

Becoming the Observer

(www.ShamanicSpring.com. Excerpt, slightly modified, from Sandra Ingerman, *Medicine for the Earth*, Three Rivers Press, 2001, pp. 84-85) *Note: Sandra gratefully acknowledges that this exercise is based on the work of Roberto Assagioli.*
You might wish to record the following meditation or have someone read it to you as you experience it.

Exercise #1.

Breathe and observe your breathing. As you breathe, be aware of what thoughts, emotions, and sensations arise. Breathing focuses the attention and helps develop concentration. As you observe your breath, you will notice that your breathing slows down. The breath and the mind are connected. When the breath slows down, the mind slows down. To better understand the reality and source of thought or emotion that arise, ask yourself the following questions:

From where does this arise?

Who am I?

To whom does this occur?

Simply watch the flow of thought or emotions, and thus the flow of consciousness. Through observation, the mind quiets and becomes calmer, and so does the breath.

Exercise #2.

Relax and sit quietly. Look around you and become aware of every detail. Next, close your eyes and inhale slowly, taking inside you vivid visual awareness. Then exhale slowly, asking yourself, "Who is aware?"

With eyes closed, imagine that you are drawing a circle with chalk on a blackboard. Look at the circle. Then take a deep breath and as you exhale, ask yourself, "Who is aware?"

Now let the circle fade away. Continuing to breathe slowly, stay with yourself as the one who is aware. Take time to really experience being yourself.

Repeat the entire exercise several times until you experience the self as the source of stability and clear perception in the midst of change.

Then, with awareness of being your unchanging self, turn your attention to your body. Recognize the changing sensations and conditions of the body over time, in contrast to your unchanging self.

Still aware of being your unchanging self, turn your attention to your feelings. Recognize that your feelings also constantly change, though the self does not change.

Focus again on being your unchanging self; turn your attention to your mind. Recognize that your mind is filled with thoughts that change, though the self, the center of awareness, remains unchanged.

Focus again on your unchanging self. Recognize that although the three aspects of body, feelings, and mind are valuable means of expression in the world, they are not you. You have the capacity to direct and regulate the body, feelings, and mind at will.

Experience the following as vividly as possible: "I have a body, but I am not my body. I have emotions, but I am not my emotions. I have a mind, but I am not my mind. I am, rather, that which has a sense of being, permanence, and inner balance. I am a center of identity and pure self-consciousness and will."

Selected Resources for Transforming Thoughts and Emotions

Sam Horn. *Ten Tongue Fu Tips*.

http://www.samhorn.com/media/articles/Ten_Tongue_Fu_Tips.htm.

Handy, one-page (double-sided) reference sheet for improving communication, with helpful examples.

Sandra Ingerman. *How to Heal Toxic Thoughts: Simple Tools for Personal Transformation*.

(Sterling Publishers, 2007). http://www.shamanicvisions.com/ingerman_folder/04books.html

Teaches readers how to identify toxic thoughts, transmute negative energy, and shield themselves from the harmful influences others project out of ignorance. Filled with pragmatic tools for coping with negative thoughts and emotions, Ingerman helps readers transform toxic thoughts into feelings of peace, harmony, and love.

Byron Katie. Online resources <http://www.thework.com/thework.asp#howto>,

<http://www.thework.com/>, and <http://www.thework.com/resources.asp>.

Byron Katie has many brief exercises and readily accessible worksheets, fact sheets, examples, and other online resources. Her tools are great for helping you to test the truth of your thoughts, emotions, perceptions, and beliefs.

Byron Katie and Stephen Mitchell. *Loving What Is: Four Questions That Can Change Your Life*.

(Crown Publishing Group, December 2003) 352 pp. <http://www.thework.com/books.asp>

Byron Katie and Michael Katz. *I Need Your Love - Is That True?: The Search for Love, Approval, and Happiness*. (Crown Publishing Group, April 2005) 288 pp.

<http://www.thework.com/books.asp>

My full listing of recommended shamanic resources is online at
<http://www.ShamanicSpring.com/RecommendedLinks.htm>

Fostering Emotional Health

Some "Original" (True) Feelings

Anger, sadness, joy, fear, compassion (love)

How Feelings Look When Distorted* - A Sampler

Original (True) Feeling or Cause	When Distorted, Can Become ...
Anger, sadness, fear	Hate
Anger, sadness, fear	Rage
Anger, sadness, fear	Shame
Anger, sadness, fear	Guilt
Anger, sadness, fear	Impatience
Anger, sadness, fear	Desire for vengeance
Fear of not enough to go around	Jealousy
Comparing yourself to someone and judging yourself as lacking; also, fear	Adoration (putting someone on a pedestal)

*Distortion may be caused primarily by repression, learned behaviors, or anything else that blocks their normal, healthy flow.

