



Deepening in the gifts of romantic relationships

Manual 1: Intrapersonal level

AN EDUCATIVE MANUAL

Eirini Dakou | Final Project on Process Work Training | May 2023

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Introduction

This manual is developed in the context of final project for the Process Work training program by Eirini Ntakou, Psychologist MSc – Psychotherapist. The material, theory and exercises, is based in the methodology of the Process Work paradigm developed by Arnold Mindell’s breakthrough viewpoint or a Process oriented psychology, although it attempts a connection with other theoretical paradigms in parallel. More specifically the manual follows to a great extent the outline, theory presentation and exercises, of the book of one of Mindell’s students and continuator of Process Work paradigm, Jan Dworkin’s “Make love better” (published in 2019 by BellySong Press) and attempts a further step: using this material to educate and prepare facilitators/educators/therapists that might be trained in Processwork or not and wish to support people’s learning on romantic/couple relationships.

The ulterior goal of the manual is the creation of a complete educational program which will include three seminars on the theme of romantic relationships. Each seminar will be focusing in each of the three levels of human interaction in relating respectively: the intrapersonal, the interpersonal and the transpersonal or field level which are more analytically presented later in the manual. In the context of this final project, the first seminar addressing the intrapersonal/intrapsychic level in relating, is completed.

The choice of romantic relationships as the thematic and the decision to create experiential educational material in this thematic, came firstly out the recognition of my own personal need for deepening, knowledge and growth in romantic relating. Secondly out of the realization that my clients, but also my friends, relatives, acquaintances, fellow professionals – in reality all people – who face difficulties, questions and tensions around our intimate relationships which we cannot always understand or make good use of. This project therefore is my own small contribution to a more meaningful encounter among people in love.

Purpose and goals

I. Purpose of the manual

The importance of romantic relationships in peoples' lives is a universal experience. In all the depths and widths of the earth, and regardless age, social, professional, financial situation, regardless religious, ideologic view, social or political culture, during wars, famines, acne or decline of civilizations, humans are falling in love, come close, love and connect with each other. The sexual and romantic relationships are decisively inherent to life since the beginning of human presence in the planet, and irrespectively of their several dimensions which have – gradually as the centuries pass – been altered, they definitely are central to human existence and life.

Parallel to human longing to relate, to love and be loved, to find meaning and joy in companionship, merging and ecstasy in sexual contact, security and context in togetherness, relationships are usually also a factor of difficulty and/or destabilization. At the same time relationships are affected, today probably more than ever, by countless stereotypes, absence of functional models, and a tendency for a superficial view and understanding of relating. Social media are full of advice on how to “keep” your lover in your life or which men/women are suitable partners or not, which sign is fitting with which, which are good relationships and which not. Simultaneously, the divorce and separation rates are rising constantly, large percentages of people experience loneliness or exclusion from relationships, flirting and meeting people live has been transferred in electronic dating platforms.

The interplay of so many and so different parameters makes relating one of the basic issues motivating us to ask for the support or advice of a facilitator, therapist or of some kind of education.

Thus, the purpose of this manual is to light on a greater depth and essence the thematic of romantic relationships, to reveal the different levels they involve and their complexity and to contribute in growing the awareness of people who seek understanding, knowledge, and personal growth in this field.

Structure of the manual

I. General comments about the manual

This educational manual, in its completion, will include three parts which will be independent but complementary. At this phase the first out of three is developed. Here lies the structure of the first part.

The sections follow, more or less, the following structure:

1. Introduction to the thematic: the relevant theory and an introductory discussion on the specific thematic.
2. Experiential exercise: all the exercises target to empirical learning through the experience arising during the duration of the exercise. Empirical learning is defined as the learning which results from the simultaneous activation of cognition, emotion and body within the process.
Some of the exercises are personal inner work and some are suggested to be done in dyad. Ask your partner, a friend, a relative, in short, any person you trust and feel nice to share personal information, to join you in reading the manual or just doing the dyad exercises.
3. Questions as food for thought: in the end of some sections there are questions that can serve as food for further thinking, innerwork or discussion with your partner or friends.

II. The sections of the educational manual are:

Introductory part

- ✚ Welcoming – Getting to know each other exercise
- ✚ Introduction in relationships - Exercise
- ✚ Process Work and Relationships
- ✚ The different levels at which relationships happen

Main Part

- ✚ The different dimensions of human experience & of reality - Exercise
- ✚ Second attention - Exercise
- ✚ Intrapersonal level and awareness – Exercise
- ✚ The myth of life and the childhood dream - Exercise
- ✚ Power and relationships - Exercise
- ✚ Family atmosphere and culture - Exercise
- ✚ The inner critic - Exercise
- ✚ Childhood and burning of wood - Exercise
- ✚ High and low dreams - Exercise

Closing

- ✚ Closing - Exercise

Important notice for the use of language in the manual:

This manual is mainly written either in the second singular addressing to you or to first singular (in every “me”) or the first plural that is to all people.

Female and male genus are interchanged and at times both are referred. The writing may at points not be inclusive of all gender identities and I am apologizing if you feel not represented at any specific point.

The Manual

Section 1: Welcoming

I welcome you at this educational experiential manual on the thematic of relationships. We call it experiential because the way to learning and personal growth happens through a wholistic interaction in the process, not only with what you will read, hear or say or what your mind will understand, but also with what you will experience emotionally and bodily. Experiential learning is in reality an inner journey which makes us richer, with a more open view and understanding of ourselves and the world around us, thus more empowered.

