centered and Exhilarated into Other Areas of Life

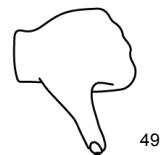
Decision Making

The Centered and Exhilarated way of making decisions is to pick whichever option feels most inspiring and definitely not pick any options that take away from your centered and exhilarated feelings. Now of course this is only when we have a choice to begin with. Often times, we don't have much of a choice at all and we're just going along for the ride. But we can always choose to align with our choices where we are and accept what is. As we consciously begin choosing the decisions that support our inspirations and our centered and exhilarated access, we will notice that we begin to have more and more options, as our life becomes something more of our making.

Group Decision Making

At Orbit 7 and in Ceocracy, all (+99%) decisions are made from CEO to maximize CEO for the group, thus supporting each other's personal pathways in all things. This is one of the ways Ceocracy (pronounced: see-ock-racy) can help reinforce the self-growth and CEO experience of its members through it's roles and processes, while protecting people at Orbit 7 from the difficult topics that might arise from those in Orbit 1 - 6 who are still holding on to the tendrils of societal views around friendship, commitment, and codependency.

The structure is as follows. When a decision is proposed to a group, the voting happens very quickly with a show of thumbs. Anyone with a thumbs up is saying they feel overall supported by the decision. A sideways thumb indicates that you are either neutral, or you're not sure, perhaps because the decision is complex. A thumbs down means the decision feels bad overall.



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The letter C formed with your thumb and forefinger might mean you're simply looking for clarity. While the upturned thumbs remain silent, the remaining neutral and downturned thumbs take turns speaking, as well as those looking for clarity, in order to help the group form creative solutions to find the sweet spot where the decision is maximally supportive to all members and minimally unsupportive. It will be clear when you've reached the right sweet spot or when the topic needs to be tabled.

⁴⁹ Illustration by Kelsey Wyman of <http://thewayofvibrantly.org>

Agreements Around Confidentiality and Idea Ownership

Constructive Confidentiality: At Orbit 7 and in Ceocracy, there are no secrets. Anything said to someone in Orbit 7 or within a Ceocracy might be said again, outside of group, when it comes from CEO and is maximizing CEO in that situation. This is what we would want, for our experiences to help heal the world. This also helps support each other's personal pathways in all things, by letting each other speak from CEO without restriction as we follow our personal pathways.

Idea Ownership and Mentoring: At Orbit 7 and in Ceocracy, we are all mentoring each other from our own personal pathways, to support each other's personal pathways. Any ideas expressed in group (that do not yet have a copyright) are naturally free to be taken by anyone else who wants to run with the idea for their personal pathway. Just remember to repackage the idea if there is already a copyright. This is how we support each other's personal pathways in all things. At Orbit 7, there is no inclination to want to draw lines around who came up with what concept when. There is only following one's own personal pathway and speaking for it, to help heal the world and all relations.

Conflict Navigation

This section contains a 3 step process for bringing Centered and Exhilarated into conflict navigation.

Step 1 - The hope is in the chicky!

Your role as facilitator (in groups, with your partner, or with yourself) is to identify chickies (charged and sticky topics) and write down cute names for them. If there is time to dive into any of the chickies, that is fine too. Remember, a chicky is any charged and sticky topic that is difficult to hold support of centered and exhilarated feelings, in yourself and each other. These topics are difficult because they have many layers to them. It is important to go slowly in order to only approach the top easy layers of the topic, or maybe just to label them and return to them later. Your role as a facilitator is to write these down somewhere. All in all, this could take a full hour and a half to just label the chickies and perhaps dip into just the top layer of just the easiest one. Up next, you will be able to set a date to dive into the rest of these chickies. For now, if someone feels the need to talk about all the chickies at once because they're all related, just let them know the goal is to talk about them to the point where we can figure out a name for them so that we can write the name down, so that we can move on to identify the names of the rest of them. Simply by naming the difficult topics, the participants will tend to feel a great deal of relief that these conversations will finally gain some progress. By agreeing on a purpose of keeping the conversation at the lighter less serious levels, the progress can feel inspiring, nourishing, and replenishing. In short, there can be hope!

Step 2 - Call out the TNT

TNT stands for "triggered, new topic". If somebody accidentally dives too far into a difficult topic, they will stop listening to the other person and it will seem as if they are talking about a separate topic. At this point, you can say TNT, or make a game of it so that whoever says it first gets invisible brownie points, and the other person gets to go first, in order to begin turn taking. Remember to only proceed if the difficult topic feels manageable to navigate with mutual support for each participant to support each other feeling centered and exhilarated about the topic.

Step 3 - Celebrate and Set a Date

Remember to celebrate how much was accomplished and that we don't have to do it all at once. Set a date for 3 - 4 weeks out (or sooner if it feels urgent) when you will follow up with each individual to see if they wish to meet again to continue processing through difficult topics. It is important to ask each participant separately, at that time, in case one of them decides they just want closure and don't want to meet again. In this case, you can check back in at the 3 month mark to see if they still feel that way. In this way, you're giving them space to heal and hope that there will still be a check-in. Otherwise, if they're ready to meet in 3 - 4 weeks, just rinse and repeat this 3 step process. If there is a pressing external factor that makes it so you can't process the difficult topic at another time, then you may feel stuck needing to dive through all

the difficult topics quickly. If that is the case, trust your heart and do what feels right in the moment.

Supplementing Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

NVC is a tool that comes up often when practicing Centered and Exhilarated and we often bring up Centered and Exhilarated when practicing NVC, so we thought it would be good to add a section about how they have synergy with each other. NVC is still the best tool we know for navigating difficult topics with someone who maybe hasn't heard of Centered and Exhilarated and doesn't know how to use the tools. In general, NVC is really great when your intention is to help the interaction reach a space of self-love and love for each other. It can also be used as a tool for creating a power dynamic, which can be used for good or bad, depending on where your heart is. In the end, it is the attitude and personality behind the language that matters so much.

Bringing the Centered and Exhilarated Approach to NVC

The 3-Step Centered and Exhilarated Conflict Navigation process is a great way to supplement NVC for those difficult conflicts where you're not sure if both parties are skilled at actively bringing in love and compassion to the situation. As long as both parties are capable of leading from an exhilarated and centered place, they will know as soon as a topic becomes stressful and you can help them table the topic if you feel the intimacy slipping. This reduces the possibility of coerced intimacy or non-consensual emotional dumping, especially helpful for relationships where there are subtle levels of emotional abuse. It also helps provide a different lens around the possibilities for boundary setting. The Centered and Exhilarated approach can also help for situations where someone wants to vent about their unmet needs and expect to be held. Yes, you'll be able to list unmet needs, as long as you can keep it somewhat humorous for both parties and come up with cute names for the difficult topics. Then when it is resonant, venting can be fun for both parties. And no, you do not have to hold them and provide empathy, you're just listing the difficult topics. Once they're listed, you can revisit them in 3 weeks or sooner, especially once trust is built. When emotional work no longer feels fun, it's time to question the bigger picture.

A note about relationships that feel abusive

For intimate relationships that might feel abusive, yet both partners are skilled in NVC, it can help to list out the power dynamics that keep the person returning to the relationship. Sometimes all they need to see is the sheer amount of power dynamics in play to realize the importance of "no contact = no new hurts". After seeing the list, a follow-up can be to ask these three questions:

1. Is this person worth it?
2. Can you help them learn to understand your unmet needs over time and meet them?

3. Bonus question: can you do better? It might sound funny to ask, but often times, even for couples that are skilled at NVC, just asking this question can be a deciding factor, if either of the first two answers are a “no”.

Bringing NVC to the Centered and Exhilarated Approach

NVC is great when the attitudes and personalities are moving towards compassion and love. Centered and Exhilarated has provided the backbone to ensure that is already happening. The core of NVC is to repeat back to the person what you heard to provide clarity and to help them feel validated and seen. It also can help to use “I” statements to reduce defensiveness for the language-centric folks. It sounds like only good things here!

Roles, Accountabilities, and Responsibilities in Groups

The Role of the Lead Link

Sometimes in life, we find ourselves in a group situation where there are things to collaborate on. It can really help to assign someone the role of overseeing the completion of a certain project. This person can also act as the point of contact, in case anyone needs information on the project status. In the cases of long running projects, this role can also be responsible for ensuring the project has been documented sufficiently to hand off to someone else, when the project ownership transitions between people. And in all cases, this role can take the initiative in asking for help and forming a circle of support for the completion of the project. Having a circle of support is so important to our functioning as humans, in fact, that these roles have been named lead links, to reflect that they are not only the lead link to the project, but that they also could be the lead link to a circle of other teammates. The term lead link comes from Holacracy, an organizational and decision making framework designed by Ken Wilbur and adopted into used by large scale business such as Zappos, in 2012, and more recently, the Whidbey Institute. The concept of a lead link role, as originally designed in Holocracy, is a perfect foundational structure for a role whose primary purpose is to be centered and exhilarated. After this, the lead link role then gets a purpose to fulfill, as voted on by everyone. Once the purposes statement is written down and clear, the lead link is able to fulfill their purpose in whichever way feels most centering and exhilarating, while receiving advice from the other lead links. In this way, the lead links may demonstrate leadership traits, but are not actually leaders and do not a monopoly or more vote control.

Accountability and Responsibility

While a lead link may be accountable for a projects completion, they may not be responsible for it. What that means is, the lead link can delegate any of their responsibilities. In many cases, a lead link may delegate all their responsibilities to their circle. Yet they are still the person accountable. Let’s review the accountabilities of a lead link:

- Act as a point of contact for questions
- Understand and communicate project status as time goes on
- Create documentation sufficient for knowledge transfer (or delegate this)

- Make sure the project is completed

What is not on the list?

- Actually do the work to complete the project <- This can be delegated to anyone on the lead link's circle, so long as the lead link remains accountable for the work being done.