Feelings: What To Do With Them?

Mode	How Healthy?	How to Process
Repress ¹	Not healthy; possibly harmful to you and others.	As you release the emotion, ask that the energy be transformed into healing or neutral energy.
Send to Others ("psychic vomiting," attacking)? ¹	Not healthy; possibly harmful to others.	Take it back.
Deny? (Ignore or be oblivious, unaware of) ¹	Not healthy; possibly harmful to you and others.	As you release the emotion, ask that the energy be transformed into healing or neutral energy.
Express in healthy, honest, non-manipulative way ²	Healthy!	As you release the emotion, face it with courage and ask that the energy be transformed into healing or neutral energy.

1. Repressing, sending, and denying feelings create a toxic environment, increasing the amount of unhealed energy in the total energy field.
2. Examples include using "I" statements, not "you" statements. Remember that what usually upsets you isn't what the person said or did but *your interpretation* of what they said or did. Remember that others are not here to live up to your expectations.

Practicing Honest Conversation

(Acknowledgement: Not sure where I found this years ago, but it's a gem.
Probably came via Radical Honesty, Brad Blanton's organization.)

Far too often, we assume we're being "honest" when in reality we're being used by our invisible automatic survival programming to manipulate the person we're mad or hurt at to buy our story, understand how we feel, get an apology, or admit they are wrong. As you come to own responsibility for your reactions, emotions and stories, you will more easily admit and reveal what you are experiencing (feeling and thinking) rather than confuse your story (the meaning you attach to what happened) with the truth.

So, for a quick guide, remember that if you can record what happened and anyone watching could see or hear what happened, you're on track. This statement of course does not include getting others to agree with you (buy your interpretation) rather than stick to facts.

Red Flags

1. If it's an adjective, it's an interpretation. ("That look on your face," not "that mean look.")
2. Always and Never are interpretations
3. You made/make me feel

Say What Happened

How hard you closed the door ...
The tone of your voice
For what you said
For how many times
For how I felt when

Not Your Interpretation

For slamming the door
The nasty way you said
For attacking me
For always
For making me feel

Evidence

Raised your voice
Pushed me
Said "Stop overreacting"
Rolled your eyes
Didn't invite me
Said I was stupid
You had sex with

Your Story

Intimidated me
Attacked me
Didn't let me have me feelings
Didn't respect me
Excluded me
You hurt me
You don't love me. If you did

Ok, you get the idea. Listen carefully to yourself.

Notice your favorite repeating stories and interpretations. That's what you filter for.

It is with the eyes of the heart that we see through all deceptions. With the voice of the heart we speak the language common to all beings. With the Wisdom of the heart, we know we are One.

"For the ordinary being, the practice of tolerance is necessary. For the evolved being, there is no need for tolerance, for there is no such thing as Other." -- Lao Tsu

Ten Tongue Fu! Tips

Sam Horn; http://www.samhorn.com/media/articles/Ten_Tungue_Fu_Tips.htm

1: Don't Explain, AAA. When people complain, don't explain; take the AAA train: Agree, apologize, and act instead of explaining why something wasn't done. That can sound as if you're making excuses, and it might make some people angrier. The better way: "You're right, Mrs. Smith, we were supposed to send that brochure to you last week, and I'm sorry you didn't receive it yet. If I could please have your name and address again, I'll personally put that brochure in an envelope and make sure it goes out today." Voila! Complaint over.

2: What Do You Mean? Has someone accused you of something you didn't do? Don't defend or deny it. Instead, put the conversational ball back in their court with, "What do you mean?" Asking the person to explain herself will cause her to reveal the real issue, and you can address that instead of reacting to the attack. Imagine an upset client exclaims, "You don't care about your customers." Responding, "That's not true. We pride ourselves on our quality service" would only create a yes-we-do, no-you-don't debate. Instead, ask, "What makes you think that?" The client may harrumph, "I've left three messages and no one's called back." Now you know what's really bothering him, and you can give him the attention he wants and deserves.

