

Cape Cod Institute

June 26-30, 2017

9:00am-12:15pm

Bouncing Back:

Rewiring the Brain for Resilience and Well-Being

S-103 image of two women talking

This morning we're focusing on relational intelligence - using regulation and resonance in the relational field, beginning in the therapeutic relationship, and then extending to larger and larger circles, strengthening the capacities of the client's brain to cultivate connections with other people, social or intimate - to use those resources to co-regulate the nervous system, integrate the committee of parts, voices, selves, recover inner secure base and authentic self...

...and then cultivate empathy and compassion for others, for common humanity, and recover skills or develop in the first place capacities to relate to others skillfully: deep listening, setting limits and boundaries, negotiating change, resolving conflicts, repairing ruptures, and practicing forgiveness.

This morning we'll be exploring tools first in intra-personal relating, healing relationship with inner parts, inner voices that may have become disconnected or repressed. Then inter-

personal relating, overcoming wariness or mistrust of relationships to be able to fully connect and belong in families, friendship and work circles, and communities.

Relational Intelligence - Inner

S-104 Q keynoter, attachment conference

I once heard a keynote speaker at a conference on Attachment and Psychotherapy say:

All this talk therapy is just an excuse to hang out long enough for the relationship to do the healing.

S-105 Q Fosha

I'm very fond of this quote from Diana Fosha, founder of Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy, which IS an attachment trauma therapy, that sums that up:

The roots of resilience are to be found in the felt sense of being held in the mind and heart of an empathic, attuned, and self-possessed other.

Diana calls this a relationship of a true other to a person's true self. And it can be any true other to any true self. When we are the true other to the true self of any other person we can see and reflect their true self back to them when they have forgotten, or perhaps have never known, who they truly are. We remember their best self when they are mired in their worst self and accept without judgment all of who they are. True others are not necessarily the people closest to us, though they may be: they are the people most attuned to the us, those most accepting of our innate goodness, our essential worth as human beings. For many people, a true other can be a spiritual figure or deity; for others it may be a teacher, or friend. When someone who is acting as a true other genuinely sees us at their best, we can see ourselves in that light, too. This mirroring helps us rediscover our resilient self.

The power of the true other can be seen in the example of the Irish playwright Oscar Wilde when he was imprisoned in England in 1895 for homosexuality. As Wilde was walking through the throngs of jeering hecklers on his way to prison, his publisher and friend, Robert Ross, quietly bowed and tipped his hat to him. Wilde later recounted in his autobiographical work *De Profundis* that his friend's gesture of respect was what enabled him to endure his two years of imprisonment with his courage and dignity intact. When Ross acknowledged Wilde's true self, Wilde's resilience came to the fore.

S-106 Q Dinah Craik

The felt-sense kind of empathy that creates the conditions for those roots of resilience moment-by-moment is expressed in the words of the 19th century British novelist Dinah Craik:

*Ah, the comfort,
The inexpressible comfort
Of feeling safe with a person.
Having neither to weigh out thoughts
Nor words,
But pouring them all right out, just as they are,
Chaff and grain together;
Certain that a faithful hand
Will take them and sift them;
Keeping what is worth keeping and,
With the breath of kindness,
Blow the rest away.*

- Dinah Craik

A Life for a Life, 1859

Among my favorite stories that also illustrated the attunement and empathy and reflecting from a true other to a true self is one

I heard from the meditation teacher Jack Kornfield. A seven-year-old boy and his family went to a restaurant for dinner. When the waitress asked the boy what he wanted for dinner, he replied without hesitation, “A hot dog and French fries!” His mother interrupted, telling the waitress, “He’ll have meatloaf with mashed potatoes and gravy.” After the waitress had taken the parents’ orders, she turned to the boy and asked, “Do you want ketchup and mustard on your hot dog, son?” As the waitress was leaving, the boy turned to his parents and said, “She thinks I’m real!”

The safety this moment-by-moment deep listening provides creates a neural safety net in the brain that primes the brain’s receptivity to new experiences, new learning, and activates the brain’s neuroplasticity for change.

When we can engage with people in interactions that are safe, resonant, not shaming-blaming-judgmental or critical, but supportive, validating, we strengthen our own inner sense of belonging and worth, and that becomes a powerful resource to strengthen our own capacities of resilience, to shift from contraction and reactivity to a more engaged and open-minded perspective in any situation.

S-107 Cultivating the Wiser Self

1. Find a comfortable position to sit quietly. Allow your eyes to gently close. Breathe deeply a few times into your belly and

allow your awareness to come more deeply into your body. Allow yourself to breathe comfortably. Become aware of relaxing into a gentle field of well-being.

2. When you are ready, imagine you are in our own safe place, somewhere where you feel comfortable, safe, relaxed and at ease. This could be a room in your home, a favorite cabin in the woods or a place by a pond or lake, or in a café with a friend.

3. Then let yourself know you are going to receive a visit from your Wiser Self, perhaps an older wise, stronger version of yourself. Someone who embodies the qualities you aspire to, and is mature and settled in them.

4. As your Wiser Self arrives in your safe place, imagine your Wiser Self in quite some detail. Notice how old your wiser self is, how they are dressed, how they move. Notice how you greet your Wiser Self. Do you go out to meet them? Do you invite them in? Do you shake hands, bow, or hug?

5. Imagine yourself sitting and talking with your wiser self, or going for a walk together. Notice their presence, their energy, and how it affects you.

6. Then, in your imagination, you can ask your wiser self how they came to be who they are.... Ask what helped them most along the way.... What did they have to let go of to become who

they are?... Can they share examples of when and how they triumphed over adversity?... You may choose to ask them about a particular problem or challenge facing you now. Notice what advice your wiser self offers that you can take with you. Listen carefully to all they have to tell you.

7. Imagine what it would be like to embody your wiser self. Invite them to become part of you. Notice how it feels to inhabit your wiser self from the inside out and to experience your wiser self within you. When you are ready, imagine your wiser self becoming separate from you again.

8. Imagine that your wiser self offers you a gift—an object, a symbol, a word or phrase—to remind you of this meeting. Receive this object into your hand and place it somewhere in your clothing for safekeeping. Your wiser self will let you know their name; remember it well.

7. As you prepare to leave, take a few gentle breaths to anchor this connection with your wiser self. Know that you can evoke this experience of encountering your wiser self anytime you choose. Imagine thanking your wiser self for the time you have spent together; imagine saying goodbye. Take a moment to reflect on the entire meeting and conversation. Notice any insights or shifts from the experience.

You may ask your client to write down their experience with their wiser self to help integrate it into their conscious memory and to use it any time they need guidance from within about how to be more resilient. As with any use of imagination to access our deep intuitive knowing, the more they practice encountering their wiser self, the more reliably they will be able to embody his or her wisdom as they respond to the challenges and difficulties of their lives.

S-108 Seeing Ourselves as Others See Us

Rewiring Negative Views of Yourself through Seeing the Goodness That Others See in You

And one more...