In summary, while a lead link is accountable for a project, they are the face of the project and the ultimate decision maker about how the project gets completed, so long as it meets the purpose/requirements. This allows for optimal centered and exhilarated experiences throughout the project, as adequate support can exist within a circle, with maximum empowerment to allow the circle to complete the project in any unique way that further builds on the centered and exhilarated experience within the members as well as within the circle. This type of liberated decision making has a high return on investment, where members rarely choose to leave a circle that is built on Centered and Exhilarated, because it makes such a difference in their lives and in supporting their general well being.

Centered and Exhilarated Daily Life and Beyond

It feels so wonderful to observe as our lives become more centered and exhilarated. Once we reach business level intimacy, it seems like there's nothing we can't do or help with! Thankfully, we have fellow *treibh* to share the work with, if we're lucky enough to be with others who practice Centered and Exhilarated. Which brings us to the next section of the book. We will now be jumping into what an organizational structure might look like when it includes roles, processes, policies, and decision making structures that reinforce the self-growth and CEO experience of it's members. This new type of organization is known as a Ceocracy (pronounced: see-ock-racy). Up ahead we have laid out the blueprint to set up a Ceocracy for your community or team.

Part IV: Ceocracy

An Organizational Structure for Centered and Exhilarated in Teams, at
Workplaces, or Living in Intentional Communities

The History Behind Ceocracy

In business school, we learned that 85% of organizational culture changes actually fail in the execution stage, due to inadequate structural reinforcement. When someone is operating at Orbit 7, their culture is vastly different and can be quite troubling to the uninitiated. Old ideas such as friendship, commitment and codependenceship have been replaced with the path of Centered and Exhilarated in all things (+99% of the time). In this new state of being, there is unconditional love for all beings, regardless of their actions. Communing with others becomes a choice made by our inner felt sense of truth, wherever it leads us, based on what is most inspiring for whatever reason emerges (healing, support, personal pathway project work, etc.). In this way, we are all helping to heal the earth and all beings from our personal pathway. Here, the very idea of friendship has fallen away and been replaced with equal levels of unconditional love while setting constructive boundaries around things that take away from optimal CEO. Commitment too has been replaced by the wisdom of following the gnosis of one's own CEO, wherever it might lead. There is no longer benefit in violating ourselves when we have a choice. It is also not possible to be codependent on others for access to living from our own CEO, since we're already there +99% of the time. A community of individuals at Orbit 7 is truly a regenerative community. But for the uninitiated, it can be quite the culture shift and many difficult topics can come up over ideas of personal pathways, friendship, ownership of ideas, and mentoring. For this reason, it is helpful to have an organizational structure with structural guidelines to help the individuals in Orbits 1 - 6 acclimate to understanding the individuals at Orbit 7, so there are less road bumps along the way. Here are a couple examples from the organizational structure of Ceocracy that might seem different to sociocracy or holacracy:

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Transitioning to Ceocracy

Ceocracy is an Organizational Structure for Communities, Volunteer Run Meeting Groups, Small-to-Medium Size Businesses, or Large-Scale Corporations

Ceocracy promotes the mutual support of CEO within an organizational structure, from the advice rounds, to the way proposals are decided on, to the way actions are opposed when they are destructive to the purpose. There are many benefits:

- Increased ability to relate with each other and with all beings
- Reduced time spent in meetings
- Increased results from contributions
- High gratitude culture of collaboration
- Meaningful milestones of self-growth unique to each contributor
- Creative outcomes in problem solving unique to each contributor
- Teams within the organization become increasingly competent at supporting CEO during stressful situations, to where a team with a year of experience can consistently demonstrate mutual support of CEO during crisis scenarios.
- The outcome of organizations with CEO at their core will tend to better the world in a meaningful and compassionate way

I. Start with a Purpose Statement

This is similar to a vision or mission. The purpose statement is the foundation of the organizational structure in Ceocracy. It helps everyone running the boat to all row in the same direction. The starter purpose statement for a community living situation might be: “Creating a harmonious living environment by practicing Centered and Exhilarated.” For an organization, or a community with a specific focus, it might be something more like this: “Helping people connect with community while practicing Centered and Exhilarated” or “Bringing premium organic dog food to the world while practicing Centered and Exhilarated”.

This purpose statement is also the guiding light during business meetings and for each role within the house or the organization to be effective and beneficial.

II. Setup the Weekly Business Meeting

So you’ve got your starter Purpose Statement. You’ll want to refine this statement over time. It is important to have a fluid statement, because it helps people continue to feel into it until it is really ringing true for everyone. In order to do so, you’ll need a weekly business meeting, to gather the minds. Firstly, pick a time, once a week, when all the members of your organization can meet for the weekly business meeting. You won’t need to know the inner workings of Ceocracy in order to perform this step. Any of your current decision making process will do just fine for now. As things pick up and you start implementing more of the Ceocracy structure, you’ll find things going more smoothly. For example, while the first couple weekly business meetings

might have mandatory participation, these meetings quickly become opt-in, as most, if not all the decision making work, gets done in hallway conversations in passing. Key stakeholders can be consulted outside the meeting and advice can be gathered. At the same time, when you're working within an organization built on CEO, the meeting can be a wonderful part of organization life, so you may want to attend anyway just to see your friends even more!

In the first meeting, it is important to vote in a fluid version of a purpose statement as well as running the initial elections. We recommend revisiting it at the start of each meeting until you can land on words everyone really agrees on. It is important that it rings for everyone, but if it doesn't, then it gets to be a fun 5 - 10 minute exploration of charged and sticky topics (chickies) at the beginning of each meeting. Each word can be a chicky! At business level intimacy (Orbit 7) that is indeed a tantalizing prospect, but at Orbit 1 that could sound like a joke! The point is to do what's most fun for whatever level the group is at. The CEO experience of the group and of each member will help guide the way.

III. Elect Your Business Circle

The Business Circle is responsible for decision making around the three most vital and foundational aspects of your community or organization:

- Any updates to the purpose statement
- Any financial expenditures
- Any updates to the decision making process

In the beginning, you can start with all members being members of the business circle if you like. That makes it a group decision, where everyone's input is requested, in order to make changes in these three core areas. There of course can be advisory votes requested of the business circle when it is unclear if the topic fits into one of these three areas. For large corporations, the business circle is kept to a board of directors in order to make the voting process manageable.

We like to borrow a couple terms from Holacracy as they pair really well with CEO and it's difficult to come up with a better name . The first term is the Anchor Circle. This is the circle that is in charge of any updates to the purpose statement, or any financial transactions. You can choose for the Anchor Circle to be the Board of Directors or simply a single person in charge. It's up to you. These decisions can always be changed later. The Anchor Circle can also vote on divesting its power to other roles, if they so choose, as we will explain later.

IV. Elect Your Lead Links

Each idea expressed within the purpose statement is important to the successful operation of your intentional community or organization. In order to ensure that everything is getting done, it is important to nominate roles not only for Treasurer, Conflict Resolution, and Document Writer, but also to oversee each functional area of the purpose statement and the

individual projects that come from these areas. For example, in the Centered and Exhilarated organization, our purpose statement is: “An organization for everyone bringing Centered and Exhilarated to communities (1a) to help the world move towards a gift culture by learning to nurture our own unique gifts (2a).” For that reason, we have separate people in charge of overseeing that the 1a part of the purpose is happening and that the 1b part of the purpose is happening. The individuals in these roles are not responsible for accomplishing all tasks on their own, but they **are** accountable for ensuring that they get done somehow. In most cases, a lead link will elect a circle of helpers at their discretion to accomplish the tasks at hand. They are the lead link in the circle, the person you go to for information and status updates on projects. The person who knows what’s going on. While they’re not directly responsible for the work, they are accountable. This difference between responsible and accountable will come up a lot in practice so we’re choosing to really emphasize that difference here.

The weekly business meeting will have four rounds:

1. Celebrations - This is where we set the tone for celebrating by sharing a centered and exhilarated memory that came up recently, as well as celebrating any accomplishments that have happened. This is very similar to the CEO Memory Share Round in Orbit 1, though there is no longer a need to answer the 4 questions after each CEO memory because everyone knows each other and understands Orbit 1 pretty well by now. Also, some people may want to share a bad memory and that’s fine sometimes. In general, the reinforcement of sharing CEO memories during this round is the single most effective way of helping remind each other in the culture how we want to be supported and what that feels like. To better get an idea of this, one only needs to imagine the change that would happen at any typical workplace if each week everyone started their meeting by sharing a centered and exhilarated memory in order for each other to remember the feeling of CEO support.
2. Announcements - This is where lead links announce any decisions they have made on topics within their areas. We cover this in depth in the next section.
3. Proposals - This is where lead links can identify when something is happening that is destructive to the purpose and propose solutions. We cover this in depth in the next section. This is also where the Business Circle can make decisions around the more foundational aspects of the organization, which we will cover in depth in Section III.
4. Advice Round - This is a sort of gathering of the minds round, where anyone can ask advice and dialogue topics of shared interest..

Decision making in Ceocracy is fast and effective because we go slow to go fast. As outlined in Part IV of this book, decision making is simply a matter of voting for what is inspiring while trying to get that sweet spot where it inspiring for as many people as possible.

Since the decision making occurs in a group and for a group, there are now four rounds:

- **Celebrations** - This is a round of gratitude and transitioning into a new space. Each member shares a centered and exhilarated memory that came up recently, as well as celebrating any accomplishments that have happened as aligned to the organization.

This is the primary driver for bringing CEO experience and tools to the culture, where the rest of Ceocracy then reinforces what is built in this round.

- **Announcements** - This is where somebody informs the group of any decisions they've made in their areas that affect the group. This is also where members can bring up reminders of upcoming events.
- **Proposals** - This is where somebody brings up a proposal, where they don't already have the power to simply make the decision on their own. If they have the power to make the decision on their own, it would move to the announcements round and skip the decision making process. If they needed advice to make their decision, it would move to the advice round, and skip the decision making process.
- **Advice Round** - This is where you can meet with others to discuss your proposal or decision and benefit from their advice. While these usually happen in hallway conversations or in separate circle meetings, they can on occasion happen after the Proposals round is finished, since you already have a bunch of members present, making it easy. Difficult topics may also come up here.