3: Police Hand, Stop Blame; Time Out. Stop blaming-by using a hand gesture. No, not that one! If people are arguing and you try to talk over them, what usually happens? They talk louder, and the voice of reason is drowned out in the commotion. Putting up your hand like a police officer stopping traffic will make people pause for a moment, which gives you a chance to get your verbal foot in the door. Then say these magic words: "We're here to find solutions, not fault." Remind them that John F. Kennedy said, "Our task is not to fix the blame for the past; it's to fix the course for the future." If the conversation starts deteriorating into a gripe session again, make a T with your hands and call time-out, saying "Calling each other names won't help. Instead, let's figure out how we can keep this from happening again."

4: Report, Don't Attack. Are people swearing at each other? Hold them accountable. Physically (gently) separate them, tell them they'll each get their turn, and then pull out paper and pen. Suggest, "Start at the beginning and write what happened." Now, they have to think back and relate events in chronological order. That moves them from an emotional frame of mind to an objective one. They're now reporting instead of ranting and raving, and they have to slow down to write. Once they slow down, they'll calm down. Taking notes motivates most people to clean up their language because they don't want documentation of their temper tantrum or verbal abuse.

5: Frustration to Empathy. Fast-forward through frustration with a statement of empathy. Next time you're feeling irritated with someone, ask how you would feel if the situation were happening to you. Exasperation can be a byproduct of seeing things from one point of view: our own. A trainer once told me, "I used to get annoyed when I'd go to all the effort to organize a requested program and employees would gripe about having to attend on their day off. When I put myself in their shoes, I understood. If I worked six days a week and had to come in on my only free day, I might be unhappy, too. That gave me the incentive to be more compassionate."

6: Let 'Em Know You Care. When it seems there's nothing you can do, let them know you care. A front desk manager at a hotel in Hawaii asked me, "What can we say when people grumble about the rain? There's nothing we can do about the weather." I told her, "The words 'there's nothing I can do' come across as apathetic. Guests will feel you don't give a darn, and they'll get louder and angrier in an effort to make you give a darn. Use the words 'I wish,' or 'I hope,' or say something to let them know you're doing your best to help. Say, "I wish I could bring out the sunshine for you. I know you were

looking forward to some beach time” or “I hope it clears up soon. In case it doesn't, here's a list of rainy-day activities so you can make the most of your visit even if the sun doesn't cooperate. ” We can't always give people what they want. But we can at least give them our concern.

7: Don't Criticize; Coach. Has someone made a mistake? Be a coach, not a critic. If something's gone wrong and we tell workers what they should've done, they'll resent us—even when we're right. A seminar participant clarified: “They'll resent us, especially if we're right.” Why? People can't undo the past. If they're being criticized for something they can't change, they'll channel their discomfort into antagonism. My favorite boss used to tell me, “We can't motivate people to do better by making them feel bad. ” Telling people what they should've done makes them feel bad and doesn't show them how to do better. From now on when people make a mistake, coach their behavior with the words “next time” or “in the future.” Now, you're shaping their performance instead of shaming it, and they're learning instead of losing face.

8: Laugh. Develop a repertoire of Fun Fu! remarks. Erma Bombeck (bless her soul) said, “If we can laugh at it, we can live with it.” Are you sensitive about something? Perhaps you're losing your hair or you've put on a few pounds. You have a choice: You can continue to give people the power to push your buttons, or you can come up with clever, non-combative comebacks and keep your wit and wits about you. Want an example? I ran into a very tall man in an airport. The people in front of me were laughing and pointing at him. I thought, how rude! until he got closer and I saw his T-shirt. It read: “No, I'm not a basketball player!” On the back of his shirt were the words, “Are you a jockey?” He told me he used to dread going out of the house because everyone made smart-aleck remarks. He finally decided if he couldn't beat 'em, he might as well join 'em. The tall man said, “I have a drawer full of these shirts at home. My favorite says, 'I'm 6'1" and the weather up here is fine.' Ever since I started wearing these shirts, I've had fun with my height instead of being frustrated by it.” I'd call him a Fun Fu! black belt.

9: "And" not "But". Involved in a disagreement? Get off your “but.” Linguist William Safire was once asked, “Is sloppy communication due to ignorance or apathy?” Safire answered with a twinkle in his eye, “I don't know and I don't care.” I think we care about how we communicate. What we may not know is that many of us use a relationship-destroying word that sets us up as adversaries and perpetuates conflict. That word is “but.” How do you feel when someone says, “I hear what you're saying, but we tried that before; it didn't work”? Now, imagine if that person replaced that destructive word but with the constructive word and: “I hear what you're saying, and we tried that before and it didn't work out. Do you have any suggestions on how we could handle it differently this time?” Do you hear how the word “and” lets people know you're listening? It moves conversations forward instead of anchoring them in a right-or-wrong dispute.