1. Sit or lie comfortably. Allow your eyes to gently close. Focus your attention on your breathing. Rest comfortably in the simple presence of awareness. When you're ready, let yourself become aware of how you are holding yourself in this moment. Are you feeling kind toward yourself? Are you uneasy with yourself? Are you feeling critical of yourself? Just notice, just be aware and accepting of what is, without judgment—or if there is judgment, noticing that.

2. Then, when you're ready, bring to mind someone in your life whom you know loves you unconditionally, someone in whose presence you feel safe. This could be a teacher or dear friend; a

partner, parent, or child; or a beloved dog or cat. It could be a spiritual figure—Jesus or the Dalai Lama, or your own wiser self. Or it could simply be a memory from any time in your life when someone accepted you as you are and loved you.

3. Imagine yourself sitting with this person face to face. Visualize the person looking at you with acceptance and tenderness, love, joy. Feel yourself taking in their love and acceptance of you.

4. Now imagine yourself being the other person, looking at yourself through their eyes. Feel that person's love and openness being directed toward yourself. See in yourself the goodness, the sacred humanness that the other person sees in you. Let yourself savor this awareness of your own goodness.

5. Now come back to being yourself. You are in your own body again, experiencing the other person looking at you again, with so much love and acceptance. Feel yourself taking in that love and acceptance. Take the love deeply into your own being. Feel it in your body. Notice how and where you feel that love and acceptance in your body—as a smile, as a warmth in your heart—and savor it.

6. Take a moment to reflect on your experience. You are learning to recondition past negative views of yourself. Set the intention to remember this feeling any time you choose to.

Cultivating Self-Acceptance

You can also try this exercise of reconditioning:

1. You can begin to accept aspects of yourself that you have previously found unacceptable by pairing a negative message or belief with the embracing stance of self-acceptance. For example:

“Even though I feel lost and confused right now, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.”

“Even though my finances are a mess and I’m in real trouble, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.”

“Even though I feel like it’s all my fault that my wife left, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.”

2. If both the awareness and acceptance seem like too much of a stretch, head yourself in the right direction with a modified phrase like “I’m willing to consider trying to deeply and completely love and accept myself.” Let yourself notice that even if you deeply believe the negative statement about yourself

to be true, the deep love and acceptance of yourself can simultaneously be true as well.

S-109 Guest House - Rumi

This being human is a guest-house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,

Some momentary awareness come

As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,

who violently sweep your house

empty of its furniture,

still, treat each guest honorably.

S-110 Rumi....

He may be clearing you

out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,

meet them at the door laughing,

and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

- Rumi

S-111 Befriending Yourself by Accepting the Many Parts of Yourself

This exercise of **de-conditioning for relational intelligence** is adapted from the pioneering family therapist Virginia Satir's Parts Party. It's about befriending yourself by accepting the many parts of yourself, including the part you may not like so very much.

This exercise does require that client has developed the Wiser Self or Compassionate Friend to "hold" the inquiry of the exercise. Again, I'll be leading this as you would lead a client.

1. Settle comfortably in your seat. Allow your eyes to gently close. Focus your attention on your breathing. Rest comfortably in the awareness of simply being.

2. When you're ready, imagine you are outside a theater. Imagine the building, the doors, the posters outside. Walk up to one of the doors, open it, and walk into the lobby. Open another

door and walk into the empty theater. Walk all the way down to the first or second row and take a seat in the center of the row. An empty stage lies in front of you. All is quiet.

3. Now imagine that the first figure to come out on the stage is your wiser self, standing in the center. This figure that represents all the qualities you aspire to: wisdom, strength, courage, compassion, competence, acceptance.

4. Now imagine other characters coming on to the stage one by one. Each of these imaginary characters embodies a particular quality in yourself. These characters could be people you know, yourself at a different age, people you know from the movies or history or literature, animals, or cartoon characters.

The first character embodies a quality in yourself that you really, really like. Take a moment to let that character take the stage and remember it (perhaps make a note).

A second character comes on stage embodying another positive quality in yourself. Again let that character materialize on the stage and remember it.

Now bring a third character to the stage that embodies a quality in yourself that you really don't like all that much. In fact, you wish it weren't part of you, but you know it is. Let this character materialize and take a moment to remember it.

Bring on a fourth character that embodies another negative quality in you.

5. Now you have on stage your wiser self, two characters embodying positive qualities, and two characters embodying negative qualities. Ask each character in turn what special gift they bring to you by being part of you: ask the positive ones first, then the negative ones. As you listen to their responses, notice what lessons you learn from their being a part of you. Each one has some wisdom or learning to offer.

6. Next, ask your wiser self what gifts and lessons these parts have to offer you. Listen carefully for the answers.

7. Briefly thank each character for coming to be with you. Watch as they leave the stage one by one, the wiser self last.

8. Take a moment to notice and reflect on your experience from doing this exercise. Notice any insights, any shifts. Take a moment to remember and embrace the lessons of each of these four characters, especially the negative ones: each is an integral part of you, essential to your wholeness.

9. Then imagine yourself getting up out of your seat and walking back up the aisle, through the lobby and back outside the theater.

Turn around to look at the theater where all this happened. Then slowly come to awareness again of sitting quietly, and when you're ready, open your eyes.

When I lead clients or workshop participants in these exercises, I always allow time at the end to pause, notice, and reflect on the experience, especially any shifts or insights gained from the experience. That's how the brain can consciously, intentionally integrate the benefit of the exercise.

S-112 Listening to the Intuitive Wisdom of the Wiser Self

1. Find a time and place to sit quietly without interruption. Settle into a comfortable position, take a few deep breaths, and relax into a state of mindful presence. Let any thoughts or concerns fade into the background. Then bring to your awareness a sense of your wiser self, the part of you that embodies your essential wisdom and goodness.

2. Bring to mind someone you are currently having difficulties with: a neighbor who turns up the television too late at night; a coworker who misses important deadlines; a sister-in-law who dominates every discussion at the dinner table. Imagine that you can introduce this person to your wiser self and then stand to the side as you overhear the conversation between them.

3. Listen to how your wiser self handles the conversation with the difficult person: what they say, how they handle the energy of your difficult person. You are overhearing your own inner wisdom being patient and skillful with your difficult person.

4. When the conversation between your wiser self and the difficult person is complete, notice how the difficulty is resolved. Notice what you overheard, what you learned, what advice you are taking in from your wiser self.

5. Let the difficult person fade from the scene. Imagine that your wiser self turns to you, offers you a word or phrase of advice, and offers you one symbolic gift you can hold in your hand to remember this conversation by. You may chose to write down your reflections for future reference.

S-113 Wished For Outcome

The exercise I use to **re-condition negative relational memories** is one of the most powerful I use with clients and workshop participants. I'll walk us through the exercise; if you find yourself doing the exercise, and people do, please do practice good self-care and stay within your comfort zone. The exercise is called Wished for Outcome and again, starting small. One moment of one memory, so the brain has a chance to reprocess the memory and you have a chance to develop a sense

of competence in using the tool. You're welcome to listen and observe if that feels more comfortable to you.