The announcements and advice rounds are straight forward enough that not much more needs to be said here. You simply make an announcement or you simply ask someone, or a group of someones, for advice.

The proposal round, on the other hand, has a bit more structure, as you will see.

Proposal Round

Once the proposal round starts, anyone can bring up a proposal. If they have the power to make the decision on their own, it would move to the announcements round. If the proposal needs more discussion, it would move to the advice round.

Hand Signals for the Voting Process

These hand signals were first created, tested, and integrated into a working governance structure called Soulacracy, at the Soulshine house, in Seattle, sometime around 2014. Many of the founding members are a part of the Vibrantly team, who helped me bring this book to the world by mentoring my creation and writing process as part of a personal pathway.

The hand signals for voting are as follows:

- A thumbs up if you're inspired by the proposal
- A sideways thumb if you're neutral
- A downturned thumb if the proposal takes away from your inspiration; or if the proposal is destructive to the purpose



Also, remember there is a “C” for requesting clarification. These hand signals emerged in addition to three hand signals learned at Relationship Anarchy meetings, sourcing from heart circles with the Radical Fairies. The additional three hand signals are:

- The crossed fingers, indicating you have a topic but didn't want to interrupt
- Two fingers on one hand pointing, indicating that you saw someone cross their fingers
- Quote fingers, indicating you wanted to piggy back really quickly onto the topic

These hand signals make everything move very quickly, especially when most proposals seem to get a unanimous thumbs up with very few neutral thumbs and hardly ever any thumbs down. Yet, there is a very important D&D round to move into when there are neutral thumbs or thumbs down.

Discuss and Dialogue (D&D) Round

A neutral or downturned thumb means you get to speak up to identify if there are any ways to make it more inspiring before bringing it to a final vote. This is the discuss and dialogue round (D&D). If you are not inspired by the proposal, you would vote neutral (sideways thumb). This simply means the proposal doesn't actually have any role for you, so there is nothing necessarily to be inspired about. Alternatively, if there is a role for you, or work to be done, and you have a sideways thumb, this is your chance to speak up. You can offer subtle changes to the proposal to make it more inspiring for you, or you can choose to find ways to make it more inspiring over time. This definitely doesn't need to be rushed. In the voting round, the group is just going for finding the sweet spot where the most people are inspired and there aren't any additional changes that need to be offered immediately.

When would you use a downturned thumb?

If the proposal takes away from your inspiration, or if it is destructive to the purpose statement of the circle or the organization, you would oppose the proposal with a downturned thumb. Members with downturned thumbs get a chance to speak in just the same way as the neutral thumbs. This is where you would amend the proposal to make it more inspiring for you or to offer a counter proposal in the case that is destructive to the purpose. The only limitation is that you cannot hold up someone's proposed project simply because you have a better way of achieving their desired outcome. It's better to empower the person to do it their way because they're inspired. You can certainly offer your way of doing it as advice, but there is not an option of holding up people's projects. Instead, you can add on to their project once their project is finished. Even though this might add additional work and expenses, in the long-run, it is a more empowering approach and more work gets done this way.

Finding the Sweet Spot or Going to Advice Round

Once the group finds the sweet spot of most people feeling centered and exhilarated with the proposal and no more counter proposals, the proposal passes. Otherwise, if the proposal needs more advice, it goes to the advice round, as long as it is not destructive to the purpose. For the members with neutral thumbs, if they have an active role in the proposal, you

can simply write down the topic so that they can think of ways to make it more inspiring for them. Remember, the goal is to work on stuff that is inspiring, and to eventually find ways to make everything inspiring.

A Ceocracy is successful when every member is actively finding ways to be inspired by their work. This is the key ingredient to finding that sweet spot in the voting rounds: the trust in each other that the neutral thumbs will not give up and that they will attempt to find ways to be inspired by each other's proposals.

The 3 Agreements in a Ceocracy

These agreements can be inserted into the footnotes of any business meeting handout as a way of reminding people how we want business meetings to feel. This gives people the vocabulary to express when one of these three agreements isn't happening.

“We agree to prioritize supporting the centeredness and exhilaratedness of each other, in all topics, while maintaining centered and exhilarated ourselves; this is tensegrity. We do not continue a topic if someone is wobbling; this is people before process. We return to full CEO when wobbling, before losing centered and exhilarated; this is titration.”

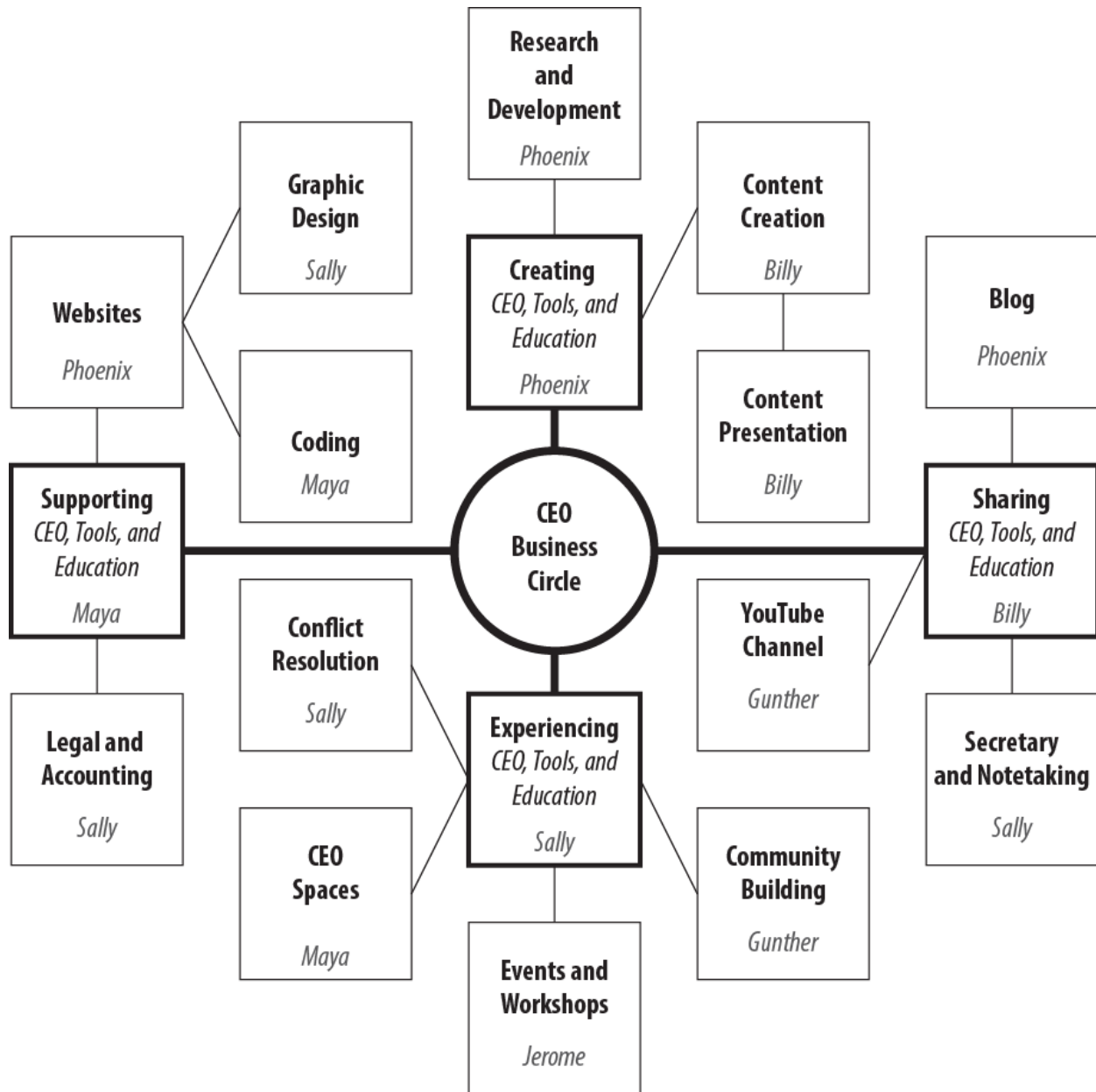
Remember these agreements are still in support of the existing Purpose statement, so if you think big picture, it's actually purpose before people before process, but who really need to say that whopper in the middle of a business meeting to get the meeting back on track? We just consider that as an assumed understanding, when we say “people before process”.

The 3 Steps of Implementing People Before Process

1. If a conversation isn't feeling supportive, check to see if each member is feeling calm and curious.
2. If someone is not feeling calm and curious, see what can be done to return to calm and curious before proceeding with the conversation.
3. If the purpose is people before process, each person would want to invest in emotional regulation skills and adopt their own self care practice in order to learn their own personal unique ways to return to calmness and curiosity.

V. Egalitarian Hierarchy

In a Ceocracy, no person has hierarchy. While it is important for roles to have hierarchy in terms of process creation and decision making, the same person who leads the entire Sharing wing of the organization, for example, may also be tasked with roles two tiers lower, for example: Coding. Each person can be on top of a chain of circles or can be at the very bottom at the same time. This is the first half of egalitarian structure. Here is an example lead link map designed to support the Purpose of “Creating, Sharing, Supporting, and Experiencing social tools to help us and all beings vibrantly thrive”:



It is great to keep the lead link roles written on a white board and to have the whiteboard present during weekly business meetings. If someone proposes that Community Building be moved to Sharing and both Experiencing and Sharing Roles are present, this proposal can quickly move to a decision. This could also be decided in a hallway conversation between those three parties and perhaps it would come up in the Announcements round.