10: "Yes" not "No". Turn no's into yes's. Imagine a staff member asks, “Can I have my paycheck early? I'm going to Las Vegas this weekend,” and you answer, “Sorry, you can't because it hasn't been approved by payroll.” That's the truth; however, the employee may get upset because you're rejecting his request. The words “can't because” are like a verbal door slamming in his face. Want good news? You can often approve requests with the words, “Sure,” “as soon as,” or “yes, right after.” Reword your reply to, “Sure you can have your paycheck, as soon as it's approved by payroll. Why don't we give them a call, explain the circumstances, and see if there's any way they can speed things up.” One manager said, “I can't wait to use this idea at home. My kids see me as a big meanie because they're constantly asking for permission and I'm always telling them no. Next time they ask if they can go outside and play with their friends, instead of telling them, ‘No you can't because you haven't finished your homework,’ I'm going to say, ‘Sure you can, right after you finish your homework.’ Instead of seeing me as the one who's keeping them from what they want, this makes them responsible for getting what they want. It changes the whole dynamic of our relationship.”

Frequently Asked Questions

<http://www.radicalhonesty.com/faq.htm>

These questions are compiled from interviews with Brad Blanton Ph.D., author of *Radical Honesty: How to Transform Your Life by Telling the Truth*.

Q: What is lying and why is it stressful?

A: Lying is saying or withholding information in order to manipulate someone's opinion of you. It captures your attention by bringing your focus to the story you're telling, the image you're preserving, and the secret that you're hiding. You're no longer able to focus your attention wherever you want to focus it; you're only able to focus your attention on the lies you're telling and the secret you're keeping. This captured attention creates stress. In *Radical Honesty*, I attempt to demonstrate that this secrecy, withholding and lying is the primary source of modern human stress, the primary cause of most anxiety and of most depression.

Q: Does everyone lie?

A: Yes. We are always telling some kind of story, building a case for ourselves and trying to put on a best face. We're trying to prove we're good little boys and girls and that we're knowledgeable. Four years ago in a nationwide survey titled "The Day America Told the Truth," 93% of Americans admitted that they lie "regularly and habitually" at work and 35% admitted they have had or were currently having an affair which they were keeping secret from their mates.

Q: Is it possible to be completely honest without hurting a person's feelings?

A: Probably not. If you are in an ongoing relationship with any person there will probably be times when you hurt their feelings. Probably the most often used rationalization for lying is "I didn't want to hurt anybody's feelings." I recommend you hurt people's feelings and stay with them past the hurt. I also recommend that you offend people. We can all get over having our feelings hurt and we can get over being offended. These are not permanent conditions; they are feelings that come and go. On the other side of that reaction is a conversation in which your mutual honesty creates an intimacy not possible if you are hiding something for the sake of someone's feelings.

Q: What if I get mad at someone's reaction to my truth telling?

A: Tell them you are mad. Say "I resent you for..." and be specific about what visible, audible part of their reaction you resent. People actually get furious at other people and get over it in 15 or 20 minutes. People can avoid being angry at someone else for 10 or 15 or 20 years, and if they actually got angry at them, they'd probably get over it in half an hour.

Q: Do you feel we have to be honest with ourselves before we can have a relationship with someone else?

A: You can't be "secretly" honest. Being "honest with yourself" is simply not separable from being honest with another. A person who says, "I was honest with myself, but decided not to tell..." is just another miserable liar and will have to suffer the consequences. Sharing honestly, with others present, is the way we can have an authentic relationship with another person.

Q: You require your therapy patients to go and tell the truth about things in their past to parents, siblings or spouses. Why?

A: What I've discovered in 25 years of working with people as a psychotherapist in Washington, DC, is that the primary source of their misery is lying. When I coached them to clean up their act and tell the truth they had a hard time going through it, but right on the other side of that hard time they were no longer depressed, they were no longer anxious—they were happier. They had their relationship worked out or a new job with a promotion. They had a brand new relationship with their spouse or a better

relationship with their family. What actually occurs is that when you open up and share by telling the truth, it frees you up from the jail of your own mind, which is the source of all human stress anyway. It's also just simply more efficient not to work so hard at all those poses.