So, as I always like to do when reconditioning, we begin by coming into a sense of presence, aware of being in our own body in this moment, in this place. And bringing a sense of kindness and openness to one's experience, evoking a sense of one's own true and deep inner goodness. Then, beginning the exercise by remembering one moment, one small moment, when an interaction between you and another person went awry, and you wound up feeling not very good about yourself, you wound up feeling badly. Stay anchored in your own awareness and your own self-compassion as you evoke this memory, and you light up all the neural networks constellating this memory by remembering where you were, who you were with, remembering what you said, and what they said. Remembering what you did, and what they did. And remembering how all of that made you feel, at the time, or even now as you remember the event. Notice how you feel, or felt, and see if you can locate where you feel, or felt, that in your body. The visceral sense of the experience. Notice any negative thoughts you may have about yourself now because of what you experienced then. Let the evoking of this negative experience be as vivid as you can, lighting up the memory so it can be rewired.

Then, you create the positive resource that you will juxtapose with this negative memory to do the rewiring, by beginning to imagine a different outcome to this scenario. A different more satisfactory resolution of the event. Remembering, whatever

you can imagine is real to the brain, even if this new ending never could have happened in real life.

So you begin to imagine something different you might have said. You imagine something different the other person could have said, even if that never could have happened in real life. Let your brain do its own imagining and its own rewiring. Imagine something different you might have done. Imagine the other person doing something differently, even if that never could have happened in real life. Let your imagination create a more satisfactory resolution of the entire event. You can even imagine someone who wasn't there at the time coming in and doing something helpful.

As this new scenario unfolds, let it come to a new more wished for outcome. And light up all the neural networks of this new resolution. Let yourself feel how you feel with this new ending, and where you feel those feelings in your body. Let yourself notice any new more positive thoughts you have about yourself, given this new outcome. Let the experience of this resolution be vivid in its details and vital in your imagination. Strengthen your experience of the thoughts and feelings of this new ending.

Then, gently touch back in to the original negative experience. Touch it lightly. And then let it go and return to resting in the experience of the new ending. Then touch into the negative experience again, just briefly; notice any shifts. Then return to the resource of the new positive ending. Touch into the negative

again one more time, let it go, and rest in the feelings and thoughts of the new positive ending.

Then you take a moment to pause and reflect on your experience of the entire exercise, noticing any shifts.

This technique of reconditioning does not change what happened, but it does change our relationship to what happened. And it doesn't re-write history, but it does rewire the brain.

When we can pause and notice any shift, usually we notice that the negative experience feels less charged. This is what happens in trauma therapy. You might be encouraged to try this technique again on another memory or part of a memory. And again. Eventually the brain learns how to generalize this technique. We don't have to do all 4,957 interactions that ever went awry in our life. Our sense of self in relationship to these memories changes, our sense of self in terms of competence to recover from trauma is changed. People no longer have to identify themselves as a victim of trauma or even as a survivor of trauma. They can identify themselves as a whole human being who has learned to grow from the ups and downs of their life.

S-114 photo of two women talking

Skills of Relational Intelligence

When a client feels more comfortable in their own skin and with their own inner landscape, they are then more likely to be able to reach out to other people, to receive support, to give support, to call on people as resources.

There are still some common impediments to the smooth flow of healthy relating. And I often end up teaching these specific skills of relational intelligence to my clients.

S-115 Deep listening

The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention....A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words.

- Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.

When we shift our attention toward listening, our whole world changes. Learning to listen is equal to learning to love.

- Ruth Cox

S-116 Deep Listening exercise

- What brings you joy in your life?
- What has brought you sorrow?
- What worries you now?
- When have you found courage in dark times?
- What are you grateful for?
- What are you proud of?

When the Brain Gets Over-Stimulated: The Impact of Digital Technology on Neuroplasticity

Plug in; no slides, foment discussion and inquiry

There is both an upside and a downside to our increasing dependence on our digital devices for communicating with our fellow human beings - texting, emailing, facebooking, tweeting on the extended brains of our smartphones and computers.

We can text to schedule a meeting while we're walking down the hall, we can stay in touch with family and friends when we or they are far away, we can send vacation photos or birthday photos or adopting a new puppy photos in the real time of those precious moments, we can find a restaurant or gas station or hotel or hospital while we're driving to it, we can google statistics on the use of our devices or look up journal articles or download a meditation in a matter of seconds.

But there is a downside to our dependence on digital technology that researchers are beginning to pay attention to, collect data about, analyze the implications of, and communicate those implications and raise questions for our larger society in books, magazines, journal articles.

When I was a young girl, if I behaved myself while sitting in the dentist's chair, I would get a lollipop. This was before researchers discovered the causal link between sugar-plaque-tooth decay. It used to be so cool to smoke cigarettes, before researchers discovered the causal links between smoking-lung cancer and teeth falling out of the mouth.

I want to review some of the important research findings about the impact of the social-digital revolution on relationships and suggest that the over-use of our devices may be a game-changer of neuroplasticity as well.

1. First we look at 5 key impacts of digital technology on time, attention, relationships, emotions and empathy, and self-awareness.

Time

You can easily google the latest stats on how many people are on their devices, how often and when.

For instance:

- * American adults spend 33 hours/week on devices - that does include computers for work - 30% of their waking time. They check their cell phones on average every 6.5 minutes

- * Teenagers, now called screenagers, spend 7.5 hours a day in front of a screen, almost 50% of the time they are awake, more time than on any other activity except sleeping. One quarter of American teenagers are on a device within 5 minutes of waking up.

- * Children 2-6 years of age spend 2-4 hours/day on screens.

- * in 2016, half a million people died in car accidents attributed to driving while texting

And while we are doing all of this connecting and communicating, what are we NOT doing? Young children not playing with other dis on the playground, or riding bikes or playing ball or playing dress-up or playing peekaboo. Older children not playing sports or camping or dancing or reading a book. (We retain more of what we read when we read a physical book that has weight and heft and real pages to turn, using our kinesthetic learning as well as cognitive. Students retain more when they take notes by long-hand than when they take notes on a laptop.)

Adults not playing with their children or playing with each other, not daydreaming, not soul searching, or working on projects that demand depth or concentration, not having the meaningful conversations that also require depth and concentration.

It's true that word processing on a computer or researching on the internet can save us a lot of time but we also have to ask ourselves and our clients, what else are we/they using our/their precious time for?

[Can use apps for meditating; can listen to podcasts of teachers from all around the world.]

Attention

Cal Newport, professor of computer science Georgetown University TED talk quit social media, book Deep Work. Brain not wired for rapid and repeated shifting of attention. Takes metabolic energy to shift, every shift, email text tweet back to a work project or answer question from our kid as you respond to a co-workers' email. After 60-90 minutes of that, brain goes into fatigue, brain fog. Can't think clearly or creatively any more. With each shift in multi-task mode, there's decreased performance and an increase in errors. Can't focus for 3-4 hours on a project. Reduction in capacity to concentrate can be

permanent. Lose capacity to distinguish irrelevant from relevant.