In the journey of learning we start off with expectations, hopes, interest, embarrassment, questions, even fear. I invite you to make this journey, as much as you can, with your authentic self, with respect to your limits and anyone you do the exercises with.

My deepest hope is that through reading the discussions and doing the exercises of this manual you will be more informed about yourself and the way you relate. That you will develop your understanding, skills, attitudes and behaviors to a more meaningful way of relating. I hope and wish that you will start walking the path of becoming a warrior of the heart.

We will start off with an exercise that will bring you in contact with an ally in your path to this warriorship.

1. Exercise:

Instruction: Read the exercise once before start doing it.

Close your eyes and turn your attention inwards.

Get permission from your everyday self to relax. Relax your face, your neck, your shoulders and gradually all your body and let your mind get dreamy.

Imagine your intimate relationships: what do you know you are doing really well in your relationships or you get feedback from others that say you do well – name these one or more things and then imagine that you place them in your right hand.

Now, think of what you know or get feedback that you're not doing well in your relationships -name them and imagine you place them in your left hand.

Let the two hands (and whatever they both hold) interact for 2 minutes. Just let the hands interact as *they* wish without any interference from your logic. Let them improvise!

When you have a sense of completion of this interaction ask yourself: who inside you knew how to do this interaction?

Consider this part as your inner elder. Make a sketch of it. Consider this elder as your ally and take her/his advice during your work with the manual.

Section 2: The different experiences in relationships and the goals of the manual use

2. Discussion:

The different experiences in relationships

Relating is a universal need and experience. Most people in the planet make one, more or many romantic relationships during their lives and their experiences, in-between their own relationships and in comparison with others', are different. Let's see some possible experiences:

- Some people chose or just happened to enter the right relationship for them and stay together for years, even for ever, and are happy.
- There are couples that are together for years and are not happy. They may be keeping the relationships out of fear, compromising needs, wishes and dreams or just avoid upsetting their life. They might continue living and relating this way, they might break up or decide to work on the issues of their relationship.
- There are people who avoid relationships, consciously or unconsciously, and live solitary lives or short or shallow relationships because this is what they can bear and is safe for them. Their logic possibly longs for togetherness, and for this reason they might be feeling unlucky for not finding a good match, however something stops them or they undermine their selves or their partners.
- And there are people who go through several relationships and break ups and although they try hard to stick to love and to one partner this is not happening so they may feel “losers” in keeping a relationship.
- Finally, there are also people who are asexual and/or uninterested for romantic relationships.

The social context and its demands

While the relating experiences are so diverse, societies – and I mainly refer to western societies – still promote that what’s asked or expected is to find “our other half” as soon as possible. Some people do find a complementary type of partner and do live with their other half, almost literally, and are good with that. However, many of us have the wish to be more and more whole in a relationship. Sooner or later, we dislike having to always play the same roles, always feel a bit like disabled or handicapped when not being able to handle things and life without our partner.

Based on social expectations the following questions arise: Is there a relationship prototype? And if yes, is it the one you watch in romantic films?

The answer is NO. Movies usually focus on the first phase of relationships (we will refer on the phases of relationships later). They don’t show us what happens next or falsely show an idealized relationship.

There is no relationship prototype. The perfect relationship is the one that has meaning for you and your partner. The one the two of you are building with awareness. What model of relationship do you want? Traditional or modern? What are your needs and dreams? Are they common? What is the goal or the dream of your relationship? What kind of life do you want to live?

Nor there exists a normal relationship. The mainstream supports specific relationships profile. Woman and man in a straight relationship, people of same color, of same nationality, similar age or the man older than the woman, etc. Whatever is supported by mainstream is not what’s normal or longed for however.

Unfortunately, our societies still support a homogeneous view on relating and are afraid of diversity in relationships and the family.

Unfortunately, our societies still look down on singles, especially women: the “unlucky” or even worse the “unworthy” to find a partner/husband. Or the men

who ought to be “eligible grooms” that is professionally successful, fit, always strong, with attractive personalities and education, otherwise they are not considered good candidates for a relationship.

If you live out of social demands, out of the mainstream, then you are already one of the people bringing the change needed in our world. Consciously or not, you make this world better, fairer, you open its eyes and its boundaries. The greater the range of the ways people relate and of their experiences, the more boundaries of what’s socially accepted open.

Here I want to make a very important note. The freedom to be myself and to relate with my own way cannot engage any kind of pressure, abuse, lack of consent in relation to any other human regardless sex or age. It doesn’t mean to engage in relationship with a minor (except minor’s relationships among themselves) nor with people of limited cognitive abilities. If you have a feeling or understanding that your behavior is hurting or abusing – emotionally, sexually, physically – other people then you need to start psychotherapy now with a trained therapist, psychologist or psychiatrist, so that you can get the help you need in order to be able to relate equally and healthily with other people.

3. Exercise: in person and in dyad

Ask your partner or any other person you choose to join you in this exercise.

Each of you takes 5 minutes and takes notes on your personal experience in relationships. Then discuss whatever you wish to share of what you wrote down or of whatever stayed with you from the introductory discussion. If you don’t feel like sharing information you can just share how you feel at the moment.

Time for each person in dyad: 2-3 minutes. If you found no person to do this exercise with, your notes on your understanding are already important!

