The Path to Well-Being

A Science-Based Map & Workbook for
Unshakable Well-Being

Tchiki Davis, M.A., Ph.D.

ISBN: 9798342451086

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all the coaches, consultants, HR reps, wellness entrepreneurs, therapists, counselors, teachers, and other helping professionals who passionately and diligently dedicate their time to improving mental health and well-being across the world. We are deeply grateful for your efforts to make the world a happier place.

Contents

The Path to Well-Being Training

Discover How To Enhance Well-Being & Accelerate Growth In Yourself & Others

With this training, you'll be able to:

✓ Estimate which stage a person is in on The Path to Well-Being.
✓ Understand the mindset of people in all 8 stages of The Path to Well-Being.
✓ Clarify which stage(s) you feel most comfortable working with.
✓ Determine which practices are likely to be most helpful for which people.
✓ Support people who are going through difficult transitions between stages.
✓ Understand why people get stuck on The Path to Well-Being.
✓ Gain clarity about what progress really looks like on The Path to Well-Being.

berkeleywellbeing.com/well-being-strategist-training

Introduction

If you've ever looked through the self-help section in a bookstore, you know that there are a zillion different ways that we can boost our well-being. Many of these approaches are even based on high-quality, psychological research. This research has shown that building certain psychological skills does indeed improve well-being.

Unfortunately, the mental health crisis continues to grow and was even accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. My own survey research shows that:

- 45% of well-being seekers disagree that they are happy
- 70% disagree that they feel good about themselves and confident in their abilities
- 30% strongly or completely disagree that they are happy with their emotions or stress response

So why are so many people still so unhappy?

Well, we humans learn best by going through specific steps in a specific order. For example, in school, we go through 1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade, and so on. We already *know* that we can not develop advanced skills without understanding the basic skills that they rely on. That's why we learn basic skills first, and then build on these skills, in our education system. If we try to learn a skill that is far below our skill level, we're likely to get bored (it's too

easy), and if we try to learn a skill that is far above our skill level, we're likely to get overwhelmed (it's too hard).

Although this same skill-building process applies to psychological skills, no one has attempted to figure out which psychological skills need to be learned first, second, third, and so on... until now.

New research from the field of developmental psychology has shown that humans progress through a predictable series of developmental stages as we move through adulthood. In each stage, our psychology shifts. In other words, we are psychologically capable of learning certain skills in certain developmental stages. And if we attempt to build certain psychological skills before we reach the appropriate stage, it may be quite difficult, confusing, and overwhelming.

So, we now know that to effectively boost well-being, we need to focus on building the psychological skills of the developmental stage we're in (e.g., O'Fallon, 2010). And, to promote personal growth, we generally need to build psychological skills that are a stage or two ahead of our current stage (Manners et al., 2004).

By relying on this process, we can finally move forward, enabling ourselves to experience more and more expansive types of well-being. And ultimately, we all have the potential to reach the developmental stage that is characterized by a more sustainable and stable type of well-being.

About This Book

This book synthesizes research and theory from a variety of fields into a well-being map. Although there are an infinite number of different sideroads that one could take on this journey, this map describes the required stages that all humans must go through on the path to unshakable well-being.

✓ Part I of this book is dedicated to helping you understand the developmental stages, assess where you are on the path to well-being, better understand the predictable ups and downs on the path, and gain clarity about how to boost well-being within stages, between stages, and across stages.

✓ Part II of this book provides a step-by-step psychological skill-building program, starting from the first stage of development. Even if you've already completed the early stages on the path (and most adults have), reviewing the skills of the early stages can help you strengthen your foundational psychological skills, aiding further development. Or, if you prefer to skip ahead to the stage that you're at, that's fine too. Do whatever feels right to you.

As you work through the exercises and build the skills in the program, you'll likely find that they get more and more difficult. Please go at your own pace, and seek out additional support from friends, family, coaches, or therapists if you need it. We can all reach the developmental stage characterized by stable well-being, but this is rarely easy and it often requires courage, determination, and openness.

✓ Past research suggests that programs like this one can help you advance one to two stages (e.g., Braks, 2020). So this book additionally provides supplemental resources at the end of the program to further aid your journey. To keep up to date on any additional resources we may have to offer, you can go to:

berkeleywellbeing.com/path-to-well-being-book

Overall, the goal of this book is to help you better understand the entire path to well-being so that you can build the psychological skills you need to boost well-being within stages, between stages, and across the stages that eventually lead to stable well-being.

Part I

Chapter 1: The Path to Well-Being

It turns out that we humans go through a predictable series of developmental stages (Cook-Greuter, 2014). As we move into each new stage, we develop a slightly wider worldview. This worldview affects how we view every single thing in our lives, including our well-being. It's almost like we're looking at the world through the lens of a camera. At each developmental stage, we zoom out a little more. And because we can see a little bit more of reality, reality looks different.

Past researchers have called the stages a variety of different names referring to many different aspects of each stage (e.g., Wilber, 2000). We'll draw from numerous research studies on developmental stages because they all have unique benefits to offer us in our understanding of the path to well-being.

Rather than rely on a confusing collection of different stage names, I'll use the 8 colors of the rainbow to refer to the 8 stages and their worldviews (e.g., red stage, orange stage, yellow stage, etc...). By using this color system, we can more easily synthesize research on the developmental stages for the purposes of understanding and enhancing well-being. We'll refer to these color/stage names throughout this entire book.

Here are the developmental stages and the primary worldview we adopt at each stage (Cook-Greuter, 2014):

- **Red Stage** - We focus on the body (self-centric)
- **Orange Stage** - We focus on social interactions (peer group-centric)
- **Yellow Stage** - We focus on behaviors or skills (skill-centric)
- **Green Stage** - We focus on emotions or outcomes (outcome-centric)
- **Teal Stage** - We focus on thoughts or perspectives (understanding-centric)
- **Blue Stage** - We focus on beliefs or patterns (pattern-centric)
- **Indigo Stage** - We focus on concepts or constructs (construct-centric)
- **Violet Stage** - We focus on awareness or unity (oneness-centric)

Note. No worldview (or stage) is right/wrong or good/bad. Each one offers unique opportunities and challenges related to well-being. Thus, our goal is to understand where we are and where we're going, not to label ourselves as a stage or elevate ourselves above others who are at earlier stages.

We Expand Through The Stages

As we progress, we don't really move through the stages in a straight line. It's more like we zoom out or expand, adding more outer rings, like trees do (Wilber, 2007). You might imagine that in each stage, we add an outer ring, or "perspective". We can think of this *outer* ring like it is a colored pair of glasses or lenses that lie between us and the world—we then see the world primarily through the outer ring.

But like trees, we still keep the inner rings (i.e., worldviews) of the earlier stages and often slide in and out of them without realizing it. So, as we expand, we can look at the world in a greater variety of different ways. This expanded 'collection' of worldviews creates greater *potential* for well-being. But, it also creates greater *potential* for ill-being. It all depends on what we do with the worldview (this is why it's so important to build psychological skills that support development at each stage).

If you're familiar with the rings of trees, you'll also know that you can see a tree's history in its rings. For example, if there was a drought or fire one year, the ring the tree grew that year will look different. The same is true for us. If we encounter challenges during certain developmental stages—or fail to develop the skills we need to thrive at certain stages—our

worldviews can develop abnormalities. In the context of well-being, we can think of these abnormalities as our unique mental health issues.

Stages Are Continuous

Although I describe the stages as if they are separate, discrete experiences, they are actually continuous. This is one reason why some developmental theories use the colors of the rainbow to refer to the stages (e.g., Wilber, 2007). This helps us keep in mind that the stages are not truly separate. For example, when you're between yellow and green stage, you're lime green (your worldview hasn't fully switched to green yet, but you're moving away from a yellow worldview).

You can also think about it like you think about your age. You may be 25 years old, and when you turn 26, you'll be in a new stage. But throughout the stage of 25, you are also 25 **and** 1 month, 2 months, 3 months, etc... You don't jump right from 25 to 26. You progress along a continuum. The same is true for the developmental stages.

We Can't Skip Stages

Just like age, we all start at 0 when it comes to the stages. And we can't skip from 0 to 5 or 50. We have to go through every stage to get to the later stages (because every stage builds on the previous one; Wilber, 2007).

But, how *fast* we move through stages is not like age. Our speed depends on our exterior circumstances (e.g., family, friends, job, etc...) and our interior circumstances (e.g., beliefs, thoughts, emotions, etc...). If someone is at an earlier stage, it may be because of difficult life circumstances and/or lack of support (ACEs, 2014; Murphy, n.d.). It's rarely because of a lack of effort! So, it's important to remember that there is no right or wrong speed to move through the stages. Everyone moves through the stages at their own pace, and that pace is right for them.

We Progress Through The Stages in Waves

When moving through the stages, we often roll forward only to slide backwards again. In other words, progress happens in a wave-like fashion (Wilber, 2007). Like the tides, we also tend to have periods of forward growth and periods where we *seem* to go backwards.

This wave-like progression is often necessary for further growth. When we feel like we're going backwards, we can just think of it like we're doing a study session before a big test at school. We often need this 'review session' in order to make the most of whatever is ahead. For example, before moving on to multiplication and division, we often need to review addition and subtraction. We can then more easily integrate and apply addition and subtraction in the context of multiplication and division.

The same is true when it comes to growing our well-being. Life will often force us to go back to review the skills we learned in the early stages so that we can effectively integrate and apply them in the context of our next stage. But, we can also do this 'review' by choice. In fact, going backwards to strengthen the psychological skills of earlier stages can be a very beneficial thing to do, especially when we're feeling stuck.

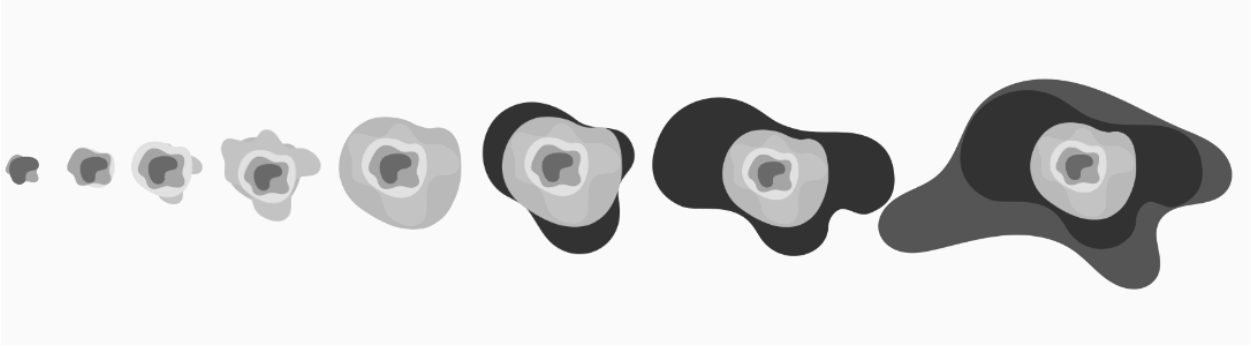
We're Always In Multiple Stages

We know that when we move from 2nd to 3rd grade, we will be better at some skills than others. We may be at a 2nd-grade level for some skills, a 3rd-grade level for other skills, and even a 4th-grade level for a few skills. The same is true when it comes to well-being. Our psychological skills are generally normally distributed around a centerpoint.

In other words, at any given time, some of our psychological skills will be in the stage prior to our current stage, some of our psychological skills will be in the stage ahead of our current stage, and a few of our psychological skills may even be in very early or very late stages (e.g., Wilber, 2000). But, the majority of our psychological skills will be at the primary stage that we're at.

Expanding Rainbow Rings

When we put all these factors together, the path to well-being might look like expanding rainbow rings of a tree.



These rings represent the different worldviews we gain as we move along the path. The shapes, sizes, and intensity of the colors represent the unique characteristics of our different layers—characteristics which are created by the unique experiences (e.g., challenges and opportunities) that arose for us during each stage.

Chapter 2: Identifying Your Stage

Research on the developmental stages has aimed to provide insight into how the stages are experienced, on average (e.g., Cook-Greuter, 2014). Understanding how the developmental stages contribute to well-being (and ill-being) can help us better understand how to improve well-being within, between, and across *all* of the stages. However, all of us will differ from these prototypical experiences in some ways. Although we all must go through all the developmental stages on the way to violet stage (where we can find unshakable well-being), everyone is different, and how each person experiences the stages will be different. It's important to keep this in mind when trying to figure out which stage we're in.

What Stage(s) Are You In?

In this section, we'll explore the worldview of each stage and how this worldview may contribute to our psychological experiences (e.g., beliefs, thoughts, emotions, etc...) at each stage. To get an idea of which stage(s) you are in, reflect on your own experiences. Write down which aspects of each stage resonate or make sense to you. Then, once you've reviewed all the stages and your notes on how each stage relates to you, see if you can figure out which stage is your current stage or centerpoint.

The Stages

The following description of the stages is based on multiple lines of research (e.g., Cook-Greuter, 2014; O'Fallon, 2010; O'Fallon, 2020; Wilber, 2000; Wilber, 2024).

Red Stage

Self-Centric (~4% of adults)

"It's just me against the world." - Tupac Shakur

Worldview: Self-focused; body-focused.
Perspective: 1st person.
Time Horizon: Very short-term (days-weeks).
Beliefs: If I can just be bigger, stronger, or more clever than other people, I'll be happy/safe.
Thoughts: When I feel bigger, stronger, or more clever in the ways that I desire, I am worthy. When I feel smaller, weaker, or less clever, I am not good enough.
Emotions: Positive emotions emerge from feeling safe; negative emotions emerge when feeling unsafe.
Behaviors: Self-protection, impulsivity, bravery, carefree, fast-acting in emergencies, difficulty seeing how actions lead to consequences, aggression, experiential avoidance, opportunism, unlawful behavior, lying, manipulation, seeking physical pleasure, avoiding physical pain, addiction.
Social Experiences: Frequent conflict with others without understanding the causes. Lack of understanding of other people's personal boundaries (Cook-Greuter, 2014), and poor empathy skills.
Physical Experiences: May have health issues or negative bodily experiences as a result of pursuing bodily pleasure and avoiding pain (e.g., drugs, alcohol, eating unhealthy foods).

What aspects of red stage do you see in yourself?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Orange Stage

Peer Group-Centric (~11% of adults)

"I am what I am." - Popeye

Worldview: Peer group focused (e.g., family, social group, religion, race, political group, etc...).
Perspective: 2nd person.
Time Horizon: Short-term (weeks-months).
Beliefs: If I can just get the approval of "my" people, I'll be happy.
Thoughts: When accepted by my close group in the ways that I desire, I am worthy. When rejected by my close group, I am not good enough.
Emotions: Positive emotions emerge from positive social experiences like social approval, inclusion, and acceptance by the group; negative emotions emerge when given negative feedback, criticism, or when excluded from the group.
Behaviors: Conformity, people pleasing, groupthink, loyalty, passive-aggressiveness, caring, in-group bias, placing oneself around like-peers, "yes-men", seeking validation.
Social Experiences: Hypervigilance when with others, fear of rejection, inability to regulate emotions (because emotions arise from approval and disapproval, which the self can not control), inability to distinguish needs, wants, values, etc... from those of the group.
Physical Experiences: May have health issues or negative bodily experiences as a result of conforming to what the group wants (e.g., unhealthy diet, unhealthy group thought patterns, etc...)

What aspects of orange stage do you see in yourself?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Yellow Stage

Skill-Centric (~37% of adults)

"You are what you do." - Carl Jung

Worldview: Action-focused; skill-focused.
Perspective: 3rd person.
Time Horizon: Medium-term (one to two years).
Beliefs: If I can just develop the right skills or take the right actions, I'll be happy.
Thoughts: When I take actions that I value, I am worthy. When I fail to take actions that I value, I am not good enough.
Emotions: Positive emotions emerge from building valued skills and self-efficacy; negative emotions emerge from social comparison—not being as good at skills or not knowing things that others know.
Behaviors: Action-taking, know-it-all-ism, building skills, wanting credit for actions.
Social Experiences: Feeling of specialness, criticizing others, social comparison, self-consciousness, jealousy, competitiveness, sabotaging others.
Physical Experiences: May have health issues or negative bodily experiences as a result of actions like overworking, jealousy, etc...

What aspects of yellow stage do you see in yourself?

Green Stage

Outcome-Centric (~30% of adults)

"You keep putting one foot in front of the other, and then one day you look back and you've climbed a mountain." - Tom Hiddleston

Worldview: Achievement-focused; outcome-focused.
Perspective: Time-expanded 3rd person.
Time Horizon: Longer-term (~5 years).
Beliefs: If I can just experience the right outcomes or achievements, I'll be happy.
Thoughts: When I achieve my goals or the emotions I desire, I am worthy. When I fail to achieve my goals or the emotions I desire, I am not good enough.
Emotions: Positive emotions emerge from achievement and creating positive experiences; negative emotions emerge from failure or negative outcomes.
Behaviors: Workaholism, climbing the social ladder, productivity, optimizing for outcomes, prioritizing, striving, taking jobs that are more prestigious or better paid regardless of one's desires, striving for a bigger house, nicer car, better family, etc...
Social Experiences: Admired by others, pressure to perform, viewed as successful by societal standards.
Physical Experiences: May have health issues or negative bodily experiences as a result of burnout, exhaustion, or deep dissatisfaction without understanding where it's coming from.

What aspects of green stage do you see in yourself?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Teal Stage

Understanding-Centric (~11% of adults)

"The optimist sees the donut, the pessimist sees the hole." - Oscar Wilde

Worldview: Understanding-focused; perspective-focused.
Perspective: 4th person.
Time Horizon: Long-term (~10 years).
Beliefs: If I can just understand myself and others, and they can understand me, I'll be happy.
Thoughts: When I understand certain perspectives, I am worthy. When I don't understand certain perspectives, I am not good enough.
Emotions: Positive emotions emerge from understanding perspectives (including our own); negative emotions emerge from not understanding perspectives or being misunderstood by others.
Behaviors: Witnessing social engineering, questioning the status quo, interest in social justice, sharing our truths, learning new things, etc...
Social Experiences: Deep conversations, active listening, aversion to shallow social interactions, difficulty seeing that certain perspectives are not as useful as others.
Physical Experiences: May have health issues or negative bodily experiences as a result of accepting harmful perspectives.

What aspects of teal stage do you see in yourself?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Blue Stage

Pattern-Centric (~5% of adults)

"It is as if we each contain a society of people, each of whom is at a different age and has different interests, talents, and temperaments." - Richard Schwartz

Worldview: Pattern-focused; strategy-focused.
Perspective: Time-expanded 4th person.
Time Horizon: Very long-term (25 years).
Beliefs: If I can undo my negative patterns (that were created through conditioning from peers, family, community, and society) or the negative patterns of society, I'll be happy.
Thoughts: When I undo patterns in the ways that I desire, I am worthy. When I feel trapped in a pattern, I am not good enough.
Emotions: Positive emotions emerge from stopping a pattern from playing out; negative emotions emerge from getting stuck in a pattern (personal or societal).
Behaviors: Introspection, exploring internal or external patterns, creating innovative strategies to improve life.
Social Experiences: Isolation, loneliness, relationships falling apart, creating healthier relationships.
Physical Experiences: May have health issues or negative bodily experiences as a result of emotional pain from old traumas, seeing unconscious material, and dealing with shadow parts.

What aspects of blue stage do you see in yourself?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Indigo Stage

Construct-Centric (~1.5% of adults)

"Everything is paradoxical." - Greg Goode

Worldview: Construct-focused; ego-focused.
Perspective: 5th person.
Time Horizon: Very long-term (25+ years).
Beliefs: If I can just become aware of the nature of myself and my world, I'll be happy.
Thoughts: When I have greater awareness in the ways that I desire, I am worthy. When I have less awareness, I am not good enough.
Emotions: Positive emotions emerge from subtle insights related to the nature of self and reality; negative emotions emerge from subtle insights related to the non-self or other illusions within reality.
Behaviors: Self-awareness, witnessing thoughts & emotions, single-mindedness, spiritual arrogance.
Social Experiences: Loneliness, witnessing projections, intermittent gratitude, growing forgiveness, ego dissolution, suffering.
Physical Experiences: May have health issues or negative bodily experiences as a result of confusion, disillusionment, identity confusion, or grief related to the dissolution of the ego (or self-concept).

What aspects of indigo stage do you see in yourself?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Violet Stage

Oneness-Centric (~0.5% of adults)

"The happiness we seek is the happiness we are." - Rupert Spira

Worldview: Oneness-focused; consciousness-focused.
Perspective: 6th person.
Time Horizon: Time and space merge into one "here and now". Everything is one.
Beliefs: I don't need anything to be happy; happiness is my essence.
Thoughts/Emotions/Behaviors: Are as they are. They come and go without me confusing them for either identity or reality.
Social Experiences: Compassion, acceptance, forgiveness, joy, gratitude, well-being.
Physical Experiences: Many thought- or emotion-based health issues cease.

What aspects of violet stage do you see in yourself?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Remember, there are different parts of us in different stages. And, as we transcend the stages, we retain the worldviews (and characteristics) of the earlier stages. Using your reflections from this section, you can begin to get an idea of which stage is your centerpoint. You can then use this as a guide (to the psychological skill-building exercises that are likely to be most important for you) when you begin the Path to Well-Being Program in Part II of this book.

What Stage Are Most People At?

Western society currently supports progress to green stage. Green stage focuses on many of the things that society values (e.g., financial success, productivity, pulling yourself up by your bootstraps, etc...) Because society wants us to get to green stage, it's *relatively* easy (assuming we didn't have too many challenges in childhood) for us to get to green stage. The majority of adult Americans are currently in either yellow stage or green stage (i.e., they are in 3rd person perspective).

There is absolutely nothing wrong with being in yellow or green stage (or any stage for that matter). These stages, like all stages, offer unique and rewarding experiences that contribute to well-being. The majority of psychological skill-building exercises that you find in books or online focus on enhancing well-being at these stages, and we can use these to boost our well-being. And if we want to move on to later stages, we can do that too, especially with the resources provided in Part II of this book.

What's So Special About Violet Stage?

Theories define well-being as satisfaction with life (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) or eudaimonia (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Until we reach violet stage, we experience these states of well-being only intermittently with various types of suffering. However, in violet stage, well-being becomes more stable and sustainable.

Stable well-being can be found at violet stage because well-being no longer arises from experiences but rather from the perspective with which we see *all* of our experiences. In other words, our violet stage worldview accepts things as they are, which enables our well-being to persist even when the circumstances of our lives are turbulent. This makes well-being a more sustainable feature of our lived experience (Cook-Greuter, 2014). Thus, violet stage **is** the enduring well-being we seek, even if we're not yet aware of it.

Challenges of Identifying Our Stage

Research on the stages is still relatively new. Even the researchers who have devoted their lives to developmental stage theories disagree about exactly how to identify stages.

Agreement between measures used to assess what stage someone is at is as low as 33% in some cases (Murray & O'Fallon, 2020).

One reason why identifying someone's stage is difficult is because the same words mean different things at different stages. For example, love might mean loyalty at orange stage and it might mean acceptance at indigo stage. But even the words 'loyalty' and 'acceptance' mean different things at different stages, so observing words or language is not a foolproof way of telling us what stage someone is at.

Another challenge with identifying our stage is that our different psychological skills are generally in more than one stage (Wilber, 2000). For example, our gratitude skills may be at yellow stage, our goal-setting skills may be at green stage, and our forgiveness skills may be at teal stage.

Plus, as we move forward, we retain the worldviews we developed at the earlier stages. So, for example, our centerpoint may be indigo stage while our interactions with the world are still mostly at blue stage. It is helpful to be able to switch between worldviews in different contexts, but this switching makes it difficult to know exactly where we are in terms of our stage development.

It is also important to note that in stressful situations, we tend to revert to the behavior of earlier stages (Cook-Greuter, 2014; Tolle, 2022). For example, have you ever noticed that when you're in an argument with someone they act in more self-centered or childish ways? Even if most of our lives are seen through the lens (or worldview) of a later stage, we can easily revert to an earlier stage when we are feeling stressed or threatened.

Lastly, don't forget that when *we* observe something, we are seeing the world through our *own* lens or worldview. This biases *everything* we see, making it difficult to objectively observe the stage that we or someone else is in. For example, even the ideas presented in this book—that we expand through stages that have these different worldviews—is *my* perspective based on the worldviews of *my* current stage. Obviously, I believe that sharing this perspective is helpful or I wouldn't be writing about it. But still, this perspective is likely to shift again at some point, and it shouldn't be mistaken for the ultimate Truth. The perspective presented in this book is just one of many that can help us better understand ourselves, our world, and our well-being.

How To Identify Our Stage(s)

For the reasons listed previously, identifying our stage is not a one-time event, but rather, a continually-evolving process. We can make a guess about what stage we think we are in. We can build the psychological skills appropriate for the *assumed* stage (and the next stage or two). And because we are always continuing to grow, we can check-in with ourselves from time to time, perhaps when we are feeling stuck.

Ideally, we will continually observe ourselves to gain more insight. If we're struggling with the psychological skills of the stage that we *assumed* we were in, it might mean that we're not quite ready for the skills of that stage, and that's okay! Alternatively, if we're bored or feeling stuck, it might mean that we are ready to develop skills of a later stage.

Because we are all continually moving along the path to well-being, all of this is also continually changing and evolving. So if we want to keep enhancing our well-being, and moving along the path to well-being, regular reevaluation is generally needed.

Chapter 3: Well-Being Within Stages

We've already talked about how our worldview expands as we move through the developmental stages. We discussed how each stage gives us access to a new perspective, and how we see everything in our lives through this new perspective (while still maintaining the previous perspectives). Now let's talk more specifically about *how* this affects well-being within all of the stages.

How Well-Being Is Defined In Each Stage

Given everything we experience flows *through* the lens (or worldview) of the stage we're at, well-being is defined, expressed, and experienced within the context of whatever stage we're at. In other words, whatever we're focused on at each stage is the key to both our well-being and ill-being at that stage.