[training in mindfulness, focused attention, could literally be the best counter-point to loss of attention and concentration.]

Victoria Dunckley, child psychiatrist in Los Angeles, noticed an upswing in her patients' diagnoses of ADHD, bi-polar, autism, etc. in the last ten years that coincided with the increase in our culture of time spent on electronic screens. She hypothesized that still developing and vulnerable brains of children and teenagers cannot process the overstimulation of digital and media bombardment. Young brains have more difficulty modulating their emotions and arousal levels when stressed. So she developed a 4-week digital fast protocol for families, no devices anywhere in the family for a month, and noticed among her 500 patients in her research study a 50% decrease in symptoms across all psychiatric and diagnostic categories. [Reset Your Child's Brain]

We may have some protection against such a sharp decrease in focused attention, we do concentrate attention on client hour at a time, but I notice writing second book now, on days designated for writing I write longhand) I cannot go on email first thing in the morning or attention becomes fragmented, easily distractible, not sustained creative flow. may turn on computer to edit my writing later, but I have to protect blocks of time from interruption or they disintegrate.

Resonant Connections - Resonant Relationships

Yes, Facebook, Face time skype allow us to stay in touch with people far away or rediscover people we knew long ago. People can feel much more connected, communicate more easily, more efficiently, with a text or a tweet.

But Sherry Turkle, professor of psychology at MIT and early observer of the impact of digital technology on relationships, finds that the style of relating to people now is much more superficial, what she calls pancake style, rather than cathedral style of perhaps fewer but deeper conversations with people. Illusions of companionship without demands of friendship. We all have our preferences for how we want to connect and communicate with others, but the shortcut handle of 1,000 friends on Facebook, but no real close friends is really becoming truer and truer for more and more people.

I taught a workshop at Kripalu last year, all clinicians or academics or professionals of some kind and I mentioned statistics I had seen in Scientific American Mind while traveling there, 50% of American adults report having zero close friends, down from 2 close friends just 5 years ago. I shared that, and two people came up to me, one a psychiatrist, the other a dietician, to confide in me that they were part of that 50%. That was true for them. No longer any close friends.

This is particularly disturbing among young people who spend 7 hours every day texting and tweeting but who feel more lonely and isolated than before or even feel badly about themselves when they compare themselves to other people's posts on Facebook, all very carefully crafted and polished for public consumption. Young people don't see the doubts and angst of other people like them; it all looks like MTV. Cyber-bullying is a tragic extension of that.

Education psychologist Catherine Steiner-Adair addresses this in *The Big Disconnect*, young children do feel the pain of all the adults in their life being on their devices, no time to play or eat or read together. The child feels less important to mommy than the phone, which is impossible for a very young brain to comprehend but it does process the feelings of rejection and neglect. (And parents do struggle with guilt and heartache, too, no question.)

Decreased Empathy

This can lead to what Sherry Turkle and other researchers have noted, less capacity for empathy, less capacity to tolerate messy emotions, less interest in other people's feelings, less compassion for other people's feelings. People choosing protective distance over vulnerable closeness. So much of what we try to do in therapy is help clients get in touch with their feelings, tolerate and accept and learn to manage difficult

feelings, learn to use their brains and pick up the emotional signals of others accurately, assess safety-comfort or danger-toxicity in relationship. Too much time on devices, clients lose this capacity, young people may not even know it's a capacity that's missing.

[positive pro-social emotions may be best counter-point to growing reluctance/capacity to be with and work with messy emotions, ours or other people's.]

Less self-awareness

Unfortunately, the ability to even be aware of what capacities might be diminishing is also diminishing. People are becoming less comfortable with solitude, less tolerant of boredom, less able to simply reflect, introspect, daydream. More superficial in relationship to others but also to self. So much stimulation every nanosecond, hardly any time left for brain to consolidate all the learning of the day into long-term memory. We hope therapy is a sanctuary where this kind of self-inquiry and self-awareness is prized and protected. But I'm curious to hear what you experience in your own session in this regard.

[Mindfulness training, open spacious awareness, may increase skill, interest, and capacity to be in default mode network of brain.]

Discussion, 3 people, 5 minutes each.

What are you noticing? Self, family, friends, colleagues, clients.

What are you most concerned about?

Large group de-briefing

Assessment of Addiction

Does all this diminishment of relationality, emotionality, self-reflection, diminished capacities of focused attention and flow mean people are addicted to technology?

We depend on digital devices for our work and our connections. We use them and need them for everything, so fast, so convenient. When does dependency tip into addiction?

If we take a traditional definition of addiction, repeated, even compulsive use of substance or activity for pleasure and reward, inability to refrain from turning to that substance or activity for reward and pleasure, inability to find pleasure and reward in other substances or activities, withdrawal from activities or people not related to that source of pleasure and reward, pursuit of that substance or activity even when it causes harm to self and others - could the compulsive behavior of checking our phones every 6.5 minutes or the interrupting of a personal conversation to check a text or email or not letting our child or spouse interrupt us when we are on Facebook - mean we're addicted?

Possibly.

The brain does release dopamine, the neurotransmitter of both anticipation and pleasure and reward, whenever it hears the ping of email or phone call or text. There is a rush of pleasure, “I’m connected! I’m wanted! I’m loved!” That’s not just psychological; that’s neurological. You can see in your clients or yourself the compulsion to answer, to find out, and get that instant gratification.

And certainly computer scientists do know that video games and social media and apps are *designed* to be addicting. To reward the user’s attention while providing more and more stimulation and novelty to keep the user’s brain hooked. Attention engineers use the same principles that gambling casinos in Las Vegas use to keep people craving the next ping, the next possible reward.

And of course, as with any addiction, the substance or activity helps us avoid some other pain - loneliness, social awkwardness, boredom. As people spend more time communication through emojis and less time connecting with people’s emotions in satisfying, nourishing ways we actually lose our capacities to find that nourishment in deep connection and have the willingness to hang in there through the messy emotions and painful ruptures to get to the repair and the resonance again.

I think something that makes it very difficult to talk with clients about the downside of the digital dependency is not just their resistance or their defensiveness, but our own ambivalence. Everyone uses devices all the time, and for very good reasons. So asking our clients to re-consider the use of their devices could be seen by them or us as the pot calling the kettle black.

Discussion

Groups of 3, different 3, 5 minutes each.

When do you see dependence turn into craving or reduced ability to do without? When do you see resistance, defensiveness, ambivalence to viewing dependency as addiction? What concerns you most?

Large group de-briefing

4:30 break

5pm

3. All the **solutions** I've seen so far to reduce the impact of our digital devices on our relationships and on our brains have proposed reducing the use of our devices. Less time spent on screens. A digital detox, an electronics fast.

That's a challenge because the reliance on screens for information and logistics is so commonplace, so ubiquitous, and so supported by our culture. It's the expectation that anyone you would want to reach would be accessible 24/7. And there's the fear of "what if there's an emergency?" It may take a large cultural shift like now restaurants and hotels and planes prohibit smoking, or now you can find healthy organic food to eat more easily. We may need a waking up and a questioning and a paradigm shift in the larger culture about computers in classrooms, etc.