4. The goals for the users

This experiential work focuses on partner/romantic relationships. Let's see which are our broader goals:

- ✚ To understand why we have great difficulty in relating while we have so much longing for them.
- ✚ To learn about the different levels in which relationships happen simultaneously and understand how this context makes relationships so complex.
- ✚ To acquire greater awareness for our inner world and for the ways we relate.
- ✚ To understand how and why, without any intention, we often block our relationship and its development.
- ✚ To discover our dreaming for a romantic relationship and how the relationship is part of the world around us and is in constant interaction with it.

If we have difficulty starting or keeping long-term, satisfying relationships or relationships that meet our real needs, instead of feeling unlucky, victims or failures we need to gain awareness of who we are, what is happening and to get out of our comfort zones. We need to trace and then change the way we learned to exist and automatically function, just repeating those we were taught to or asked to be. In short, we need to learn new skills and approach relationships in a new way.

Section 3: Process Work and Relationships

This section focuses on the theoretical framework of this workshop. The theoretical framework forms the background of learning, helps us to cognitively understand the different aspects and parameters of the field in which we are choosing to shed light on, to acquire new skills, to grow and this is the goal of this section.

We will start with a small reference in the different basic schools of psychology so that the theoretical parameters of Process Work paradigm, which is the foundation of this seminar, be more easily understood.

Then we will focus on Process Work view on intimate relationships, their deeper role and the phases through which they develop.

After the exercise we will explain that every relationship happens simultaneously at different levels of experience and we will attempt an introduction to the level which will be explored in greater depth in the workshop.

1. Discussion:

I. Different schools and paradigms in Psychology

You may already be aware that in Psychology, just as in most sciences, there are different schools, each one focusing on different aspects of human existence.

The four basic schools or paradigms are the following:

Analytic school: explores the individual at the depth of its psyche (childhood experiences, conscious and repressed self-parts, defense mechanisms, etc).

Systemic school: examines human in the systems in which s/he functions (relationship, family, group, society) as it believes that we cannot understand and work with human existence irrelevantly with the systems a person is in.

Existential & Person-Centered school: focuses on human existence itself and to its dynamic, that is to existential concerns like the meaning of life, death, desire and the inherent tendency for development and self-actualization.

Cognitive – Behavioral school: examines the cognitive parameters of the individual (beliefs, thoughts, expectations, etc) and the way these affect one's attitude and behavior.

Under the umbrella of each of the above schools, dozens different approaches exist and each of these advances or complements the other and there are many other approaches which have no direct reference to one of the four schools, as the therapies through arts (dance therapy, music therapy, psychodrama, art therapy) as well as those who incorporate elements from more than one of the four schools. It is estimated that more than 250 different psychotherapeutic approaches exist today.

II. Process Work Approach

As mentioned above, this seminar is based on a relatively younger approach called Process Work (originally called Process Oriented Psychology). It's a more wholistic approach, including elements from the basic schools and not only, thus attempting to understand and highlight the wholeness of human existence.

More specifically:

Process Work embodies elements from:

- ✚ Jung's analytic psychology
- ✚ Systemic school of psychology and the communications theory
- ✚ The existential and person-centered school of psychology
- ✚ The TAO philosophy and the following of nature

Process Work is a phenomenological approach, that means it observes and describes what is happening instead of explaining and interpreting through a dogmatic position of what should be happening. It is also a teleological approach, that means it recognizes the existence of a purpose to whatever is happening and it targets to highlight what is already happening, the process which is already there, as this process incorporates a meaning always important for us. For Process Work even the disrupting or annoying experiences which often destabilize us – symptoms, diseases, addictions, relationship difficulties, moods, altered states of consciousness, conflicts of groups or sociopolitical tensions and also night dreams – contain the patterns that bring change.

And this because all experiences carry a deeper and essential for us message, which once unfolded and integrated leads to greater awareness. And awareness opens the way to our wholeness, it utilizes our inner wisdom which carries the seed of the solution or change needed in an individual, couple, family, group, organization or the society as a whole.

The goal of process-oriented work therefore is the awareness of an individual's or a system's wholeness, that is of all its different sides and the growth towards this wholeness. More specifically, each person as well as each couple has a **primary process**, all the “I am” or “We are”, that is all it recognizes as identity and all the processes by which this identity remains stable in the ongoing inner and outer experiences. Your gender, age, family condition, sexual orientation, elements of your character with which you identify and “introduce yourself” in the world around you, your education, hobbies, occupation, all are parts of your primary identity. Respectively for a couple, the kind of relationship (open, committed, exclusive or multiamorous, etc.), the time two people are together, the way they relate, the common grounds or interests, are parts of their primary process. For example, a couple says “We are inseparable, we do everything

together” while another says “We like each one of us doing their own things during the day and when meet at the evening we share our different experiences” or the one says “We like our peace and quiet” while another says “We want our house to be full of friends and family”. These “I am” or “We are” form the image, the sense of self (or of couple) with which we identify.

Simultaneously, every individual just as every couple also has a **secondary process** with parts of self, characteristics, states of consciousness, needs or wishes that have been repressed or marginalized due to personal history and/or the social culture. These processes challenge the stability of our identity and for this reason remain disavowed by our awareness. For example, “I never yell at someone” or “I can’t stand staying alone even for one minute” or for a couple “We never fight”. These statements imply secondary processes and some of them are closer to my awareness while other not at all.