Q: In the case of someone who was abused as a child, they are supposed to go back to their parents-and their parents are 70 years old- and tell them they resent the abuse?

A: You're damn right. I often have people bring parents in such cases into my office and tell them in front of me. We have two-hour sessions with the parent and the child. The child begins first by asking the parent to keep quiet and listen. Then the child tells them everything that they specifically remember that they resent and everything that they appreciate. If there's something that they did, like they stole the car at two a.m. when they were 16 and took it out and got a dent in the front fender and brought it back and covered it over and got by with it, I have them tell the truth about it and other things they got by with too. And then I coach the parents to tell the truth to their child about what they resent and what they appreciate. And it works out quite well. It works out for a renewed relationship between the parent and child. As long as there are hidden issues and agendas and feelings, you can never be yourselves with each other..

Q: Why do people have such a hard time being honest about sex?

A: For people to be honest about their sexuality is one of the big hurdles for everyone to get over because sexuality is such a taboo subject. I tell people when I'm attracted to them and they tell me when they are attracted to me to make sure that nothing is going on disacknowledged, that is, an avoidance of reporting feelings which is what we're trying to cure.

Q: Suppose you met someone whom you found unattractive. How do you handle that?

A: If the person's outstandingly ugly, then that's an issue I'm certainly going to bring up to talk about right off. I would say, "I think you look kind of ugly and this is what I think is ugly. I think that big wart on the left side of your face is probably something that puts people off and that you don't have much of a love life, is that true?" Then we'll have a conversation about it. That ugly person probably always felt the negative unexpressed reaction from people. The idea is that they end up not avoiding the damn thing instead of living a life that's dancing on egg shells. They live life out loud and it's a whole lot better life.

Q: What if you want to be honest and you don't even know the truth yourself?

A: What's true, then, is that you don't know. So you say that. Sometimes it might be more honest to say "I don't know" where it's a real opening where you don't know, and you're willing to be with not knowing; that's where creativity comes from. But more often than not, when people say "I just don't know," it's a protest, it's a whine, it's a not wanting to take responsibility. An authentic "I don't know" is a great place to be.

Q: Is there one central point that you would like people to know about Radical Honesty?

A: I think the focus of what I have to say is not so much some moral taboo against lying as it is that I am in favor of people having fun in their lives, and having joyful, playful lives, serving each other. I'm not morally condoning telling the truth or saying that it's immoral to lie. I'm just talking about a pragmatic thing. If you go out and tell each other the truth you'll be happier. You're better nurtured in a world in which you're telling the truth than you are in a world in which you're cowering, hiding and lying.

Ten Tips to Living a Radically Honest Life

<http://www.radicalhonesty.com/tips.htm>

1. Tell the truth -- live out loud by telling other people the truth about what you have done, what you feel and what you think.
2. If you have a lot of reasons to not say something to someone, find him or her and say it.
3. Don't use "but I didn't want to hurt his/her feelings" as an excuse to withhold the truth. Hurt people's feelings and stay with them through it. Let them hurt your feelings and stay with you through it.
4. If you find that you are having a difficult time following through on a commitment you made to someone, or are making a lot of mistakes in honoring that agreement, you are probably angry with that person. Go tell him or her what you are mad about.
5. Tell your parents about the time you stole the car and dinged it backing out of a parking lot ... well, you get the idea.
6. Remember that there is no such thing as "none of your business" in an intimate relationship.
7. Tell your spouse/partner your complete sexual story, past and present. Don't generalize; tell who, what, how long, how many, how it felt, etc.
8. Be the same person to your parents, your lover, and your boss.
9. If you're gossiping about someone, you are probably angry at that person. Go tell him or her what you are mad about.
10. Ask explicitly for what you want. Don't compromise, not tell this because it will affect that, hint, accommodate, and bully. Those are manipulations to get what you want.

Byron Katie's Worksheets

Facilitation Guide: <http://www.thework.com/pdf/facilitationguide.pdf>

Stressful Beliefs: <http://www.thework.com/pdf/onebelief.pdf>

Judge Your Neighbor: http://www.thework.com/pdf/6QJYN_21Nov07.pdf

Little Cards: http://www.thework.com/pdf/Yellow_Cards_10_06.pdf

"The Work" website: <http://www.thework.com/thework.asp>