So now that we've covered the first half the components that lead to egalitarian structure, what is the second half? Well, that is the CEO. When people make decisions from a protective place, it is not truly egalitarian, because they do not have all the options at their disposal. When we are defensive, our feedback could be coming from anywhere and may not

be supportive to the CEO of the other person. This would lead to situations where power exchange might be explored at a personal level. To counter this hierarchical model, it is important that each decision is made from a centered and exhilarated place, where the members are voting for what feels most inspiring to them. When you combine CEO with the Link Lead Model (first invented in Holacracy by Ken Wilber), you get a magical combination of self-reinforcing egalitarian organizational structure.

VII. Bylaws, Organizational Constitutions, and Asset Distribution

Many organizations create bylaws to decide what to do when the going gets tough. In the event of dissolution, these papers might also indicate a legal course of action for asset distribution. I would highly encourage you to think about such matters when investing money, time, and assets into an organization. If your inspiration changes and you decide to move on someday, these legal documents can help you rest assured about what will happen with the fruits of your labor. We will not address these documents in this book because they concern legal matters of importance, over which we have not yet identified a way to infuse CEO supportive goodness into. This book acts as a Centered and Exhilarated Constitution, with info on how to appoint individuals into roles to create empowering processes through which your organization can handle situations as they arise. As your lead link roles create these process docs, you can keep them in a private online share, viewable by all your organization's members. This helps especially when bringing new members in, or when old members leave. Here are some examples of what a Process Doc looks like.

VI. Examples of Process Docs

Here is an example of a Process Doc created by our Event Organizer Lead Link Role:

Organizer Role Process Doc

Domain: All Event Organization on Facebook Pages and Websites

Organizing Community Gatherings

When organizing community gatherings, here are the 6 things we like to do every time, in order to keep the flow moving:

1. Create a facebook event 4 weeks in advance, containing a description of the event, the proposed theme, and the agreements.
2. Shop this event around to the community leaders whose houses might be a good fit for hosting. See if there is a date that works for one of them. Also run the list past the Community Council Lead Link, since they are great for advising on things to think about in terms of messages being sent by repeatedly nominating certain types of people for permissions of power, or ceremony, or hosting at the same type of a community multiple times in a row.

3. Once you get confirmation on a house and a date, begin separate conversations with each of the house members, 3 weeks in advance, to understand their concerns but moreso to ensure they're on board. It's often the one person you didn't talk with the organizer who might be completely unaware, caught off guard and have dissonance with the whole event taking place at their house.
4. Begin inviting your friends to the event and using the @symbol in the description to call out people who might want roles or who have already confirmed roles. If you're asking if they want a role, it helps to end the sentence with a question mark.
5. 1 week in advance, using a smartphone, use facebook messenger to send a form letter individually to each of the attendees who are marked as "going". Note that this feature only works on smartphones at this time. The form letter will include a greeting, instructions for parking, and a closing poetry sentence to brighten their day and remove any shame if they're not actually planning on attending and just hit Going to show support. It can say something like: "Peace to you my friend, may you always feel the groundedness of the earth beneath you and bright wings to inspire and carry you in each moment of the day." Except you have to change it, you can't do the same one every time, but that gives a good idea.
6. Take photos of event.
7. Post the photos for follow-up to double as promotion for the next event.

Centered and Exhilarated Gathering Agreements

Here are the agreements to post on the door of the gathering:

1. This is a Centered and Exhilarated Space Gathering, with the purpose of supporting the calm and curious experience in yourself, in each other, and in all beings.
2. As a result of supporting the Centered and Exhilarated Space, we can observe a container for relationships that begin to build trust in mutual support. If any topics take away from someone's centered and exhilarated experience, you may see them leave the conversation. Please support this space of healthy boundary setting in leaving conversations without needing to give a reason. Sometimes it's difficult for people to ask for support and sometimes it's preferable to let a group continue a topic and simply excuse oneself.
3. If someone is wearing a safety pin, they are wanting to be a safe space to turn to if someone is being destructive to your calm and curious experience.
4. If you see someone doing something that is less-supportive, assume good intent and address impact with them in a supportive way. Feel free to check with a safety ambassador if you would like assistance in being more supportive in these situations.
5. We are cultivating trust in each other growing into a nurturing place to learn, play and grow. With so many interactions that feel supportive of centered and exhilarated feelings, people will likely be feeling more connected to themselves and others. These high levels of joy in connection also expose us to more open levels of vulnerability. As such, please

use verbal agreements in all interactions. We realize this is likely a more strict request than in standard consent culture. Feelings of rejection in this space can feel more traumatic than normal so we are doing our best to reduce the types of interactions that could lead to the need for sudden and strong boundary setting. Help us heal our connection to each other and Gaia!

Process Doc History

Name	Description	Date
Joe Bob - Lead Link	Doc Creation	9/13/2014
Sally Joe - New Lead Link	Updated Gathering Agreements	9/13/2015
Bob Sally - Contributing member of Agreements Circle	Added some agreements that others will likely disagree with so we may want to change them before our next gathering. Let's review in our next business meeting!	9/13/2018

Part V: Restorative Justice Practices

Restorative Justice Process

Restorative justice echoes ancient and indigenous practices from cultures all over the world dating back to the times of animism. These practices can be found in the deep histories ranging from Egypt, Hebrew, Arab, African, Asian and Celtic cultures all the way to Native American and First Nations. One such example is Ma'at, the goddess of judgement and harmony, found in ancient Egypt.⁵⁰ "Judging according to Ma'at meant restoring harmony that had been broken by the offense. Ancient Egypt did not seem to have written codes. The idea of justice was to heal the wounds inflicted on the community by restoring Ma'at, in order to evict Ifset (chaos).

Thotnakht-ánkh, a judge from the 11th Dynasty, around the 20th century BCE, confesses that:

"I have accomplished Ma'at during my whole career (...) I have judged according to Ma'at in such a way that both parties walked away with a peaceful heart." MENU (2005:80) [see also ANTHES 1928:28-29 in KARENGA 2004:255 and ASSMANN 1989: 333-334]"

Modern Uses

The phrase "restorative justice" has appeared in written sources since the first half of the nineteenth century⁵¹. The modern usage of the term was introduced by Albert Eglash, who in 1977 described three different approaches to justice:

1. "retributive justice", based on punishment;
2. "distributive justice", involving therapeutic treatment of offenders;
3. "restorative justice", based on restitution with input from victims and offenders

Here is a cool quote from John Braithwaite that really sums it all up:

"Reliance on punishment as a social regulator is problematic because it shames and stigmatizes wrongdoers, pushes them into a negative societal subculture and fails to change their behavior. The restorative approach, on the other hand, reintegrates wrongdoers back into their community and reduces the likelihood that they will reoffend."⁵²

⁵⁰ <https://waynenorthey.com/2017/05/24/ancient-practices-of-restorative-justice/>

⁵¹ "See pages 13–18 in Gade, C.B.N. 2013. *Restorative Justice and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Process*. *South African Journal of Philosophy* 32(1). 10–35" (PDF). Retrieved 2014-03-01.

⁵² Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

The Ingredients of Restorative Justice

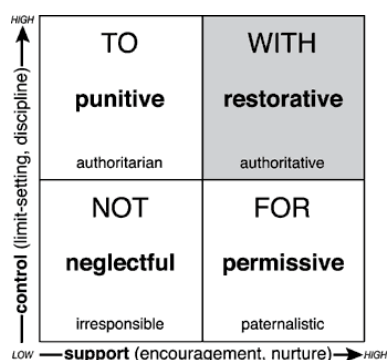
Restorative justice requires a form of meeting between the offender and the victim. A 2013 Cochrane review stressed the need for the offender to meet the victim face-to-face⁵³. In addition, the meeting may include people representing the wider community.

Suggested reasons for why it can be effective include:

- The offender has to learn about the harm they have caused to their victim, making it hard for them to justify their behavior.
- It offers a chance to discuss moral development to offenders who may have had little of it in their life.
- Offenders are more likely to view their punishment as legitimate.
- The programs tend to avoid shaming and stigmatizing the offender⁵⁴.

Many restorative justice systems, especially victim-offender mediation and family group conferencing, require participants to sign a confidentiality agreement. These agreements usually state that conference discussions will not be disclosed to nonparticipants. The rationale for confidentiality is that it promotes open and honest communication.

It may be easiest to understand Restorative Justice in terms of the Social Discipline Window⁵⁵, a helpful framework created by Ted Wachtel. We will dive into that next!



The Social Discipline Window...

...describes four basic approaches to maintaining social norms and behavioral boundaries. The four are represented as different combinations of high or low control and high or low support. The restorative domain combines both high control and high support and is characterized by doing things *with* people (collaboratively), rather than *to* them (coercively) or *for* them (without their involvement).

The Difference Between Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices

The notion of restorative practices evolved in part from the concept and practices of restorative justice. But from the emergent point of view of restorative practices, restorative justice can be viewed as largely *reactive*, consisting of formal or informal responses to crime and other wrongdoing after it occurs. *Restorative practices* also includes the use of informal and formal processes that precede

⁵³ Livingstone, Nuala; MacDonald, Geraldine; Carr, Nicola (2013). "Restorative justice conferencing for reducing recidivism in young offenders (aged 7 to 21)". *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* (2): CD008898. doi:10.1002/14651858.CD008898.pub2. PMID 23450592.

⁵⁴ "Restorative Justice - What Works". *College of Policing*. 2015-08-27. Retrieved 2018-05-25.

⁵⁵ Wachtel, Ted. "Restorative Justice in Everyday Life: Beyond the Formal Ritual". Retrieved 16 August 2012.

wrongdoing, those that proactively build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrongdoing⁵⁶.

The Restorative Practices Continuum

On a restorative practices continuum, the informal practices include *affective statements* that communicate people's feelings, as well as *affective questions* that cause people to reflect on how their behavior has affected others. Moving from left to right on the continuum, as restorative practices become more formal, they involve more people, require more planning and time, and are more structured and complete. Although a formal restorative process might have dramatic impact, informal practices have a cumulative impact because they are part of everyday life.