- ✚ I may desire some of these secondary characteristics but think or feel I don’t have access on them (e.g., I desire not to be so dependent on others but I feel that I can’t stand being alone or I have no idea on how to keep myself energized or active when alone).
- ✚ I might not consciously desire some other but need them (e.g., I like that I never yell to/at others, it makes me feel I am a great guy. But something in me is most repressed when there is no room for expression of my anger or my tension and whether I know it or not this tension needs to be expressed). The same stands for a couple as well (e.g., It seems cool that we never fight but there are times that we both repress our feelings or our different needs).
- ✚ Many of our secondary processes however are so far away from our awareness that are beyond our slightest idea that they exist. For example, all stressful or painful experiences that happened in our first years of life, for which we have no recollections, have shaped our identities (ie personal characteristics, ways of perceiving the world, of thinking and behaving, etc). So, if my sense of self power was choked in my family, I may today

feel genuinely weak in all terms about myself and be totally unaware of my powers and the ways these powers are indirectly communicated to others.

Awareness and gradual integration of this less conscious or totally unconscious process leads the person or the couple in the path to their wholeness. Without this integration we live in a system of inner conflicts and the secondary process will “search for ways” to express with a less conscious or an unconscious way as we said (e.g., I never yell but when I get angry, I withdraw myself or I feel my stomach tight or I see weird dreams or I drink alcohol to relax myself). These “alternate” ways of expression will be attempts to get me where I need or fully express myself, not successful however.

What’s stopping us to the opening towards our secondary process and wholeness is called **edge** and an edge can be well-established beliefs, childhood trauma, social demands, parental orders/instructions, hurtful experiences, or lack of learning in the sense that we never experienced a stimulus or a model before in our life. It’s the barrier or boundary between our primary and secondary processes. In the above examples the edges could be the following: since I was a child I never learned to stay alone even for a while so it’s something unknown or frightening for me, or in the family I grew up we were not allowed to yell for any reason, or me and my partner know that the couples that fight are not considered successful for society.

It’s interesting that not only our secondary process carries unconscious parts. Our primary process, whatever we define as our identity, also carries unconscious parameters. For example, I define myself as diffident person but I am not conscious of what is blocking my boldness or I know I have difficulty letting go but the reason I am so tight all the time is beyond my awareness.

For this reason, Process Work enriches and transcends the notions of conscious and unconscious. Instead of these it introduces the three levels of reality in which we simultaneously exist and for which we will analytically talk in the next

section. Just to mention them here, the three levels of reality are: the consensus reality, the dreaming level and the essence level.

III. Process Work view in romantic relationships

For Process Work, relationships are one of the ways or paths or channels through which we experience ourselves. Difficulties in relationships – and here we focus in the romantic ones – are one of the “vehicles” which bring deeper processes closer to the surface in order for us to unfold and then work with them thus gradually acquiring more and more awareness and so achieve change and personal growth. The relationship therefore becomes a channel highlighting the deeper process for the individual and the individual becomes a channel for the relationship as s/he feeds it constantly, so the relationship becomes the field where the deeper dreaming process emerges. That means that the other person and the way we relate continuously reflect parts of myself and my primary and secondary processes and I continuously communicate something back whether this is done consciously or unconsciously. For example: I never yell. Yes, but I do get angry or disappointed. So, what happens, or what do I do when I feel like that? With which indirect ways these feelings are expressed and what the other person perceives? And how is the atmosphere between us affected and our communication too at this point of time or generally? If I therefore observe for example that yes indeed, I don't yell but when I get angry, I get distant emotionally, I freeze, then I have to go deeper and explore what happens in this freezing, why do I turn to freezing in the first place, what stops me (what is my edge) in yelling, and how is my freezing affecting the other and the communication and atmosphere between us.

We cannot not communicate: this is the first axiom of human communication which actually says that at any moment when two or more people are together, they communicate, even when they think they don't.

To make things even more complicated, even when intended the communication between two partners is never solely the intentional one. The unintended one, usually non-verbal or paraverbal (which is estimated to cover the 85% of human communication!), includes these deeper processes which strive to come to the fore, the secondary ones, and observation, following and emergence of those secondary processes play a decisive role in the entering and nature of relationships. A hypothetical example would be that I intentionally tell my partner how much I love him/her, how much I want to spend time with him/her, but I don't say that occasionally I might be feeling repressed and that I need more personal space. Since I don't say it – and I might not even be conscious of that need – this secondary process, the need for more personal space, will emerge non-verbally. So, I may start sleeping more as while sleeping I actually allow more personal space, or I may start forgetting things I have taken the responsibility to do for the two of us, or be abstract when my partner talks to me, or get a headache or some other symptom just when we are about to do something together. In short, whether we want it or not, whatever happens in us will somehow be communicated, it will find a channel to be expressed. But as far as I am not aware of my inner processes then I cannot express them with clarity and then my partner, or any other person, is receiving a confusing message (we call it double signal and we will further explain it in a while) from me in which s/he does not know how to respond.

Let's get a bit further on the deeper role of relationships and to why learning and growing around romantic relationships is so important.