But the now, the solutions tend to focus, at the personal level, on reducing the WHEN and the WHERE and then the WHO.

When

Of course, there could be a digital vacation anytime. And that means not using any devices for a specific block of time. To not use any devices for an entire day or an entire weekend. To set aside a digital-free block of time every weekend - Saturday morning or Sunday evening.

Everyone certainly recommends refraining from or prohibiting others from going on any device for 30 minutes in the morning to enter the day, maybe even eat breakfast, in a more present focused way. And of course any deliberate refraining from

using our devices could evoke a lot of reactions that might be interesting to explore.

It's highly recommended by everyone to turn off all devices at least 30 minutes before going to bed, preferably 60 minutes, to reduce the over-stimulation of the brain so that it knows it's time to, it has permission to, turn itself off and go to sleep. Important to help children begin to slow down by reading a book or playing a game rather than watching TV or playing a video game before going to bed.

Many people I know now, especially people who DO want to focus on deep work for any length of time, have designated times when they check their emails or turn on their phone - twice a day, 4 times a day, but the rest of the time the devices are OFF, at least the ping is off. No distractions or interruptions. Amazing how much work can get done!

Where

The restrictions on WHEN relate to the restrictions on WHERE. Many families have to impose restrictions - NO devices at meals. No devices in the dining room, kitchen, or in the car. Travel time is time to talk.

Who

And the WHO. Catherine Steiner-Adair in the Big Disconnect: if parents want to be able to enforce restrictions on their children's use of devices, they have to be willing and able to restrict their use of devices around the children. Play time, transportation time, watching a soccer game or dance class are device-free zones. Like therapy or workshops are a device free zone. My clients are always very apologetic when their phone goes off in session, but it's a different session if the devices are turned off and can't interrupt.

Interventions

For my *individual* clients, I suggest a periodic "digital detox" - a vacation from devices for one to three days. (At least turn off the ping on the computer and phones so they can work on a project for 2-3 hours without interruption. We need to both rest and energize the brain by focusing on (flowing with) one project at a time for a significant stretch of time.) Trying to comply with such a suggestion can be very diagnostic, bringing to conscious awareness all manner of fear, shame, anxiety, loneliness, etc., that can be addressed in the therapy, even if the attempted digital detox lasts only two hours.

For *couples*, I assign (require) homework of carving out time, at least 10 minutes to start, where they sit face to face with each other, television off, cell phones and computers off (preferably left in a different room) and talk with each other eye to eye,

voice to voice, heart to heart about *anything*. The 7% content of the words is not really as important as the 93% nonverbal communication and resonance.

Because the brain learns best “little and often,” small experiences repeated many times, it’s more productive for brain and behavior change for my couples to talk with each other 10 minutes a day everyday than to talk together for one hour on the weekend. (Doing both, even better). The physical proximity to activate the neuroception of the social engagement system can generate-recover experiences of safety-trust-love in the relationship.

For *families*, I recommend a modified digital fast, carving out spaces where use of all digital devices is prohibited - the dining room, the kitchen, the car, so that family members actually talk with each other while sharing the activities of daily family life. And carving out time, half a day on the weekend or one full weekend a month, where pleasurable and nourishing family activities like picnics, camping, playing board games or badminton, playing with the dog, can be rediscovered.

For *everyone*: powering off all devices and media thirty minutes before going to bed (60 minutes is better for the body’s circadian rhythm) and allowing 30 minutes to wake up in the morning and engage with the day and the real people in our lives before we turn the devices on again.

Discussion, groups of three; five minutes each. What have you tried? What would you be willing to try? What would the obstacles be to trying?

6:30pm

S-117 Skills of Relational Intelligence

Reaching out for help keeps us connected to the resources we need to find a new job or a good doctor or the right tutor for our kid.

Setting limits and boundaries actually helps us stay calm in relationships, knowing we won't be intruded upon or have to do something that goes against the grain or could be harmful to do.

Negotiating change builds our competence in getting our needs met.

Resolving conflicts smooths the way to be more resilient, more successful in our daily living.

Knowing how to repair a rupture in a relationship helps us find the courage to take risks, confident that we can repair and even strengthen the bond with another person if need be.

Forgiveness requires the mindful empathy that allows us to see the larger picture clearly, holding our own behaviors and those of others, resilient or not, in a larger compassion that supports resilience.

S-118 Photo - Reaching Out for Help

Resources can be people, and frequently are. People who serve as role models offer wisdom from their own experience, giving us keys to crack the code of how to live resiliently, whether we are observing them, talking with them, or evoking their presence in our imagination. From them we learn competencies and values to guide our actions, sometimes through direct instruction and practical suggestions, sometimes by the “contagion” of coping: the resonance from spending time with a resilient role model can call forth the same capacities for resilience in us. And because our brains can encode new patterns of coping directly from interacting with other resilient brains, identifying people as resources greatly accelerates our own brain change.

Researchers at the University of Michigan conducted a simple experiment to measure the effect of receiving help on a person’s estimate of a difficulty. Participants standing at the bottom of a steep hill were asked to estimate its height; their estimates were recorded. Next the same participants were given heavy backpacks and asked to estimate the height of the hill again. The estimates were considerably higher. The backpacks were then

removed, and the participants were paired up to climb the hill together. This time their reported estimates of the height of the hill were considerably lower than the original estimates. Help... helps.

My client Doug grew up in a family that was both dysfunctionally disconnected within itself and isolated from other families. He had never even attended a birthday party until his first year of community college, and no one had ever thrown a birthday party for him. As he approached his twenty-first birthday, he decided to throw a party for himself. For Doug, this event was as significant a marker of becoming a competent adult as knowing how to buy a car or rent his own apartment.

He approached a guy he had met through pick-up basketball games who seemed to know how to get people together for social occasions. Doug's request for advice turned into a three-week mentoring project: Neil helped Doug identify whom to invite, what sort of event to host, and when to hold it, and coached him on the details—obtaining the food and drinks and planning activities and rituals that Doug had only glimpsed from afar. Doug had a great time celebrating his twenty-first birthday, resourced by people who could help him figure out how to make his way in the world in this particular way. And he learned the value of finding a role model to help him crack the code and rewire his own brain.

For many clients, asking for and accepting help is much harder than giving it. They may not know how to ask for help, they may believe that asking for help is a sign of weakness, or they may have come to believe, from experience, that there's no point. At the other extreme, if they have not developed enough self-sufficiency, they may be constantly asking for help and driving people crazy. Reaching out for help in relationally intelligent ways is a sign of resilience. they don't need to wait for something bordering on catastrophe—a teenage son arrested for drunk driving, a muscle spasm in your lower back that keeps you in bed for three days, a storm that blows a huge tree down onto the roof of the house—to practice asking for help.

S-119 Reaching Out for Help

Identify need (MSC helpful here for the client to even acknowledge that they have needs and that it's okay to have them

Identify people receptive to need

I'm applying the wisdom of shame resilience researcher Brene Brown here: how important it is for someone to tell their story to someone, not to stay in withdrawal and hiding with it, and that it's essential to tell the story to someone who deserves to hear it.