Social Justice and Restorative Justice

For the past several decades, restorative justice has been studied as reactive processes that benefit interactions between a community-and-individual. The larger scale issues are typically referred to as social justice "in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society⁵⁷". On an even larger scale is cosmic justice, which is concerned with restoring the balance to all being/consciousness (starting from the human paradigm as the stewards).

We will be focusing on proactive restorative practices in this workshop. These proactive restorative practices can also be applied to the societal and cosmic levels to benefit the proactive and reactive practices in each case. On the next page you will see a diagram to understand where Restorative Practices fits into the grand scheme of things.

⁵⁶ Wachtel, Ted. "[Defining Restorative](#)". International Institute for Restorative Practices. Retrieved 11 July 2012.

⁵⁷ Merriam Webster Dictionary

This diagram was created to show where restorative practices fit in the grand scheme of things.

	<i>Community and Individual</i>	<i>Community and Society</i>	<i>Community and All Being</i>
<i>Reactive</i>	<i>Restorative Justice</i>	<i>Social Justice</i>	<i>Cosmic Justice</i>
<i>Proactive</i>	<i>Restorative Practices</i>	<i>Social Justice Practices</i>	<i>Cosmic Justice Practices</i>

Restorative Practices: Informal Proactive Processes with Centered and Exhilarated

The TLLR Tool, TLLR Catch-up Circle and Individuation Round are the three core aspects of Centered and Exhilarated. These are formal proactive processes that have this same dramatic impact on a groups restorative justice practices through proactive connection and tool development. These lead to the informal practices in our everyday connections that can have a cumulative impact on the success of the existing Restorative Practices. This can create a profound impact on the ability for offenders to be reintroduced into the community, as well as addressing the 4 tenets of restorative justice: The offender can better learn about the harm they have caused to their victim when there is Centered and Exhilarated level support. This same level of support offers a chance to discuss moral development to offenders who may have had little of it in their life. In this way, offenders are more likely to understand the consequences of their actions. And last but not least, the Centered and Exhilarated Approach to Restorative Practices tends to avoid shaming and stigmatizing the offender.



The TLLR Tool as an Informal Proactive Process

The TLLR tool acts as an informal process that proactively creates a culture of support during difficult conversations. Brain thinks 31% better when we feel good about ourselves. When things get tough and difficult topics arise in social situations, it's important to be able to be present and to take steps to feel good about our self, in order to think and respond more clearly in an empowered way. This tool can be practiced any time a difficult topic arises in conversation. You can let someone know that you'd like to try out this tool by saying "this tool will support me and that's why I want you to do it with me". Then take a step back from the stressful topic to follow these 4 steps:

1. **Table it.** To table a topic, means to write it down somewhere and return to it later. Choosing to table topics when they get stressful builds trust with your partner. It shows that you care about both of you feeling good and that you don't want to push topics that make either of you feel stressed. This builds trust that you are prioritizing feeling resourced, so that you can support others better. It also reduces feelings of resentment that can build when you feel trapped in a draining situation.
2. **Label it.** Give the topic a cute and humorous name if possible. For example, if the topic has a charge and is sticky, I like to refer to it as a "chicky". If we're having a difficult conversation about eating out at restaurants too much, for example, I might call it the "Restaurant Chicky". That way it is possible to imagine a cute little chicky running around the room that is frustrated about restaurants. It brings some levity into the situation for both parties and invokes feelings of wanting to care for the chicky. .
3. **List it.** The next step is to write it down on a list somewhere, ideally on an ongoing list of difficult topics. I like to call this the "chicky farm", where all the chickies are happy and playing. You might even have some bigger farm animals in there, for the really difficult topics. By having a list, it makes it easier to revisit at a later date.
4. **Revisit it.** It is important to revisit the list of difficult topics from time to time, being mindful to also fit in time for fun positive experiences with each other as well. It is important to space out the emotional work, since stressful conversations can sometimes feel a bit resource depleting, to the point where it might even require some self-care afterwards to repair to feeling our best again. Dr. John and Julie Gottman are world renowned psychologists whose studies suggest that happy couples in long-term relationships have four times as many positive feeling experiences with each other to every negative feeling, emotionally depleting conversation⁵⁸. This "5 to 1" rule can be a great guideline for knowing when to visit the chicky farm together.

Restorative Practices: Formal Proactive Processes with Centered and Exhilarated

It All Starts with the Circle

The Centered and Exhilarated Circle is a weekly meeting where teammates (co-workers, housemates, etc.) can get caught up on each other's lives. This circle helps bring in the culture of 4 positives to 1 negative, by setting aside a designated space and time for the team to gather and catch up with each other in a nourishing culture. The TLLR Tool is practiced through the hour or two that the circle lasts, which helps hold the container of 4 positives to 1 negative, while also giving everyone a chance to experience practicing the TLLR Tool. However, these aspects of the Centered and Exhilarated Circle turn out to be less important over time, than the real treasure here, which is the Centered and Exhilarated Individuation Round. Each circle starts off with this opening round and over time, it becomes the engine that moves a community from "4 positives to 1 negative" culture, all the way to fully inspiring, nourishing, and replenishing culture.

The Centered and Exhilarated Circle

The Centered and Exhilarated Circle has 2 parts:

1. **The Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share** - The circle starts with participants sharing a recent memory where they felt both centered and exhilarated at the same time. At a glance, this helps get the centered right brain (C) and the exhilarated left brain (E) coordinating with each other, for a whole brain group share. Each person gets a max of 4 minutes to share and there is usually a phone alarm clock timing them with a tibetan bowl alarm, or some such sound. This helps everyone relax by knowing there won't be anyone who overshares. It also helps the habitual oversharers to know they will not be at risk of oversharing.
2. **Three Alarms** - Following the Centered and Exhilarated Memory Share, the circle begins by setting an alarm for 20 minutes. This is where the Centered and Exhilarated culture starts to take root. Anyone who is inspired can begin talking about any topic that keeps the Centered and Exhilarated container of the group. Once someone begins to lose their Centered and Exhilarated topic, they can ask for the topic to change (TLLR Tool) or they can leave the group for self care if they prefer. The magic really happens at the 20 minute mark when the alarm goes off. At this time, everyone takes a moment of silence to revisit their centered and exhilarated memory, noticing how far they've moved from having that feeling in their body, or how much they've been able to keep it. The alarm is then set for another 20 minutes and conversation resumes. After doing this a couple times, each member begins to notice their ebb and flow from the centered and exhilarated experience, in their own way. They also begin to start mapping their first body-level (somatic) tools for returning to their centered and exhilarated experience when they've left it, while sustaining it longer when they have it, and also noticing what it

feels like to use the TLLR Tool as a constructive boundary to help keep the centered and exhilarated feeling.

Restorative Process at Orbit 5: Beyond Restorative Practices

The first thing to keep in mind is that there is little need for restorative justice process (reactive) when everyone is operating at Orbit 5 (business level intimacy), because of the restorative practices (proactive). At Orbit 5, we can simply say how we feel and arrive at a best possible win-win solution by collaborating together to find the sweet spot that works best for everyone. This process can be very centering and exhilarating to share. A difficult situation might look like someone finding they need to move on to a new project because this project is no longer suiting their needs and even that can be celebrated. For those who are not operating at business level intimacy, the Centered and Exhilarated Restorative Justice Process can be just the thing for assisting each member to have optimal centered and exhilarated feelings during difficult topics. This can even be somewhat achieved for members who are just barely operating at Orbit 2, via the use of scripted dialogue. In this case, each member can read to each other to help remember that we're all on the same team and wanting to collaborate to reach a best possible solution for everyone, while maintaining centered and exhilarated support of each other. As members grow through Orbit 2 and higher there is no longer a need for scripted dialogue.

The Centered and Exhilarated Restorative Justice Process adds additional scaffolding to help participants by having the facilitator clearly explain each of the phases/circles that we will be moving through during the process, in order to meet each person's core needs. The circles are designed to meet important needs such as staying informed, having support if desired, and reconvening for further action steps when it aligns to the timeline, and the timeline is made clear and visible.

Let's jump into it by learning about each circle and then we can look at some example scripts to help give an understanding of how Centered and Exhilarated can have the highest possible chance of emanating throughout the process. Each circle is a clear guiding light to be followed in order to help keep connection.

The Pre-Pre-Circle

This is where you meet with each individual separately. In speaking with them, you can learn what their needs are and who they would like to have in attendance at the Pre-Circle.

The Pre-Circle

This circle is larger, where you will be meeting with each member separately, along with each of the people they wished to be present. These additional circle members may have

additional support or information that may be helpful to the person. This is where the action steps are plotted on a timeline, in order to understand everything that needs to come into place before the restorative justice circle takes place.

The Restorative Justice Circle

This is where both parties meet with each other in order to dialogue around each other's needs, or to simply state boundaries to each other. We are assuming that these members are not at business level intimacy trust with each other, so it is important to script out the connecting pieces for them and to have them recite the connecting pieces with their support/mediator and with you just prior to the meeting, as well as informing you of anything else they plan to say, in order to give the circle a better chance for success, by allowing you to give feedback ahead of time and see how things will play out. The connecting pieces are as follows:

1. I am here today to find ways to be in tribe with you in the future.
2. I am here today to connect with you and understand your feelings as well as mine, even if we only make it through one sentence before we lose our centered and exhilarated experience and need to reschedule.
3. I am here today to take the first step in restorative justice process, knowing we may not be able to make it through all the important topics today. We may not make it very far through even the first topic and that is still great because we are working for ways to be in tribe with each other.

After the intro, each person can say their piece through turn taking. It is good to use the Nonviolent Communication technique of having them repeat each other's needs back to each other until each person feels fully heard.

The circle can proceed like this until either participant is at ego depletion (see Roy Baumeister's Willpower) which just means that they've burnt up enough calories and need food and their anterior cingulate cortex is no longer able to regulate their emotions, which usually happens after an hour of being on one's best behavior until they can't take it anymore.