Summarizing till here, keep the basic points:

- ✚ *Your primary process includes all you define as your identity.*
- ✚ *Your secondary process includes whatever has been or is marginalized and is seeking ways to come to the fore.*
- ✚ *Whatever is stopping you from recognizing and incorporating parts or elements of your secondary process are your edges.*

- ✚ *No matter if you wish so or not, your secondary process will appear and unconsciously get expressed in various ways.*
- ✚ *This unconscious expression will confuse the other person.*
- ✚ *The romantic relationship, maybe more than any other kind of relationship, most probably due to the closeness negotiated in several levels, is “pushing” you to greater self-awareness as long as you can recognize and utilize the opportunity for learning.*

IV. The role of romantic relationships

Having understood that firstly every human has primary and secondary processes and edges in integrating secondary elements and secondly that relationships push us to awareness, let's see more analytically:

What is the deeper role of couple relationships?

Romance, love and companionship are happening in the tangible world, in our everyday life, however they are related with dimensions of our existence that are partially or fully unconscious as we saw.

Moreover, romance, love and companionship involve amazing contradictions such as:

Ecstasy & pain	Always & now
Charm & disappointment	Light & darkness
Power & weakness	Trust & fear
Faith & betrayal	Sharing & egoism
Respect & devaluation	Togetherness & loneliness
Communication & its absence	Security & abandonment

When we start or we are in a couple relationship, we are called to experience these contradictions and the inner processes they circulate - primary and secondary - and to handle them. So, they push us in our limits, in front of our edges and the need to recognize and pass those edges in order to firstly connect with the more and more large, expanded self and then with our partner in a way that is both functional and meaningful for both of us.

Thus, all conscious and unconscious processes that arise from the difficult/negative but also the beautiful/positive feelings and situations happening in the romantic/couple relationship give an amazing possibility to every human:

To get to know oneself and grow mentally.

But why do I fall in love with “X” person and not with “Z”?

I am *falling* in love. It’s something happening to me, which I don’t exactly decide, I don’t define it.

Almost all theory supports that we are attracted by those people that reminds us something of our past. They remind us our parent(s) or the pattern of relating we experienced with them. Even when this past was hurtful and although we may consciously really want to relate differently, what feels familiar becomes a magnet and we get unconsciously magnetized by the possibility to achieve a different outcome this time.

The very strong feelings, positive or negative (e.g., ecstasy and pain) that develop when we fall in love and which create the base of the relationship happen autonomously. Usually something deeper, unknown and powerful attracts two people together. This autonomous attraction happens because these two people are important for each other’s development and growth. Through the other person I will get to know and start relate with parts of myself marginalized by my edges.

So apart from being attracted to the familiar pattern, we also fall in love with characteristics of the other person which are secondary for us, that is outside of the identity we have built for ourself, outside of our primary process as we named it. And as we mentioned, the tendency to overcome our edges and to expand ourself is inherent, it is present whether we are conscious about it or not. Whatever is marginalized is striving to come to the fore. In the relationship therefore, by trying to meet the other I am indirectly (and unconsciously) the possibility to meet myself. And then grow.

If the areas that two people need to develop are very different, that is when their processes don't meet in some way, the relationship does not have a great chance to last long. If, on the other hand, their personal difficulties and areas of growth are proximal, compatible, this will probably tie them together in a longer lasting process thus relationship. Let's understand what that means:

More specifically, when two people have a common/**symmetrical edge** on something, eg on letting go, they have to work around what drives each one of them in holding back and the one will help the other on a gradual change and opening.

Also, when two people have **complementary edge** on something, e.g., the one is having difficulty to express her sentimental world and the other is drowning on emotions, working internally, the first with gradually begin to connect with her feelings and the second to take a distance from the inner "drama" and use more logic or be in a position to also logically understand what is happening to him.

But if a person with an edge on closeness relate with another whose edge is in living autonomously/not committing in people or things or situations, none of them is able to work towards their growth path in this relationship. So, the most probable is that those two people either won't fall in love, or won't stay together long.

Therefore:

Our deepest need to meet ourselves and our inherent tendency for personal growth is the basic reason that we “fall in love” with people.

Another reason we “fall” in love is our common dreams, the myth as we say of the relationship. What does that mean: There’s always in each human a creative, curious, mythical part of self which connects them with their most personal path in life, the *why am I here in this world*, and with what gives a deeper meaning to one’s life. Quite often this deeper calling or path has not been expressed as the person has difficulty to support it by oneself and can thus find support, understanding, recognition or sharing from the person s/he falls in love with, from a group in which s/he joins or from other human relationships – friends, colleagues, etc.

Just as each of us has our own personal myth, so does every relationship; it has its very own path, something that the two people share and gives a deeper meaning of existence in their relationship.

This common myth is shaped in the first or one of the first meetings with our beloved and it can be a myth of a very deep union in various levels, of a large family, of a common political/social/business action, of the achievement of inner freedom or whatever else. Two people for example first meet on a social environmental action to which both are very committed. The myth of their relationship includes that they will both fight for protecting nature and this will unite them. Or, another example, two lovers from the first moment of their acquaintance share a feeling of kinship, emotionally and spiritually, a connection which they don’t really know how to explain and their myth is about a deep connection.

In his book “Sitting in the fire” (2002) Mindell explains that our inner self is inseparable from the world. Relationships, he says, are built with love, chemistry or common interest but also are the creation of a political, global necessity. Our

world needs us to be different and solve our difference issues at home (p. 96 in the Greek edition)

So, since relationships are channels of secondary processes and myths of individuals around the world they are also channels of a universal spirit. Viewing them as channels enables them to take away the boundaries between individual – couple – family and understand that something bigger is expressed, something collective and universal.