Ask for help (don't rely on mind-reading) "If you loved me, you would know." Not helpful or effective

Take in the good of receiving help

Practicing asking for help actually strengthens the PFC, the brain's center of executive functioning, so that it's available when we need it in times of emergency.

S-120 Theory of Mind

For the next skill of relational intelligence - setting limits and boundaries - we need to help clients strengthen a capacity known as theory of mind.

Developmental psychologists have found that the human brain is capable of distinguishing between self and others by six months of age. The capacity of theory of mind (see chapter 1) takes that development further as we mature. More important for taking our place in the world as independent, resilient human beings, by four years of age our brains are capable of recognizing and accepting that other people may be having thoughts and feelings different from our own. Your thought, belief, impulse, feeling, or reaction to a topic, event, or reality may be completely different from mine at the same moment—and vice versa. And that's okay.

Theory of mind allows us to develop and maintain an inner subjective reality—a sense of self—that is separate from other people’s opinions and expectations of us. It allows us to be ourselves and other people to be who they are, regardless of our needs or projections. We each have our own inner subjective reality, whether we’re fully or only fuzzily in touch with it.

This capacity to differentiate our own thoughts, feelings, reactivity, and responses from another person’s helps us step back from assumptions, rules, and expectations about how we and others *should* feel or behave. Stepping back from “should” is essential for responding flexibly—reminding us that different options are available and that they are valid, a sine qua non of resilience.

Secure, resonant relationships enhance this capacity of theory of mind; less secure or un-empathic relationships typically don’t. So not all of our clients have fully developed this capacity by age four.

S-121 Setting Limits and Boundaries

Setting limits—trusting that we can set boundaries, regardless of another person’s reactions—also allows us to initiate communication and take risks in relationships that otherwise we might not perceive as safe. We learn to avoid either responding aggressively to protect ourselves or acquiescing completely to another person’s needs when they do not reflect our own needs. This experience supports the brain’s capacity to stay open to learning and change.

I help my clients strengthen their theory of mind that’s part of healing attachment trauma and then I help them learn to set limits and boundaries because they need and deserve to create safety for themselves in the world by having clear limits and boundaries with the people in their world. You as therapist may model setting limits and boundaries (ending session on time).

1. Identify what’s “wrong,” any intrusion into personal space, any disrespect of personal beliefs, any disregard for personal welfare.
2. Identify what limit or boundary would actually address that.
3. Identify what the consequences would be for violating that limit or boundary.
4. Identify how they would enforce the consequences,

My client Nancy was becoming more and more frustrated with her husband going out drinking with his buddies. That part was okay, but he would repeatedly promise to come home by a certain time and then invariably would come home two hours after that agreed upon time, often without calling to let her know what was going on.

Nancy was clear, Jim's staying out with his buddies wasn't the issue. She was fine having a quiet time at home with the dog and a good book. Her frustration was more about feeling disrespected and not cared about, not important when Jim didn't call to tell her about his change of plans. Not for permission but for communication of information.

Nancy asked me to help when she began to resent how powerless she felt. She did try talking to Jim about it. She was worried that someday something might happen and she would be getting a call from the police or the local hospital.

She needed a consequence for Jim's habit of forgetting to call, and rather than threatening to call the police or check with the local hospital, she told Jim the next time he was more than 30 minutes late without calling, she would call Jim's sister who lived in the same town. Jim was very fond of this sister, revered her almost, and truly did not want to look bad in her eyes. Nancy never ever had to call the sister; she had created a limit

with an enforceable consequence and Jim's ne habit of calling when he would be late started the very next weekend.

S-122 Negotiating Change, part 1 (reciprocal)

[do this exercise]

I teach this exercise on negotiating change to couples and individuals all the time. Because it's effective and the principles underlying it eliminate shame-blame-hostility and attack within the relationship and create conditions for empathy, understanding, and change.

This exercise is adapted from a method originally known around the world as Non-Violent Communication (NVC) developed by Marshall Rosenberg and now called Compassionate Communication. To some, the method can feel structured and mechanical, but when a conflict needs to be expressed and dealt with, it can be worth its weight in gold. When both people become adept at the protocol, they can identify the emotional needs that need to be addressed and choose appropriate actions to address them.

1. Stating the Intention

One person begins the conversation with: “There is something happening that’s impacting our relationship. I would like to talk about it. Are you available?” Mechanical! But it does close the exits. The listener agrees to listen respectfully until the speaker is done. If the listener is not available at that moment because he’s out the door on the way to work, or needs to be on an important conference call in five minutes, or is simply frazzled for the day, he can say no, but he must agree to be available within 24 hours. The speaker never has to nag or pursue once the mutual agreement to meet has been made.

2. Creating the Conditions to be Heard

Choose a time and place where there will be no distractions or interruptions. With the two sitting face to face, the speaker then states the topic in one sentence, and the listener repeats the topic back word for word so the speaker feels heard. The listener then asks, “Is there more?” That’s it. No commentary, no rebuttal, no resistance, no incredulity. This method completely prohibits any shame-blame-name calling. Safety and mutual respect are the priorities.

3) Speaking and Listening

The speaker then begins sharing her experience along the following lines: “I felt really hurt when I perceived (or thought or believed) you were flirting with Sandy at the block party last

night.” She acknowledges any of her own subjective impressions or thoughts that may have contributed to the experience. The listener listens, repeats the statement word for word, so the speaker feels heard. “You felt hurt when you thought I was flirting at the block party last night.” The listener expresses no defensiveness, no editorializing, no retaliating, no sharing of his experience. It can be much harder to be the listener than the speaker!

The speaker continues until she is done, focusing on the feelings and needs underneath the facts of the events. Rather than express the problem as a thought – “I feel as if you’re not interested in me anymore” – she tries to get down to the feeling underneath – “I’m worried, and I’m scared.” Getting to the heart of the matter usually takes far less time than one would expect, once the focus is placed on the feelings driving the speaker’s own behaviors.

4) Summary of concern

The listener gives a brief summary of the entire concern, and the speaker clarifies until both can agree on a clear statement of it. In this case, it might be: “When you experience me paying attention to other people and not paying enough attention to you or to us, you’re worried that I don’t love you as much as I did; that I’m not really there for you.”

S-123 **Negotiating Change, part 2**

5) The request for change

The speaker articulates the request that would address the emotional need underneath: “I need to hear from you that you still love me; that you’re in this 100 percent.” She then identifies three things she is willing to do herself to address her emotional needs, for example: “I will check in with you at least once in the coming week to hear how you feel we’re doing as a couple.” “I will remind myself that I am loved by you before we to the football game with Sandy and Jim two weeks from now.” “I will pull you aside and speak to you right away the next time I experience any worry about your behavior.”