Here are the types of well-being that we are most focused on, and most desirous of, at each stage:

- Red Stage - body-based well-being
- Orange Stage - socially-based well-being
- Yellow Stage - action-based well-being
- Green Stage - outcome-based well-being

- Teal Stage - thought-based well-being
- Blue Stage - belief-based well-being
- Indigo Stage - construct-based well-being
- Violet Stage - oneness-based well-being

Enhancing well-being at each stage generally involves a combination of creating real-world experiences and building psychological skills that bring about the type of well-being that dominates the current stage. Because we maintain the worldviews of the earlier stages as well, we can also enhance well-being by enhancing the types of well-being found in the stages that we've already transcended.

How Well-Being Is Built In Each Stage

We can think of awareness as the background or underlying current of all things—it's what is looking through the camera to see the world. Placed on top of this awareness are the different lenses. For a moment, let's think of it like wearing different glasses with different colored lenses. Imagine that we're wearing glasses with yellow lenses. Everything we see looks yellow, and this yellowness affects all of our other experiences.

For example, with our yellow glasses on, we may *believe* that an orange fruit is a lemon. We may then have *thoughts* that we should make lemonade. We then have *emotions* of excitement about making the lemonade. We may then take *actions*—we use a lemonade recipe instead of an orange juice recipe. In this example, our awareness has just affected our beliefs, then our thoughts, then our emotions, then our behaviors. In this example, you can see how our worldview affects all of our experiences, and how it does so in a specific order.

Now, let's apply this metaphor to our psychological experiences. Awareness is looking through a series of lenses. As we move through the stages, it becomes increasingly clear how these lenses affect our experiences. In fact, we tend to be able to see one additional psychological experience in each stage.

The Emergent Process of Psychological Experiences

The process model below shows how our psychological experiences emerge and the order in which they do so:

Awareness > Constructs > Beliefs > Thoughts > Emotions > Behaviors > Social Experiences > Physical Experiences

Research supports each of these steps. First, constructs—or our conceptual understanding of the world—affect the types of beliefs we have about the self and world (e.g., Cook-Greuter, 2014; O'Fallon, 2010). Additional research shows that beliefs lead to thoughts (Buschmann et al., 2018) and thoughts are a necessary precondition for emotion (Lazarus, 1982).

Further research suggests that emotion is a mediator between cognitive evaluation of a situation (i.e., thoughts) and behavior (Mauss & Robinson, 2009; Sander et al., 2003), while other studies show that emotions lead us to engage in *specific* behaviors that result in *specific* social experiences (Keltner & Kring, 1998). All of these experiences can lead to physical (e.g., health) outcomes (e.g., Colagiuri et al., 2015), but poor social relationships may be one of the strongest predictors of poor physical health (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2017).

Keep in mind that there are also many feedback loops in this process. For example, if someone is having a panic attack, their physical experiences of panic often lead them to have additional panicky thoughts, which can lead to a loop of increasing physical symptoms.

How Stage Affects the Development of Psychological Skills

Although we all *have* beliefs, thoughts, emotions, behaviors, etc..., we can't directly or objectively observe these experiences from the perspective of all of the developmental stages. Rather, the perspective of each stage focuses on just one of these psychological experiences at a time. We focus on physical experiences in red stage, social experiences in orange stage, behaviors in yellow stage, emotions in green stage, thoughts in teal stage, beliefs in blue stage, constructs in indigo stage, and oneness, in violet stage.

Because we maintain the worldview of the previous stages, we can still observe the experiences of the earlier stages when we move into the next stage. But, we can only observe how the psychological experience that dominates our current worldview affects other experiences further down in the emergent process.

Before we reach the stage in which we can view an experience objectively (from the outside of it), it feels like we ***are*** the experience (e.g., Wilber 2007). For example, we focus on thoughts and perspectives in teal stage. We are still so close to our thoughts that we think we *are* them. Still, we are theoretically able to see how "I" (my thoughts) affect my emotions, how my emotions affect my behaviors, how my behaviors affect my social experiences, and how my social experiences affect my physical body. Of course, to see all this still requires us to build the psychological skills needed for self-reflection.

Given this insight, it's clear that trying to observe not-yet-observable aspects of our experience would be like asking a fish, "What is water?" To a fish, water is everything, so much so that it is impossible to see. But, by understanding the emergent process of psychological experiences, and at which stage each psychological experience can be directly observed, we can determine which psychological skills can be built in each stage and what order they need to be built in.

Given the emergent process of psychological experiences, we can now see that the following psychological skills can be developed at each stage:

- Red Stage - We can build psychological skills related to the 5 senses.
- Orange Stage - We can build psychological skills related to social experiences.
- Yellow Stage - We can build psychological skills related to behaviors and actions.
- Green Stage - We can build psychological skills related to emotions and outcomes.
- Teal Stage - We can build psychological skills related to thoughts and perspectives.
- Blue Stage - We can build psychological skills related to beliefs and patterns.
- Indigo Stage - We can build psychological skills related to constructs and concepts.
- Violet Stage - We can build psychological skills related to oneness or unity.

It is this understanding of the psychological skill-building process that informs much of the program in Part II of this book.

Historical Insights From Mental Health Treatment

In the 1970s, Behavioral Therapy was the most popular psychological treatment (Hayes & Hofmann, 2017). This, being a treatment that focuses on changing behaviors or actions, is a treatment that would likely be most helpful to someone in yellow stage. Interestingly, in the

current era, the most popular treatment is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). This treatment focuses primarily on thoughts (and how thoughts lead to emotions and behaviors). This suggests that Western society is now beginning to support the development into teal stage (i.e., 4th person perspective), which is great news!

Moving Beyond the Well-Being of Each Stage

To enhance well-being within each stage, our goal is to experience the stage fully, enjoy the type of well-being it has to offer, and build the psychological skills that help us do so. Depending on our speed along the path to well-being, we may stay in a stage for a short or long period of time. Usually though, over time, the well-being of our current stage (and earlier stages) becomes less and less satisfying.

As the types of well-being we have access to become less satisfying, we may compulsively or addictively seek them more and more (e.g., more pleasure, more approval, more skills, more achievements, more thinking, etc... depending on the stage we're in). Because the type of well-being of our current stage is the best one that we are aware of, and we haven't yet found the more expansive type of well-being that lies beyond it, we can end up feeling stuck or trapped.

The feeling of 'getting stuck' can often be quite painful. But, on the bright side, each time we seek out the well-being of our current stage, we have the opportunity to see through it. If we are willing to bring awareness to and fully experience the nature of each type of well-being, this breaks the 'spell', the belief that this experience can provide well-being is dispelled, and we begin to transition to the next stage.

During each transition, there is often a period of time where well-being can not be found anywhere—we have already seen through and let go of the current source of well-being, but we have not yet found the more expansive type of well-being that lies beyond. Eventually, we find and begin to experience the more expansive type of well-being, which generally feels much better than the previous types.

Although this process is not generally easy, and most of us spend years looking for *stable* well-being in the types of well-being that do not offer stability, our seeking actually does

help us. Ultimately, it is our seeking (and willingness to honestly observe what we find) that reveals the path from one stage to the next.

Chapter 4: Well-Being Across Stages

As you have now discovered, there are clear strategies that can be used to enhance well-being within each stage. Our initial efforts at boosting well-being can go towards, first, identifying our stage and then, second, building the psychological skills of our current stage. We wouldn't skip a child forward a grade unless they were ready, and the same is true on the path to well-being. We are wherever we are, and wherever we are is just fine.

Although some people stay in the same stage for their entire adulthood, other people will go through the transitions from one stage to the next. For those of us who go through transitions between stages, we are well-served by being prepared. During each transition, our entire worldview shifts, and it does so in different ways for each transition.

This shifting includes our views on both ourselves and our world—however, our personality may push us towards focusing more on our interior or more on our exterior (i.e., we may be more internalizing or externalizing). Regardless of the route we take, transitions between stages tend to be more difficult periods than when we are in the middle of a stage. We may not feel well at all, and this is to be expected since we have not yet reached the final stage, where well-being becomes stable.

Phases On The Path To Well-Being

Although there are likely to be many *unpredictable* ups and downs on the path to well-being, our movement between stability (within a stage) and instability (between stages) generally results in *predictable* high and low 'phases' along the path to well-being.

Well-Being Lows
Transitioning to a new stage involves expanding beyond our old worldview (and self-view), which we now realize was incomplete (e.g., O'Fallon, 2010). As we enter a transition, there is a period of time between when we have this realization and when we solidify the worldview and well-being of the next stage. During this gap, we generally have many negative emotions and experiences as our earlier types of well-being stop working as well but there is not yet a new type of well-being to replace them.

Well-Being Highs
Somewhere in the early to mid point of each stage, we feel like we have mastered our world (as we see it). This is when our worldview and self-view seem the most "solid". During this period, we may have many positive emotions and experiences and can easily find satisfaction in the type of well-being of our current stage.

What Leads To Transitions

There are two types of experiences that invite us to begin transitioning into a new stage. First is an external experience (e.g., loss of a job, death of a loved one, natural disaster, etc...). The second is an internal experience (e.g., unhappiness, dissatisfaction, grief, etc...). External and internal challenges aren't exactly separate—our real-life experiences are usually a mixture of the two. Regardless of the specifics of our experience, these kinds of experiences are disequilibrating—that is, they call our worldview into question, inviting us to take a closer look at ourselves and our world.

Unfortunately, most of us ignore or resist the invitations to transition. As Spencer Johnson said, "Change happens when the pain of holding on becomes greater than the fear of letting go." Indeed, transitions seem to occur when the balance of pain to fear shifts to having greater pain than fear. This can happen in one of two ways—our pain can increase, or our fear can decrease.

The *amount* of both pain and fear can be quite high, especially if we just rely on external and internal experiences to push us along. But, if we opt instead to build the psychological skills we need for each stage, then we can grow and move along the path to well-being without having to experience quite as much pain and fear. In other words, these psychological skills seem to enable us to turn down the intensity of suffering, such that we can continue to move towards unshakable well-being without so much difficulty.

Transitions On The Path To Well-Being

Let's explore each transition a bit more to better understand the lived experience of each one. Keep in mind that during these transitions, we are generally not aware that our worldview is changing. Usually, we just experience these transitions as highly distressing, without understanding the root causes of why we are suddenly so distressed.

Transitioning Into Orange Stage

At red stage (before moving into orange stage), we see ourselves as our physical body, and our whole world is seen to be physical objects, pleasure, survival, and safety. When we begin to transition into orange stage, we realize that "I am more than the body-based self". We are now beginning to expand, and we let go of our sole identification with the physical body. We shift away from predominantly focusing on physical objects and now additionally focus on social objects and interactions.

Most of us go through this transition as children. When children are going through this transition, you may notice that they begin to choose their own friends and interact more with these friends during playtime (Woods, 2022). I know it can seem strange that adults remain in this stage, but a few do (~4%; Cook-Greuter, 2014). One of the key giveaways is that people in this stage describe mental objects (like thoughts and feelings) in physical terms (O'Fallon et al., 2020). For exmaple, if you ask them what love is, they will say it's their dog, their family, or their boyfriend.

Getting stuck in red stage

Although the majority of adults move past this stage, it seems that trauma in early childhood (along with an inability to bring awareness to this trauma) can result in us getting stuck in red stage. For example, one woman I know spent the first months of her life in an orphanage before being adopted. Despite being a kind and smart person, this early-life

trauma seems to have halted her stage growth to late red stage or early orange stage. This woman has not yet developed orange stage skills like empathy, personal boundaries, or social courtesies. These psychological skill deficits make it difficult for her to maintain relationships, jobs, and reliable housing.

Navigating the transition

Within healthy family contexts, transitioning from red stage to orange stage is relatively easy, and it is considered a normal part of child development (e.g., Wilber, 2000). For those of us who made this transition in childhood, it may be hard to remember the experience. Just try to think back to when you made your first real friend. After this transition, we can feel great joy as we begin to identify with the important people in our lives and gain access to social well-being.

Transitioning Into Yellow Stage

At orange stage, we identify as a part of our close group. Before the transition into yellow stage, our whole world is our friends, family, relationships, and sometimes a religious group. When we begin to transition into yellow stage, we realize that "I am more than the group-based self" and we begin to expand again. We are now letting go of our primary identification with our small group and focusing more on our individual self.

Getting stuck in orange stage

Many people will go through this transition as teenagers. When teenagers go through this transition, you may notice them beginning to make their own decisions rather than blindly following their parents or friends (Woods, 2022). However, it seems that trauma in late childhood (along with an inability to bring awareness to this trauma) can result in us getting stuck in orange stage. For example, one woman I know was sexually assaulted in early adolescence. Although she has developed a few yellow-stage skills, she continues to mostly identify with her relationships. She finds healthy adult individuation threatening, she feels rejected by any hint of social separation, and she hasn't yet realized that *she* has the power to improve her life.

Navigating the transition

Even in a healthy environment, this transition can be somewhat tumultuous. We might suddenly realize that we do not want to follow the same path as our friends, parents, religious leaders, or others who we formerly admired or followed. Exploring our own

individual needs and interests (for example, in the context of college or work) can help us move successfully through this transition. On the other side of this transition, we can feel great joy with our first taste of individual autonomy and power. We begin to identify as 'the doer'—or the agentic self. In other words, we can now see that we choose our own actions.

Transitioning Into Green Stage

At yellow stage, we see ourselves as having autonomy and agency. Before transitioning to green stage, our whole world is devoted to doing things "right" (but not necessarily doing the "right" things; Cook-Greuter, 2014). When we begin to transition into green stage, we realize that "I am more than the agentic self". In other words, we see that our actions, skills, and knowledge don't really matter unless they lead to the results that we desire. We are now beginning to expand beyond identification with our actions, skills, or knowledge. Instead of valuing the actions themselves, we begin to value actions as tools for creating the outcomes that we want. Our focus generally shifts away from doing things 'right' or knowing the 'right' things to figuring out which actions to take to get where we actually want to go.

Getting stuck in yellow stage

We don't need to experience trauma to get stuck at yellow stage. We might just be happy with our life as it is—we're doing what we enjoy and that is enough. There is nothing inherently wrong with choosing to stay in yellow stage (or any stage, for that matter). I know many adults who are happy with lives made up of work, family, vacations, and other "normal" activities. So even though Western society wants people to reach green stage (because green stage focuses on efficiency, productivity, results, etc...), many people stay in yellow stage for the duration of their adult lives (Wilber, 2007).

Navigating the transition

If we are going through the transition from yellow stage to green stage, we may realize that we are doing everything right and yet still getting nowhere. Or, we may notice that other people (e.g., role models) are prioritizing certain actions and getting better results. This can be extremely frustrating and produce a significant amount of jealousy and envy, which may be key drivers of change during this time.

When we begin to move through our negative emotions, we start to understand that no matter how much we know or do, we can always know or do more—some of us can even become obsessed with our potential. This seems to be a key belief of green stage. As a result

of this belief, we begin to create longer-term goals and priorities that put us on a path towards a better future. On the other side of this transition, we can feel great joy and creative power. We are now free to create the outcomes we desire.

Transitioning Into Teal Stage

At green stage, we see ourselves as our outcomes. In other words, we see ourselves as our achievements or the things we are able to create (e.g., a degree, a successful career, a nice home life, a happy family, a good paycheck, etc...). Before the transition into teal stage, our whole world is devoted to creating the best possible outcomes for ourselves.

Getting stuck in green stage

Given Western society wants people to be in green stage, the majority of people who reach this stage get stuck here. It's not hard to see why—society rewards people for goal-oriented behavior, and it can feel really good to be successful in the eyes of others. Often, it is the realization that our achievements don't actually make us happy that nudges us into the next stage.

Navigating the transition

When we begin to transition into teal stage, we realize that "I am more than the achiever self." One way that this can occur is that we start to notice that we keep achieving bigger and better things, but when we do, the goalpost always moves such that no achievement is ever enough to make us truly happy. Burnout or disenchantment with the 'rat race' may also lead into this transition. As a result of these experiences, we feel called to expand beyond our primary identification with our achievements and outcomes.

During this transition, we may begin to question the society that has taught us that lasting well-being can be found in achievements. We now see that this isn't true—at least not for us—and we begin to expand our awareness to include a greater variety of perspectives. "*Maybe someone out there has the answers we're looking for*", we think.

Moving into teal stage can be a difficult transition. We not only have to let go of our identity and worldview *again*, the identity and worldview we are moving into is not as highly valued by our peers or society. We may feel lost or adrift, and we may feel angry at our family, leaders, or society for selling us a false dream.

A friend of mine who went through this transition agonized over whether he should keep his job. During this transition, he saw it as meaningless and struggled to find meaning beyond it. Eventually, he accepted that work is a necessary part of life but he doesn't let work take up as much mental space as it did before.

During this transition, we become somewhat less attached to our achievements, so we don't struggle as much with challenges like overwork or burnout. Eventually, we begin to find joy and freedom in a new worldview that isn't bound by the beliefs of society. We are now free to fully explore all perspectives, including our own.

Transitioning Into Blue Stage

At teal stage, we see ourselves as our perspective. In other words, we see that each of us live our lives using our perspective as a guide. When we begin to transition into blue stage, we realize that "I am more than the individualist self" (or, I am more than my perspective).

We may continue to appreciate perspectives, but we now begin to see how these perspectives evolve across time. We can look into the past to see how our and others' perspectives formed through social conditioning. And, we can look into the future to see how these perspectives will likely play out and affect our and others' lives. Perspectives begin to morph into patterns, roles, or stories that play out throughout a person's life.

When I was at teal stage, I became interested in trying every food and every diet I could find. It wasn't until I transitioned to blue stage that I realized some of these diets made me downright sick. I began to look at how people formed these diets (the past) and realized that none of these diets were going to help me get my health back (the future). I gave up vegetarianism (which is a perspective) and began eating mostly meat (a new perspective).

Getting stuck in teal stage

If we become overly identified with our perspectives, we might get stuck in teal stage. For example, a common 'self' that emerges in teal stage is "the social justice warrior self" (e.g., Wilber, 2007). It is indeed beneficial to consider perspectives that have previously been silenced. However, we can get stuck thinking that certain perspectives are the *only* perspectives. I think a great example of this thinking was demonstrated by a sign that was posted at my old university. It read something like: "We do not tolerate intolerance." To move beyond teal stage, we have to fully understand the hypocrisy of this statement.

Navigating the transition

At this transition, we may feel angry at ourselves for buying into certain perspectives that harmed us. The realization that not all perspectives are equally helpful shakes our identity as an individualist or pluralist (i.e., someone who values multiple perspectives), and we can struggle to figure out what is beyond.

On the other side of this transition, there is a deeper understanding of ourselves and our world that helps us feel more complete and whole. We are no longer bound by thoughts and perspectives—we can *choose* what we believe, even if no one else in the world agrees.

Transitioning Into Indigo Stage

At blue stage, we see ourselves as our patterns. In other words, we see that each person is made up of a history that has conditioned them to believe, think, and act in certain ways. Before this transition into indigo stage, we believe ourselves to be our patterns, beliefs, stories, roles, etc...

When we begin to transition into indigo stage, we realize that "I am more than the story-based self" (or, I am more than my beliefs). In other words, we start to expand beyond the stories we told ourselves about ourselves—e.g., 'Bad things always happen to me', 'No one loves me', 'I am not enough', etc... We've zoomed out again and can now witness how these beliefs create our life experiences.

Getting stuck in blue stage

Refusal to see through our own self-delusions, denial, and limiting beliefs is often what keeps us stuck in blue stage. For example, we may not want to see the truth of the toxic relationships, habits, or beliefs that keep us stuck in pain-producing patterns. It's understandably difficult to admit that we spent decades tolerating abuse, lying to ourselves, or engaging in activities that were harming our well-being. Thus, getting unstuck at this stage often requires a level of bravery, trust, and self-acceptance far greater than what we've experienced before.

Navigating the transition

At this transition, we may feel angry about how beliefs, patterns, or stories formed or how they have controlled our lives. We might experience considerable grief, now realizing the ways that we were making ourselves miserable. Our beliefs, patterns, and stories are such

fundamental parts of our identity that letting go of our identification with them—even when they are harmful—can be extremely difficult.

To realize that your mother never loved you in the ways you needed and see that this created a belief that no one could *ever* love you the way you needed is a painful realization. Realizations like this characterize this transition. At this transition, we need to let go of the beliefs that harm us and anything that continues to perpetuate these harmful beliefs. They are not our true identity, and we don't have to keep them if we don't want to.

This is another difficult transition, as we have realizations and experiences that most people around us just don't understand. Our friends and family may be used to us being the belligerent drunk, the emotional mess, or the codependent doormat. When we suddenly realize we are not these things and stop the pattern, people no longer know how to relate to us. It can be frightening for them, creating additional social problems for us that need to be resolved before we can continue.

On the other side of this transition, we are no longer bound by patterns, stories, and beliefs. We may still find ourselves playing out old patterns, but we are more able to witness ourselves acting them out, like we are part of a massive play that is life. We can feel freer than ever and can now make choices that are no longer driven by our deepest traumas. Thus, the joy on the other side of this transition can be immense. We may experience the lightness of having put down our heaviest baggage and simply feel grateful for being alive.

Transitioning Into Violet Stage

At indigo stage, we begin to identify with our awareness, itself, which is sometimes called 'the witness' (Goode, 2016). But, we still can not observe awareness objectively, because it feels like we *are* our awareness.

Before the transition into violet stage, we are focused on becoming aware of the nature of reality and its constructs (e.g., Cook-Greuter, 2014). When we first start to transition into violet stage, we expand again and realize that "I am more than the conceptual self".

In the middle of indigo stage, we become construct-aware and ego-aware (although not necessarily in that order; Cook-Greuter, 2014). This experience can feel similar to the way we realized that beliefs were socially constructed in blue stage. Now we begin to see that

even words and concepts are socially constructed (Sharma, 2010). Nothing is real or solid in the way we thought it was.

Eventually, we start to see how the concept of 'self' (i.e., the identity or self-concept) is just a hodge podge of socially constructed beliefs, thoughts, emotions, actions, and experiences that we have no control over. We now see that we don't have control over any of this, so how can it be us?!

This presents a 'paradox of self' that begins to emerge at this stage. You might remember that at yellow stage, we first realized that we *do* have control, and this was a huge, important stepping stone on the path to well-being. We could then take control of our lives in ways that significantly enhanced well-being. But, as we transition into violet stage, we realize that we *don't* have control, and this too is a huge, important stepping stone on the path to well-being. We can now let go of control, and allow our life to be what it will be. Prior to reaching this stage, it's difficult to understand how both of these things can be true and how both of these experiences can enhance well-being at different stages.

Living with expanded awareness

As we continue to investigate, we might see that even the subtlest experiences that we labeled as 'self' are not actually us. Our decisions, thoughts, attention, and so on just happen on their own. Suddenly, we start to understand that all of our experiences are no different than our lungs breathing or our heart beating—they happen on their own. Every single experience has been mis-attributed to the self, but the self is just a concept—it's an idea and not ultimately real. At this point, we might feel a mixture of fullness (in a sense, we are everything) and emptiness (in another sense, we are nothing).

Over time, we begin to see the unrealness (or emptiness) within *all* of our earlier stages of self-concept (i.e., the body-based self from red stage, the group-based self from orange stage, the agentic self from yellow stage, the achiever self from green stage, the individualist self from teal stage, the story-based self from blue stage, and the conceptual self from indigo stage). While we expanded *within* the self-concept in each of the earlier transitions, we are now expanding *beyond* the self-concept.

Getting stuck in indigo stage

Eventually, the self-concept notices that we've started seeing it for what it truly is, and it begins to throw a fit. It may start wildly clinging to anything and everything. Because we are still identified with the self-concept, we feel its pain as if it were our pain, and we participate in the clinging to whatever might hold the self-concept together.

If we do not have the psychological skills to manage the pain and disillusionment that are arising, we can find ourselves adding even *more* material to our self-concept. For example, we might have seen through aspects of our old self-concept and let them go, but then we suddenly find ourselves creating a new self-concept. We might change our name, move to a new location, label ourselves as enlightened or special, amass followers, or do any number of other things to reify our identity (e.g., Shutan, 2015). Given how hard it can be to let go of the idea of self, it is quite easy to get stuck in this stage.

Navigating the transition

If we can effectively manage our pain and ignore the self-concept's machinations, we can begin to become aware of "fundamental suffering". In all of the earlier stages, we believed that suffering arose as a result of our experiences (e.g., lack of pleasure at red stage, rejection at orange stage, social comparison at yellow stage, etc...). Now it becomes clear that suffering is not in external objects—it arises when the 'self' attaches to or resists something—e.g., I want this; I don't want that; I am this; I am that (Sayadaw, 1994).

If we continue to be open to witnessing ourselves create our own suffering (without resisting it), the impulse lessens. We might notice that our self-concept is no longer throwing fits (even though it may still be brooding somewhere in the background of our experience). Finally, when we reach a tipping point—that is, we've released enough control and seen enough emptiness—we fall into the unshakable well-being that lies beyond. We now *embody* the 'paradox of self'—we live with the experiential knowing that the self is both true and not true.

To call this a difficult transition is a massive understatement. This process can feel like the complete deconstruction of everything we once believed to be true. We may, at times, feel completely lost and extremely lonely—most of us have no one to talk to who has the slightest clue about what we're experiencing. We know nothing, we are nothing, and everything can seem empty and meaningless. All of the self-created types of well-being

from the earlier stages vanish, and we are left with nothing to hold onto other than our hope that something is beyond this.

On the other side of this transition, we are no longer attached to our experiences being a certain way—we can experience beliefs, thoughts, emotions, actions, social interactions, and physical sensations without wanting them to be different. Everything has lost its apparent power over us—nothing can make us happy or unhappy. So, instead of living in resistance, we now live from a place of acceptance and contentment—'we are what we are', 'everything is as it is', and that's just fine. We've let go of control, and we allow life to flow in whatever way it wants to.