Each time this circle completes, the next circle can be scheduled for at least 3 weeks into the future. Sometimes this could even be 6 months into the future. If the parties cannot wait 3 weeks, restorative justice may not be the best option until proper boundaries can be set, in order for both participants to be able to wait 3 weeks.

The Healing Circle

This is a circle that can happen multiple times throughout the journey. It consists of members that the person has asked for, to be present and support them, in whatever healing might look like for them at that time. Any contributors would be doing so out of complete resonance in order to maintain a container of complete support.

The Reintegration Consideration Circle

This would be the final circle, when everyone comes back together to consider reintegrating the individual back into the community, and to determine next steps for that to happen. This could happen with each person separately, or altogether.

The Reintegration Circle

This is the ceremony where each person is reintegrated into community with each other and to the community as a whole, in the case that someone may have been temporarily removed from community in order to respect one of the boundaries set, so long as the boundary was set for the purpose of working towards being in tribe with each other again. If there was no desire to be in tribe with each other again, there would be no restorative justice and the person would simply set boundaries to not put themselves in the other person's presence.

Summary

It seems that once we reach business level intimacy, we certainly have our work cut out for us! Thankfully, the work is joyful to the core and all the effort and difficulty can be shared with fellow *treibh*. The basics of the seven orbits have now been covered. Up next, we will be jumping into some of the deeper dives where centered and exhilarated culture can be applied, in places like visual arts, dance, music, language arts, athleticism, you name it! If it's a hobby or a practice, you can probably find a meaningful way to enhance it with centered and exhilarated tools.

Part VI: Book Summary

What Have We Learned So Far?

Centered and Exhilarated is a powerful practice that can be used to bring more empowerment to our personal relationships, the communities we live in, the workplaces we contribute to, and the families we come home to. As Centered and Exhilarated culture grows, even the planet at large will benefit from the increased connections that are possible when we can support both the centered and exhilarated spectrums in each other throughout collaborative interactions.

Part I - Relationship Tools

Here we began discussion of the 4-Step TLLR tool, introducing the benefits of building skill in our ability to recognize when a topic is difficult and whether or not there might be an option to discuss it at another time, when feeling more fully resourced.

We also introduced a 5th optional step of reminding your partner how you would like to be talked to. We are all such uniquely different creatures and at the end of the day we all want connection. It can be so easy to forget that our partner wants us to help them understand what connection feels best for us. That is why we call this step: “tell me what to say”.

Part II - The Centered and Exhilarated Approach

In this section, we discussed the beginnings of the shift in understanding, moving from the simplified TLLR Tool (table it, label it, list it, revisit it) to applying it as a larger philosophy and toolkit for social interaction. This Centered and Exhilarated approach includes the ability to recognize stressful topics where there might be a choice and combines this observational skill with the resources to nurture an empowered left brain and right brain experience. As the centered right brain and exhilarated left brain meet down the middle, a new whole brain experience of Centered and Exhilarated emerges and is shared with others as many new contextual and energetic dimensions of conversation emerge.

The Opening Orbits

Here is where the rubber meets the road. Up until now it's been all talk. This is where we began learning how to actually practice the Centered and Exhilarated approach.

In Orbit 1, we covered the basics of how to bring the centered and exhilarated state to a group setting by sharing recent memories where we felt centered and exhilarated.

In Orbit 2, we began observing the nuances of leaving and returning to the Centered and Exhilarated experience while discussing neutral conversation topics. We also learned the key aspects of right discernment that can lead to right action.

The Orchestrator Orbits

In Orbit 3, we began differentiating how the active practice of Centered and Exhilarated tools contributes to the passive effects that make it increasingly easier to stay in Centered and Exhilarated. This is known as the Raise Up pyramid of right action, insight, a supportive environment, and eventually being able to work on our utopia project.

In Orbit 4, we began applying our empathy and support skills to the practice of being present with others. This is a practice of holding Centered and Exhilarated for yourself and also holding Centered and Exhilarated for someone who is unable to, in order to bring more empowerment and resources to them while they process a difficult topic.

In Orbit 5, we took a look at the 30 Day Challenge, including some tips for how to make it go as smoothly as possible. The benefits of taking the 30 Day Challenge are the single biggest leap of insight that comes while practicing Centered and Exhilarated. With big leaps, it's important for adequate preparation. In this case, that means remembering how to communicate to people in a gentle way that helps them to feel included and connected. After all, isn't that the point of all of this?

The Oneness Orbits

In Orbit 6, we discussed some of the realizations that may begin to emerge around the very fact that our sense of identity is changing as we practice these tools. As we grow used to living from the part of our self that is fully resourced and empowered, our identity too begins to shift to that place. This creates a sense of gravity to stay in Centered and Exhilarated more often, for longer periods of time, and to return more quickly.

In Orbit 7, we introduced the idea that business meetings are perhaps the last frontier for being able to hold Centered and Exhilarated, because they are so difficult. To be able to hold the type of intimacy that comes with the Centered and Exhilarated experience while getting business done will help bring your most creative out-of-the-box thinking and unique passionate solutions to wherever there is a need for work to get done. This is what we refer to as business level intimacy. We also discussed how these tools can be used for the facilitation of large scale community level restorative justice processes.

Part III - Integrating Centered and Exhilarated into Daily Life

At the point someone has made it to Orbit 7, it has likely been at least a year's worth of practice already. By this time, it's natural to notice the Centered and Exhilarated experience benefitting so many aspects of our daily life and offering new ways to improve some of the existing systems we use with each other.

In this section we explored how group decision making can leverage Centered and Exhilarated tools, as well as conflict navigation, and assigning roles to complete projects on a team.

Part IV - Ceocracy

This section was written for any of us who are already working on a team to complete projects and are looking for an entire organizational structure that can bring about the optimal levels of Centered and Exhilarated in their workplace, community, or home.

Part V - Restorative Justice

Here we learned how to bring Centered and Exhilarated into both proactive and reactive practices that support compassionate decision making and true shared vicinity during the conflict navigation process.

Part VII: Deeper Dives

Integrating Centered and Exhilarated into Hobbies

Centered and Exhilarated wouldn't exist if it weren't for hobbies and other areas of life.

One of my first experiences of exhilarated centeredness comes from my 10,000 hours in freestyle rap, where I was winning awards for best freestyler because of their ability to consciously get into the zone of quickly articulating ideas from an exhilarated centeredness.

Another one of our members arrived at their first experiences of exhilarated centeredness as a yoga teacher, benefiting from the increased whole brain coherence to speak from a place of deep centeredness while remembering to mirror body movements and give fast and explicit queuing, as they felt into the changing needs of the students based on micro-expressions, postural instabilities, mirror neuroning, or just general psychic communications.

As we begin to understand the deep importance of placing a focus on hobbies, it is possible the education of practicing Centered and Exhilarated might become increasingly hobby focused. In the future, perhaps readers will find this book for the most part out of a desire to improve their ability in their hobby. Or maybe to reflect on other's experiences of Centered and Exhilarated in their favorite hobby.

That is why we've chosen to include hobbies as the final section of our Centered and Exhilarated Book. As time goes on, we hope to keep adding a page for each new hobby where someone has Centered and Exhilarated insight. As multiple pages emerge for a hobby, we intend to create a separate Centered and Exhilarated Book for each hobby, in order to frame this helpful material within the lens that the person is already using to find this knowledge. For now, here are some of the baby plants, that we can water and watch as they grow.

Art

Art can be such a wonderful way of accessing centered internal flowstate consciousness in combination with formal elements of artistic expression. Our team is blessed with a resident artist who has a lifetime of experience drawing from their centered being while learning technique to pair the centeredness with exhilarated approaches that can communicate emotion in so many beautiful ways. Their first experiences of using Centered and Exhilarated art was when having lovers paint with them, accessing flow state and universal centeredness and then communicating with words/colors/movements about the experience. We can look forward to a lush deep dive on this topic.

This Centered and Exhilarated Guide to Art will be made available on <http://centeredandexhilarated.org>.

Teaching

The Centered and Exhilarated of Teaching is all about drawing out a student's own internal knowledge of Centered and Exhilarated through leading questions of inspirations to invite them to an optimal learning state. The methods and techniques support both the teacher and the student. The field of contemplative pedagogy is ready to begin integrating these new techniques and this guide will be one of the first places we can find these resources.

This Centered and Exhilarated Guide to Teaching will be made available on <http://centeredandexhilarated.org>.

Jazz

When we think of jazz, images of a group of players jamming with each other tends to come to mind. Freely flowing off each other's ideas and building beautiful musical structures with each other, or madly zig-zagging through jagged architectural patterns seemingly without losing each other. The secret in the new orleans sauce of jazz comes back to Dan Siegel's concept of coherence. As we use the 4 Ls of our left brain to differentiate the functions of each of the chords within a mode, we are able to store the concepts in the long term memory of our muscles. We are then able to access the short term memory of our muscles to store concepts such as where we're heading within the next couple seconds, minutes, or the overall theme of the jazz set. To get to this level of musicianship, we've laid out a practice guide for playing jazz in a way that automatically strengthens Centered and Exhilarated as it is used in conversation and visa versa. Supporting Centered and Exhilarated in conversation actually strengthens the same muscles used to play jazz. The course outline starts with playing simple melodies in the right hand as they appear in our centeredness. This is what one might call the musician's inner ear. We then strengthen the ability to "hear" with our inner ear, by identifying which guiding tone of a chord progression the melody notes on the strong beats would fit into. From there, it is a simple matter of integrating Barry Harris' 6th and Diminished scales to gain a mastery of understanding the blueprint behind jazz standards. Playing blindfolded or with eyes closed then becomes important, while playing a chart in all 12 keys, starting at 30 bpm and working up to 300 bpm eventually, where your solos really catch fire.