The speaker identifies three things the listener could do that would help address her emotional needs, such as: “I ask that you spend five minutes with me every night this week telling me three things you appreciate about me.” “I ask that you include me in at least one conversation you have with Sandy in the coming month.” “I ask that you spontaneously give me a big hug and tell me you’re glad to see me at least once in the coming week.”

The speaker and listener each choose *one* of the three behaviors to do in the specified time period. The requests must be for changes in behaviors (not changing personality or

character, but behavior) that are *positive* (specifying what is wanted rather than what is not wanted), *specific, measurable, and set in a specific time frame* so that both speaker and listener know when they have been accomplished.

4. Following through

As the pair implements the change requests, the speaker is responsible for acknowledging and showing appreciation when a request for change has been met. If the change didn't address her emotional need after all, she can use the method again to get clearer and more on target. The listener then takes his turn using the same formula that lets him create the conditions to be heard, communicate his feelings and needs, and present his six requests for change. If each person does one new behavior every week for a year, they will have instituted more than 100 positive changes in their relationship in that year. Pretty resilient!

Sometimes, even with secure attachment and theory of mind, but especially when not, people can fall into conflicts with spouse, family members, co-workers, neighbors, and not know how to resolve them.

At times our habitual lenses of perception and reactivity can make responsible speaking and empathic listening almost impossible. Both people in a conversation can be caught in a mind-set of “me. vs. you,” “us vs. them,” or “always-never.”

The differences feel intolerable and frustrations run high. Learning to communicate your fears and wishes to other people, and receiving their communication about their fears and wishes in return, is a practice of relational intelligence that will sustain resilience for a lifetime.

S-124 Resolving conflict

- Acknowledge conflict
- Identify possible misunderstandings, mis-perceptions
- Take responsibility for your part in conflict
- Convey your responsibility to other; ask them to reflect on their responsibility for their part
- Brainstorm possible solutions; come to agreement

Slide here for clients. I do practice with clients in session, any conflict or disagreement they have had with me. The conflict or disagreement may be a genuine disagreement in real time right now but, as we know, the client and I can also be caught in an enactment from the past. It may take more time and skill to unpack the many layers of an enactment, but me being able to take responsibility for my part (I need a strong, mature, well-functioning PFC myself) helps model for them taking responsibility for their part, too.

S-125 Repairing a Rupture

Likewise, this particular slide is for clients to get the map of repairing a rupture.

Researchers have discovered that even in “good enough” close relationships we spend about one third of the time in actual relating (attuned connection) about one third in rupture (mis-attuned or disrupted connection) and one third in repair (recovering the attuned connection.) Repair is the most important phase of this rhythm, especially in terms of re-wiring our patterns of behavior.

Years ago, I was visiting relatives in northern Minnesota on their summer vacation and witnessed a brilliant example of repair. My seven-year-old cousin Marty was fishing off the dock one morning. His mom, my Aunt Gen, came out to check on him, noticed his mouth was covered in jelly and crumbs from his morning donut, and scolded him for being so messy as she wiped his face clean. Marty’s body visibly slumped in a sulk. As Gen started to walk back to the house, Marty’s dad, my Uncle Ted, who had watched the whole scene, walked over to Marty, put his hand gently on his shoulder, and reassured him, “That’s okay, son. Fish bite better with a dirty face anyway.” Marty gave his dad a smile and a high five and joyfully went back to fishing.

Gen, who had watched Ted’s skillful repair to Marty’s self-esteem, decided to try to make amends with Marty, taking responsibility for causing a rupture in Marty’s self-esteem as well as between the two of them. She went into the house for

more donuts. Back on the dock, she handed one to Ted to eat and ate one herself. Gen intentionally left crumbs on her face, then asked Marty, “How’s the fishing?” Marty looked at her, understood her attempt at repair, laughed, and gave her a big hug.

So I go over these steps with the client, of course working to overcome any reluctance or resistance to do these steps. (I had a consultant once who said he could work with any reluctance or resistance on the part of the client, but if the client refused, the therapy would stall, and the focus would have to shift with working with the refusal.)

Focus on repairing the relationship, not on right v. wrong

- Value of relationship, motivation to repair
- Mindful empathy for each other
- Share experiences, not opinions
- Convey understanding of experience, care for person
- Re-engage from more resonant space

S-126 Forgiveness

The last skill in this section on skills of relational intelligence is perhaps graduate level work in interpersonal relation.

Forgiveness is an art, it is a practice, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would say:

Forgiveness is not an occasional act;

It is a permanent attitude.

Whether the causes of a potentially or previously traumatizing experience lie outside of us in other people or circumstances or within ourselves, whether we bear no responsibility or some, or a lot, practicing forgiveness allows us to bring the brain out of the contraction of anger, resentment, grudge, hostility, shut down and withdrawal. Forgiveness is not an emotion; it's a behavior of an attitude of the heart and mind that brings the functioning of the brain out of the lower brain's survival responses and back into the larger perspective of the higher brain - utterly necessary for resilience.

Most clients will experience injury, injustice, disappointment, or betrayal at some point in their lives. Staying caught in those experiences can block their resilience and their relational intelligence from developing. Continuing to feel judgment, blame, resentment, bitterness, and hostility against those who have caused us harm can cause us pain and suffering themselves.

The same can be true if the client hasn't been able to forgive themselves for harm they have caused others or themselves. We want to help them rewire the behaviors of complaining,

criticism, disgruntlement, and contentiousness they can so easily get stuck in, and re- open themselves to the genuine understanding, compassion, grieving, and forgiveness that are needed to move into resilient coping and relational intelligence.

It's important to say here: forgiveness does not mean condoning, pardoning, forgetting, false reconciliation, appeasement, or sentimentality. It is a practice, daily and lifelong, of cultivating an inner peace and wisdom that allows our clients to see that their pain is part of the pain of all human beings universally, to reset their moral compass, and to remain compassionate even in the face of injustice, betrayal, and harm.

They may even need to practice forgiveness of life itself, that they've been dealt the hand they've been dealt by life.

This forgiveness practice I will share with you comes from Jack Kornfield, a practicing psychologist as well as beloved spiritual teacher from his book *The Art of Loving Kindness: Forgiveness and Peace*. It's not the only skill needed for healing from hurt and betrayal into post traumatic growth, but it is an important one.

S-127 Forgiveness I

1. Let yourself sit comfortably, allowing your eyes to close and your breath to be natural and easy. Let your body and mind

relax. Breathe gently into the area of your heart, letting yourself feel all the barriers you have erected and the emotions you have carried because you have not forgiven yourself or others. Let yourself feel the pain of keeping your heart closed.

2. Breathing softly, moving through each of the following possibilities for forgiveness. Begin reciting the suggested words, letting the healing images and feelings that come up grow deeper as you repeat the phrases of forgiveness.

3. Seek forgiveness from others with the following words:
There are many ways that I have hurt and harmed others, have betrayed or abandoned them, caused them suffering, knowingly or unknowingly, out of my pain, fear, anger, and confusion.