Although we continue to live, grow, and experience challenges, we no longer identify with the aspect of us that was seeking, striving, and pursuing happiness. Instead, our worldview is characterized by calm curiosity—*"Oh, this is what's next for me? How interesting."* Thus, the search for happiness is over—we have found the unshakable well-being that we were looking for, and this ends the path to well-being.

Speeding Up Transitions

Initial research suggests that, with support, we might be able to advance one stage every 2-3 years. However, some research suggests it's possible to transition 1-2 stages per year with an effective training program (Braks, 2020). Manners and colleagues (2004) further show that teaching people skills that are a stage or two ahead of their stage can help them get to the later stage. This is consistent with theories of learning and goal-setting, which suggest that setting your aims a bit further than where you are helps you advance (e.g., by setting 'stretch goals').

Disorienting dilemmas and reflective inquiry can be useful tools for aiding growth. Additionally, creating opportunities for self-expression, revelation, feedback, and reflection amidst diverse perspectives including later stage peers seems to support growth (Braks, 2020). Part II of this book aims to implement these insights and hep you grow through each stage.

When The Path Goes Awry

Later stages on the path to well-being *do* offer greater potential for well-being because each stage provides access to an additional, more expansive type of well-being. For example, when we're at yellow stage, we have access to red well-being, orange well-being, and yellow well-being.

However, later stages also offer greater potential for ill-being. If we don't develop the psychological skills that we need for later stages, if we encounter major challenges, or if we develop complex shadow parts, we may find ourselves experiencing lower well-being as we move along the path. This further highlights why it's so important to build the psychological skills needed to enhance well-being within stages, between stages, and across stages.

Chapter 5: Building Skills On The Path

To boost well-being within stages, between stages, and across stages we generally need to build psychological skills. These skills might include social skills, mental skills, emotional skills, and more. We learn some of these skills in the context of our daily lives, but many of these skills, we don't learn. So, in this chapter, we'll explore how psychological skill-building actually occurs along the path to well-being and how to build the right skills at the right stages. These efforts can help enhance your well-being as you move towards unshakable well-being.

Psychological Skills Help Us Understand Our World

Remember, we've defined awareness as the background or 'looker', and what it sees is filtered through the worldview of our current stage. It is the knowing or witnessing that observes our experiences. It might also be called consciousness.

If we use the metaphor of a camera:

- **Awareness** is what is looking through the lens to see the world.
- **Our stage** is what determines how far we are *zoomed out* (i.e., how much of the world we can see).
- **Our psychological skills** are what enable us to *focus* on different aspects of the world that are within our view.

Because psychological skills focus our attention, they enable us to get the most out of each stage. And because they enable us to more fully explore each stage, we can more quickly and easily see the limits of our stage and begin to move into the next stage. However, we can not build psychological skills that focus on aspects of reality that we can not yet see. So, an effective approach to enhancing well-being on path is by building a variety of psychological skills related to our current stage and the upcoming stage.

Stage-Resonant Skills

We are best served by building skills that capitalize on (or resonate with) the worldview of the stage we're at. This resonance (compatibility) between a stage and a skill makes the skill feel like an especially good fit for us.

Past research shows that a good fit between a person and a psychological skill can result in many positive outcomes (e.g., Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2014). Namely, good fit can:

- Make us more likely to want to build these skills.
- Make them easier to build.
- Make them more enjoyable.
- Make us more likely to stick to them.
- Make them more beneficial.

How To Understand Stage-Resonant Skills

Certain psychological skills just resonate better with some stages than others. As an example, in green stage, we are outcome-centric and begin to see ourselves across time. This worldview makes a skill like 'goal-setting' a great fit—it fits the outcome focus and time perspective of green stage (it resonates!)

In earlier stages, we haven't yet developed an outcome perspective or a long-term time perspective, which makes a skill like 'goal-setting' more **difficult**. In teal stage and beyond, we don't value achievements or outcomes quite as much, which makes a skill like 'goal-setting' more **boring**. So, even though goal-setting can be learned in earlier or later stages, it resonates especially well with green stage.

Although some skills seem to resonate better with certain stages, *all* psychological skills can be modified in ways that make them resonate *better* with other stages. For example, if we built our kindness skills as a child in orange stage by sharing our lunch with a friend, we might expand this skill by being kind to different people in different ways that better resonate with the worldview of our current stage. Below is an example of how we might upgrade kindness skills at each stage.

- Orange Stage - I share my lunch with someone who I'm close to.
- Yellow Stage - I donate food to help my expanded community.
- Green Stage - I mentor younger people at my workplace to help them achieve their goals.
- Teal Stage - I listen empathetically to everyone I meet.
- Blue Stage - I stop engaging in patterns that hurt people or the planet.
- Indigo Stage - I engage in whatever acts of kindness are offered to me.
- Violet Stage - Kindness is my essence.

Technically, we can build a psychological skill using any of the worldviews of the stages up to the stage that we're at. For example, if we're in yellow stage, we could develop red kindness, orange kindness, and yellow kindness. But because we've already made it to yellow stage, developing red kindness and orange kindness might be boring—maybe we've already done those things, or maybe we just want to express kindness in ways that support our world (as we see it). So at yellow stage, we're likely to benefit most from building yellow kindness (and green or teal kindness if we want to keep growing).

Modifying Skills For Each Stage

To modify a skill-building exercise so that it resonates with a different stage than it was originally designed for, a variety of things need to be taken into account. First, the language needs to be changed. Words actually mean different things at different stages (Cook-Greuter, 2014). So, much thought needs to go into which words are used and whether their meaning at a given stage is the meaning that is intended for the skill-building exercise.

Second, the time and space of each stage need to be considered. That is, the skill-building exercise needs to focus on the space that one occupies (e.g., family, community, country,

planet, universe) and the time (days, weeks, months, years, decades, generations, histories, eternities) that one occupies.

Third, it is necessary to explore which psychological skills *can* be built at each stage. Most of us know that we can't teach an infant to read—they're just not yet at the stage where this is possible. In the field of psychology, we rarely consider which skills are possible for us to build at certain stages.

Given the emergent process of psychological experiences (discussed earlier), the following psychological skills can generally be developed at each stage:

- Red Stage - We can build psychological skills related to the 5 senses.
- Orange Stage - We can build psychological skills related to social experiences.
- Yellow Stage - We can build psychological skills related to behaviors and skills.
- Green Stage - We can build psychological skills related to emotions and outcomes.
- Teal Stage - We can build psychological skills related to thoughts and perspectives.
- Blue Stage - We can build psychological skills related to beliefs and patterns.
- Indigo Stage - We can build psychological skills related to constructs.
- Violet Stage - We can build psychological skills related to unity and oneness.

Note that given we have some skills that are ahead of our primary stage and some skills that are behind our primary stage, this will vary somewhat for each of us. As an example, many psychological skill-building exercises invite us to reflect on our interior thoughts and emotions. This ability to *objectively* observe interior experiences—like thoughts and emotions—doesn't begin to arise until yellow stage (Cook-Greuter, 2014). So, activities that focus on red and orange stage should focus on physical and social processes rather than individual processes.

Walking The Path to Well-Being

Hopefully, Part I of this book has helped you better understand the path to well-being and what goes into navigating it successfully. In Part II of this book, you'll begin The Path to Well-Being program. This step-by-step psychological skill-building program will provide a collection of stage-resonant skill-building exercises for the entire path to unshakable well-being.

First, you'll strengthen some foundational red stage and orange stage psychological skills (1st and 2nd person perspective). You'll then move on to building yellow and green-stage skills (3rd person perspective). If you feel adequately challenged (but not overwhelmed) by the yellow and green stage exercises, stay here. You might also extend your learning by pursuing skill-building exercises outside of this book (most skill-building exercises you'll find in other books and online focus on yellow and green stages).

If you find yourself getting bored with yellow and green stage exercises, feel free to move on to teal and blue stage (4th person perspective). There is a lot of psychological work to be done in these stages. If you feel adequately challenged (but not overwhelmed) by the teal and blue stage stage exercises, stay here. Building strong psychological skills here is important for maintaining well-being throughout the later transitions. So don't push yourself too far, too fast.

If you're feeling fairly confident with your teal and blue skills, you may feel called to move to indigo stage (5th person perspective) or violet stage (6th person perspective). Fair warning: Indigo stage is unlike 99% of what you've read about in psychology or self-help books. It can be tough and weird. If it doesn't make sense to you yet, that's fine. It will make sense when you are ready for it to. If you're not ready to go all the way to violet stage, I suggest staying in blue stage—well-being is generally easier to find in blue stage than indigo stage.

Last Words Before You Start The Path to Well-Being

Although the program that follows provides a map to unshakable well-being, the journey can be heroing. The roller coaster of ups and downs on the path to well-being is no joke—please take your time and go at your own pace, being gentle with yourself all along the journey. And if you need additional support, please seek it out from friends, coaching, or therapy!

Part II

Chapter 6: Red Stage

At red stage, we have a first-person perspective. Most of us move beyond red stage in childhood, but research shows that 4% of adults remain in red stage (Cook-Greuter, 2014). Even if we've moved past red stage, the skills of this stage remain important throughout adulthood. Red stage is all about meeting survival needs (housing, food, safety, etc...). This stage may also include improving physical health, gaining social support, developing a sense of psychological safety, developing bodily awareness, and building basic "adulting" skills.

Given most of you reading this book will be past red stage, we'll focus here on just a few foundational psychological skills—skills that can be used across all the stages to help you enhance bodily awareness, stay grounded, and boost well-being. These are also some of the easiest skills to learn, which can hopefully help you realize some benefits from this program right away.

Breathing

Most of us don't think about breathing at all unless we struggle to breathe, perhaps during exercise or when experiencing a bout of panic. That's because breathing is a mostly-automated function of the body. This automated biological function is managed by our autonomic nervous system, which is the part of our nervous system that controls automated functions of the body such as the beating of our hearts or the actions of the digestive system.

Although breathing is automated, we can still use our breath to bring greater awareness to our bodies while also reducing our stress. It can even reverse some of the adverse effects of emotions, resulting in a general relaxation of the mind and body (Jerath et al., 2006). Furthermore, deep breathing may be one of the easiest ways to relax. Focusing on our breath can help us shift attention away from our negative emotions, let go of our worries, and slow down hyperactive thoughts. The best part is that we don't need any special equipment or subscriptions to take deep, relaxing breaths. All we need is a few minutes of time (Nariyani &Vras, 2017).

Exercise: Deep Breathing

Try this quick breathing exercise any time you find yourself feeling stressed and want to reduce the overall tension in your body. Aim to do this exercise at least once per day, perhaps before or after a stressful activity, for a few weeks. After creating this habit, your mind will have an easier time reminding you to take a few deep breaths whenever it is feeling tense.

1. Sit down on a comfortable chair with your back straight and your feet on the floor. Alternatively, you can lie down in a relaxed position.
2. Take a deep breath in through your nose for about 2 seconds (you might say one Mississippi, two Mississippi).
3. Then exhale as slowly as you can, aiming for a count of 4 seconds (you might say one Mississippi, two Mississippi, three Mississippi, four Mississippi).
4. Continue a few of these cycles, filling and emptying your lungs as completely as you can in each cycle. You may choose to release your breath through your nostrils or your mouth; choose whichever is more comfortable and relaxing for you.
5. As you are breathing, see if you can pay attention to the air moving in and out of your body.
6. For each session, aim to count at least ten deep breaths. Additional deep breaths may help you relax further.

After a few minutes, you'll likely start feeling calmer and more relaxed. And once you start to relax, you may find it easier to cope with stressful situations. In other words, a few minutes of deep breathing can make you feel more calm, grounded, and capable of navigating life.

Exercise: 5 Senses Search

Try this quick 5-minute exercise any time you find yourself feeling anxious or panicky. It can help shift the focus from your mind to your body.

Start by pausing to focus on your senses. Ask yourself the following questions allowing yourself to come up with as many answers as you can (this number may be different for the different senses).

Sight. What do you see?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Hearing. What sounds do you hear?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Smell. What do you smell?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Taste. What do you taste? (you may want to grab a drink or snack)

_____
_____
_____
_____

Touch. What is your body feeling (e.g., the chair you're sitting on or your shirt on your shoulders)?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Shifting our focus to our physical senses brings us into the present moment, reducing mental stress, and enhancing bodily awareness. Thus, this small practice can help us feel better very quickly.

Self-Care

Self-care doesn't have to be a big thing. Spending just 5 minutes per day on a free or inexpensive self-care activity can significantly improve well-being across time. If we switch up the types of enjoyable self-care activities we use, this can be even better, as it helps prevent us from experiencing hedonic adaptation—or the tendency for us to return to our emotional baseline.

Exercise: Create a Self-Care Routine

Choose a couple of small self-care activities to do each week, slowly working them into your regular schedule. Doing so can help you build good habits that improve your well-being over time. The activities below are organized by the amount of time they take to complete. Feel free to choose from these or make up your own.

One-Minute Activities

- Smile at yourself in a mirror.
- Splash your face with cold water.
- Text a friend or family member a sweet message.
- Have one good stretch.
- Scratch your back with a back scratcher.

Five-Minute Activities

- Eat a piece of fruit.
- Listen to your favorite song.
- Watch a funny YouTube video.
- Make yourself a cup of tea.
- Write down five things you're grateful for.

Fifteen-Minute Activities

- Take a quick walk around the block.
- Tidy up one area of your living space.
- Do a quick guided meditation.
- Write in your journal.
- Put on a soothing face mask.

Thirty-Minute Activities

- Make yourself a healthy meal.
- Do a workout circuit.
- Take a bubble bath.
- Spend some time outside.
- Read a chapter of your favorite book.

One-Hour Activities

- Take a fitness class.
- Get a massage.
- Clean out your email inbox.
- Clean out your closet and donate unwanted items.
- Try a new hobby, like origami or drawing.
- Take a nap.

Two to Four Hour Activities

- Meal prep for the week.
- Create a vision board.
- Go to a museum in your city.
- Try a new restaurant/coffee shop.
- Paint or draw a picture.

What will you commit to doing this week?

_____
_____
_____
_____

When will you do these things? Make a note or schedule them in your calendar.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

By working small self-care activities into your routine, you create additional moments of positivity, which can help you boost your well-being significantly over time.

Red Stage Summary

We've now covered a few of the most basic red-stage skills. If you are in red stage (or need to further strengthen your red-stage skills), I recommend seeking out additional self-help books related to whatever red-stage skills need the most work. Some of the best books for this stage might include books on how to cook nutritional meals (especially the paleo diet or mediterranean diet), books on adulting or budgeting, books on creating an exercise routine, and other books that are aimed at helping us learn basic skills for functioning in life. Because each stage builds on the previous one, these skills remain important throughout our entire lives.

Chapter 7: Orange Stage

At orange stage, we develop a second-person perspective. Most of us move into orange stage in mid-childhood, but research shows that 11% of adults remain in orange stage (Cook-Greuter, 2014). When we begin to transition into orange stage, we start to realize that "I am more than the body-based self". We are now beginning to let go of our complete identification as solely a physical body. Our priorities generally shift away from focusing solely on physical needs to focusing more on social needs and belonging (within our family, tribe, peers, church, etc...; e.g., Greene, & Burke, 2007).

At this stage, our objective is to develop basic social skills and enhance our sense of belonging. If you find that you have difficulties with social relationships (e.g., repeated relationship failures, difficult friendships, codependency, etc...), then pay special attention to the work of this stage. Regardless of which stage we're in, many of us have gaps in our learning from this stage that need to be addressed later on in life. Perhaps this is not surprising given most of us enter this stage in childhood, and schools only-minimally focus on helping us develop our social skills.

Although orange-stage social skills are extremely important for well-being, we'll focus here on just a selection of key skills to help you better understand whether you have additional orange-stage work that needs to be done.

Belonging

Human beings have a fundamental need to belong. We feel we belong when we are socially accepted by close peers. Social acceptance occurs when others want to include us in their groups or be in a relationship with us (DeWall & Bushman, 2011). Social acceptance and social rejection exist on a continuum with acceptance on one end and rejection on the other. So, we may feel relatively accepted by someone one minute and relatively rejected by them later. Or, we may feel accepted by one person and rejected by another person.

Rejection involves being excluded from a social relationship actively—in the cases of bullying or teasing—or passively—in the cases of giving someone the silent treatment or ignoring someone (DeWall & Bushman, 2011). Social rejection can be extremely painful and it even activates regions of the brain involved in both the sensory components of pain and the emotional components of pain (Kross et al., 2011).

During orange stage, we are most attuned to this type of pain. Bullying or exclusion can feel like life or death because our identity is so closely linked with our peers. Although most of us move out of orange stage at some point, many of us carry these traumas with us, bringing our orange-stage coping strategies with us across the entire life span. Thus, addressing orange-stage skill deficiencies can be key to enhancing well-being.

Rejection Sensitivity

Although most of us feel rejection in response to being left out, ignored, bullied, or teased, some of us feel this far more frequently and strongly than others. If this is us, we may notice when we are rejected in even the smallest ways. In other words, we may anxiously expect, readily perceive, and react strongly to rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996). We might also respond to rejection with feelings of hostility, dejection, withdrawal, and even jealousy (Downey & Feldman, 1996).

For example, if we are highly rejection sensitive, we might perceive our friend's failure to invite us to lunch as a rejection, while another person might not care about not being invited.

Exercise: Exploring Your Rejection Sensitivity

Take a moment now to reflect on your level of rejection sensitivity by asking yourself the following questions. The goal here is to better understand yourself and how you react to different social situations.

When people are late, do you feel rejected? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____

If you were to smile at someone and they didn't smile back, would you feel rejected? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____

If a friend forgot to return a call or text, would you feel rejected? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____

If you weren't invited to a friends' party, would you feel rejected? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____

If someone walked away from the group when you walked over, would you feel rejected? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Take just one more minute to see if you can think of other circumstances when you feel rejected. See if you can better understand why you feel this way.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

These are just a few examples of when we may feel rejected. The goal for this exercise is not meant to change who we are but just to better understand how we interact with others.

Kindness

Kindness has been defined as "having or showing a friendly, generous, and considerate nature, and as encompassing gentleness, respect, amiability, and concern" (Johnstone, 2010). Practicing kindness can help us increase our happiness (Rowland & Curry, 2019).

Kindness is a key orange-stage skill. Perhaps you recall in elementary school when you were taught to say “please” and “thank you”. These are some of the earliest learnings we receive on kindness, and indeed, kindness is a skill that resonates well with orange stage. We can further upgrade this skill across the other stages of development to greatly enhance well-being throughout our lives.

We’ll start here with a basic kindness exercise, and we’ll expand our kindness skills later on in this book.

Exercise: Basic Loving-Kindness Meditation

Loving-kindness meditation nurtures generosity, tranquility, and compassion and may help you cultivate positive emotions toward yourself and others (Zeng et al., 2015). Give it a try with the instructions below, and keep in mind that loving-kindness meditation becomes easier after doing it a few times.

1. Start by finding a comfortable sitting position in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Allow your eyes to close gently.

2. Begin to focus on the idea of kindness and love by expressing these feelings toward yourself. Say the following phrases out loud towards yourself.

- May I be happy
- May I be safe
- May I be healthy

Repeat your phrase(s) slowly until you feel done.

3. Now think about someone close to you, such as a good friend, a family member, or even your beloved pet. Say the following phrases out loud while thinking of this person.

- May you be happy
- May you be safe
- May you be healthy

4. This time, think about someone neutral, such as a casual acquaintance, a coworker, or a grocery clerk. Again, say the following phrases out loud while thinking of this person.

- May you be happy
- May you be safe
- May you be healthy

5. Finally, bring your attention to someone you don't like. This could be someone you disagree with, a politician you dislike, or a driver that displayed angry hand gestures towards you. Say the following phrases out loud while thinking of this person.

- May you be happy
- May you be safe

- May you be healthy

6. Finish your practice by slowly allowing your eyes to open.

If you prefer, you can gradually increase your focus from yourself to others. For instance, in your first meditation, you can stop after step 2. In your next practice, you can add step 3 and so forth.

Exercise: Getting Started With Gratitude

Gratitude involves a sense of thankfulness, contentment, and a genuine appreciation for the people, experiences, and opportunities of life (Sansone & Sansone, 2010). By using gratitude, we can improve our social relationships, sense of belonging, and our well-being.

Use the following prompts to explore some things you may be grateful for.

- First, think about people you are grateful for: Family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, coaches, teachers, teammates, colleagues, and co-workers.
- Next, think of things you are grateful for: Home, car, sentimental items, beautiful items (e.g., jewelry, nature).
- Now, think of any places you are grateful for: The beach, the mountains, the movie theater, being under warm blankets, the gym, your favorite store, or your friend's house.
- Finally, think about if there are experiences to be grateful for: The wind on your skin, going on a rollercoaster, swimming, sports, arts & crafts, playing games, and laughing.

Take a few minutes to write down a list of things you're grateful for.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

By regularly reminding ourselves of things we're grateful for, we can improve our relationships with everything in our world.

Exercise: Forgiving a Friend

In general, holding a grudge doesn't make us feel good. In this exercise, we'll explore how we can more easily let go of our grudges against others.

Take a moment to think of the types of things that you might need to forgive a friend for—what things might they do that are not okay with you? For example, would it bother you if they were dishonest, if they hit you, or if they said something mean to you?

Brainstorm a few examples of things that you want to forgive someone for. It's okay to be upset by others' actions. Just remember, it can boost our well-being if we can forgive them.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Now think about what would need to happen for you to forgive this person. Would you just let it go? Would they need to apologize or take some other action for you to forgive them? What actions could you take to make forgiving them easier?

_____
_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____
_____

By forgiving people for small transgressions, we can let go of the hurt we carry.

Social Connection

Most people believe that love, intimacy, and social connection are more important than things like fame, wealth, and even physical health when it comes to their well-being (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). Our intuition is right because loneliness represents one of the most significant threats to our physical health. Loneliness can impact our health just as much as lack of exercise, obesity, or smoking (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008).

Unfortunately, about 20% of people feel socially isolated (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). In addition, more than a quarter of the US population lives alone and even 3 in 10 married couples don't feel especially connected to each other. This is why loneliness is actually considered to be a major (and growing) public health issue in the US (Holt-Lunstad, Robles, & Sbarra, 2017).

How to Build Connections

Given the importance of building connections when it comes to our well-being, let's talk about some tips that help us develop this key skill.

Personal connections
We might start by developing and strengthening the personal connections we already have with friends or colleagues. Is there a friend you would like to spend more time with? Ask them when they are regularly free, and set up a weekly get-together. Is there a co-worker that seems nice who you'd like to get to know better? Invite them out to lunch. Building connections with people you already know personally can be an easy way to start feeling more socially connected.

Family connections
The connections we have with family are generally strong, but not always healthy. So building connections with family members may be a good strategy for some people and not for others. For those who feel close to their families—or want to feel closer—it can be worth making an effort to talk more often. Even if you live far away, you could schedule a phone or video chat with a parent or sibling. Or, you could aim to plan a future vacation together to have more experiences together.

Connections with strangers
Research shows that even small talk with strangers can be good for our well-being (Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014). So don't hesitate to talk to someone in line at the grocery store, chat with the barista at the coffee shop, or even ask for directions.

Other healthy connections
As our culture shifts to one where fewer family members live together, young people move away for college, and adults frequently move for work, we're often left with fewer connections to build. Since Covid, even more people are working remotely suggesting that "aloneness" is only likely to increase. So we may need to go out of our way to cultivate new connections.

If we identify with a religion, joining a religious event may be helpful. Or, we can make an effort to get to know our neighbors, join a Meetup group to discuss or engage in a hobby we enjoy, or go to local events in an effort to meet new people. We can also make attempts to meet people at the gym, a comedy club, or while volunteering.

Interpersonal Communication

In addition to building a greater number of connections, it's important that we actually feel connected to the people we spend time with. And the way we interact with people has a direct effect on how connected we feel to them. This is why effective interpersonal communication can be very important for well-being.

Here are some tips for helping establish better connections (Bishop, 2013; Pipaş & Jaradat, 2010).

- **Maintain direct eye contact:** This communicates that you feel comfortable.
- **Use a strong but calm tone of voice:** This communicates that you're not passive, aggressive, or passive aggressive.
- **Time your comments:** Communicate at the right times. For example, interrupting others or changing the subject in the middle of a discussion can make others feel unheard.
- **Be clear:** Say what you mean instead of dancing around a subject. For example, if you need something, ask for it directly instead of waiting for the other person to offer or manipulating others into doing what you want.
- **Ask rather than accuse:** If you don't like what someone else is doing, ask them to do something different rather than accusing them. For example, you might say, "Would you please put your cans in the recycling bin," instead of saying "Stop leaving your garbage everywhere!"

Boundaries

You are likely already familiar with the term boundary. A boundary in physical space is a line (real or imagined) that defines the space by marking its limits. For example, when you look at a map of the United States, each state is defined by the line that separates it from other states.

Just as boundaries define a physical space by identifying its limits, they help define *us* by identifying *our* limits. In other words, when the outside world is trying to influence us and manipulate our behavior to serve its interest, boundaries help us show up more authentically because we are certain about where we end and others begin. This clarity allows us to behave in healthier ways, develop healthier relationships, and protect ourselves from unhealthy social interactions.

Ideally, we learn how to set healthy boundaries in orange stage and modify these boundaries to fit our unique needs as we move across the stages. Unfortunately, this seems to be a skill that many people miss out on. So, we'll cover some basic boundary setting information in this section and upgrade this skill as we move through the program.

Setting Boundaries

Setting boundaries can look different depending on the boundary and the context. Below are a few common examples of what it means to set a boundary.

Saying No
'No' is a word that many of us are taught not to use. Rather than enduring the discomfort and perceived potential consequences of setting a boundary, we compromise our authenticity and say "okay".