This Centered and Exhilarated Guide to Playing Jazz will be made available on <http://centeredandexhilarated.org>.

Freestyle Rap

MC stands for master of ceremonies. Those who have earned the name MC are those who can rock with the crowd to elevate the communion to higher energy levels. The difference between a great MC and a wack MC can be defined simply as talking with someone vs. talking at someone. When we are constricted or expressing rage, we may be able to access a wealth of words and fast rhythms, but it can oftentimes be at the expense of connecting with ourselves and our audience, to find more impactful ways of expressing the same underlying poetry. After winning the Freestyler of the Year award a couple years in a row and putting more than 10,000 hours into freestyle rapping while releasing more than 300 songs, I have arrived at my understanding from within the lens of freestyle rap. By pairing the 4 Ls of the Left Brain to drawing from imagery within the ocean of integrated centeredness in the right brain experience, it is possible to learn to map concepts against both the short term and long term muscle memory in our body, to juggle up to 9 separate dynamics when we are at maximum coherence. In order to arrive at this place of mastery, there are several stages and milestones along the way, each with their own set of exercises. As with all Centered and Exhilarated integrations, practicing freestyle rap with the Centered and Exhilarated method will directly translate to improving interpersonal relationships and visa versa.

This Centered and Exhilarated Guide to Freestyle Rap will be made available on <http://centeredandexhilarated.org>.

Men's Circles

A member of our team has more than a decade of experience in hosting Men's Circles and is excited to make this deeper dive available. They would make a guide for Female Circles as well but they don't have that experience.

A Brief History of Men's Circles

Men's circles have traditionally been a healing space for men to get together and learn from each other what masculinity means. While these circles can often be specific to male-bodied individuals, a lot of discussion in tantric men's circles can orbit around bringing in the divine feminine as central to masculine expression, regardless of CIS gender. This often evolves into balancing conversation around the divine masculine as well, which can then dive into Jungian archetypes. With a rich history of attending and guiding men's circles, I have a unique perspective on how to bring an element of support and understanding to a men's circle, especially when it comes to accessing the divine masculine and divine feminine in its masculine expression, as well as within the feminine expression. It is the Centered and Exhilarated elements of the supportive masculine that are somewhat of a new realization, stemming from recent neurobiology research, that present Jungian static and dynamic masculinity in a new way. This supportive masculine role, aligning to the exhilarated spectrum, and supportive feminine role, aligning to the centered spectrum, can quickly be understood and experienced within a men's circle.

The masculine, as defined by Carl Jung, carries the qualities of making things separate and isolated, in order to understand them, to make systems out of them, and to make laws to live by and to protect the good and punish the bad. The feminine, on the other hand, Jung uses to describe the aspects of ourselves that are immersed in oneness, in exploration of a holistic interconnected world of relationships within and around us. He arrived at these definitions from the pagan and Germanic cultures that preceded him, for thousands of years, speaking of the masculine and feminine not as deities but as divine energies that manifest within ourselves.

Now fast forward 150 years from the times of Carl Jung and we have the study of neurobiology, where Dan Siegel has written many books about the 4 Ls: literal, logic, linear, and language, all which take place in the left hemisphere of our brain. The right brain on the other hand, has no concept of time or space as separateness; the right brain experiences oneness, connectedness, and relationship with all beings. Yogis and sages have found many paths to reconnect with these aspects of our right brain, while the left brain has yet to be explored in terms of its balancing effects in our spiritual lives. Both sides of our brain support and balance each other, like yin and yang, like feminine and masculine.

	Left Brain	Right Brain	
Masculine	Differentiation	Integration	Feminine

This book is about bringing that balance into social interactions. There are many books out there that teach the skills to create a safe container for emotional vulnerability. When humans feel safe to expose their vulnerable side, their stress metabolizing nervous system bridges the right brain in order to bring about embodiment and healing. When we speak from centeredness, we can have very inspiring and supportive conversations. However, what happens when the container disappears? We're left with a sense of longing. If the container is removed by an unwanted energy, it could even leave us feeling a bit constricted and tense, as a result of the surprise while we were feeling vulnerable.

This is where the exhilarated spectrum of emotions becomes important to look at. When we have built up reasonable trust that the safe container for centeredness will not disappear, we start to get used to it. When we get used to it, we can become our childlike unique and joyful selves for a short time being. This feeling is experienced in immersion within the right brain as both centered and exhilarated, at the same time. This state of connection, while being very wonderful, can still be subdued if we are relying on something outside of ourselves in order to trust that we're being protected, that the container is safe. When we rely on the protection of others to keep a safe container, for example if we are relying on a guide or leadership figure, then we are still operating out of our vulnerable right brained centered and exhilarated experience.

It is here that Centered and Exhilarated fits into the world of compassionate communications. Centered and Exhilarated is about bringing in the 4 Ls of the left brain in order to build empowerment for each participant in a conversation to be able to build empowerment in their own ability to protect the safe container. Once these skills are practiced, participants find themselves able to feel centered and exhilarated more often, for longer lengths of time, and even in increasingly difficult topics. What may have seemed as a threat to safety can be thoroughly manageable once the 4 Ls of the left brain have had a chance to come into balance.

Over time, the 4 Ls of the left brain can master the tools of protecting safety and empowering others. As this happens, the feelings of centered and exhilarated help us to rejoin to our joyful childlike joyful identity. As this happens, there is not as much of a need to use the 4 Ls to protect safety, as we can do it unconsciously from our right brain as well, empowering others in subtle ways, while never feeling a thread of losing our centered and exhilarating feelings. But to get to this level of mastery, the 4 Ls are our bread and butter. This book will focus on using the 4 Ls to bring us back into balance, where we are fully empowered to create our own safe containers in a way that can build trust in our own abilities to protect the centered and exhilarated feelings in ourselves and others.

This Centered and Exhilarated Guide to Men's Circles will be made available on <http://centeredandexhilarated.org>.

Social Permaculture

In the last couple years, I have been offering Centered and Exhilarated workshops at permaculture gatherings. The workshops are setup to help participants identify patterns that exist in the natural occurrence of our social communication when we are in a resourced and fully engaged parasympathetic state of being. This is a way of human existing that feels protected and would be akin to observing animal beings in nature interacting when they feel relaxed and at ease, living in harmony with all being. Compassionate communication is an important part of permaculture and Centered and Exhilarated provides an awesome option.

This Centered and Exhilarated Guide to Social Permaculture will be made available on <http://centeredandexhilarated.org>.

Parts Play

When the feeling of Centered and Exhilarated has developed a sort of gravity, it can be quite wonderful to intentionally leave the Centered and Exhilarated experience, through parts play. This allows other parts to disassociate and come online fully, for the purposes of strengthening the gravity to return to the centered and exhilarated experience after dissociation, or even just to allow the parts to build skill of their own, differentiating their many aspects at an unconscious level, before bringing them back into the whole of Centered and Exhilarated. An easy example is going to a float tank for relaxation. Here we cut ourselves off from our sensations of our sense of smell, of hearing, of sight, and even of gravity. What's left then becomes greatly enhanced, especially by the 30 minute mark or the 60 minute mark. Our other senses get to take a break and be fully relaxed and replenished from taking that rest. The senses we're left with then begin to map their own sense of identity, since that is just what the mind/ego does. This new identity can be so much fun to explore, as all the senses become more vivid than they're used to being, with more nuanced skill in these areas. If we were blindfolded, walking through a park, holding someone's hand, our skill at walking would gradually become enhanced in new ways, without the sense of sight to aid us. The experience of the sensations of the breeze or the sounds of nature would become greatly enhanced as well. The emotions of reliance and feelings of being held get to spread their wings and explore feelings that we may have not revisited in a while, often times with a gift of empowerment and healing to come with them. We can do this partner play even without leaving our home, by making a headphone mix for someone of a musical journey and blindfolding them. In the music, you can have certain noises timed, such as birds swooping in. While watching the playlist and the sheet of paper with timed noises, you can then use a fan to simulate the feeling of that bird swooping in. With Ableton you can craft a lot of additional noises to go along with textures and sensations you may be able to conjure throughout the audio adventure. This can be a very immersive experience. The opening ceremony in Centered and Exhilarated for these parts plays might be a conscious departure from Centered and Exhilarated and the closing ceremony might be a conscious return. This translates easily to all those times in our life when we may be feeling greatly centered yet we've left our ego into no ego. While this can be so nurturing in so many ways, if done unintentionally, the no ego experience might persist in this ungrounded way for longer than we might intentionally wish. By playing with movement between no ego and an exhilarated centeredness, we can cultivate nuance, risk, and reward in ever advancing abilities to dance between the two worlds in an empowering way. This promotes well being in our home life, our work life, with our communities, in our romantic relationships, and even just with ourselves in having more options for deeper self care after a long and difficult day.

This Centered and Exhilarated Guide to Parts Play will be made available on <http://centeredandexhilarated.org>.

Centered and Exhilarated Language Arts and Writing

When we read, we can sometimes come across a passage of written **language** that can be taken **literally**, where everything adds up in a **linear** manner, where everything is **logical**. Did you notice the 4 Ls there? Those are the four Ls of the left brain, covered in Part II of Centered and Exhilarated. When we allow a reader to take the easy way out, where the left brain is mindlessly processing, we risk losing the centeredness of the reader, and so we lose the complexity and coherence of their whole brain connection in relation to the living word. Yet we can easily learn to instill a sense of relation with all beings in the way we write. This manner of writing has been employed successfully in anything from Martin Buber's I and Thou to the eastern philosophies of gurus like Ramana Maharshi, buddhist monks like Thich Naht Hanh, or even sufi poets like Rumi, Khalil Gibran, or their teacher John Donne. In fact, it was John Donne who created some of the literary devices that can be used to capture the soul in a stirring way. One such device he created is the "conceit", where the two elements of a simile are so dissimilar that it creates a whole brain connection in a way that somehow becomes more than the sum of its parts.