Summarizing:

We fall in love in order to grow and breath life in our deepest, mythical parts – both the personal and the ones shared with our partner or the world. This knowledge and understanding are already very important!

V. The phases of couple relationships

All these seem and are exciting! Relationships grow us, develop us, push us towards awareness and help us give life to our deepest and mythical parts and dreams.

When entering the relationship however, the path for the development of all these dimensions is soon not cloudless or easy. Couple relationships evolve through some phases which, according to Process Work, tend to usually occur in succession however are not fixed or requisite.

Each phase has its own importance in the evolvment of the relationship and in the development of the two partners.

Let's see them one by one:

1. Paradise on earth

It is also called honeymoon and it happens in the beginning of the relationship. The attraction felt by both partners is really intense.

Consciously or unconsciously the one complements the other in creating a whole. For example, I forget, you remember for me, or you get tired I feel no tiredness and I go on for you, etc. Thus, both partners experience a feeling of completion internally and externally. Whatever could block the relationship or the communication vanishes. So, you never get angry with my forgetting, I don't get frustrated with you getting easily tired, etc. Both people present themselves in the relationship with their whole self, giving the opportunity to get to know each other, to connect, to experience the merge and the excess of togetherness.

This ecstatic state is usually accompanied by a realistic fear that this perfect coexistence and harmony will be disrupted at some point.

2. The creation of the dynamic or culture of the relationship

In this second phase roles are usually assigned (e.g., of the strong and the weak, or of the realist and the dreamer, etc.). Each person identifies with certain roles and then starts the creation of personal blockings or edges. This condition favors the lack of role interchange in order a fixed dynamic to run the everyday functioning of the couple, maintaining this way a homeostasis. For example, my edge in expressing my anger maintains the homeostasis since you have no tolerance in tensions or conflicts.

For a period of time, any negative feelings vanish from the foreground and exist only as secondary signals - the unconscious and unintentional communication we mentioned earlier which happens independently of our will since whatever is marginalized strives to come to the surface.

When two people communicate to each other intentional (primary) signals and unintentional (secondary blocked by edges) simultaneously, then we say that we send/communicate **double signals**.

So, what happens is: any of the negative feelings or any parts of self which are marginalized from the roles each partner has taken over in the relationship, maintaining this way their edges, appear:

- a) As double signals in the communication (e.g., I tell you how much I love you but I look away or the tone of my voice is aggressive as I have marginalized my anger for you),
- b) As figures in night dreams or while awake (e.g., I see agree terrorists in my dreams, or I have a strong preference or attraction for a series' hero in tv or Netflix, as if it is a real person, and this hero has characteristics that my partner lacks),
- c) As symptoms or somatic sensations – since I have no awareness of what bothers me and so I don't communicate it to my partner, my body takes over the “mission” to communicate it (e.g., since you don't tolerate tension or conflict, I wake up one day with dermatitis, full of red rashes).
- d) As dreaming up: while edges block the challenging marginalized processes and these try to find expression and completion through secondary processes as the ones mentioned above (double signals, dreams/fantasies, symptoms) there are times that the process finds expression and completion by “jumping” to another person transcending the interpersonal boundaries (e.g., I visit an island during winter and I drag my partner to the beach as I am determined to dive in however on the last minute I lose my boldness and feel fear. My partner who never wanted to dive in the first place becomes the bold one and overcomes the edge for me).

In this phase both partners remain in the “safe zone” of their edges and the roles each has undertaken in the relationship. The path of each and of the relationship towards growing, the unknown, that is towards the unconscious marginalized sides, is not yet imperative.

3. Boredom and Irritation

In this phase an inner motive for freedom and individuation, this inherent tendency for expanding oneself as we mentioned earlier, now begins to

resist the roles I have confined myself and the same happens to my partner. The primary process of each of us starts reaching its limits (e.g., for how long can I swallow my anger), the role becomes restrictive (e.g., I am bored of being the good girl that never shouts) and the secondary process is more and more “pushed” towards the surface (e.g., I suddenly shout for something, most probably a minor thing, and I get dumbfounded with myself).

Even though both of us retain the dynamic and our roles, we start noticing annoying and irritating characteristics of our partner: e.g., I am starting to get tired with you keep forgetting things, paying bills, etc. because I have to recall everything and have the responsibility for everything, or it starts feeling too much that you avoid any type of tension between us, I feel restrained.

In this phase couples attribute irritation or bother in the confines of the marital life however it is on this phase usually that they decide to create a family believing that a baby will unite them.

Some couples may break up in this phase or create another type of distance (with third parties, workaholism, over occupation with hobbies) or differentiate the type of their relationship (e.g., decide to live on different houses, stay friends).

4. The crisis

As the time passes and irritations on both sides accumulate, a crisis will be created at some point. Usually, one of the two partners will break the superficial harmony asking to be released from the roles s/he assumed so to feel whole again (e.g., I can't stand being responsible for everything, you have put all on me and you are in your own world all the time, or I can't bear not to ever express my anger, from now on I will be saying whatever really bothers me).

However, things are not so clear in the first person yet and thus not clearly yet communicated so the other person will react intensely in front of the threatening change. But as long as the first person is not aware enough of which repressed/marginalized parts of self are striving to come to light in order to clearly communicate their need, they cannot understand the other person's rage. None of the two can clearly see what happens, which parts of their selves they both have marginalized, so both are unable to accept each other's accusations.