Defining the Limits of Acceptable Behavior
The limits of acceptable behavior are unique to every individual. Something that is hurtful for one person may not even be noteworthy for another. Limits serve a protective function by minimizing the amount of harm or disruption another person can cause you. An example many of us are likely familiar with might be: "When you message me late at night it wakes me up. I'd like it if you would wait until the morning to text me."

Articulating Expectations
Clearly articulating expectations helps define the role of each person in the relationship and helps both parties meet each other's needs. An expectation can be something as simple as expecting your friend to return your shirt in the same condition it was in when they borrowed it.

Types of Boundaries

Boundaries can be categorized in many ways according to the life domain in which they exist and the aspect of yourself that they protect. Some of the different types of boundaries include spiritual, emotional, internal, physical, material, social, mental, sexual, and conversational. Many of these categories overlap, so we will focus on just 5 categories of boundaries (Tawwab, 2021): physical, intellectual, emotional, material, and temporal.

Physical
Physical boundaries include personal space, physical touch, and privacy. Personal space refers to the perimeter around your body that you are comfortable having another person inside. Your personal space preference will likely be different for different people and

different contexts. For example, if a stranger on an empty elevator stands immediately behind you, you might feel uncomfortable, but you might feel perfectly fine when your spouse or partner stands right behind you.

Boundaries surrounding physical touch include any action in which one person's body comes in contact with another's. This might be things like hugging, kissing, or holding hands, as well as less intimate actions like shaking hands or a pat on the back. You get to decide what is right for you.

Intellectual
Intellectual boundaries refer to your freedom to hold and express your own thoughts, ideas, and opinions without being dismissed or belittled. Essentially, intellectual boundaries protect your individuality and guard against being influenced by people who have not earned your trust. For example, if someone calls you hurtful names or yells at you about the opinions you express during a conversation, they may be violating your intellectual boundaries.

Emotional
Emotional boundaries are all about interpersonal expressions of feelings. In part, emotional boundaries refer to the expectation that when you express your feelings, you will not be belittled and that your feelings will not be invalidated. Emotional boundaries also safeguard you against unwillingly sharing the burden of someone else's feelings or performing emotional labor you did not consent to.

For example, when a friend calls you up to vent about their ex or their terrible boss without asking first, they may have violated an emotional boundary. Other examples of emotional boundary violations include gossiping about another person, sharing a friend's secret, minimizing feelings or telling people how they should feel, and oversharing. Some of these things may be fine with you while others are not. Again, you get to decide what is okay for you.

Material
Material boundaries refer to expectations surrounding how others treat your material possessions. For example, when you loan something to a friend, you expect it to be returned in a reasonable amount of time in the same condition in which it was lent. If someone takes

something without your permission or damages something that belongs to you and refuses to fix it, they may have violated your material boundaries.

Temporal
Temporal boundaries essentially refer to how you spend your time. Unhealthy time boundaries lead to struggles with work-life balance, neglecting self-care, and prioritizing others' needs over your own. Many of us struggle with these boundaries. Commonly, we agree to do things we don't want to do, take on extra work we know we don't have time for, and prioritize our partners, children, and friends, leaving no time for ourselves.

Time boundaries can also include making requests at a bad time, such as late at night when someone might be sleeping, and expecting someone to be available and responsive at all times. In the digital age when we are all theoretically accessible at nearly every hour of the day, the expectation to immediately text or call back is common. However, having healthy time boundaries can help us prioritize the activities that are important to us and proceed with them uninterrupted.

Boundaries With Family and Friends

Different life domains each entail their own set of challenges and requirements when it comes to boundaries. The different types of boundaries described above may also manifest differently in each life domain. For example, your physical space boundary might be very different at home than it is at work. Let's talk a bit about setting boundaries in different life domains.

Family
Boundaries are essential for a healthy, well-functioning family. They help define the roles, rules, and responsibilities of each family member and serve to create a safe space where we know what to expect and what is expected of us. Adults in a family need boundaries with each other and with their children, but it is also important to allow children to set their own boundaries. When a child's boundaries are respected, it shows them that their needs are valuable and saves them from having to learn this skill as an adult.

Family may be one of the most difficult life domains in which to set and maintain boundaries. There are many reasons for this. For example, if you grew up without

boundaries, then your family is accustomed to expecting that you'll agree to all of their requests, brush off the snide "jokes" they may make about you, and ignore their invasions of your privacy. So, when we set boundaries as an adult, we are suddenly and drastically changing the rules of the game in the eyes of our family.

Your parents may feel insulted when you turn down their invitation to dinner because they are used to you always saying 'yes'. Similarly, your sibling may react negatively when you ask them to stop making jokes about your body because you've permitted that kind of behavior for your whole life. This is why standing up for yourself can feel shocking or antagonistic to them (Newman, 2019).

Though there are many additional challenges that we need to overcome when setting boundaries with our families, it is worth the effort to do so. As Dr. Susan Newman suggests, "If you truly are to be your own person, you have to practice self-protection, and that means sometimes you have to say no to those you love" (Newman, 2019).

Friends

An important consideration to make when you are setting boundaries with friends is whether they reciprocate your love and generosity or if they tend to take advantage of your kindness. Unhealthy friendships tend to be caused by unhealthy boundaries (Tawwab, 2021).

Friendships, like families, are also a tricky space for setting boundaries. Our friends are special to us and we don't want to lose them, so the idea of saying no and setting boundaries can feel like a big risk. And, unlike families, we do not have ties that bind us to our friends, thus ties to friends dissolve more easily than ties to a family member. However, if you have a friend who would rather end the relationship than respect your boundaries, this is likely not the kind of friendship that will enhance your well-being in the long term.

Though many of the boundaries we may wish to set in our friendships will be the same as or similar to those we set in our other life domains, there are some boundary issues that are more specific to friendships. Let's take a look at a couple of common boundary issues that arise in friendships (Tawwab, 2021).

Acting as an advisor
Our treasured ability to be open and honest with our friends can sometimes set us up for frustration and burnout. That is, there is commonly an expectation that part of the responsibility in a friendship is constantly being open to listening to our friends' more intimate thoughts, feelings, and issues. This, however, is not a realistic expectation, and trying to consistently fulfill this perceived responsibility can lead us to feel frustrated and compel us to engage less with our friends.

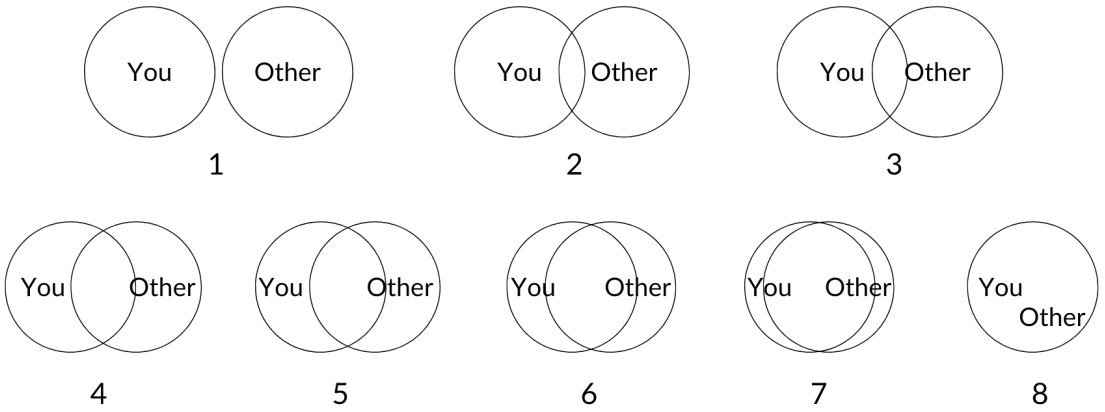
Loaning money and possessions
We may be quick to loan our friends money or let them borrow something they need because we love them. However, we don't always consider whether or not we want to be a lending source before we offer our resources. Loaning money or other possessions to our friends when we don't really want to can make us feel resentful and ultimately damage the friendship.

Unsolicited advice and feedback
Both offering and receiving unsolicited advice and feedback can strain an otherwise healthy friendship. Typically, the motivation for offering unsolicited advice is good. Most of the time our friend is just trying to help. However, this can make us feel unheard or like our friend thinks they know better than we do, which can create fertile ground for conflict.

The "needy" friend
Having needs, no matter how many, is never wrong. Expecting that our friends will always be available to meet them, however, demonstrates the lack of healthy boundaries around time and emotional availability.

Exercise: Boundary Mapping

Below, you will see a series of circles. The left circle represents you and the right circle represents someone else. The amount that the circles overlap represents how much you feel like you overlap with the other person.



Sometimes, we want to overlap more with others. This can result in us being more needy, clingy, or controlling. Sometimes, we want to overlap less with others. This can lead us to withdraw, avoid, or push someone away.

There is nothing inherently wrong with any of these emotions—they simply tell us what action to take. If we want to move closer, we can engage in healthy social connections. And if we want to move further away, we can create stronger or wider boundaries.

For this exercise, think about 3 of your most important relationships. Identify which set of overlapping circles describes each relationship.

Relationship 1:

_____

Relationship 2:

_____

Relationship 3:

_____

Next, ask yourself if you would prefer the relationship be a different set of circles. And if, so which set?

Relationship 1:

_____

Relationship 2:

_____

Relationship 3:

_____

Once you know whether you'd like to move towards or away from each relationship, you can begin to think about what actions you'd like to take—actions that enhance social connection or actions that strengthen boundaries.

What action will you take to adjust your boundaries?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

By continuing to re-adjust our boundaries, we ensure that our relationships are neither too enmeshed nor too distant, and this can help us feel more connected to the people we care about.

Orange Stage Summary

We've now covered a few of the key orange-stage skills. If you are in orange stage (or need to further strengthen your orange-stage skills), there are many self-help books that focus on developing social skills and improving relationships. As I'm sure you already know, social skills remain important throughout our entire lives, so it never hurts to further strengthen these skills.

Chapter 8: Yellow Stage

At yellow stage, we develop a third-person perspective. Some of us move into yellow stage during adolescence or young adulthood and many of us remain there for the rest of our lives (Wilber, 2000). Research shows that 37% of adults are in yellow stage (Cook-Greuter, 2014).

When we begin to transition into yellow stage, we realize that "I am more than the group-based self". We are now beginning to let go of our identification with our small group. Our priorities generally shift away from focusing solely on the group to focusing more on our individual self. So, yellow stage is all about autonomy—we begin to make our own decisions, engage in independent action, and take responsibility for ourselves. This stage includes developing healthy behaviors and learning how to take effective action.

At this stage, we begin to see that changing our behavior can change our experiences. This is a major shift from the earlier stages, which felt more passive, and it gives us the potential to improve our well-being in many new ways. Prior to reaching yellow stage, we are far less likely to seek out books like this one because we don't yet believe that *we* are the ones in control of our lives. So, in this section, we'll focus on some of the key yellow-stage skills. These skills help us take control of our lives and begin shifting from surviving to thriving.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to your belief that you can succeed in a given situation. Keep in mind that self-efficacy is not about having the *skill* to complete a task. It's about whether you *believe* you can achieve that task. Suppose you feel confident that you can handle a new challenge. In that case, you might be highly motivated to take action, put more effort toward accomplishing it, and display higher resilience when you face adversity. These positive beliefs you have in your abilities indicate high self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is situation-specific. In other words, you may have a high self-efficacy toward certain situations but a low self-efficacy toward others. For example, imagine you cook frequently. Your mother asks you to cook Thanksgiving dinner, and you feel confident that you can do it. Then your mother asks you if you can fix the transmission in her car. You have no experience with cars so you have poor self-efficacy (or confidence) in your ability to do it.

At yellow stage, we are developing our self-efficacy. In other words, we are discovering our capabilities and seeing that we are indeed capable of doing things we set our mind to.

How Does Self-Efficacy Develop?

In the 1970s, Albert Bandura outlined four major influences on self-efficacy (Bandura et al., 1977). These are: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional or physiological states. Let's take a closer look at each of these sources of influence.

Mastery Experiences
When it comes to developing self-efficacy, Bandura determined that mastery experiences, which are an individual's past performance outcomes, are the most reliable predictor of self-efficacy. In other words, if you have performed well at a

given task in the past, you might feel competent about performing a similar task again. Keep in mind that this phenomenon can be a double-edged sword; your positive experiences can boost your self-efficacy, but your negative experiences can erode it.

Vicarious Experiences

Vicarious experiences, or observations of other people's performances, also influence self-efficacy. Observing another person deal with a situation and watching them succeed can increase your self-efficacy in that situation. However, like with the mastery experiences, watching someone else fail might lower your self-efficacy.

Verbal Persuasion

The third source of influence that shapes self-efficacy is verbal persuasion. In this case, what other people say about your performance, or ability to perform, shapes how you feel about your capabilities to handle the challenge. The more credible the source of verbal persuasion, the greater their influence over self-efficacy (Won, Lee & Bong, 2017). For example, a parent or coach might cheer you on and help boost your self-efficacy. The reverse is also true; discouraging words and put-downs can chip away at self-efficacy.

Emotional and Physiological States

Simply put, having a positive attitude might enhance your self-efficacy, but a negative attitude might diminish it. Other physiological influences may include your bodily reactions, such as fatigue, aches, pain, pleasure, and levels of stress hormones. People who perceive their physical reactions as energizing are likely to have higher self-efficacy, whereas people who regard them as setbacks are likely to have lower self-efficacy.

Exercise: Increasing Self-Efficacy

Taking on small, easy projects that you know you can accomplish can increase your sense of mastery and increase your feelings of self-efficacy (Bandura et al., 1977). Let's explore how to do this now.

- First, think about a part of your life that you don't feel completely confident about. Possibilities include aspects of work, home life, or school.

What area of life do you lack confidence in?

_____
_____
_____
_____

- Next, spend a little time brainstorming small things within that part of your life that you can accomplish in less than a day. For example, at work you may be able to clean out and organize your desk, locker, or workspace. At school, you may be able to write an outline for one paper. At home, you may be able to make one healthy meal.

What do you want to accomplish in this area of life?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- Choose a small project that you can start and finish within a few hours. Setting an ambitious goal is counter-productive for this exercise, so start small.

What small project can you do?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- Make sure that you leave plenty of time for accomplishing your goal. Try to dedicate more time than you think you'll need and try to pick a time when you're less likely to encounter unexpected distractions.

When will you do this project?

_____
_____
_____
_____

- Remember that the main reason you're doing this is to increase your sense of self-efficacy, and not to get that one thing off of your to-do list. You want to feel that you have the power to take action in the ways you want.

By taking on a small task every few weeks, you'll start to actually witness your ability to take effective action. In time, these actions generally result in positive outcomes, which can further help create a bridge between this stage and the next one.

Exercise: The Effective Self

This exercise can help you appreciate the positive things about yourself and your life. Given one of the main objectives of yellow stage is individuation, developing confidence in yourself is a key skill of this stage. Simply complete the following five prompts at the end of your day for the next few days.

Today, I enjoyed

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Today, I learned

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

One cool thing I did today was

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

I am proud of myself because

_____
_____
_____

The best part of my day was

_____
_____
_____
_____

I am looking forward to

_____
_____
_____
_____

Regular use of this exercise can help you appreciate yourself, which is not only a key aspect of this stage, it supports all further development.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is thought to include three main components: Self-kindness (versus self-judgment), feelings of common humanity (versus separation), and mindfulness (versus over-identification with our experiences; Neff, 2011). Thus, self-compassion is a skill that becomes important to develop at yellow stage. Let's explore what this experience is like at this stage:

1. Self-kindness at this stage refers to looking at ourselves kindly through a 3rd person perspective—we can see ourselves, we can see others, and we can see ourselves as separate and different from others (Cook-Greuter, 2014). Given this new found worldview, we are likely to engage in a lot of social comparison. So, to practice self-kindness at this stage, we might remind ourselves that "we're better than others at some things and worse than others at other things, and it's okay."

2. Common humanity at this stage is in relation to a group with which we share some similarities and some differences (e.g., school, workplace, etc...). We can now

finally begin to understand that many people fail, make mistakes, and feel inadequate in some ways. This understanding can hopefully help us be more understanding of our (and others') failures.

3. Mindfulness at this stage is likely to be mostly focused on actions, experiences, and stable personality; e.g., Cook-Greuter, 2014). So, we might focus our mindful awareness on our actions, social experiences, or physical experiences. By just being present with these experiences, we can experience realizations that may reduce the pressure we put on ourselves.

Exercise: Self-Compassion Letter

The following exercise is adapted from Shapira & Mongrain (2010) to be suitable for yellow-stage.

- First, think of something that makes you feel bad about yourself or not good enough. It could be something related to your personality, skills, actions, relationships, or anything else.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- Once you have identified something, write a kind letter *to* yourself *from* yourself, to help yourself feel better.
- **You might:** Remind yourself that other people have things that they don't like about themselves. They have strengths and weaknesses too, and that's okay.

- Remind yourself that there are other people that are struggling with similar things as you are. You're not alone, even if it feels like it sometimes.
- In a compassionate way, ask yourself whether there are actions that you could take to accept this part of you more. Or, are there actions you could take to improve this part of yourself? Focus on how positive actions might make you feel better about yourself.

- After writing the letter, put it away. Consider coming back to it and reading it again if you're feeling bad about this part of yourself.

Given many of us judge ourselves harshly, self-compassion is an important skill to develop at yellow stage.

Exercise: Self-Gratitude

Many of us have been taught to value only certain parts of ourselves, usually the parts that are valued by our family, social group, or society. But our other unique qualities are also valuable.

For this exercise, start by listing things about yourself that you're grateful for. These can be things that make you, your family, or your social group proud. For example, maybe you are funny, a good cook, or friendly. Write down these things that you are grateful for about yourself.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Next, try to think of things about yourself that you're grateful for that are *different* from your family or social group. For example, maybe you're grateful that you can paint, know about a specific topic, or are interested in cars, even though other people around you do not have these qualities. Write these characteristics down now.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

In the future, when you are practicing self-gratitude, try to remember to focus on the positive ways that you are both similar and different from others.

Mindset

A mindset is a set of expectations about ourselves and our world that help us make sense of our experiences. Mindsets offer a sort of shortcut that allows us to respond to a situation quickly, easily, and—most of the time—appropriately.

For example, imagine you walk into a friend's house and their dog starts running toward you. If you've had good experiences with dogs, you will likely expect the dog to be friendly, interpret its behavior as an enthusiastic greeting, and bend down to greet it in return. On the other hand, if you've had negative experiences with dogs, you might expect the dog to be aggressive, interpret its behavior as a threat, and either flee or move to protect yourself. In each of these examples, you have a mindset that determines your actions.

We develop mindsets over time through personal experience and the influence of other people. If we have negative experiences with others or are consistently taught by an authority figure that people are untrustworthy, we are likely to develop a mindset in which we generally anticipate the worst from others. Mindsets can be really useful in that they help us interpret our behavior and the behavior of others and react in a healthy manner. However, our mindsets can sometimes work against us.

Research has shown that our expectations of ourselves are often self-fulfilling. For example, studies investigating a phenomenon called stereotype threat, have shown that by putting people in a context in which they doubt themselves or feel as though they don't belong, they will actually perform worse than when they are in a context where they feel capable (Spencer et al., 2016). So, our mindset affects our actions and experiences.

What Is a Growth Mindset?

A **growth mindset** is a set of expectations that generally reflect a belief in your ability to intentionally develop yourself intellectually, physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc. It is essentially believing that you are capable of more, whatever the particular 'more' may be.

Growth mindset is a concept that was first developed by psychologist Carol Dweck. It emerged from her observation that students who believed in their ability to grow were more likely to succeed academically than students with a fixed mindset, who believed that their abilities were fixed and couldn't be developed (Dweck, 2006).

The benefits of a growth mindset are vast and diverse (Dweck, 2006) because it allows you to see yourself as a capable and autonomous agent in the world. In other words, you move through the world with confidence in your ability to exert control over your experiences.

Can Mindsets Change?

A substantial body of evidence supports the effectiveness of programs to change mindsets. For example, research demonstrates that following interventions in which students were taught about growth mindset and their capacity to improve, mathematical ability and reading comprehension skyrocketed (Dweck, 2006). These results demonstrate not only that mindsets can be changed, but that a mindset has a powerful effect on performance.

Other studies corroborate these findings and suggest that a growth mindset can be developed relatively easily. For example, a national study that included more than 12,000 students revealed that after participating in an online growth mindset course lasting for only an hour, academic achievement improved in students that were previously performing poorly (Yeager et al., 2019). All this is to say that mindset matters, and growth mindset is an extremely useful mindset to develop.

Exercise: Shift Your Mindset

Building a growth mindset is similar to building self-efficacy. We just need to witness our ability to do things we set out to do.

So, for this exercise, spend a few minutes writing about a time when you learned something new or built a new skill. Write about how it went, the challenges you overcame, and how you eventually learned the new thing. This can help remind your brain that you are indeed capable of growing and learning things.

For example, maybe you learned how to cook a certain meal, you developed the ability to do addition and subtraction, or you learned how to play soccer. You can write about any skills you developed related to sports, arts & crafts, fixing things, skills you learned in school or work, etc...

Write about a time when you learned something new:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

The truth is that we learn things all the time—we are always capable of more personal growth.

Exercise: Turn Failure Upside-Down

Many people perceive failure as “bad”, which in turn causes them to avoid it at all costs. However, if you are avoiding failure, you are making it harder to succeed. Try completing the following exercise to help shift your perspective on failure and start seeing it as something you can use to your advantage. This can make it easier to accept failure when it happens and allow you to use the lessons learned to help drive you forward.

1. Assess your personal feelings about failure.
Gaining a more full understanding of how you view and react to failure can help you determine where your strengths are or where you could improve. Answer the following prompts to gain a bit of introspection into how you view failure.

When I fail, the first thought that comes to mind is...

_____
_____
_____
_____

When I failed as a child, my parents responded by...

_____
_____
_____
_____

The top 3 emotions I feel after I fail are...

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Identify a time in your life when you failed.
It may feel uncomfortable to recall these memories at first. However, this exercise can help you reframe any negative feelings in a more positive light. Avoiding the memory can often make it seem worse than it was.

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Try to forgive yourself.
Recognize that you are only human and mistakes are a part of life. Failure is something to be proud of because it shows you put in the effort to *try* in the first place. Accepting your failure—and trying to let go of any negative feelings attached to it—is the first step in seeing how that failure may have benefitted you in the long run.

Write a statement forgiving yourself:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Consider how the failure may have helped you.
Look back at your perceived failure and try to see how it may have helped you along your life path. Maybe you didn't get a job you wanted but it led you to a better position. Maybe you lost the first cooking contest you entered but went on to win the next year. Or maybe a relationship failed, but now you feel more confident on your own.

How did failure help you?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Write down three lessons you learned from the failure.
Dig deep and try to figure out what you may have learned about yourself or the world as a result of the failure. There are always aspects within a failure that offer benefits.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. Try to use this framework for future failures.
You will likely fail many times in your life, and that's okay. Failure is a natural part of life for everyone. How you view that failure can determine whether you use it as a stepping stone on your journey or if you let it drag you down. Flipping your failures on their head and turning them into a positive learning experience rather than a painful memory can help move you forward.

How will you keep this in mind in the future?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Yellow Stage Summary

We've covered a few of the most important yellow-stage skills. If you are in yellow stage (or need to further strengthen your yellow-stage skills), you might explore self-help books related to mindset, autonomy, self-compassion, or confidence. This is the stage where we develop a stable, healthy, and confident sense of self, and by doing so, we have the mindset and confidence to more easily navigate further stages and maintain our well-being along the way.

Chapter 9: Green Stage

At green stage, we continue to have a third-person perspective, but this perspective gains in strength, allowing us to more easily view ourselves and our world across time. Research shows that 30% of adults are in green stage (Cook-Greuter, 2014).

Given that yellow and green stages both have third-person perspective, there are fewer differences between these two stages. Some researchers even join yellow and green stages into one (early stage and late stage; O'Fallon, 2020). Still, I find it useful to separate them (as Cook-Greuter does) so that we can better build the skills needed to maintain well-being within, between, and across stages.

When we begin to transition into green stage, we realize that "I am more than the agentic self". In other words, we see that our actions, skills, and knowledge don't really matter unless they lead to the outcomes that we desire. Our time horizon expands, and our priorities generally shift away from focusing solely on doing things right—we're now figuring out what actions to take to get where we want to go. Thus, this stage generally includes creating long-term goals, priorities, and positive outcomes (related to work, home life, friendships, etc...).

By the time we enter this stage, we mostly have our lives together (e.g., we may have a marriage, money, and material success). But, we tend to sense that there is something more to life and this can drag our well-being down. We may also be especially likely to seek out coaching, self-improvement, and books like this one.

Green-stage skills are especially important within the context of Western society, and because Western society supports development to this stage, building these skills can feel especially rewarding. Given the bulk of self-help books focus on aspects of green stage, we'll focus here on just a few key skills to help you boost green-stage well-being.

Goal-Setting

Goals are defined as the desired states that people seek to obtain, maintain, or avoid (Nair, 2003). When we set goals, we envision, plan for, and commit to achieving these desired results. Because our lives include many different parts, goals can span many different categories and include things like relationship goals, career goals, financial goals, and more.

Goal-setting research shows that specific, hard goals lead to more success than vague or abstract goals like "I'm going to succeed!" Other things that lead to goal success include being committed to the goal, having the skills needed to achieve it, believing we can achieve the goal, and not having conflicting goals. We can also benefit from feedback and tracking our progress (Locke & Latham, 2006).

When setting goals, we may want to use the SMART goals system (Rubin, 2002). SMART goals are:

S - Specific
M - Meaningful
A - Achievable
R - Realistic
T - Trackable (or time-based)

By identifying these features of each of our goals, we can more easily ensure that the goals we've set are a good fit for us.

Exercise: What Are Your Goals?