Centered and Exhilarated Writing is all about how to connect to the reading in a way that promotes whole-brain well-being and fosters a sense of connection with all beings. We will explore easy ways to use simile, metaphor, and conceit, as well as other tools and techniques that add to the simplicity of the flow of the reading experience, by bringing in a sense of nourishment and replenishment while not having the types of rough edges that might catch the reader, unless to take a breath to enjoy the exhilaration and centeredness of it all. An example might be if we re-wrote the first sentence of this page, in a way that brings in centeredness, to raise the 4 Ls of the left brain up to a state of exhilaration:

"When we read, we can sometimes come across a passage of written **language** that can be taken **literally**, where everything adds up in a **linear** manner, where everything is **logical**. Did you notice the 4 Ls there? Those are the four Ls of the left brain"

With Centered and Exhilarated in mind, this sentence too can become centered and exhilarated:

"When we read, we may be lucky enough to stumble across a passage of written **language** so vital that it shows us it's inner life. The wordsouls when breathed in can be taken as **literal**. The period dances at the end of the sentence and winks. And so we feel seen by a guide, leading us down a **linear** path. To arrive at the outbreath of this magic and find true **logic**. Did you notice the 4 Ls there? Those are the four Ls of the left brain," as the whole brain becomes *centered* and *exhilarated*.

This Centered and Exhilarated Guide to Writing will be made available on <http://centeredandexhilarated.org>.

Part VII: Appendix and The Centered and Exhilarated Origin Story

The Centered and Exhilarated Origin Story

It was 15 years ago that I met my beautiful wife, Miku Lenentine, standing on a hill outside of a mixed martial arts club, that it turns out we were both about to attend. We met under the moonlight and had a blast getting to know each other that night. At that time I was working on an upgraded system of Jungian Function Type assessment that could take into account mood swings. She was into community building and helping further the field of Ecology. I remember her elation in telling me about a book she was reading called *The Way of the Peaceful Warrior*. We both hit it off strikingly, under that beautiful moonlight, a night I will never forget.

Our first steps in community living were in Bellingham, in a large house of 6 college students, where we didn't really have an intention for a regenerative community. We were just unintentionally living with each other and seeing how it goes. We had a blast! Our hearts did yearn though, to live in an intentional community, where the intention was to relate from our energy bodies and have full connection with each other, while being able to tackle even the biggest difficult issues with joy and love because we were tackling them together. We began our first intentional community in 2013, just Miku, myself, and our friend who we like to refer to as Alex-Kittens. The three of us prepared our house each week to let the community come in and join us every Sunday for day-long co-created workshops, food and festivities. Here's an example⁵⁹ of what one of those early Soulshine Festivals looked like:

“Jan. 5th, 2014

I'm back from Mexico! This week continues the free festival series of workshops and guest speakers, occurring every Sunday, at the Soulshine house. The intent is to keep skillshares abundantly available to those who want to learn. Whoever wants to can co-create, present a workshop, adopt an alternate location to host, etc. Upcoming ideas for workshops include piano lessons, tarot readings, communication skills, and a listening workshop.

Noon - 2pm - [ASP.Net](#) integration with SQL coding class
2pm - 4pm - Mixing and mastering music
4pm - 6pm - Sunday Cypher (freestyle rap)
6pm - 8pm - Bodywork Skillshare (At the Soulshine House, 4312 36th NE, Seattle, WA 98105)”

We had a blast that year but we really yearned to bring the tools we were learning for conflict navigation into a larger intentional community setting. One of our goals was to someday be authors and bring tools to the world that could help people, where there was a need, and where the tools might not yet exist. We knew we were onto something, so we started spreading the word that we were upgrading the Soulshine House and looking for a 10 bedroom house to begin the next iteration. We would meet every week throughout the summer with others to work out the logistics and find a location that met all our needs. We found a place alright and it was exactly what we were all hoping for, though a bit on the pricey side. We all moved in and

⁵⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/events/568399979903659/>

continued practicing the social tools we had been developing, while helping other house members to support the development of their own tools, and receiving feedback and mentoring from them on the tools we were developing. My specialty was in holacracy consulting at the time and I was able to usher in a new era of holacratic governance, where we had previously been using a sociocratic governance methodology. I drafted the constitution up, explained the anchor circle process to everyone, and we were on our way with link lead sheets, domains, and holacratic decision making process. This was unheard of in the Seattle intentional community circuit at the time. I owe everything to every member at Soulshine House who was excited about Holacracy and helped give their all to making it work, because those were some of the funnest years of my life. After 3 years, our landlord raised the prices and we were forced to move out, but with perfect timing! For me, it was a much needed release to take a step back and really look at what worked and what didn't work, at least in terms of my unique needs. I'm the type of person that really needs to feel exhilarated about conflict navigation with people, if it's going to work. I was noticing that others weren't enjoying the conflict navigation process nearly as much as I was. The defendedness that was creeping into our culture was starting to drain the energetic resources we had available and the conflicts were starting to back up. This needed a fix! But I wasn't sure how to address the issue. My wife wanted to move into another intentional community right away, but I couldn't do it until I could solve for this issue, of under-resourced individuals not attending to conflict navigation in balance with the needs of the community. Clearly the answer was that conflict navigation needed to be regenerative, not draining. In fact, all aspects of the community living could be regenerative. I was certain!

That was about 3 years ago. I spent a year stewing on it drawing designs on papers that I would hang on my bedroom walls. I began recognizing that it was hard to tell when I was losing centeredness if I wasn't feeling a thriving feeling inside. I was noticing that somehow that thriving feeling was important for monitoring my feelings of centeredness. This is when the timeline of my life started to spiral in on itself. See, twenty years ago I started rapping and I became quite good. I won the Best Freestyler Award three years in a row at the Sunday Cypher awards show and I truly believe it was based on my consistency and my poetry. I could get into the zone very quickly and I could stay there, because that's how I practiced rapping. I knew what the zone felt like, because I'd been there enough times: it felt centered and exhilarating. The centeredness was where my inspirations for words would come from and also a vast set of connection possibilities for verbal coherence and rhyme patterns. The exhilaration was essential for speedy word choice and rhythm pattern switching, as well as connecting with which aspects of my rapping the audience was vibing with and fine tuning my delivery in alignment with their appreciation. This was basically exhilarated attunement and centered attunement happening in my body, twenty years ago! I was able to arrive at that state consistently because I knew what the state felt like and I chose to prioritize feeling "the zone" whenever I practiced rapping, which actually helped me get much better at rapping from the zone, returning there when I lost it, and staying in the zone longer. I was fortunate enough to headline at some of the biggest venues in Seattle on Friday and Saturday nights, while opening for some big names like Gym Class Heroes, Macklemore, and Redman. But I hadn't put two and two together that I had stumbled on Centered and Exhilarated. That would take at least 15 more years.

Then, also seemingly unrelated, about 2 years ago, on New Years, I made a resolution for myself that ended up changing everything. This New Years resolution would turn out to hold the answer in it, to everything I was looking for. To the birthing of everything I've written in this book in fact. My new years resolution was this: to live from a space of gnosis (deep embodied knowingness) 99% of the time. This was already a personal practice of mine, to set an alarm clock to go off every hour on my phone and remind me to become deeply embodied, similar to rapping from the zone.

Eventually this practice moved to every 15 minutes. But now I was capable of staying in my gnosis, my illumined path, 99% of the day, 99% of the week, and 99% of the month! February 1st came and I had successfully pulled it off. It became crystal clear to me during this time period that I needed to feel exhilarated first and foremost, in order to keep my centeredness. That meant having discernment about staying in situations where I did not lose my exhilaration. It also meant talking to my boss to let him know if I had to leave a meeting it was for health reasons (to keep my exhilarated spectrum). I had to let my family in on what I was doing so they could support me as well. But it was so worth it! After a full month of it, there was no thought of ever returning to the way I used to live. My brain was able to think so much better when I was in my gnosis, I could be so much more supportive, and I could heal my traumas on the fly as they came up. I knew this lifestyle was here to stay. But a couple things had to be solved for over the long term:

1. How do I stay centered when the difficulty level of the conversation is too high, say, where someone is actively shaming me and telling me I'm "doing it wrong"?
2. How do I communicate to others the type of support I need in order to keep my promise to myself, to be in my deep centeredness 99% of the time?
3. And this was the big one: I learned in business school that 85% of culture changes fail in the workplace due to lack of adequate structural reinforcement. How could I build a structural framework for intentional communities that reinforces the ability for everyone to stay in their gnosis 99% of the time, even during conflict navigation, even during high difficult levels?

It was all about the exhilarated spectrum and this was becoming more and more clear to me as the months continued. Flash forward to the present day and here I am sitting in front of a book, written by me, with the support of my community, and I have full-fledged sections of chapters to answer each of these questions. The first part of this book answered the first question: how do I stay centered when the difficulty level is high? The second part of this book, with the orbits, answered the second question: how do I communicate this to others so that they can know how to support me? The third part of this book, Ceocracy, answered the third and most important question: how do we bring these regenerative community tools into our organizations, workplaces, and intentional communities? I've taken a lot of care to ensure there is a simple core framework to Centered and Exhilarated, and that it can scale to bring the embodied level connecting that is so important for regenerative relating to any size organization, culture, state, or even to the world!

It was in my decision to live from my gnosis 99% of the time where I unwittingly discovered the missing link that could bring everything together: structural reinforcement of the exhilaration spectrum once the centeredness spectrum is present. I found that I could not live from my gnosis even more than 25% of the time if I wasn't first feeling centered and exhilarated. The centeredness piece is important for accessing my gnosis, but the exhilarated piece is the key to maintaining it. As it turned out, the feeling of exhilaration is what mapped to the experience of empowerment, when centered, to be able to use all the tools at our disposal to maintain that centered access to our gnosis. I hope you enjoyed reading this book as much as I did writing it. And I truly hope you are enjoying your Centered and Exhilarated life as much as I am!