Accusations come on both sides and the partners fight to prove their right and how the other is wrong. One or both may feel that the other is lying, one or both may start withdrawing from the relationship, get depressed, may engage third parties in the relationship as allies. Or they may be silent externally experiencing all tension and conflict internally.

There's a crisis in both communication and trust between them. If these get consolidated then the couple most probably break up irreversibly whether the break up happens now or much later. A lot of couples cannot stand the tension, the fire of the crisis and they leave believing, falsely, that by staying alone or entering another relationship they will find the (expected) permanent state of harmony.

5. Working with the crisis

Just as we mentioned while outlining Process Work paradigm above, one of its basic principles is that the process happening in the moment contains all that is necessary for its solution. Patterns which will bring the change needed exist even within experiences that disrupt or destabilize us, such as the relationships' crises. And this, because as we have said, all experiences bring a deeper and meaningful for us message, which when unfolded and integrated drives us in greater awareness and thus in the path towards our wholeness.

If a couple decides to get help in this phase (through a facilitator or some learning procedure), it may learn to use attacks and accusations as a challenge for personal growth and for the relationship's development. The goal of this manual/seminar is exactly this: the development of a greater awareness of our personal processes (primary and secondary) and of our edges in order to be able to communicate and connect with more clarity with our partner.

The crisis therefore indirectly invites partners to come closer to their feelings and their personal needs and once worked out, it usually results in two people who are empowered, with an anew deeper awareness and a deeper and more meaningful relationship.

The point is to learn expressing our truth, our whole truth. This may bring tension but focusing on tension is what can deeply transform us.

When the cycle of accusations and denial ends the couple can be closer than ever. The paradox of this phase is that the process that created the crisis is the one that reconnects it in a much deeper level.

Source: Arnold Mindell (1987), The dreambody in Relationships, Routledge & Kegan Paul, pages 92-95

Note something very important:

Not all relationships are worth staying and withstanding the heat of the crisis. Quite often the underlying growth for ourselves in a relationship is to say NO. To leave.

To stand for ourself when we receive rejection, or aggression, or indifference, or feel unloved. To respect our need for affection, for care, for security, for commitment, or any other need per se. In such cases the edge usually is in loving, respecting, valuing ourself and sometimes it may unfortunately take a lot of bad

relationships until we get to realize that what we don't get by the other(s) is what **we** don't give to ourself.

Our deeper "dreaming" self (we will discuss about the levels of human experience in the next section analytically) requires personal power and freedom. Relationships and their problems can rob both our power and freedom. So, in our creative journey the ability to be ourself requires more than knowing ourself; it requires loving, struggling, failing and then rising, each time with more love to us, more powerful, more free.

2. Exercise in dyad

Take both a few moments with yourself to think in which phase is a relationship important for you currently. What makes you think that? If during this period you are not in a romantic relationship choose another important relationship e.g., with a parent or a good friend.

Then take 3-5 minutes each to share your thoughts. In case you find no person to do this exercise with, take notes of your findings.

3. Questions as food for thought

Take time to think with yourself or discuss with others the following questions:

- How do you perceive romantic/couple relationships, what is their role in your life?
- Do you have any idea which roles you tend to take when you are in a relationship?
- Would you like to share a few words on how you experience the phase an important relationship for you is today (romantic or other)?

VI. The different levels of the relationships

Having by now a better understanding of how our inner processes are structured (primary – secondary – edges that block our development), of the deeper role of couple relationships and of love in our lives as well as of the phases through which this development happens, in this subsection you will go deeper on that every couple relationship does not only involve communication and interaction between the two partners but it happens simultaneously on three different levels.

On this workshop we will focus on the first level, the intrapersonal (or intrapsychic), the one which pertains what is and happening within me and for which you will read further down. However, it's important to understand that at any moment relating includes experiences and interaction in different levels.

The different levels in which relationships happen

You may already know by experience that every relationship happens in different levels. These are:

- ✚ my inner world, the intrapersonal level,
- ✚ the world between the partners, the interpersonal level, and
- ✚ the world of the relationship, the transpersonal level where the relationship is an entity by itself.

My inner world, the **intrapersonal level** is about my personal history and how this has formed me, which are my fears hopes and dreams, my needs, which is my identity and what parts of mine are unknown to me or marginalized, what stops me and to what extend I am aware of my powers. All these, consciously or not, I bring them in my relationships and mainly the romantic/couple ones as they involve the most closeness than all others.

The world between the partners, the **interpersonal level** is about communication, verbal and non-verbal, the signals sent from one to the other, the projections happening from both unconsciously, that is from parts of self/characteristics which I am unable to see in me while I see and transfer to the

other as if they belong (only) to him/her, to the roles each one takes, and how & where all these blocks the flow of relating.

The third level is the world of the relationship, the **transpersonal level**. Every relationship is larger than the sum of the two people, it has a common dreaming, its own myth as we said earlier. Therefore, the relationship is an entity by itself with its own atmosphere, its own qualities and its own dream which is evolving.

In every relationship those three levels happen simultaneously: Each partner brings in the relationship their inner world with whatever this includes, have ease but also blind spots and edges on the communication level and the partners may or not be aware and may follow or not the common dreaming or myth of their relationship.