Let's take a few minutes now to start exploring your goals. To create goals that would contribute to the life you really want, take the following steps:

1. **Make a list of your goals.** Keep in mind that your goals should be things that actually lead you to the fulfilling, satisfying life that you desire. Be careful because oftentimes we end up setting goals that don't actually reflect who we really are or what we really want—then we're stuck having achieved the goal but being no happier. So be sure to ask yourself, for each goal, does this goal reflect my true, authentic self? And would achieving it make me happy?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. **For each goal, break it down into smaller steps.** Keep breaking these steps into even smaller steps until a step is something you could complete in a day or less. For example, you might have a career goal to create a million-dollar business. That's a BIG goal. So make sure to break it up into the smallest steps you can. That way, if

you complete one step per day, you'll have completed 365 steps in a year and be well on your way to your goal.

3. **Plan how and when you'll achieve these small steps.** Once you have steps that can be completed in a day or less, schedule them in your calendar. Once they are on your agenda, they'll be harder to ignore or forget.

4. **Move forward with self-compassion.** If you set ambitious goals, you might fall short, and that's okay. Be kind to yourself when you fail and celebrate when you

succeed. This pattern of self-compassion can really help you keep exploring and discovering what you really want.

How will you ensure that you are kind to yourself?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Exercise: Visualize Your Day

In this next exercise, we'll use visualization to help you create positive outcomes and reach your goals.

1. **Find a quiet and comfortable space:** Choose a spot where you won't be disturbed for a few minutes. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
2. **Set clear intentions:** Take a moment to think about the goals or tasks you have for the day. What would make today successful for you? Set clear and positive intentions for the day ahead.
3. **Relaxation and deep breathing:** Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to relax. Inhale deeply through your nose, hold for a moment, and exhale slowly through your mouth. Repeat this a few times until you feel a sense of calm.
4. **Visualization of success:** Picture yourself successfully completing tasks and achieving your goals for the day. Imagine the details—the sights, sounds, and feelings associated with your success. For example, if your goal is a successful presentation, visualize yourself speaking confidently, receiving positive feedback, and feeling a sense of accomplishment.
5. **Engage all your senses:** As you visualize, engage all your senses. What do you see, hear, feel, and even smell in your imagined scenario? The more vivid and detailed your visualization, the more impactful it can be.

6. **Gratitude reflection:** Shift your focus to gratitude. Take a moment to think about three things you are grateful for in your life. This can help enhance a positive mindset.
7. **Positive affirmations:** Incorporate positive affirmations into your practice. Repeat a few affirmations that resonate with you, reinforcing positive beliefs about yourself and your capabilities.

By visualizing what we want to happen, we can help draw our attention to whatever positive things do occur.

Exercise: Sticking to Your Goals

There are many reasons why we don't actually do the activities that will lead us to our goals. These can include being in a bad mood, lack of time, bad weather, fatigue, social pressure, and many other things. Anticipating the situations that provoke unwanted emotions can help us both be more emotionally prepared for them and have locked and loaded plans for how we can respond effectively. Creating "If-Then" statements for each potential obstacle can help you more easily overcome it.

Create Implementation Intentions
If you get stuck before you can execute your action, it can be helpful to already have some implementation intentions set up. Implementation intentions are simply plans for what you'll do if your 'plan A' goes awry. It is: IF situation X happens, THEN I will do Y (Gollwitzer, 1999).

Setting up implementation intentions can help us more easily reach our goals. For example, we can tell ourselves: IF I am unable to complete a task at X time, THEN I will complete it at Y time. Or, IF X strategy doesn’t work, THEN I will try Y strategy. It's basically just a way to make sure that we have alternative paths to walk down to reach our goals. That way, if the first path we try is blocked, we can still get to our desired destination.

How will you use implementation intentions?

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Beat Distraction

Perhaps the most common obstacle on the way to a long term goal is distraction. Maybe some of the things we need to do to achieve the goal are boring or hard. Or, we're just a distractible type of person. Putting plans in place to minimize the influence of these distractions from the start can make it easier to overcome this obstacle.

For example, we can download apps that pause our emails, log us out of social media, or put a time limit on our Internet playtime. Or, maybe we benefit from headphones to drown out noise. Maybe we need a room with a closed door. Or maybe we need a few refreshments to keep handy so we don't have to keep going to and from the fridge. Think about what strategies help you stay focused and put them into action.

How will you overcome distractions?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Create a Coping Plan

We are the best experts on our own weaknesses and strengths, and only we know our own habits, temptations, and emotional responses. It's worth thinking through what challenges

we commonly encounter when we are trying to reach a goal. If we know ahead of time what gets us stuck or off-track, then we can more easily plan and prepare.

So take some time to write down common challenges you expect while working towards your long term goals. Then write down what you'll do. Try to be specific (Say more than, "I'll beat it!"). For example, if low self-confidence often trips you up, make a plan to use a self-compassion activity whenever you're getting down on yourself. By having specific plans in place to cope with your unique difficulties, you can increase your chances for success.

What is your coping plan?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Change Goals as Needed

Remember, long-term goals can take time. A lot can change between the time you start and the time you finish. You might change. Your situation might change. Your goals might change. And that's totally okay! It's all the more reason to check in your progress, revise your goals, and keep moving forward.

If you're tracking your progress, try to pay attention if your activities are not quite feeling right anymore. Maybe you have developed new values that make your previous plan untenable. For example, maybe you have a child and want to spend less time on one goal and more on another. Or, maybe you get an opportunity to do something really fun, like move to a foreign country. You still want to manifest your big dream, but you also want to take full advantage of this time, so you take a break from doing your regular goal-based activities.

Other times, goals need to be thrown out altogether. Maybe you learned something new about yourself that makes you want to pursue a different career than you originally planned. Or, maybe you've decided you want to join the Peace Corps. Life is unpredictable, and manifesting our goals means being able to accommodate changes—changes in the world and inside of ourselves.

When will you check-in on your goals?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Positive Visualization

We can use positive visualization techniques for a variety of goals, such as stress relief, mood improvement, bodily relaxation, promoting sleep, or increasing confidence. For instance, visualization can increase physical performance (Ranganathan et al., 2004), boost relaxation (Yu et al., 2014), and mitigate stress while increasing sleep quality (Amini, Shirvani & Bazgir, 2022).

But how does one practice visualization? If you have ever daydreamed in the passenger seat or during a meeting, then you have the fundamental skills to get started with this technique. Simply put, positive visualization is an imagination technique that enables you to focus on something you want to achieve and envision yourself in a scenario where you reach that goal.

There are three keys to effective positive visualization: being very specific, incorporating as many sensory details and emotions as possible, and repetition. When you are specific in your visualization, you create a detailed picture from the start to the finish. This process allows you to figure out any steps you need to take to reach your goal.

When visualizing, it's helpful to incorporate many sensory details to create a complete mental image, such as where you will be, how you will look, the smell of the room, etc. Similarly, try to imagine your emotions from beginning to end during the entire process. The more pleasant the emotions (especially when you imagine the desired outcome), the more you'll likely want to reach this future. Finally, just like you'd practice a line for a play, rehearsing the same scenario a few times can solidify your visualized future in your mind. That way, you can be tuned to take steps to achieve this desired future.

Exercise: Visualize Your Best Life

Start thinking about what success means to you and what you truly aim to achieve in life (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). This means that you will imagine yourself in the best-case scenario in the future. In other words, you will visualize that everything in your life has gone well, your hard work has paid off, you have accomplished all of your life goals, and all your dreams have come true in the future.

Now, write about this future using the following prompts. Make sure you add sensory and emotional details.

What stands out about you in this ideal future?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What are the emotions of the future you?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What can you do to make that future a reality?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Take a moment to read and reflect on what you have written. Connect with this scenario as much as you can.

Create a Vision Board

Vision boards are visual representations of your goals, intentions, and desires. Vision boards are typically poster-sized and include a collage-type arrangement of images that symbolize different facets of your goals and intentions. Vision boards are useful for ensuring that your goals remain salient. That is, by creating a visual representation of your goals, you can easily look back at your vision board and remind yourself of the intentions you set. When your intentions are at the forefront of your mind, you are more likely to act on them.

Exercise: Vision Board for Self-Improvement

Identify your areas of focus. What area of your life do you want to improve? This could include your physical and mental health, relationships, career, finances, or personal development.

1. **Set specific goals.** Identify more specifically what you want to achieve. For example, if your goal is to improve your physical health, you might want to lose weight, gain muscle, or eat healthier. If your goal is to improve your relationships, you might want to spend more quality time with your loved ones, learn to communicate more effectively, or resolve a conflict.
2. **Find images and words that represent your goals.** Look for images and words that inspire you and that evoke positive emotions. You can find images in magazines, newspapers, online, or even draw your own. For example, if your goal is to lose

weight, you might find images of healthy people, nutritious food, or inspirational quotes about health and fitness.

3. **Create your vision board.** You can create your vision board on a poster board, corkboard, or even digitally. Arrange the images and words in a way that is pleasing to you. You can also add stickers, glitter, or other embellishments to make your vision board more creative.
4. **Place your vision board in a place where you will see it often.** This could be your bedroom, bathroom, office, or anywhere else where you spend a lot of time. Seeing your vision board regularly will help you stay focused on your goals and motivated to achieve them.

As your goal evolves and progresses, update your vision board to reflect any changes or new ideas. This ensures that the vision board remains a dynamic and relevant resource throughout the creative process.

Exercise: Forgiveness Time Travel

Practicing forgiveness over time helps us let go of some of the weight that we carry. So let's work on developing a forgiveness habit so that your forgiveness skills continue to grow.

Start by letting go. It's common for us to get very upset about things that might not matter at all to us in a year or two. If you're holding onto a grudge, try to imagine yourself a year or two in the future. Ask yourself, will you still care about this event? If not, then how might you let it go now rather than carrying it with you?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Keep growing. Even difficult experiences are good for us if we use them as learning experiences. How might you grow from this experience and use it to improve yourself?

_____
_____

_____
_____
_____
_____

Action taking. What did you learn about yourself about how you like to be treated? Might you change anything about your current life to help prevent this experience from happening again?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Exercise: Gratitude In Relationships

Can you think of a relationship that you'd like to improve? For instance, it could be a friendship with someone you care about but have started to feel estranged from over time. Or maybe, you wish you were on better terms with your in-laws or your sister. In this exercise, you will take a first step towards mending and strengthening that bond using gratitude.

- Start by thinking about the relationship you want to improve. Instead of thinking about the negatives that weakened this relationship, try to focus on the connection between you and the other person and why this person is important to you.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- Next, think about why you are grateful that this person is in your life. Did they extend a hand to you when you needed help? Did they provide a shoulder to lean on? Did they make you laugh? Did they make you feel beautiful or intelligent? Did they share their delicious meals with the homeless? Did they give someone good advice? Write down everything that makes you feel grateful for this person.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Sometimes, we forget the positives in our relationships and let our bonds erode. This exercise can help you remember those ignored or long-forgotten positives to help you find gratitude in your relationships.

Burnout

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that many people feel after living through stress for a long time (Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001).

The most popular scale for measuring burnout is the Maslach Burnout Inventory, often referred to as the MBI (Schaufeli et al., 2001; West et al., 2016). The MBI categorizes burnout symptoms as falling into three major categories:

- **Emotional Exhaustion.** Feeling like you are emotionally overextended. Feeling drained by interactions with other people. Feeling strained and chronically fatigued. Feeling a sense of deep and profound weariness that isn't relieved by sleep. If you notice that you are asking yourself "What now?" every time someone approaches you, you might be experiencing emotional exhaustion.
- **Depersonalization or Cynicism.** Negative, cynical, callous, or detached attitudes toward the people around you, especially people who you are responsible for, like patients, students, clients, or your children. Feeling indifferent or distant towards your work. Losing interest in your work. Feeling that your work isn't meaningful. If

you feel that you just don’t care about your work or the people you are supposed to be helping, you might be experiencing depersonalization or cynicism.
- **A Sense of Reduced Personal or Professional Accomplishment.** Negative emotions and thoughts about your achievements and your ability to succeed at work or in life in general. The feeling that you or your work doesn't contribute positively to the people or projects that you serve. A decline in your feelings of competency and your belief that you can be successful.

Green Stage Summary

We’ve covered a few of the most important green-stage skills. If you are in green stage (or need to further strengthen your green-stage skills), you might explore self-help books related to goals, habits, success, etc... This is the stage where we learn to optimize our behaviors to get the results we want. If we aim to move on to later stages, this ability to prioritize and optimize can indeed come in handy.

Chapter 10: Teal Stage

At teal stage, we develop a fourth-person perspective. This is a new perspective that can feel very different than the previous one. We can feel a bit different from others when we see the world in this way as research shows that only 11% of adults are in teal stage (Cook-Greuter, 2014).

When we begin to transition into teal stage, we realize that "I am more than the achiever self." In other words, we see that enduring well-being can not be found in our achievements. We then start to question everything we've learned up to this point. We are now seeking to better understand ourselves and our world from a different perspective than the one society modeled for us. This stage includes more advanced perspective-taking, looking deep within the self, and extending our learning beyond what is socially desired.

To boost well-being at this stage, we often need to explore ourselves and our world from a variety of perspectives. The following psychological information and skill-building exercises can help us learn how to take on this task, developing important teal-stage skills such as the capacity for deep self-reflection and self-understanding.

The Origins of Your Self-Concept

There are so many external influences affecting us at any given time that we often don't realize that many of the decisions we've made or the actions we took were not actually **our** decisions or actions. Maybe society influenced us—perhaps by telling us to get a certain job, get married, buy a home, have kids, or whatever else is popular at the time. Or maybe our parents told us to pursue a certain education, career, or life path. Or maybe it was even our friends—perhaps they encouraged us to take the path they took, to walk alongside them on their journey.

These influences are not necessarily negative, but they do often blind us to who we really are and what we really want out of life. Maybe the true you is a free spirit who wants to live in a hippie commune, start a groundbreaking business, or become a monk. There are many layers of self-concept, and at this stage, we begin to explore the deeper layers.

Looking Inward

The first thing we need to do when we desire to know our deeper selves is to get to question and explore. We do this by looking inward. We put down our phones, turn off the TV, and spend some quality time with ourselves to explore the hidden layers of who we are. We need to do this because so many of our habits, patterns of behavior, and pre-set programs are beneath our conscious awareness. They operate in a sort of "control room", affecting how we think, feel, and act. If we want to know who we really are—and be in control of that person—we need to look deeper.

We access information about the less-apparent parts of ourselves through self-reflection and introspection:

- **Self-reflection** involves looking at ourselves objectively. We might observe the way we think, feel, or act. We might notice that we act one way when we're with one friend and another way with another friend. Or we might notice that we get a nagging feeling of discontent when we think about our careers or relationships. Without this self-reflection, we would not be aware of our true experiences.
- **Introspection** involves observation and evaluation of attitudes, beliefs, desires, evaluations, intentions, emotions, and sensory experiences (Schwitzgebel, 2012). It

takes the awareness that we gained from self-reflection and examines it. With introspection, we might find ourselves asking "why" when we notice ourselves feeling or thinking in ways that we don't understand. As a result, we gain even deeper knowledge about ourselves.

Exercise: Put Your Internal States Into Words

Start by reflecting on your thoughts and emotions. Simply notice what's going on in your mind. Next, try to describe these experiences in as much detail as possible. For example, you might notice that you're feeling melancholy with a dash of sadness.

Keep observing. Maybe you notice that these feelings are coming from an interaction you recently had with a friend. Try to follow your thoughts and emotions as far as you can until you can see the root of where they are coming from. For example, maybe you realize that your thoughts and emotions related to your friend are really coming from a deeper place inside of you. Maybe you feel like you're not good enough and you worry that your friend

doesn't like you anymore. By observing, you might begin to see that the origin of your emotions is really your feelings about **yourself**. The goal of this exercise is to follow your emotions to see what you can learn about them.

Warning: It can sometimes get kind of scary when we engage in deep self-reflection. Much of the reason that we don't self-reflect is that the information we find can be overwhelming and sometimes difficult to deal with. In fact, the more we pay attention to negative emotions, the more we amplify them, so please only do these exercises when you are feeling somewhat strong and secure.

Using Introspection

Once we've started paying attention to our internal states and processes, we can then begin to evaluate and form judgments about them (Schwitzgebel, 2012). Basically, we go from a more passive observer to a more active interpreter. We can start to explore the "why" of the information we find, we might begin to detect patterns that provide further insight, and then later, we might even try to interact with or modify the information we find. Try the exercise below to practice introspection.

Exercise: Making Sense of Internal States

Here are a few ways to begin making sense of your internal experiences:

Categorize your internal states. When you notice something going on inside your mind, try to categorize it as an attitude, belief, desire, evaluation, intention, emotion, or sensory experience.

- For example, it's extremely common for people to misinterpret the effects of caffeine as anxiety. It's actually a sensory experience (bodily experience) but because it feels so similar to anxiety, it can often get miscategorized.
- Another example involves beliefs. We often misinterpret our beliefs as objective reality when in fact they are part of us and how we process the world. For example, if you believe you're not funny, you probably view that as objective truth. But it's not (your friends might think you're funny). This is just a belief.

What is your current internal state?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Explore the origin of your internal states. Once you've categorized your internal states, see if you can determine the origin or origins of these states.

- For example, if you believe you're not good enough—for a relationship, a career, a lifestyle, or whatever, ask yourself why you believe that? Did someone tell you that? Did you have childhood experiences that taught you this belief?

What do you think the origin is of your current internal state?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Interpret the impacts of your internal states. Once you've categorized your internal states and have some idea of where they come from, explore how these internal states contribute to who you are.

- For example, if you believe that people like you can't be successful, how does this belief contribute to who you are? Does it make you someone who doesn't want to go back to school for more education? Does it mean you're the one at the office who people label as a complainer? Does it mean that you are content with your life just as it is?
- Our beliefs often have both positive and negative impacts. In this step, our goal is just to become aware of these impacts.

What are some of the potential impacts of your current internal state?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Question your internal states. Once you know more about your internal states, question whether your internal states are actually reflective of the deeper you—the you that feels authentic or real.

- For example, maybe you discovered that you have an intention of staying at your current job until you retire, but you sense that this intention is not true to your authentic self. Upon further exploration, you discover that your desire to travel the world is a more authentic expression of you. So ask yourself, what internal states feel most like you, and are there any states that don't feel like you?

Do your internal states feel like they're coming from the authentic you? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Interact with your internal states. The more information you gather about yourself and your internal states, the easier it will become to interact with and modify these internal states.

- For example, say you discovered a fear of commitment and a desire to meet the love of your life. Maybe the true you feels most at home giving and receiving love. Then, it might be worth examining and modifying your beliefs about commitment. The more you dig and uncover the roots of the internal states, the easier it can be to modify internal states that don't feel authentic.

Is there anything else you discovered about your internal states?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Exercise: Digging Deeper

To further explore different aspects of yourself, ask yourself the following questions. After asking yourself each question, try to notice, without judgment, what thoughts come to mind. Write down your answers below so you don't forget them.

What are my attitudes?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What are my beliefs?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What are my desires?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What are my intentions?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What emotions do I tend to feel?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

How does my body feel?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

How do I feel about myself?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

By taking the time to get to know ourselves better, we can begin to shift our actions and experiences in ways that enhance well-being.

Journaling for Introspection

You may have heard that journaling can be a powerful tool to aid self-understanding and even transformative change. Perhaps that is, at least in part, because journaling aids self-reflection and introspection. When we ponder ourselves and our internal workings, we get to know ourselves better, and as a result, we can take actions that better suit our true selves.

One of the most common journaling techniques is freewriting (or free-flow writing). Freewriting involves writing whatever comes to our mind by just letting the thoughts come and putting them onto the page without any filters or concern about grammar, spelling, or storyline. This may include both conscious thoughts and thoughts that were previously outside of our conscious awareness.

Another good way to journal is to write about emotional experiences. 15-30 minutes of daily journaling for 3-5 days can result in notable improvements in mental or physical health (Pennebaker, 1997). It may be that these benefits come from discovering difficult buried thoughts and emotions and releasing them.

However, it's important to keep in mind that journaling doesn't work for everyone. Journaling is thought to be the most effective and appropriate for those who have mild to moderate levels of distress (Manier & Olivares, 2005) while more severe stress might be best addressed with the support of a therapist or counselor.

Exercise: Self-Reflective Journaling

An easy place to get started with journaling is to simply reflect on aspects of yourself. To begin exploring yourself, answer the following questions.

When I feel angry, I tend to...

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

When I feel sad, I tend to...

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

When I feel anxious, I tend to...

_____
_____
_____
_____

I feel ashamed when...

_____
_____
_____
_____

I regret...

I feel most physically healthy when I...

I would describe my relationships with other people as being...

When I am struggling, I tend to...

My favorite things to do are...

If you feel inclined, you might extend this exercise by engaging in freewriting, or just writing about whatever comes to mind.

Exercise: Self-Discovery

The more you engage in introspection, the easier it gets. It gets easier to notice your thoughts and emotions and pinpoint when you've drifted from your true self. So, here are some deeper questions to explore.

When do you deceive or lie to yourself? Why do you do it?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Which of your beliefs are helpful? Which are harmful?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Are you a reliable person? (Explore both sides)

_____
_____
_____
_____

What do you love and hate about yourself? Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

How would you characterize the authentic you?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What would truly make you happy?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Do other people see you differently than how you see yourself? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Evaluating your inner experiences and how they serve you can be helpful when trying to understand both who you are and who you want to become.

Thought Patterns

Our thoughts are central to our lives in everything we do. What we think about a situation guides our emotions about what is happening and determines how we react to it. The same applies to our thoughts about the people we interact with; what we think about a person defines how we feel about them and influences our interactions.

Negative thought patterns are also known as cognitive distortions. In simplest terms, this mode of thinking is the gloomy and self-defeating way we consider situations and our roles and experiences in those situations. Sometimes even optimistic people get caught in a storm

of negative thoughts, especially during challenging or stressful situations. Therefore, it is a good idea to be able to identify these types of thoughts.

Exercise: Identifying Thought Patterns

Here are a few common negative thought patterns. See if you can recall a time when you had a thought that followed each pattern.

- **All or none.** If things aren't perfect, they must be terrible. "I didn't get a promotion at work. I'm a total failure."

When did you have a thought that followed this pattern?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- **Mental filter.** Focusing on cherry-picked negative details. "One of my clients wasn't happy that my products are pink and said it made them look tacky. I have to change the color scheme of my entire product line."

When did you have a thought that followed this pattern?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- **Overgeneralization.** Good things never happen to you, but bad things always happen to you. "This date was terrible. Bad things always happen to me."

When did you have a thought that followed this pattern?

_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

- **Discounting the positive.** Your positive experiences don't count. "Thanks for enjoying the meal I cooked, but anyone with a frying pan could make it."

When did you have a thought that followed this pattern?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- **Catastrophizing.** Magnifying problems and minimizing your positive qualities. "I got a C in this midterm exam. It will ruin my grade point average. I will never get into graduate school or find a good job and will have to live under a bridge until I die of a preventable disease at a young age because I won't have health insurance."

When did you have a thought that followed this pattern?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- **Jumping to conclusions.** Drawing negative conclusions without evidence about how people feel about you or how things will turn out. "Why should I bother applying? They won't hire me anyway."

When did you have a thought that followed this pattern?

_____
_____
_____
_____

- **Emotional reasoning.** Thinking that your negative emotions reflect objective reality. “Life is hard. Everyone struggles.”

When did you have a thought that followed this pattern?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- **Personalization.** Blaming yourself for adverse outcomes over which you have limited or no influence. “My friend lost his glasses at the beach because of me. It was my idea to go to the beach.”

When did you have a thought that followed this pattern?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- **(Mis)labeling**. Attaching negative labels to yourself or things you do. “I’m such an idiot. I make the stupidest errors.”

When did you have a thought that followed this pattern?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- **Unrealistic expectations.** Having definite ideas about how things should or shouldn’t be and berating yourself if you don’t meet your high standards. “I should be fitting in my old jeans a week after giving birth.”

When did you have a thought that followed this pattern?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

By observing our negative thought patterns, we begin to be able to move past them.

Exercise: Past, Present, & Future Gratitude

As we continue to explore ourselves and our world in teal stage, it can be a good time to upgrade our gratitude to focus on a broader range of things. Expand your gratitude practice by responding to the prompts below.

Write down three things you're grateful for today.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Next, explore why each one brings you joy. This involves looking backwards in time to see what caused your gratitude.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Now, reflect on how these 3 things enhance your life. This involves looking at the present and how these things are connected to other good things in your life.

_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

Lastly, explore how each thing may continue to improve your life. This involves looking forward in time to see how things may positively impact your future.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

As we gain awareness of more and more of the world, there are more and more things to be grateful for.

Exercise: Forgiveness & Misunderstandings

Understanding how others feel is a crucial skill that greatly aids forgiveness. When we can not only see our side clearly but also the other person's side clearly, often we realize that forgiveness isn't even needed—it was all just a misunderstanding.

Take a moment now to think about a disagreement that you have over and over again with someone. For example, maybe your romantic partner always forgets to do the dishes when you ask them to. Write this example down below.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Next time you get into this argument, plan to take a different approach. Instead of making sure that your perspective is clear to them, see if you can make sure their perspective is

clear to you. What questions would you ask? How would you make sure you fully understand their point of view?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

By seeking to understand another person's perspective, we can usually find a solution that works for everyone, and forgiveness is no longer needed.

Teal Stage Summary

We've now done some of the core work needed for teal stage. To strengthen your teal-stage skills, you might continue to explore yourself by asking yourself questions. Almost any question can help us gain further insight into our deeper selves and our world. So, at this stage, continue questioning, and this practice can lead you to the next stage.