Let yourself remember and visualize the ways you have hurt others. See the pain you have caused out of your own fear and confusion. Feel your own sorrow and regret. Sense that finally you can release this burden and ask for forgiveness. Take as much time as you need to picture each memory that still burdens your heart. And then as each person comes to mind, gently say:
I ask for your forgiveness, I ask for your forgiveness.

S-128 Forgiveness II

4. Seek forgiveness for yourself with the following words: *Just as I have caused suffering to others, there are many ways that I*

have hurt and harmed myself. I have betrayed or abandoned myself many times in thought, word, or deed, knowingly or unknowingly.

Feel your own precious body and life. Let yourself see the ways you have hurt or harmed yourself. Picture them, remember them. Feel the sorrow you have carried from this and sense that you can release these burdens. Extend forgiveness for each act of harm, one by one. Repeat to yourself: *For the ways I have hurt myself through action or inaction, out of fear, pain, and confusion, I now extend a full and heartfelt forgiveness. I forgive myself, I forgive myself.*

S-129 Forgiveness III

5. Find forgiveness for those who have hurt or harmed you with the following words:

There are many ways I have been harmed by others, abused or abandoned, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought, word or deed.

You have been betrayed. Let yourself picture and remember the many ways this is true. Feel the sorrow you have carried from this past. Now sense that you can release this burden of pain by gradually extending forgiveness as your heart is ready. Recite to yourself: *I remember the many ways others have hurt, wounded, or harmed me, out of fear, pain, confusion, and anger. I have*

carried this pain in my heart long enough. To the extent that I am ready, I offer you forgiveness. To those who have caused me harm, I offer my forgiveness, I forgive you.

Gently repeat these three directions for forgiveness until you feel a release in your heart. For some great pains you may not feel a release; instead, you may experience again the burden and the anguish or anger you have held. Touch this softly. Be forgiving of yourself for not being ready to let go and move on. Forgiveness cannot be forced; it cannot be artificial. Simply continue the practice and let the words and the images work gradually in their own way. In time you can make the forgiveness meditation a regular part of your life, letting go of the past and opening your heart to each new moment with a wise loving kindness.

S-130 Integrating the Take Aways

What tools/exercises could you commit to practicing every day?

What obstacles might get in the way?

What resources could you draw on to overcome the obstacles?

Individual reflection, journaling, share in groups of three; large group Q&A

Exercise in the Brahma Viharas: Taking in the Innate Goodness of Others

Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in the eyes of the Divine. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, nor more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed. ...I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other. – Thomas Merton

The Brahma Viharas – loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity – are considered to be “the divine abodes” in the Buddhist wisdom tradition: states of consciousness we embody as we move toward enlightenment. These four Brahma Viharas are also states of being we cultivate to further us on the path toward enlightenment.

1. This exercise is done with a partner, entirely in noble silence. Invite a friend to do this guided meditation with you. Sit across from each other so that you can easily maintain eye contact. Decide who will be partner A and who will be partner B.

2. Begin by simply gazing into each other’s eyes, allowing yourself to see in your partner the nobility of their true nature.

Their innate goodness and radiance of their being; their sincere wishes for peace, happiness, and well-being.

3. Partner A closes her eyes. Partner B begins to silently wish her well, sending her sincere expressions of loving kindness: may you know the deepest happiness, may you have ease of mind and heart. Partner A, let yourself know that your partner is sending you expressions of loving kindness; let yourself receive and take in the kindness being offered you.

4. Partner B closes his eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience and giving and receiving wishes for loving kindness, happiness, peace and ease.

5. Partner A opens her eyes; partner B keeps his eyes closed. Partner A begins to begins to silently Partner B well, sending him sincere expressions of loving kindness: may you know the deepest happiness, may you have ease of mind and heart. Partner B, let yourself know that your partner is sending you expressions of loving kindness; let yourself receive and take in the kindness being offered you.

4. Partner A closes her eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience and giving and receiving wishes for kindness and happiness, peace and ease.

5. Partner B opens his eyes; Partner A's eyes remain closed. Partner B begins to imagine what human sorrows Partner A might have experienced in her journey, what losses, what griefs, what pain of the human condition. Partner B silently begins to send Partner A expressions of compassion: May your sorrows be held in loving awareness, may your sorrows ease; may yours sorrows cease. May you be free of suffering, and all causes of suffering, and from causing any suffering. Partner A: let yourself take in the care and compassion being offered to you.

7. Partner B closes his eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving compassion and care for sorrows and suffering.

8. Partner A opens her eyes; Partner B's eyes remain closed. Partner A begins to imagine what human sorrows Partner B might have experienced in his journey, what losses, what griefs, what pain of the human condition. Partner A silently begins to send Partner B expressions of compassion: May your sorrows be held in loving awareness, may your sorrows ease; may yours sorrows cease. May you be free of suffering, and all causes of suffering, and from causing any suffering. Partner B: let yourself take in the care and compassion being offered to you.

9. Partner A closes her eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving compassion and care for sorrows and suffering.

10. Partner B opens his eyes; Partner A's eyes remain closed. Partner B begins to imagine what human joys Partner A may have experienced in her journey. What accomplishments and competencies she might have achieved. What blessings of abundance and love she might have experienced. And silently begin to send her expressions of sympathetic joy, happiness for her happiness. May you fully delight in your delight; may you feel your joy deeply. Partner A; let yourself receive these sincere wishes from your partner for your own deepening joy.

11. Partner B closes his eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving joy and delight.

12. Partner A opens her eyes; Partner B's eyes remain closed. Partner A begins to imagine what human joys Partner B may have experienced in his journey. What accomplishments and competencies he might have achieved. What blessings of abundance and love he might have experienced. And silently begin to send her expressions of sympathetic joy, happiness for his happiness. May you fully delight in your delight; may you feel your joy deeply. Partner B; let yourself receive these sincere wishes from your partner for your own deepening joy.

13. Partner A closes her eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving joy and delight.

14. Partner B opens his eyes; Partner A's eyes remain closed. Partner B begins to imagine what ups and downs Partner A might have experienced in her life; what twists and turns. And begin to send her wishes for equanimity, for a calm abiding in centeredness and groundedness as she rides the waves of life. Partner A, let yourself receive these wishes for equanimity, balance and deep inner peace.

15. Partner B closes his eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving wishes for calm, for equanimity, for deep inner peace.

16. Partner A opens her eyes; Partner B's eyes remain closed. Partner A begins to imagine what ups and downs Partner B might have experienced in his life; what twists and turns. And begins to send him wishes for equanimity, for a calm abiding in centeredness and groundedness as he rides the waves of life. Partner B, let yourself receive these wishes for equanimity, balance and deep inner peace.

17. Partner A closes her eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving wishes for calm, for equanimity, for deep inner peace.

18. With eyes remaining closed, both partners simply bring awareness to this entire experience, reflecting on the giving and

receiving of kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Notice any changes in your sense of yourself or of your partner.

19. Both partners open their eyes; simply gaze into the eyes of the person you have shared this experience with. Give a bow of thanks and gratitude for creating this experience together.

Inquiry: which resonated more: giving or receiving? Which practice of the four resonated the most?

6:30pm