Chapter 11: Blue Stage

At blue stage, we continue to have a fourth-person perspective, but this perspective gains in strength, allowing us to more easily view perspectives across time. Research shows that 5% of adults are in blue stage (Cook-Greuter, 2014). When at teal stage, we might more easily understand our perspectives by asking ourselves increasingly complex questions (we also better understand another's perspective after chatting with them). But at blue stage, this insight expands—we now begin to understand how our (and others') perspectives relate to beliefs, patterns, habits, and stories.

Given that teal and blue stages both have a fourth-person perspective, there are relatively few differences between these two stages. Some researchers even join teal and blue stages into one (early stage and late stage; O'Fallon, 2020). Still, I find it useful to separate them (as Cook-Greuter does) so that we can better focus on the unique skills that help us optimize well-being within, between, and across stages.

When we begin to transition into blue stage, we realize that "I am more than the individualist self." All of the self-reflection and questioning that we did in the last stage give way to a deeper understanding about the self and world over time. In other words, we start to see the beliefs, patterns, processes, and stories that created our perspectives. This may be the first time that we can witness how beliefs > thoughts > emotions > behaviors >

experiences. We now see how this pattern affects all areas of our lives which may motivate us to develop more advanced pattern recognition skills, resolve old traumas, and do extensive shadow work.

By the time we reach blue stage, we may have already realized that the advice given by the majority of other people (including helping professionals) is not super useful for navigating the challenges we currently face. Often, the best guidance at this stage can be found internally. We can now clearly see much of our inner landscape, and only we know what we need to do next to progress on our path.

In this section, we'll explore some of the key psychological skills needed to begin blue-stage work. Hopefully, these guidelines and exercises can point you inward towards the beliefs, patterns, processes, and stories that you still need to bring awareness to.

What Is Conditioning?

Conditioning is a fundamental learning process where certain experiences or stimuli make actions more or less likely (American Psychological Association, 2018). It's the process by which beliefs, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are learned and modified based on associations with experiences in the environment. There are two primary types of conditioning: classical conditioning and operant conditioning.

Classical Conditioning

In classical conditioning, a neutral stimulus (one that initially does not evoke a specific response) is paired with an unconditioned stimulus (a stimulus that naturally triggers a response). For example, in the classic experiment of Povlov's dogs, a bell sound is paired with food. Pretty soon, the dogs start salivating to the bell sound alone even if food is not present (Pavlov, 1927).

We can see this happening in our everyday lives as well. Ever notice a pang of excitement or anticipation when your phone dings with a text message? There's no reason the sound itself would cause that. The emotional response comes because the sound has been repetitively paired with receiving a text that evokes pleasant feelings.

Classical conditioning drives many of our behaviors without us knowing it. For example, if in childhood your mom always gave you hugs and kisses at dinner time, you might have paired the experience of eating with the feeling of love. This pairing follows you into the future, and anytime you want love, you may instead choose to eat food.

Exercise: Exploring Classical Conditioning

Take a moment now to see if you can identify ways in which you've been classically conditioned. One way to identify your conditioning is to reflect on your go-to coping strategies.

When you're feeling upset, what do you do and why do you do it?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Operant Conditioning

Operant conditioning is the process where consequences of our behavior increase or decrease the likelihood of that behavior occurring again in the future. For example, if a behavior is rewarded (positively reinforced), the likelihood of it being repeated increases. And if it's punished, the likelihood of it being repeated decreases.

Here's a breakdown of the key elements (Mandriota, 2021):

- **Positive reinforcement:** A behavior is strengthened by adding a desirable consequence.
- **Negative reinforcement:** A behavior is strengthened by removing an unpleasant stimulus.
- **Positive punishment:** A behavior is weakened by adding an unpleasant consequence.
- **Negative punishment:** A behavior is weakened by removing a desirable stimulus.

Operant conditioning also drives many of our behaviors without us knowing it. For example, if you grew up in a society that rewarded you for doing what you're told and punished you for questioning the status quo, you are more likely to do what you're told and less likely to question the status quo.

Exercise: Exploring Operant Conditioning

Take a moment now to see if you can identify ways in which you've been operantly conditioned. One way to identify your conditioning is to reflect on the behaviors that you were punished for and rewarded for in early childhood.

What behaviors were you frequently punished for as a child? How do you think this affected your future behavior?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What behaviors were you frequently rewarded for as a child? How do you think this affected your future behavior?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

By understanding the ways in which our behavior was conditioned, we can begin to loosen the hold of this conditioning, allowing ourselves to feel freer.

Limiting Beliefs

Limiting beliefs are negative thoughts about ourselves, our abilities, or the world around us. They are deeply ingrained convictions or perspectives that we hold about ourselves, others, or the world that constrain our abilities, potential, and possibilities. They are not only

negatively biased but also inaccurate and rigid (Boden et al., 2012). They can be about our intelligence, appearance, relationships, or our ability to achieve goals. In addition, they can be conscious or unconscious. What we choose to believe becomes our reality (Rao et al., 2009).

Many of us think that beliefs are an unchangeable personality trait. However, beliefs are created by our past experiences. Someone withholds love from us and we begin to believe we're unlovable. Our family has financial struggles and we then create a belief in scarcity. We fail at something, and we then form a belief about being stupid. These beliefs form without us realizing it, and then we hold on to them because we are afraid to let go of them. And then, we believe these beliefs *are* us. But they're not. They are just one lens through which we may see ourselves and our world.

For an example of just how influential beliefs can be on behavior and well-being, just look at the placebo effect. With this well-known phenomenon, people who are given a "medication" with no active ingredient report feeling better and even have a reduction of observable symptoms simply because they believe it's helping.

Less widely known is the "nocebo" effect. When you believe something won't work it's more likely to do just that, even if it's been shown to be effective. Or, if you believe something will cause you harm or pain, that's what you'll experience, even if there's no objective reason for it (Porot & Mandelbaum, 2019). The placebo effect provides some of the most convincing evidence that beliefs affect experience.

Beliefs About Yourself

There are a variety of limiting beliefs that we may hold (Osmo et al., 2018). Generally these beliefs come from trauma or challenges we faced during earlier stages of development. At the time when we were focusing on a particular aspect of the world, we developed beliefs about what is true (and it may indeed have been true at that time.

For example, if we were bullied in elementary or middle school when we were in the midst of orange-stage development, we may have developed beliefs that we were unlikable or that other people are unkind. It's often not until we reach this stage that we can begin to view these beliefs objectively, seeing that they were an accurate representation at that time, but they may not be anymore.

Here are a few examples of common limiting beliefs and when they tend to arise.

- **Worthlessness.** You may believe that you are inherently flawed in some way, you're insignificant, you don't matter, or you are worthless. Limiting beliefs in this category likely come from challenges that we experienced during red stage.
- **Unlovability.** You may have a belief or fear that you're incapable of having close intimate relationships and attention. Examples are "I'm not worthy of love or happiness" or "I'm not attractive enough". We may also view our relational self or other people as demeaning, uncaring, hurtful, threatening, and manipulative (Osmo et al., 2015). Limiting beliefs in this category likely come from challenges that we experienced during orange stage.
- **Helplessness/Inferiority.** This includes beliefs associated with personal incompetence, vulnerability, and inferiority. It includes beliefs like "I'm not smart enough", "I'm not talented enough", "I'm not good enough", or "I can't handle problems or setbacks". Limiting beliefs in this category likely come from challenges that we experienced during yellow stage.
- **Failure.** You may have beliefs around your lack of achievements (related to work, relationships, money, friendships, etc...). Examples are "It's impossible to achieve my goals" or "I can't change my life". Limiting beliefs in this category likely come from challenges that we experienced during green stage.

Some other common limiting beliefs might include:

- The world is unfair.
- Good things don't happen to me.
- I'm not lucky.
- The world is a dangerous place.

Exercise: Explore A Self-Limiting Belief

To gain further clarity on one of your beliefs, try out this exercise.

1. **Identify a limiting belief.** What is a negative thought or assumption that you have about yourself or your abilities? For example, "I'm not smart enough to pursue the job I really want".

2. **Write about the origins of the belief.** Where did this belief come from? Was it something that someone said to you? Was it a message that you received from your culture or society? How old were you when this belief emerged?

3. **Explore the evidence for and against the belief.** What evidence is there to support the belief? What evidence is there to contradict the belief? If the belief was true in the past, is it still true now?

4. **Consider the impact of the belief on your life.** How is this belief affecting your thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and experiences?

5. **Challenge the belief.** The mind tends to focus on aspects of experience that support our existing beliefs. Take a closer look. What evidence do you have that supports a different, contradicting belief?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. **Explore the motivation for the belief.** There is always a reason why we keep beliefs. Write about the benefits of continuing to hold this limiting belief. For example, a belief that "I'm not good enough" might benefit us by enabling us to keep our life the way it is. If we changed the belief, we might then need to change our lives in ways that might be difficult initially.

_____
_____
_____
_____

7. **Explore what it feels like to let the belief go.** Mentally, let the belief go for just a moment. What does that feel like in your body? Is there relief, fear, joy?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

8. **Explore the emotions that reinforce the belief.** If you felt negative emotions when letting go of the belief momentarily, explore why. If you felt positive emotions, explore why.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

9. **Are you ready to let go of the belief?** Having now explored the belief, are you ready to let go?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

The more we can bring awareness to our beliefs, the easier it is to let them go.

Deprograming Our Limiting Beliefs

To deprogram our beliefs, we simply need to bring awareness to the emergent process of experiences that come from beliefs so that we can see their effects clearly.

Beliefs > Thoughts > Emotions > Behaviors > Social Experiences > Physical Experiences.

We don't actually need to "change" the belief. Simply acknowledging the beliefs and the experiences that flow from them begins to deprogram the entire process. After we fully acknowledge a belief (and its pattern)—that is, we bring full awareness and acceptance to it—the belief will begin to dissolve.

If you've brought awareness to a belief (or any part of its pattern) several times and yet you notice that it's still affecting your experiences, try looking deeper for the exact wording of the beliefs you hold that lead to unhappy experiences. To fully dissolve the pattern, you may need to bring awareness to it more than once. But once you see a belief with complete clarity then POOF, it starts to disappear.

Exercise: Explore A Pattern

Let's focus on another limiting belief for this exercise.

What is a belief you have?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What thoughts does it create?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What emotions does it create?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What actions do you take as a result of it?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What social and/or physical experiences to have as a result of the belief?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Bringing Awareness To Our Beliefs

To effectively undo a belief, we need to allow the information to come forward into awareness and just look at it. For example, if we are looking at a thought, we might try to observe it as a thing, notice the emotions associated with it, look for the beliefs that created it, and watch it fade away. You can think of it as moving through your awareness as if on a conveyor belt.

Working Backwards
A great way to increase awareness is to work backward from a given experience. For example, if you experience a negative emotion, bad habit, or bad experience, follow it backward in time to the thoughts and beliefs that caused it. It can take some time to learn how to do this, but once you learn, it'll begin to happen automatically—whenever you feel bad, it'll lead you to look for the underlying belief.

Pro Tip: Usually, it is easiest to gain awareness of the end experiences in a program. For example, I might notice that I dislike something or want something to be different than it is—that is the type of negative experience that we're looking to find. From here, you'd follow the experience backward to see if you can uncover the limiting belief that caused the experience.

Go Further Backwards
Sometimes it can help to go backward even before the belief and ask ourselves, "Where did this belief come from?" Usually, you'll find that it was given to you by your parents, community, or culture. If you can see this clearly, it becomes obvious that the belief isn't you—and it doesn't need to be part of your identity—and this helps you let go of it. Some beliefs may come from before the age of 3 or so, and you won't have a memory of where it came from. Just do your best to bring as much awareness to them as possible.

Exercise: Working Backwards From Experience

In this exercise, we'll aim to uncover a limiting belief by working backwards from a negative experience.

What is a negative experience you had recently?

_____
_____
_____

What emotions were involved in this experience?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What thoughts do you think created these emotions?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What beliefs created these thoughts?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What led me to have these beliefs in the first place?

_____
_____
_____
_____

If we struggle to figure out what our limiting beliefs are, working backwards can be an effective strategy for finding them.

Acceptance
As we begin to be more aware of our beliefs, we might have the urge to resist, fight, ignore, or otherwise push away what we see. At this point, we need to simply allow the information to exist as it is. (You can't change what already is. So there is no point in trying!)

For example, if you realize that you believe you're unlovable, accept the truth of your experience. Accepting that you have this belief does **not** mean that you can't change it! If you resist, deny, repress, or otherwise distort the truth of your experiences, then the belief will keep operating.

However, if you can allow your beliefs, thoughts, and emotions to exist (they do anyway) and accept them as they are, the negative charge of the pattern begins to dissipate. That is, you've seen it for what it is, and it loses its power over you.

Self-Compassion
Self-love and self-compassion can be successful ways to get to acceptance. For example, if you find that you have a belief that leads to shame, try to give the part of you that felt shame the love that it didn't get in your past. Engaging in positive self-talk or inner child work can be extremely helpful in undoing negative beliefs.

Exercise: Self-Compassion Towards Beliefs

In this exercise, we'll engage in a brief self-compassion exercise, specifically towards the part of us that holds the limiting belief.

Begin by focusing your attention on the part of you that holds the limiting belief. Tell that part of yourself that you love and accept it, regardless of its beliefs. You understand that these beliefs formed as a result of your life circumstances, and there was nothing you could have done at that time to stop that from happening. Try to bring as much love to yourself (or the inner child that developed this belief) as you can.

Now take a moment to accept yourself. Try to keep in mind that we humans develop beliefs unconsciously—it's normal and it's okay! But now that you understand the negative impacts of the belief, you're ready to let it go.

After you've generated self-compassion toward the belief, take a moment to reflect on how this exercise felt:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Disidentification
Once we've gained complete awareness and acceptance of a given belief (and its program), we begin to disidentify with it. For example, maybe you now see that your belief "I'm not good enough" has led you to spend your whole life trying to please your parents.

Seeing now that this program is not who you are, you instinctively begin to let go of it. You may find that you are no longer a people pleaser, and that identity falls away. Over time, you may notice that the program stops running entirely. Or, you may just feel happier and not realize it's because the belief is no longer driving your other experiences.

Shadow Work

The term shadow was first used in psychology by analytic psychologist Carl Jung. He defined the shadow as "the darker side of the human psyche", things about ourselves that are unacceptable to our conscious self. It includes the repressed parts of ourselves, the parts we find unpleasant or cannot tolerate acknowledging (Jung, 1958). While the shadow can include things with negative connotations like anger, envy, or jealousy, our shadow self can also include hidden talents and desires.

Shadow work is the unification of who we consciously are with the shadow part—the parts of ourselves that we have repressed (Bértholo, 2013). It aims to bring awareness to these hidden aspects, understand their origins, and ultimately integrate them into our whole selves. Ultimately, shadow work aims to incorporate the shadow into our conscious personality, leading to greater wholeness and personal growth.

The Development of Shadow Parts

One of the biggest threats to well-being on the path to well-being is the development of shadow parts. If we repress parts of ourselves at any stage, they become shadow parts and are invisible to us. These shadow parts are blind spots that drive unhealthy beliefs, thoughts, emotions, etc..., which contribute to ill-being.

Shadow parts that are developed in one stage generally cast shadows across all subsequent stages (resulting in multi-stage blind spots). This prevents us from being aware of entire parts of ourselves. As we move through stages, these blind spots grow bigger, potentially creating greater ill-being (i.e., mental health issues).

Shadow Parts Example

As an example, imagine we grew up in a home where our parents were abusive, neglectful, or even just really busy. As children, our immediate needs for love, support, and protection were simply not met. As a result, we were unable to fully experience being self-centric at red stage, the time when it is completely appropriate to do so. If we also developed the belief that our self-centric tendencies are not okay or that our needs are not important, we repress this aspect of self and it becomes a shadow part. If we don't see and reclaim this shadow part, it can continue to grow as we move through all the subsequent stages.

Here is how this might go given the example of not having our childhood needs met:

At orange stage, not advocating for our needs might lead us to develop one-sided, unhealthy friendships. At yellow stage, we might take actions that put others' needs first. At green stage, we might pursue outcomes and achievements that other people want (without considering our own needs and desires). At teal stage, we might consider everyone else's perspectives except our own. At blue stage, we might stop engaging in habits that lead us to hurt others, but continue habits that allow others to hurt us. At indigo stage, when the entire process begins to come into awareness, we may finally realize how we have denied parts of ourselves and start to change all of the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that are related to this shadow part. As you can now see, shadow parts can create a cascade of ill-being that grows across stages.

Dissolving Shadow Parts

To resolve shadow parts, we need to go back to the stage where the shadow part was formed and "own" that part of ourselves. With regard to the previous example, we would try to bring up the awareness of red stage, embracing our selfish tendencies, and get in touch with our desire to have our immediate needs met. The more we can observe the child we once were from an external perspective, the easier it can be to see how this part of us became a shadow part. We may also need to go into the awareness of each stage, dissolving the shadows in each location.

Let's continue the example above regarding our red-stage needs. To resolve our red shadow, we might ask our inner child what it needs. Depending on our unique experience, it might tell us it needs protection, it might say it needs more play time, or it might want us to buy things that we felt deprived of as a child.

As we begin to own that original part of us and the shadow begins to dissolve, the shadows cast in later stages may come into awareness. With regard to orange stage, we can now see how our original wounding led us to develop one-sided relationships with people who do not care about our needs. Because we are now in touch with our needs, these unhealthy relationships begin to fall away, either because we choose to end them or because these people are not capable of considering our needs and they leave us. Of course, this can be difficult.

As we continue to own our shadow in yellow stage, we start to take specific actions that put our important needs above others' needs. Maybe we've always been a drinking buddy for a certain friend but we now realize that being sober is what we really want. Or maybe we've always gone along with whatever our family wanted to do but we now realize some of those actions go against our core values. We stop doing things simply because others want us to, and we begin to prioritize what *we* want to do.

When we see our green shadow, we stop pursuing achievements that don't represent our true desires. This might mean quitting a job that society views as very successful. Or it might mean we stop trying to reach some impossible standard that our parents want us to reach. We let go of the outcomes that never actually mattered to us.

To resolve our teal shadow, we may start to speak up a bit more in social situations. Maybe we used to just agree with whatever others said, whether we agreed or not. Or maybe we just participated in whatever conversation was happening, even if it wasn't about anything we cared about. As the teal part of this shadow begins to dissolve, we may speak out in new ways, inviting the conversation to veer towards things we care about or sharing perspectives that we know others won't agree with.

With our blue-stage skills, we continue to look at our beliefs and patterns for other instances of this shadow part playing out so that we can resolve it once and for all. As all of the layers of this shadow continue to dissolve, we experience lifelong patterns begin to shift. We can now see how this old red shadow rippled through all of our stages of development, leading to beliefs, thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and experiences that limited our well-being.

Although I have described the dissolving of a shadow part in a progression, from red stage to blue stage, it can happen in any order. And, although it may seem simple, it generally requires a lot of courage and willingness to see the parts of ourselves that we most fear.

Exercise: Exploring Triggers

Triggers are situations, people, or behaviors that evoke intense negative emotions in you (Cuncic, 2023). Intense emotional reactions to certain situations or individuals can be indicative of the shadow, especially if the emotions triggered are disproportionate to the current situation. These "oversized" reactions may suggest that there are unresolved issues that we're resisting thinking about. By understanding what triggers you, you can gain valuable insights into the unacknowledged parts of yourself and lingering issues.

1. **Pay Attention to Your Emotions.** The first step is to become more aware of your emotional landscape. Notice what situations, interactions, or even certain words or phrases consistently evoke strong negative emotions like anger, frustration, envy, or shame. Pay close attention to your body sensations as well, as they can be subtle clues to your emotional state. You might feel something like a "gut punch" or tightening of your chest.

What is one trigger for you?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. **Reflect on the "Why" Behind the Trigger.** Once you've identified a trigger, take some time to reflect on why it provokes such a strong response in you. Ask yourself the following questions:

What does this situation remind me of?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Is it similar to any past experiences that were painful or traumatic?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Are there any underlying beliefs or fears that are being activated?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Paying attention to triggers is probably the easiest way to begin identifying shadow parts.

Exercise: Recognizing Shadow Parts

Let's do another exercise to further recognize shadow parts.

Triggers
Pay attention to intense emotions, especially those that seem to arise unexpectedly. Notice what experiences trigger strong emotional reactions in you, such as anger, envy, or jealousy. These reactions often point to aspects of yourself that you have disowned or rejected. For instance, if you get triggered by someone taking credit for your work, it could point to a shadow aspect of insecurity or competitiveness.

What triggers you and causes intense emotions?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Projections
We tend to project the qualities of our shadow that we don't like onto others (BetterHelp, 2023). When you judge someone for being lazy, arrogant, or selfish, ask yourself if you might have a similar, disowned quality within yourself. For example, if you constantly criticize someone for being lazy, is it possible you have disowned this tendency in yourself?

What are the characteristics about others that most bother you and can you recognize these characteristics within yourself?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Past Experiences
Traumatic or difficult experiences can lead to the repression of certain emotions or behaviors (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2014). Reflecting on your past can help you identify areas where you may have shut down parts of yourself.

What past traumas still affect your present life?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Repetitive Patterns
Do you find yourself falling into the same negative behavior patterns repeatedly? Perhaps you constantly over-commit and feel overwhelmed. Or you react with sarcasm despite good intentions. These recurring patterns often stem from unaddressed shadow qualities.

In addition, notice if you have automatic, emotional reactions to certain situations or triggers. Do you get easily defensive, overly critical, or shut down in specific circumstances? These emotional patterns may indicate underlying shadow aspects seeking expression.

What are your personal patterns?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Compulsive Behaviors
Certain compulsive behaviors like excessive work, procrastination, or unhealthy attachments can be coping mechanisms to avoid facing uncomfortable shadow aspects. We may engage in repetitive behaviors that provide temporary relief from uncomfortable shadow emotions, such as procrastination, overeating, or excessive social media use. Recognizing these underlying motivations can shed light on shadow areas.

What are your favorite coping strategies and what do they distract you from?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Relationship Patterns

Recurring patterns in relationships, such as consistently choosing partners with similar negative traits, may point to unresolved issues from the past. Recognizing these patterns can serve as a mirror reflecting aspects of the shadow that are seeking acknowledgment. For example, if an individual experiences emotional neglect in childhood, they may unconsciously seek relationships that replicate this dynamic. By examining the consistent selection of partners with similar negative traits or dynamics, we can uncover deeper, unconscious patterns and unresolved issues.

What are your relationship patterns?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Self-Sabotaging Behaviors

Self-sabotaging behaviors or undermining your success can be a manifestation of the shadow. It may be coming from an unconscious fear of success or feelings of unworthiness. Sabotaging behaviors may be the shadow's attempt to protect us from perceived threats or vulnerabilities. Identifying these self-destructive tendencies can help us understand the underlying fears and insecurities, ultimately contributing to the integration of these hidden aspects into conscious awareness.

How do you stop yourself from creating the life you really want?

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____

Exploring our hidden shadows can often reveal difficult things we didn't know about ourselves. If you need support, please seek out a friend, therapist, or coach.

Why We Resist and Avoid the Shadow

The reasons we resist and avoid the shadow are complex and multifaceted. Let's take a look at some key factors.

Fear & Shame
The shadow often contains aspects of ourselves that we deem unacceptable, harmful, or wrong. These could be impulses, desires, thoughts, or memories that cause fear, shame, or guilt. Facing these can feel overwhelming and threaten our sense of self-worth and identity. In addition, because the shadow represents aspects of ourselves that are unconscious or unfamiliar, the idea of bringing this to the surface can provoke fear of the unknown, of what you might find. Confronting this can lead to anxiety and discomfort.

Ego Protection
Our ego, the part responsible for our conscious identity, works to maintain a positive self-image. The shadow challenges this image by highlighting what we consider to be flaws and imperfections. Accepting these aspects can feel like a blow to our self-esteem, so the ego acts to repress and deny them (McLaughlin, 2018).

Social Conditioning
Societal norms often emphasize the importance of suppressing negative emotions and behaviors. This can lead us to believe that acknowledging our shadow is wrong, weak, or even dangerous. We might resist acknowledging our shadow due to fear of social judgment or rejection (McLaughlin, 2018).

Exercise: The Shadow Voice

Shadow parts are within us and we have spent much of our life trying to avoid them. But, if we listen, we can hear what they are trying to tell us. When we do finally hear them and

help them get their needs met, they can finally start to let go and settle down. So let's now practice listening to our shadow parts.

Set the Stage. Find a quiet, uninterrupted space and grab your journal. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to center yourself.

Prompt. Write down a recent situation where you experienced strong negative emotions like anger, jealousy, or shame. Be as detailed as possible, describing the event, your thoughts, and your feelings.

Dig Deeper. Now, imagine these negative emotions had a voice. What would they say about you? What would they be angry, jealous, or ashamed of? Write down what this "shadow voice" might say.

Reflection. Read what you wrote without judgment. Were there any aspects of your shadow revealed? What surprised you? How might these shadow traits be impacting your life?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Remember, the goal is not to shame or punish your shadow self but to acknowledge and understand it. Practice compassion and acceptance towards these hidden parts of yourself.

Exercise: Projections in Relationships

Whenever we have a fight with someone we're in relationship with (e.g., friends, family, romantic partners, etc...), projections are playing a role. In other words, we merge with our shadow parts. These shadow parts see the world through their own trauma, and as a result, do not see the situation clearly. The goal of this exercise is to recognize when we have merged with a shadow part, what that shadow part is projecting onto someone else, and how others' shadow parts may be projecting onto us. This skill can greatly improve the quality of our communication and our relationships.

To begin this exercise, think back to a recent argument you had with someone that you care about. With this experience in mind, reflect on the following questions.

Briefly describe the argument that you are bringing to mind.

_____
_____
_____

What did the other person do that bothered you? Why did it bother you so much? What part of you was upset?

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____

What past challenge or trauma did this argument remind you of? Did somebody treat you this way in the past? In what ways was this experience similar and different to your past experiences? Describe any past experiences where you were treated in a similar way.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

At any point, did it feel like you were caught up in reacting without understanding why or having control over your reactions? Did you have any regrets afterwards?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What parts of your past might you have been projecting on the other person?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Now, what did you do that bothered the other person in the argument? What part of them was reacting to you? How was this part of them different from the version of them that you usually interact with?

_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

At any point, did it feel like the other person was more upset than you would have been in their shoes? Did it ever feel like they were upset with you about something that was going on inside of their minds?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What parts of the other person's past might they have been projecting on you?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Ask yourself: Is it you? Is it me? Or is it us? Were one or both people projecting their past experiences onto the other person?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

By practicing this skill, especially in the context of actual arguments, you can begin to see that the majority of arguments are the result of projections. We have been hurt in the past, and we replay these hurts again and again by perceiving them as occurring in our present circumstances. Once we see through the projections, we can begin to resolve some of our past issues and engage in far more productive communication with those we care about.

Exercise: Self-Compassion Visualization

The following exercise is based on a mixture of exercises (Kirby et al., 2023; Schwartz, 2021) designed to be suitable for blue stage (e.g., to focus on patterns and internal systems of self-compassion).

- To begin this visualization, take a deep breath, focusing on the air as you breathe in and then out through your nose.
- Start by visualizing the part of yourself that is compassionate toward the other parts of yourself. This aspect of self has wisdom, kindness, understanding, and love for all aspects of yourself. You might see it like a loving parent, a supportive elder, or even an animal or god that supports you. Just choose an image that feels right and natural to you.
- Now visualize a part of yourself that is hurt. How old is it? What does it look like? Once you have imagined an image of this aspect of self, move on to the next step.
- Next, visualize the compassionate part of yourself talking to the hurt part. What would it say? How would it support and guide you with love?
- After you've imagined a brief conversation between your parts, reflect on how you feel. Do you feel better? More supported? Do you have a greater sense of inner acceptance? How does your body feel? Spend a minute or two reflecting on the emotions and sensations that have arisen in you.

By working with our different parts, we can begin to bring greater acceptance to all of our parts, even parts that were hurt in the past.

Exercise: Letting Go of Past Pain

The most difficult things to forgive are the ones that seem unforgivable—trauma, abuse, and cruelty can sometimes feel impossible to forgive. Try to remember that forgiveness doesn't mean you accept or approve of the actions. It simply means that you have decided to let go of your pain, resentment, or hatred toward another.

We all have experiences that seem unforgivable. What about you? What grievance are you holding onto?

Take a moment to look at this grievance fully. Allow yourself to feel any negative emotions that come up. Allow your pain and your truth to exist, and just be with it. If you're angry, yell or hit pillows. If you're sad, cry. Let your body guide you as to how it wants to process the hurt and let it go. Your body will decide when it's done and the emotions will lessen. Take a moment to write about how you felt at the worst, and how these emotions lessened.

By fully experiencing our truth, the pain slowly releases, and in time, forgiveness can happen on its own.

Blue Stage Summary

We've now begun to develop some of the key skills needed for blue stage. To strengthen your blue-stage skills, continue to explore your beliefs, shadows, patterns, and stories. The most straightforward way to continue this work is to look inward after experiencing a negative emotion so that you can see where the emotion comes from and where it goes. Continue this inner work and in time, you may find yourself moving into indigo stage.

Chapter 12: Indigo Stage

At indigo stage, we develop a fifth-person perspective. At this stage, we can more objectively observe social constructs. Research shows that 1.5% of adults are in indigo stage (Cook-Greuter, 2014).

When we begin to transition into indigo stage, we realize that "I am more than the story-based self". In other words, we have now seen that the patterns and stories we have about ourselves (e.g., I am a victim, bad things always happen to me, no one loves me, etc...) are not who we are. This can lead us to question who we *really* are. Using our new fifth-person perspective, we can now observe the more subtle aspects of experience to find the answer. Thus, this stage is about further questioning and observation of the subtlest phenomenon we can find.

According to O'Fallon (2020), there are two sub-stages of indigo stage—first, we are more passively experiencing the shift to fifth-person awareness, then we more actively do something with these insights. Given how few people are in this stage, it is difficult to study exactly what it entails, but I tend to agree that this stage includes multiple phases.

Awareness, non-attachment, and ego-transcendence are the key skills of this stage. Self-inquiry and meditation can help further this development. Given the unique set of

challenges inherent in indigo stage are not generally addressed by coaches or therapists, the exercises presented in this section are designed to provide the guidance and support that is needed to maintain well-being and transcend this stage.

The Ego

The ego can be defined as our sense of self, identity, self-concept, or the feeling of existing as a separate individual. The ego helps us develop a sense of personality, including our names, roles, memories, and values (Society of Analytical Psychology, n.d.). Up until this stage, we have been seeing the world through an egoic lens or filter. It has colored our reality in the red, orange, yellow, green, teal, and blue shades that we have experienced across all the earlier stages.

On the path to well-being, we've thus far been working with the self-concept (also called ego or identity)—figuring out how to meet its needs, understanding what it wants, and helping it resolve its issues. We worked to fully explore this 'self' through practices like self-expression, self-reflection, and self-acceptance.

When we were seeing the world through the earlier stage lenses, we were viewing aspects of the self-concept. We zoomed out, one stage at a time, learning more and more about the self-concept. But something very different happens in indigo stage—we begin to see the self-concept is, well... a concept.

According to Cook-Greuter (2014), there are two ways that this may come about—by becoming construct-aware (externalizing focus) or by becoming ego-aware (internalizing focus). As we move through indigo stage, we'll likely have some of both of these experiences as we begin to realize that our entire world (including the self) is made of constructs, which ultimately, are empty of substance.

Noticing Ego in Self & Others

If we are internally focused, we begin to be able to see egos. Often, we first see other people's egos before being able to see our own (e.g., O'Fallon, 2020). The ego can be observed in others in various ways. It can show up in social interactions such as body language, tone of voice, a need to assert opinions, or a desire to dominate conversations in

order to get validation or recognition. Or, sometimes it shows up as displays of pride or defensiveness.

We begin to recognize when other people's egos feel threatened, challenged, or insecure, as well as inflated, better-than, or special. We then see that others choose their actions to reinforce their ego (or self-concept). This realization can feel quite strange at first—we suddenly see that how people treat us has almost nothing to do with us. It's usually not until later in this stage that we realize that we do the same thing to others—we too use them as mirrors to reinforce our view of ourselves. As we move through and beyond the ego, we can finally begin to experience ourselves and our world without the ego.

Noticing Constructs

If we are more externally focused, our realizations may come in the form of noticing the emptiness of constructs. We notice that words, themselves, are empty because their meanings change as we move across the developmental stages. Or, we might realize that a particular construct relies on other constructs that we no longer believe in, so it stops making sense (e.g., Cook-Greuter, 2014).

For example, imagine we previously defined forgiveness as "letting go of a grievance about something someone did to wrong us". In indigo stage, we realize that everything is seen through our own worldview and our idea of 'wrong' is not the same as another person's idea of 'wrong'. So nothing is actually 'wrong'. We may additionally see that our 'grievance' was held by the ego—the ego was attached to the grievance so that it could reinforce some aspect of its identity (e.g., self as victim, self as good, self as strong, etc...). We may also begin to realize that everything is as it should be, leading a former grievance to transform into gratitude for the experience we formerly defined as 'bad'.

A de-construction process like this may begin to infiltrate all concepts making everything suddenly seem empty and meaningless. This experience can create both ecstatic waves of bliss as well as heavy waves of suffering. It just depends on the person.

Exercise: Defense Mechanisms

Unfortunately, the ego doesn't really want to be transcended. So, in indigo stage, it puts up a fight. Once the ego realizes it is losing control, its defense mechanisms can go on overdrive, leading us to experience resistance, fear, and negativity.

Let's review some defense mechanisms and how they may present challenges when transcending the ego.

Denial
Denial is refusing to accept the reality or truth of a situation. It protects the ego from something it can't cope with (Cherry, 2022). When attempting to dissolve the ego, we may need to confront and overcome denial, acknowledging and accepting the aspects of ourselves and our lives that we've been avoiding, specifically, impermanence, attachment, and aversion.

How might you bring more awareness to denial?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Projection
Projection involves attributing your own unacceptable thoughts, feelings, or impulses to others (Cherry, 2022). For example, you may accuse someone else of being weak, when it's your own weakness you're struggling with. Transcending the ego may require recognizing and taking responsibility for these projections, acknowledging and integrating the most hidden shadow parts within yourself.

How might you bring more awareness to projection?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Rationalization
This defense mechanism involves providing logical or reasonable explanations for behaviors, thus avoiding the true reason for the behavior (Cherry, 2022). It might involve making excuses to justify your behavior. As we work toward diminishing ego influence, we may need to challenge and let go of these rationalizations to gain a more authentic understanding of ourselves.

How might you bring more awareness to rationalization?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Intellectualization
This involves focusing on the intellectual aspects of something in a cold, clinical way to avoid dealing with emotions or uncomfortable realities (Cherry, 2022). To transcend the ego, we need to move beyond intellectualization and fully experience our emotions.

How might you bring more awareness to intellectualization?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Repression
Repression involves pushing unpleasant thoughts or memories into the unconscious (Cherry, 2022). Transcending the ego may involve bringing repressed material into conscious awareness, allowing for greater self-awareness and integration.

How might you bring more awareness to repression?

_____
_____
_____

Fundamental Suffering

As we move past the ego's defense mechanisms, we begin to witness fundamental suffering. In the earlier stages, it looks like the causes of suffering are outside of ourselves (e.g., lack of pleasure, belonging, agency, achievement, individuality, etc...). To us, bad circumstances = suffering. When we take a closer look at our suffering, we start to notice something funny going on—we're confused about what actually causes emotional pain. The true causes of our suffering are not within the experience itself. Rather, suffering originates within us, in the ego.

This does not mean that others have not hurt us. Indeed, there are many situations where removing ourselves from the harmful behavior of others is the best action. It is only to say that our experience of suffering is coming from our own ego. In particular, it is coming from three, overlapping experiences (Sayadaw, 1994):

Aversion or Unsatisfactoriness
We experience aversion constantly: I don't want this outcome. I don't want this experience. I don't want this emotion. Aversion touches even the most minute actions, thoughts, or sensations. My hands are slightly too cold. I should have used this word instead of that word. I'm just so tired of thinking. All of this is aversion, and it is one of the roots of suffering. At this stage, we can begin to see that no circumstance can make us happy because aversion is dissatisfied with everything.

Attachment or Wanting
Attachment is just the opposite: I want this outcome. I want this object. I want this experience. I need a bit more money to be happy. If she would just listen to me, I'd feel like I matter. If he only understood me, we'd get along. We are attached to what we perceive to be good because we think it will produce happiness. But when we watch our experiences carefully, we see that these things don't actually produce happiness. At this stage, we now begin to see that suffering is not in the circumstances themselves; it's in the wanting, clinging, and attachment to particular circumstances.

Self-Concept or Identity
The self-concept overlaps with the other two kinds of suffering, but it's helpful to notice it in its own right: I am this. I am that. If I tell myself that I am a nice person, I'd feel valid. If I believe that I am a good person, I'd feel less lonely. If I do what everyone wants me to do, I'd feel approved of. But no matter how we conceive of ourselves, we can never find the happiness or well-being we're seeking because it doesn't live in concepts. We suffer as we try to mold the self into something that would get the love it seeks.

Witnessing Suffering

When we begin to witness the fundamental suffering inherent in our reality, we might feel depressed, lonely, empty, or unmotivated. So much of our lives were motivated by the desire to alleviate suffering. When we are no longer trying to avoid aversion, seek attachment, and create a self-concept, we can have a hard time figuring out what to do with our time. But as we continue to notice suffering with concentrated awareness, we learn how to gently release ourselves from its grasp. And over time, the pain lessens. We might notice that the ego no longer throws massive tantrums. Now, it just broods quietly in the corner.

Moving Through Suffering

Each moment of concentrated awareness placed on suffering is painful for the ego, but luckily, the ego becomes less and less of who we are. If we keep at it, the truth of suffering becomes more apparent, and eventually, it starts to become transparent.

It's almost like suffering is a monster under our bed. If we just turn the lights on and look, we see that it was all in our heads—just a figment of our imagination. And now instead of seeing the monster, we see a glimmer of what was in the monster's shadow: true well-being. Life—when experienced without aversion, without attachment, and without self-inflation—is well-being.

Exercise: Mindful Observation

To hone our observation skills and move through the ego, try doing this exercise for 5 to 10 minutes and increase gradually as you become more comfortable.

1. **Observe Your Thoughts**: Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Breathe deeply and gently for a few minutes. Begin by simply observing your thoughts without judgment or trying to change them. Notice their content, their tone, and their intensity.
2. **Label and Accept:** As you observe each thought, label it mentally with a simple descriptor like "thought," "feeling," or "judgment." This creates a space between you and the thought, recognizing it as just a mental event, not your identity. Then, silently say "I accept" or "This is okay" to acknowledge and accept the thought without resistance.
3. **Focus on the Present Moment:** Gently bring your awareness to your physical sensations. Feel the rise and fall of your chest, the touch of your clothes on your skin, or the sounds around you. This grounding in the present moment helps to shift your focus away from ego-driven thoughts and towards the vastness of your being.
4. **Repeat and Expand:** Continue observing, labeling, and accepting thoughts for several minutes. As you become more comfortable, expand your awareness to include emotions and physical sensations. Notice how accepting them without resistance allows them to flow and fade naturally, reducing their grip on your mind and identity.
5. **Reflect and Integrate:** After completing the exercise, take a few moments to reflect. How did it feel to observe and accept your thoughts and sensations? Did you notice any shifts in your sense of self? Remember, this is a practice, and the more you do it, the more you can cultivate acceptance and weaken the hold of the ego on your experience.

The more you can observe the subtle aspects of experience, the more you will transcend the ego.

Exercise: Ego Awareness Meditation

To further turn our attention inward, try doing this additional exercise for 5 to 10 minutes at a time.

1. Find a quiet place where you can sit comfortably with minimal distractions. Close your eyes if it feels natural, or soften your gaze. Take a few deep breaths, inhaling slowly and exhaling completely.

2. Bring your attention to your body. Notice any sensations without judgment or trying to change anything. Feel the rise and fall of your chest with each breath. Are there any areas of tension or tightness?
3. Now, shift your attention to your thoughts. Don't try to control them, just observe them like passing clouds in the sky. Notice the content of your thoughts – are they positive, negative, or neutral? Are they about yourself, others, or the world around you?
4. Ask yourself: "Who is having this thought?" Is it your ego clinging to a certain identity, or is it simply a thought arising in your awareness? Just observe your thoughts with curiosity and non-attachment.
5. Next, bring your attention to your emotions. Are you feeling calm, anxious, happy, or something else? Notice the emotions without judgment, simply acknowledging their presence. Ask yourself: "Who is experiencing this emotion?" Is it your ego that is attached to a certain situation, or is it simply an emotion arising within you?
6. Finally, expand your awareness beyond your individual self. Notice the sounds around you, the feeling of air on your skin, and the space you occupy in the room. Ask yourself: "Who is experiencing this space?" Imagine yourself connecting to something larger than yourself, whether it's nature, humanity, or the universe.
7. Gently bring your attention back to your breath. Notice each inhale and exhale, feeling the connection between your body and mind. As you continue to breathe, hold the awareness of your ego without judgment. Recognize that it's a part of you, but not all of you.
8. Slowly open your eyes (if closed) and bring your attention back to the present moment. Take a few moments to integrate your experience before returning to your day.

By asking yourself, “Who is the one that experiences XYZ?” you direct your focus further inward, supporting yourself in moving past egoic worldviews (Maharshi, 1985).

Surrender

In psychology, surrender means mentally releasing attachment to something. It’s a type of accepting or stopping a struggle. It may also be called “non-attachment”. This can be defined as a feeling of not being stuck or fixated on ideas, images, or objects. It also includes not feeling the need to acquire, hold, or avoid (Whitehead et al., 2018).

The ego, with its desires for control and self-importance, can be a formidable opponent to surrender. However, practices like surrendering and letting go chip away at this barrier. These practices involve releasing attachment to desires, possessions, and even fleeting emotions. As we observe thoughts and feelings without judgment, we weaken their hold on us. This process gradually softens the ego's grip on our identity as we learn to accept life as it is and surrender to what is beyond our control.

Exercise: Everyday Surrender

Explore these different areas of life where you can practice surrender in your daily life (e.g., Colombiere, 1980):

1. **Surrender to emotions today.** Think about your daily routine and the things in it that you can't control. For example, before you even get on the road, let go of your anger at the driver in front of you. Accept that you will be anxious during that meeting with your supervisor. Before your brain can start trying to control these feelings, surrender to the fact that you'll likely have them. That might make it easier to let them go when they arise.

What emotion will you surrender to today?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. **Surrender to outcomes today.** You cannot control the outcome of the next election, whether your spouse will develop a severe illness or the long-term effects of climate change. When thoughts of distressing outcomes arise, it can be easy to spin out with worry as you wonder how you might control (or how little you can control) future events. Instead, see if you can let go of your attachment to outcomes.

What outcome will you surrender to today?

_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

3. **Surrender to thoughts today.** Pause for a moment and try to watch the thoughts running through your mind. Note whether they are telling you to believe something, do something, or ruminate on something. Instead of listening to the thoughts, just surrender to the fact that they exist without taking any action.

What thoughts will you surrender to today?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. **Surrender to actions today.** Bring to mind an action that someone else engages in that bothers you or you don't like. Imagine yourself detaching from their action, letting it occur without mentally or physically trying to stop them in any way. Surrender to what occurs as best as you can.

What actions will you surrender to today?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

To extend this practice, consider other things you might surrender to (e.g., thoughts, beliefs, experiences, etc...)

Ego Dissolution Experiences

The process of ego dissolution and transcendence varies among people, but here are some common themes (Lebedev et al., 2016; Carhart-Harris, 2019).

1. **Sense of unreality:** In the initial phase, we may feel a sense of unreality or detachment from our surroundings. Perception of time and space may become distorted.
2. **Dissolution of boundaries:** As the experience deepens, the boundaries between the self and the external world may start to dissolve. Distinctions between yourself and the environment, as well as between yourself and others, may become less clear.
3. **Loss of ego control:** You may start to lose a sense of control over your thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations. Your sense of a separate and distinct self begins to weaken.

Transcending The Ego

The ego is our sense of self and our identity, so transcending it is understandably difficult. However, it's worth the effort. Here are just a few outcomes that may arise after ego transcendence.

Reducing Suffering
Egoic attachments and desires can lead to suffering when they are unmet. By transcending the ego, we may experience a reduction in personal suffering as we become less attached to outcomes and more accepting of the present moment.

Mental Health
Studies show ego-transcendence, and the feeling of connectedness it facilitates, can promote mental health and psychological well-being across several mental health conditions, particularly depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders (Kałużna, et al., 2022).

Enhancing Relationships
Ego-driven behaviors, such as defensiveness and competitiveness, can strain relationships. Transcending the ego can improve interpersonal connections by fostering empathy, understanding, and cooperation.

Freedom from Limiting Beliefs
The ego often reinforces limiting beliefs about yourself. Transcending the ego can free you from these self-imposed constraints, allowing for personal growth, creativity, and a more authentic expression of your true nature (Stoliker, 2022).

Alleviating Negativity
Ego-driven behaviors such as judgment, criticism, and comparison, can contribute to stress and dissatisfaction. Transcending the ego can help us break free from these patterns and adopt healthier, more constructive ways of thinking and behaving.

Psychological Transformation
Many people have reported profound psychological transformation as a result of transcending the ego (Nour et al., 2016).

Indigo Stage Summary

This is the last stage before we see our true nature and begin to merge with well-being. It can indeed be difficult, but hopefully, the information and exercise presented in this section can help you navigate this stage more easily. To strengthen your indigo-stage skills, continue to bring awareness to every aspect of yourself and your reality. Continue this inner work and in time, you may find yourself moving into violet stage.

Chapter 13: Violet Stage

When we begin to transition into violet stage, we realize that "I am more than the conceptual self". In other words, we start to see how the very idea of self was created by our family, society, experiences, etc... As we begin to witness more and more subtle aspects of self (e.g., our thoughts, emotions, decisions, effort, and so on), we realize that all of our suffering originates in that clinging, grasping, attachment to the self and its assumed characteristics.

At violet stage, we finally begin to move past the separate self (or ego) into awareness. We can now watch the storm of human life from a non-attached and peaceful view. The experiences that are part of the earlier stages (e.g., beliefs, thoughts, emotions, behaviors, etc...) continue to exist but they no longer have the same pull—they don't drag us away from the equanimity that we've found (e.g., Goode, 2016; Ingram 2018).

Thus, this is the end of the path to well-being—we've found the more stable, sustainable well-being that we were looking for. Once we reach this stage, we may no longer need to practice the skills in this section, which focus on awareness and acceptance. However, those of us who want to reach this stage can benefit from developing these skills. Therefore, this section has been included to further aid your progress and help you develop the skills that arise in violet stage.

Presence

Presence is notoriously difficult to define. The state itself is thought to consist of a lack of interpretation or judgment (Childs, 2007). Others have described it as a state of present-centered attention or awareness along with acceptance (Brown & Ryan, 2004).

Awareness and acceptance are thought to be the two primary components of presence. Reciprocally, the experiences of true awareness and acceptance can only be had in the state of presence. Because we can develop awareness and acceptance as skills, this makes them sort of like guiding lights. Although it's their combined force that generates presence, each offers massive benefits to our lives. Also, we differ in the extent to which we need to strengthen one or the other, so we'll talk about each of them separately. Let's first talk about awareness.

Understanding for yourself what awareness is, and also being able to recognize its opposite—what might be called confusion, illusion, or even fogginess—are good places to start. To better understand what awareness is, let's look at some examples. We might be aware, for example, that we are anxious, yet we might have no awareness of what makes us anxious. Or, we might be aware that we find it extremely difficult to be around a particular person, but we might not be aware of the thoughts that make this so. As you can see from these examples, there are **stages** of awareness.

Lucky for us, present-moment awareness is a skill that can be developed. So let's explore some practices and strategies for increasing the strength and breadth of our awareness.

Exercise: Pause To Notice

Take a moment now to close your eyes. See if you can calm down the thoughts. Center yourself in your body. Find a space where you feel a bit more comfortable being in your own skin. Now open your eyes. We're just going to take a moment to notice some of the objects around your room.

First, let's notice your computer or smartphone screen. See if you can identify the details of the screen. How sharp are the corners? What colors is it? How bright is the light shining? What is its size and shape? And see if you can just notice it as a united thing.

Now, see if you can find a new object. Perhaps a pen or the table in front of you. The carpet on the floor or the clothes on your back. And just try to fully sense them. What do they look like? What is the object's shape? Position? Colors? Or other details?

Does the object have a smell? What does the object feel like when you touch it? Just see if you can sense the aliveness of the object as you bring increasing levels of awareness to it.

Now let's look for one more object to give our full attention to. Perhaps you have a pad of sticky notes, a drink or food item near you, a stapler or paper clip or push pin? Choose another object to give your full attention to as we finish this exercise.

What does this object look like? Use your awareness to pinpoint everything you can about this object. Make sure you look at it but also try to use some of your other senses—like smell, taste, touch, or even sound—to get to better know this object that has been here with you.

Now just take a moment to see how that felt in your body. How do you feel now? See if you can take this feeling of presence with you as you go back to whatever it is that you were doing.

Body Awareness

In addition to noticing things outside our bodies, we can also benefit from becoming more aware of the internal sensations inside our bodies. Have you ever asked yourself, for example, what does it feel like to be in your body? Or, what does emotional pain feel like? Or, what does hunger feel like? Bringing awareness to the sensations in our bodies can help us add depth to our awareness practice, helping us further illuminate the pathway to well-being.

Exercise: Sensing Life In Your Body

When we quiet our minds for even a moment, we make it possible to sense the feeling of aliveness in our bodies (Tolle, 2004). Being able to detect the feeling of aliveness in your body can be a good measure of how much presence there is in you at any given moment.

When beginning this practice, you may not be able to detect a sense of aliveness in your body at all. But that's not necessary to be successful. Simply looking inside yourself, focusing your attention on the aliveness that is there, is enough.

As you practice, you may start to notice "something". "Is that something the aliveness?" you may ask yourself. Let this and other thoughts go. The answer to whether it is aliveness or not is not important. Simply look, listen, and feel. This just may be one of the most powerful exercises for building awareness.

So let us begin just sitting here for a moment with our entire attention on the sensation of aliveness in our bodies.

Pause.

What do you feel now? If you're struggling to sense the aliveness in your body, ask yourself, how do I know, with eyes closed, that my arm is still there? What does it feel like?
How do I know, without seeing it, that my leg is still there?

Continue to sit here for as long as you want, bringing awareness to the aliveness in your body.

Being Versus Doing

You might have some hesitancy here, so let me explain further. Actions can be completed in a 'state of doing'—and most are for most of us—but actions can also be experienced in a 'state of being'. It is a qualitatively different experience when we have an intention to **complete** an action versus an intention to **experience** an action.

In a 'state of being' you might experience increasing heaviness as you fill up a cup of water and lift it to your mouth, you might feel the water slide against your tongue and cheeks, then feel the movement as you release the cup back down to the table. If you're in a 'state of being' each of these acts contains awareness and is, therefore, experienced in presence. When your whole life becomes these moments of presence, you have found true well-being.

In this 'state of being', each task is executed for the sake of itself. Its inherent well-being exists without relying on an imagined moment of completion in the future that is created by your mind. The action simply is. And you who executed the action simply are. Experiences like these help you begin to realize that you are not your mind and that your existence does not rely on your mind (Foundation for Inner Peace, 2007).

Exercise: Drinking with Awareness

Let's practice "being" versus "doing" with an exercise based on Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness and eating research (Kabat-Zinn, 2006). Please find some liquid—some water, juice, tea, or soda to use for this activity. When you are ready, we'll begin the exercise.

Start by picking up the object that holds the liquid, whether it be a cup, can, or water bottle. Feel the sensation of that object in your hand or hands. Is it warm, cool, soft, scratchy, or some other sensation?

Then, bring the object to your mouth and take a drink. But don't swallow just yet. Feel the liquid flowing into your mouth. What does it feel like against your cheeks, tongue, and teeth? What does it taste like? Is it warm or cool? Is it bubbly or flat? See if you can sense what it is like to have this liquid in your mouth without adding any labels to it.

Then swallow the liquid and feel it moving down your throat. What does that feel like? Is there pressure? Is there a sense of movement? Is it relaxing or frightening?

If you have not already, put your cup back on the table.

Was this experience more fulfilling than taking a normal drink of water? How do you feel in your body right now?

Acceptance & The State of Being

We just said that actions can be completed in a 'state of doing' or experienced in a 'state of being'. When we are 'doing', our actions are simply stepping stones to the future—in a sense,

they are nothing and do not exist in the present. When we are 'being', our actions are experienced in their own right—they exist because they are acknowledged in the present.

Acceptance, too, can be understood through both a 'state of doing' or a 'state of being'. For example, perhaps we're at the dentist. We are absolutely miserable with pain in our mouths and a light blaring in our eyes. In a 'state of doing,' we just want the appointment to be done and over with. As a result, maybe we get angry with the experience—and probably ourselves for failing to take care of our teeth—and we resist experiencing the appointment so much that we may even give ourselves a tension headache.

In a 'state of being', we would simply accept that, yes, we are at the dentist. Our acceptance does not in any way suggest that we find the dentist either good or bad—our experience simply is. We still experience the pain, but we allow ourselves to exist in the present moment instead of only existing in an imagined future. In this scenario—or any other scenario like it—our awareness and acceptance of the present moment actually make the moment more tolerable.

Accept What Is

To reiterate, acceptance does not mean tolerating uncomfortable, unsafe, or unacceptable circumstances. It simply means acknowledging the truth of those circumstances. The mind will make up all kinds of wild stories that can easily trick us if we let it. We might suppress emotions that we don't want to experience. We might project our thoughts onto others (thinking that another person is having the thoughts that we're actually having). Or, we might even be in denial of our true thoughts—for example, perhaps we avoid thinking the thoughts that would lead us to conclude that our romantic relationship is toxic. These are just a few of the examples of the games the mind will play to keep us from seeing and accepting what is.

Now let's start by accepting the 'isness' (or what is; Tolle, 2004) of the present moment. For example, start by opening an email. Use your awareness skills to notice all the details of the email. Now, practice your acceptance skills by acknowledging and being okay with all aspects of the email.

There is nothing you can do to go back in time and change what's written in the email. It is happening now, and it is what it is. If you have annoyance, tension, or other discomfort, these are signs that you have not accepted what is.

Now imagine shifting your attention inward. Tell yourself, "In this moment, I am experiencing these feelings. They are what is." See if you can imagine accepting them without evaluating them as good or bad. They simply exist.

Perhaps this practice felt silly or annoying. If so, see if you can notice those feelings and accept them for exactly what they are.

As you practice this more in the future, you'll likely find that some parts of the 'isness' are easier to accept than other parts—our thought patterns are different so our areas of struggle will also be different. So before leaving this practice, try to acknowledge yourself as you are right now. Don't make your existence reliant on some specific future. You are as you are now and that is fine.

Exercise: Practice Acceptance

Let's begin this exercise by first closing our eyes and getting centered in our bodies. Let the thoughts calm down on their own, and after taking at least one deep breath, open your eyes.

For this exercise, we're going to practice accepting the unacceptable. As a small example of what this might feel like in daily life, I'm going to ask you to make somewhat of a mess in your environment. Maybe rustle the papers around or spill your drink a bit on your desk. Throw some stuff on the floor or just create a little mess, something that's just slightly disturbing to your peace of mind.

When you have done so, sit with it. See if you can bring as much awareness as possible to the mess, without judgment, without criticism. Just let the mess be. Acknowledge that this mess is what it is. And accept it because it exists and for its existence alone.

If you feel any discomfort arising in your body—perhaps you feel a little irritated or annoyed or stressed—acknowledge those emotions too. They are what they are, and they

exist in this moment. There is no need to push them away. They have every right to be just as **we** have a right to be.

If any other thoughts or emotions come up for you, see if you can continue to practice these layers of acceptance. If resistance comes up to this activity, do your very best to accept it and let it go. You might say, "Hey there, resistance. I see you." And then let it go.

When you feel ready, finish this exercise and come back to your space.

Exercise: Upgrade Loving-Kindness

At some point, our loving kindness shifts from being about egoic needs to being more about radiating love. Try this exercise to practice radiating your love.

1. Find a quiet, comfortable place where you won't be disturbed. Sit or lie down in a relaxed position with your back straight. Close your eyes. Take a few slow, deep breaths, feeling your belly rise and fall. Bring your awareness to your body, noticing any sensations.
2. Silently bring to mind an image that represents love. Maybe it is a ball of light, a rainbow, a field of flowers, or the eyes of someone you love deeply. Or you might recall a moment in your past when you felt intense love. You might also call on aspects of love such as gratitude, compassion, and shared moments of social connection.
3. Concentrate on this aspect of love, allowing it to fill your mind and body. You might even feel yourself smiling or notice goosebumps on your skin.
4. Once you have filled yourself with as much love as you can, begin imagining that love radiating from your body, like heat. You might visualize this as radiating love as light, sound, scent, imagery, or anything else that feels right to you.
5. Imagine this love expanding further and further out into the world.
6. Now, imagine this radiating love reaching someone you care about. Watch this love wrapping itself around this person, almost like it's giving them a hug.
7. Next, share loving words with the person by saying things like, "You are loved", "Love is with you", "Love surrounds you", "Love fills you", or "Your essence is love". Or, you may want to be more specific by stating ways in which they are loved, not only by you but by others. For example, you may want to say things like, "You are accepted",

"You are understood", "You are valued", "You are worthy", "You are safe", or "You are supported".

8. Now, imagine this radiating love reaching a person who you've had challenges with. It may be helpful to remind yourself that "hurt people, hurt people"—any harm that others have caused you is coming from a place of pain inside them. Radiate your love around this person, surrounding and filling them, seeping into the places in them that are most lacking love.
9. Share some loving words with them. These words don't imply that you condone their actions but only that they are worthy of the love that exists in the world. You may say things like "Love is with you", "Love surrounds you", "Love fills you", "Love heals your pain", or any other loving statements that resonate with you.
10. Now, see if you can imagine your love spreading across the entire world, touching and filling every being.
11. Gently bring your awareness back to your own body, perhaps noticing the sense of aliveness within.
12. Take a moment to reflect on how you feel. Sit quietly for a few moments, integrating the experience.

By regularly doing this exercise, we expand and extend our inherent well-being.

Violet Stage Summary

As violet stage becomes your home, many of the difficult experiences of the lower stages fade into memory. It's not that we don't still have beliefs, thoughts, emotions, actions, and experiences, but we now understand that these experiences are not us. We see these experiences arise in awareness and so we are not attached to them in the same way we were when we thought they made up our identity. Now, life just flows and we flow with it.

Conclusion

I hope that at the conclusion of this book and program, you now understand the path to well-being and find yourself closer to the well-being you seek. No matter where you are on the journey, there are many ways to both boost your well-being and move forward. But the choice is always yours as to how you want to walk the path to well-being.

If you are a helping professional (e.g., a coach, consultant, therapist, counselor, teacher, or anyone interested in supporting the well-being of others), I invite you to join the Path to Well-Being Training. This training offers you the opportunity to gain further expertise in how to apply the insights presented in this book in your life and work.

If you need additional support for your own journey on the path to well-being, we hope to soon be able to offer additional resources and coaching. To discover other resources related to this book, check out:

berkeleywellbeing.com/path-to-well-being-book

Supplemental Books

Red Stage

- Adulting for Beginners, By Matilda Walsh
- Alcoholics Anonymous Books
- Healing Trauma By Peter Levine
- The Paleo Approach, By Sarah Ballantyne

Orange Stage

- Codependent No More, By Melody Beattie
- Emotional Intelligence 2.0, By Travis Bradberry
- Communication Skills for Dummies, By Elizabeth Kuhnke

Yellow Stage

- The Happiness Project, By Gretchen Rubin
- The 5 Love Languages, By Gary Chapman
- The How of Happiness, By Sonja Lyubomirsky
- Mindset, By Carol Dweck

Green Stage

- Atomic Habits, By James Clear
- Love 2.0, By Barbara Fredrickson
- The Golden Thread, By Holly Woods
- Unlearn Your Pain, By Howard Schubiner

Teal Stage

- Not Nice, By Aziz Gazipura
- Boundary Boss, By Terri Cole
- The Inner Bonding Workbook, By Margaret Paul

Blue Stage

- How To Do The Work, By Nicole LaPera
- Change Your Mind, By RJ Spina

- No Bad Parts, By Richard Schwartz
- Complex PTSD, By Pete Walker
- Shadow Work for the Soul, By Mary Mueller Shutan

Indigo Stage

- Radical Forgiveness, By Colin Tipping
- A New Earth, By Eckhart Tolle
- The Yoga of Truth, By Peter Marchand
- You Are the Happiness You Seek, By Rupert Spira

Violet Stage

- The Four Stages of Enlightenment, By Tchiki Davis
- Be As You Are, By Ramana Maharshi
- The End of Your World, By Adyashanti
- After Awareness, By Greg Goode

References

1. ACEs, R. R. (2014, July). Adverse Childhood Experiences. In ACEs (Vol. 12, p. 18).
2. American Psychological Association. (2018, April 19). Conditioning. In APA dictionary of psychology. https://dictionary.apa.org/conditioning
3. Amini, A., Shirvani, H., & Bazgir, B. (2021). Effectiveness of Guided Visualization and Mental Imagery on Perceived Stress, Psychological Well–Being and Sleep Quality in Armed Forces Retirement. Journal Mil Med, 23(12), 913-924.
4. Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. Psychological Review, 84(2), 191–215.
5. Bértholo, J. (2013). The shadow in project management. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 74, 358-368.
6. BetterHelp. (2023, December 13). What is shadow psychology? Retrieved 10/17/24 from https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/psychologists/what-is-shadow-psychology
7. Binda, D. D., Greco, C. M., & Morone, N. E. (2022). What are adverse events in mindfulness meditation?. Global advances in health and medicine, 11, 2164957X221096640.
8. Bishop, S. (2013). Develop your assertiveness. London, UK: Kogan Page Limited.
9. Boden, M. T., John, O. P., Goldin, P. R., Werner, K., Heimberg, R. G., & Gross, J. J. (2012). The role of maladaptive beliefs in cognitive-behavioral therapy: Evidence from social anxiety disorder. Behaviour research and therapy, 50(5), 287-291.
10. Braks, A. J. (2020). Leadership coaching leads to later stage development. Integral Review, 16(1), 332-356.
11. Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2004). Perils and promise in defining and measuring mindfulness: Observations from experience.
12. Buschmann, T., Horn, R. A., Blankenship, V. R., Garcia, Y. E., & Bohan, K. B. (2018). The relationship between automatic thoughts and irrational beliefs predicting anxiety and depression. Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy, 36, 137-162.

13. Cacioppo, J. T., & Patrick, W. (2008). Loneliness: Human nature and the need for social connection. WW Norton & Company.
14. Carhart-Harris, R. L., & Friston, K. J. (2019). REBUS and the anarchic brain: toward a unified model of the brain action of psychedelics. Pharmacological reviews, 71(3), 316-344.
15. Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. (2014). Understanding the impact of trauma. In Trauma-informed care in behavioral health services. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US).
16. Cherry, K. (2022, November 1). Common defense mechanisms people use to cope with anxiety. Verywell Mind. https://www.verywellmind.com/defense-mechanisms-2795960
17. Childs, D. (2007). Mindfulness and the psychology of presence. Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, 80(3), 367-376.
18. Colagiuri, B., Schenk, L. A., Kessler, M. D., Dorsey, S. G., & Colloca, L. (2015). The placebo effect: from concepts to genes. Neuroscience, 307, 171-190.
19. Colombiere, C. (1980). Trustful surrender to divine providence. Charlotte, NC: Tan Books.
20. Cook-Greuter, S. (2014). Ego development: A full-spectrum theory of vertical growth and meaning-making. mimeo, Wayland.
21. Cuncic, A. (2023, August 23). What does it mean to be triggered? Verywell Mind. https://www.verywellmind.com/what-does-it-mean-to-be-triggered-4175432
22. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Hedonia, eudaimonia, and well-being: An introduction. Journal of happiness studies, 9, 1-11.
23. DeWall, C. N., & Bushman, B. J. (2011). Social acceptance and rejection: The sweet and the bitter. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 20(4), 256-260.
24. Downey, G., & Feldman, S. I. (1996). Implications of rejection sensitivity for intimate relationships. Journal of personality and social psychology, 70(6), 1327.
25. Dweck (2006). Mindset: The New Psychology of Success. Ballantine Books.
26. Gollwitzer, P. M. (1999). Implementation intentions: strong effects of simple plans. American psychologist, 54(7), 493.
27. Goode, G. (2016). After Awareness: The End of the Path. New Harbinger Publications.
28. Greene, L., & Burke, G. (2007). Beyond self-actualization. Journal of Health and Human Services Administration, 116-128.

29. Epstein, S. (1973). The self-concept revisited: Or a theory of a theory. American psychologist, 28(5), 404.
30. Foundation for Inner Peace (Ed.). (2007). A Course in Miracles: Combined Volume. Foundation for Inner Peace.
31. Hayes, S. C., & Hofmann, S. G. (2017). The third wave of cognitive behavioral therapy and the rise of process-based care. World psychiatry, 16(3), 245.
32. Holt-Lunstad, J., Robles, T. F., & Sbarra, D. A. (2017). Advancing social connection as a public health priority in the United States. American psychologist, 72(6), 517.
33. Ingram, Daniel. (2018). Mastering the Core Teachings of the Buddha: An Unusually Hardcore Dharma Book - Revised and Expanded Edition. Aeon Books.
34. Jerath, R., Edry, J. W., Barnes, V. A., & Jerath, V. (2006). Physiology of long pranayamic breathing: neural respiratory elements may provide a mechanism that explains how slow deep breathing shifts the autonomic nervous system. Medical hypotheses, 67(3), 566-571.
35. Johnstone, M. J. (2010). On the matter of human kindness. Australian Nursing Journal: ANJ, The, 17(7), 32.
36. Jung, C. G. (1958). The undiscovered self. New York, NY: The New American Library.
37. Kabat-Zinn, J. (2006). Eating meditation. On mindfulness for beginners [CD]. Louisville: Sounds True, Inc
38. Kałużna, A., Schlosser, M., Craste, E. G., Stroud, J., & Cooke, J. (2022). Being no one, being One: The role of ego-dissolution and connectedness in the therapeutic effects of psychedelic experience. Journal of Psychedelic Studies, 6(2), 111-136.
39. Keltner, D., & Kring, A. M. (1998). Emotion, social function, and psychopathology. Review of General Psychology, 2(3), 320-342.
40. Kirby, J. N., Hoang, A., & Ramos, N. (2023). A brief compassion focused therapy intervention can help self-critical parents and their children: A randomized controlled trial. Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, 00, 1– 19. https://doi.org/10.1111/papt.12459
41. Kross, E., Berman, M. G., Mischel, W., Smith, E. E., & Wager, T. D. (2011). Social rejection shares somatosensory representations with physical pain. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 108(15), 6270-6275.
42. Lawlor, K. B. (2012). Smart goals: How the application of smart goals can contribute to achievement of student learning outcomes. In Developments in business simulation and experiential learning: Proceedings of the annual ABSEL conference (Vol. 39).

43. Layous, K. T. I. N., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2014). The how, why, what, when, and who of happiness. Positive emotion: Integrating the light sides and dark sides, 473-495.
44. Lazarus, R. S. (1982). Thoughts on the relations between emotion and cognition. American psychologist, 37(9), 1019.
45. Lebedev, A. V., Lövdén, M., Rosenthal, G., Feilding, A., Nutt, D. J., & Carhart-Harris, R. L. (2015). Finding the self by losing the self: Neural correlates of ego-dissolution under psilocybin. Human brain mapping, 36(8), 3137-3153.
46. Lester, D. (2013). Measuring Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Psychological reports, 113(1), 15-17.
47. Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2006). New directions in goal-setting theory. Current directions in psychological science, 15(5), 265-268.
48. Maharshi, S. R. (1985). Be as you are. Arkana, London.
49. Maio, G. R., Pakizeh, A., Cheung, W. Y., & Rees, K. J. (2009). Changing, priming, and acting on values: effects via motivational relations in a circular model. Journal of personality and social psychology, 97(4), 699.
50. Mandriota, M. (2021, November 11). What is operant conditioning? Psych Central. https://psychcentral.com/health/operant-conditioning
51. Manier, D., & Olivares, A. (2005). Who Benefits from Expressive Writing? Moderator Variables Affecting Outcomes of Emotional Disclosure Interventions. Counseling & Clinical Psychology Journal, 2(1).
52. Manners, J., Durkin, K., & Nesdale, A. (2004). Promoting advanced ego development among adults. Journal of adult development, 11, 19-27.
53. Mauss, I. B., & Robinson, M. D. (2009). Measures of emotion: A review. Cognition and emotion, 23(2), 209-237.
54. McLaughlin, R. G. (2018). Transformational Learning and the Role of Shadow in Quality of Life. Adult Higher Education Alliance.
55. Mruk, C. (1995). Self-Esteem: Research, Theory, and Practice. Springer.
56. Murphy, R. (n.d.). What Is Fischer's Skill Theory? Retrieved on 9/16/2024 from http://fab-efl.com/onlinelearning/page21/page19/index.html
57. Murray, T., & O'Fallon, T. (2020). A Summary of Research on and with the STAGES Developmental Model. Integral Review, 16(1), 39-68.
58. Nair, K. S. (2003). Life goals: the concept and its relevance to rehabilitation. Clinical Rehabilitation, 17(2), 192-202.
59. Nariyani, P., & Vyas, H. (2017). Immediate effect of deep breathing exercise on health. Int. J. Physiother Res, 5(5), 2420-2423.

60. Neff, K. D. (2011). Self-compassion, self-esteem, and well-being. Social and personality psychology compass, 5(1), 1-12.
61. Newman, S., & Schreil, C. (2019). The Book of No: 365 Ways to Say it and Mean it-and Stop People-pleasing Forever. Highbridge Audio.
62. Nour, M. M., Evans, L., Nutt, D., & Carhart-Harris, R. L. (2016). Ego-dissolution and psychedelics: validation of the ego-dissolution inventory (EDI). Frontiers in human neuroscience, 269.
63. O'Fallon, T. (2010). The evolution of the human soul: Developmental practices in spiritual guidance. Excerpt from Masters in Spiritual Direction.
64. O'Fallon, T. (2020). States and STAGES: Waking up Developmentally. Integral Review: A Transdisciplinary & Transcultural Journal for New Thought, Research, & Praxis, 16(1).
65. O'Fallon, T., Polissar, N., Neradilek, M. B., & Murray, T. (2020). The validation of a new scoring method for assessing ego development based on three dimensions of language. Heliyon, 6(3).
66. Osmo, F., Duran, V., Wenzel, A., de Oliveira, I. R., Nepomuceno, S., Madeira, M., & Menezes, I. (2018). The negative core beliefs inventory: Development and psychometric properties. Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy, 32(1), 67-84.
67. Pavlov, I. P. (1927). Conditioned reflexes (G. V. Anrep, Trans.). Oxford University Press.
68. Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). Writing about emotional experiences as a therapeutic process. Psychological science, 8(3), 162-166.
69. Porot, N., & Mandelbaum, E. (2021). The science of belief: A progress report. Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science, 12(2), e1539.
70. Ranganathan VK, Siemionow V, Liu JZ, Sahgal V, Yue GH. From mental power to muscle power--gaining strength by using the mind. Neuropsychologia. 2004;42(7):944-56.
71. Rao, T. S., Asha, M. R., Rao, K. J., & Vasudevaraju, P. (2009). The biochemistry of belief. Indian journal of psychiatry, 51(4), 239.
72. Rowland, L., & Curry, O. S. (2019). A range of kindness activities boost happiness. The Journal of social psychology, 159(3), 340-343.
73. Rubin, R. S. (2002). Will the real SMART goals please stand up. The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist, 39(4), 26-27.
74. Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. Journal of personality and social psychology, 69(4), 719.

75. Sander, D., Grafman, J., & Zalla, T. (2003). The human amygdala: an evolved system for relevance detection. Reviews in the Neurosciences, 14(4), 303-316.
76. Sandstrom, G. M., & Dunn, E. W. (2014). Is efficiency overrated? Minimal social interactions lead to belonging and positive affect. Social Psychological and Personality Science, 5(4), 437-442.
77. Sayadaw, M. (1994). The progress of insight: a treatise on satipatthana meditation. Buddhist Publication Society.
78. Schaufeli, W. B., & Greenglass, E. R. (2001). Introduction to special issue on burnout and health. Psychology & Health, 16(5), 501-510.
79. Schwartz, R. (2021). No bad parts: Healing trauma and restoring wholeness with the internal family systems model. Sounds True.
80. Schwitzgebel, E. (2012). Introspection, what?. Introspection and consciousness, 29-48.
81. Shapira, L. B., & Mongrain, M. (2010). The benefits of self-compassion and optimism exercises for individuals vulnerable to depression. Journal of Positive Psychology, 5, 377-389.
82. Sharaievska, I., & Stodolska, M. (2015). Redefining boundaries in families through social networking leisure. Leisure Sciences, 37(5), 431-446.
83. Sharma, B. (2010). Polarities and Ego Development: Polarity Thinking In Ego Development Theory And Developmental Coaching Beena Sharma & Dr. Susanne Cook-Greuter.
84. Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves. The journal of positive psychology, 1(2), 73-82.
85. Shutan, Mary Mueller. (2015). The Spiritual Awakening Guide: Kundalini, Psychic Abilities, and the Conditioned Layers of Reality. Findhorn Press.
86. Smolicz, J. (1981). Core values and cultural identity. Ethnic and racial studies, 4(1), 75-90.
87. Society of Analytical Psychology. (n.d.). Jung's model of the psyche | jung and the ego - the sap.
https://www.thesap.org.uk/articles-on-jungian-psychology-2/carl-gustav-jung/jungs-model-psyche/
88. Spencer, S. J., Logel, C., & Davies, P. G. (2016). Stereotype threat. Annual review of psychology, 67(1), 415-437.

89. Stoliker, D., Egan, G. F., Friston, K. J., & Razi, A. (2022). Neural mechanisms and psychology of psychedelic ego dissolution. Pharmacological Reviews, 74(4), 876-917.
90. Tawwab, N. G. (2021). Set boundaries, find peace: A guide to reclaiming yourself. Penguin.
91. Tolle, E. (2004). The power of now: A guide to spiritual enlightenment. New World Library.
92. Tolle, E. (2022). How the Pain-Body Affects Relationships. Retrieved 10/7/2024 from https://youtu.be/5jSpDZVM1WE?si=NaIvgU-0gI081Q07
93. Vermersch, P. (1999). Introspection as practice. Journal of consciousness studies, 6(2-3), 17-42.
94. West, C. P., Dyrbye, L. N., Erwin, P. J., & Shanafelt, T. D. (2016). Interventions to prevent and reduce physician burnout: a systematic review and meta-analysis. The Lancet, 388(10057), 2272-2281.
95. Whitehead, R., Bates, G., Elphinstone, B., Yang, Y., & Murray, G. (2018). Letting go of self: The creation of the nonattachment to self scale. Frontiers in Psychology, 9, 2544.
96. Wilber, K. (2000). Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy. Shambhala Publications.
97. Wilber, K. (2007). Integral spirituality: A startling new role for religion in the modern and postmodern world. Shambhala Publications.
98. Wilber, K. (2024). Finding Radical Wholeness: The Integral Path to Unity, Growth, and Delight. Shambhala Publications.
99. Won, S., Lee, S. Y., & Bong, M. (2017). Social persuasions by teachers as a source of student self-efficacy: The moderating role of perceived teacher credibility. Psychology in the Schools, 54(5), 532-547.
100. Woods, H. (2020). The Golden Thread: Where to Find Purpose in the Stages of Your Life. New Degree Press
101. Yeager, D. S., Hanselman, P., Walton, G. M., Murray, J. S., Crosnoe, R., Muller, C., ... & Dweck, C. S. (2019). A national experiment reveals where a growth mindset improves achievement. Nature, 573(7774), 364-369.
102. Yu, B., Funk, M., Hu, J., & Feijs, L. (2017). StressTree: A metaphorical visualization for biofeedback-assisted stress management. In Proceedings of the 2017 conference on designing interactive systems (pp. 333-337).

103. Zeng, X., Chiu, C. P., Wang, R., Oei, T. P., & Leung, F. Y. (2015). The effect of loving-kindness meditation on positive emotions: a meta-analytic review. Frontiers in psychology, 6, 1693.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my entire team at The Berkeley Well-Being Institute, both past and present. In particular, I'd like to thank Beth Birenbaum, Charlie Huntington, Nimmy Dumm, Kelsey Shultz, Eser Yilmaz, Nathalie Boutros, Justine Saavedra, Sukhman Rekhi, Arastah Gatchpazian, Helena Rose, Sarah Sperber, and Elsye Barkstrom for their content contributions and continued dedication to enhancing well-being.

About The Author

Dr. Tchiki Davis, M.A., Ph.D., is a well-being expert, writer, and website creator. Her well-being content reaches more than half a million people per month. In her free time, she enjoys being in nature, making art, and drinking tea.

Learn more at: berkeleywellbeing.com & awakeningcollective.org

More Books By This Author