This simultaneous existence of the three levels is one of the parameters making relationships complex and difficult. And this because it is not always, actually it is rarely, clear on which level we relate at any given moment or phase. We relate with our partner without understanding what emotions – attitudes – behaviors – moods are related with our personal history, when we are at edge and send double signals blocking the communication between us and when a difficulty or tension is arising because the relationship is getting distant from its essence and myth.

Understanding, going deeper and working on all three levels and the parameters each one includes is fundamental to our apprenticeship in romantic relationships and to our growing.

Three different worlds co-existing in every relationship and asking for our attention is, as a sum, a large thematic. Each of these worlds demands time, energy and focus on its exploration and for this reason, as already mentioned in the introduction, in this workshop we will explore the intrapersonal level.

VII. Introduction to the intrapersonal level

In this level the focus is your inner world. As you read earlier, being in a relationship, the relationship reflects what is happening in your inner world, your inner process, but also is affected by it. Awareness of your inner processes as well as of the ways these appear consciously or unconsciously in the relationship is very important therefore.

Exploration and work on this level will start off in this workshop by investigating your personal life myth which connects to your childhood dreams. You read above that your personal myth has a direct relation with the myth of your partner so it's an important intrapsychic parameter concerning and affecting your romantic relationships.

Then you will get to know and get deeper in touch with the various aspects of your power, the strengths you bring as a human being and how these affects relating. In the same section you will come in contact with your internal repressor or judge who defines your self-image and the way you relate.

You will also explore how your childhood wounds or/and the unfinished interactions of your personal history can “blind” you by activating unconscious mechanisms while you relate.

And finally, you will have the opportunity to appropriate your deeper dreams for love and romantic relationships.

Basic learning points of this section:

- *Process Work is an approach that combines elements from the basic schools of Psychology, and not only, and targets the path towards wholeness of an individual or relationship.*
- *Our secondary process, whatever is marginalized from what we define as our identity, strives to come to the fore mainly with unconscious ways as long as we are not aware of it. The resulting double signals confuse, annoy or hurt our partner and disrupt the flow in the relationship.*

- *The deeper role of love and of romantic/couple relationships is connected with our personal growth.*
- *The growth in the context of the relationship happens gradually in the successive phases it goes through or it may happen by stopping relationships that are not good for us.*
- *Every relationship happens simultaneously at three different levels. This understanding is central in our apprenticeship in relating and acquiring awareness in the intrapersonal level is fundamental.*

Further reading:

Diamond, J., & Spark Jones, L. (2018). *A path made by walking: Process Work in Practice*. Belly Song Press.

Dworkin, J. (2019). *Make love better*. Belly Song Press.

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Section 4: The three levels of awareness – dimensions of human experience

In the previous section you read that unknown, unconscious parts of self, exist in your secondary but also your primary process. Thus, the concepts of conscious and unconscious we all know, as two separate and autonomous areas in the psyche do not really cover the range of human experience.

Process Work introduces an expanded and enriched perspective recognizing that human experience, also, has its own dimensions or levels.

It is very important to understand these different dimensions or levels of awareness before you start exploring the intrapersonal level.

1. Discussion:

In Process Work all dimensions of human experience are treated as equally important and awareness of our multidimensional existence is encouraged through observation and work in all three of them.

Let's see what that means...

1. **The first dimension is the consensus, material, everyday reality.** It's the space and time we perceive with our mind, here exist all measurable experiences and whatever is commonly accepted as reality. Experiences like: I run to catch the bus and not be late at work, yesterday I had a fight with my wife, I have an eczema in my hand and need to see a dermatologist, I am really pissed off with my supervisor because he treats me like an idiot, I got carried away with thoughts while cooking and I burned the food, etc., belong in this dimension.

In this dimension you exist with all you recognize as your identity, all the “I am”. Your gender, age, occupation, family condition, financial condition, religion, ideology and views about the world, your sexual orientation, elements of your personality you recognize till today. This identity for sure includes elements of your deeper self, of your nature, of different inner parts but at the same time includes elements that you “wore” in the context of your upbringing a) in the very specific family you grew up, which had a specific dynamic (i.e. what was the role of each member, how the different roles were interacting between them, what was functional and what not, etc.) and a specific atmosphere, b) in the specific society, in the specific time period you grew up and live, and in the culture with the specific sociopolitical, technological or health parameters and data that make it up.

In the largest part of this world nowadays, this dimension is the dominant, or even the only put forward as valid reality. Anything that does not have a material existence or tangible evidence, that does not go along with the mainstream, that does not agree with any data of the time is ostracized, whether it concerns human experiences, or ideas, or behaviors, or individuals and groups of people.

2. **The second dimension is the dreaming reality.** It is the background of our experiences in consensus reality. Entering the dreaming reality is like travelling down the river of ongoing experiences – just like Shamans do. It contains experiences such as:

- ✚ *The dreams you see at night* – you see them, sometimes you recall them, but you have no idea why you saw that dream that specific night or what all the figures and symbols of the dream mean and why you dreamt that ones and not others and how these are interpreted and what do they mean for you.

- ✚ *The way you experience your symptoms* – your very own subjective experience of how you feel when you have eczema, flu or whatever

else. A hundred people may have headache simultaneously but the experience of pain or annoyance for each or for many of them be less or more different. One may feel pain as hammer, other as burn, other as numbness, etc.

✚ *The signals you sent without knowing when you communicate with other people, the unintentional communication – all you communicate to others and your environment with paraverbal or non-verbal way unaware that you communicate those signals and of the fact that those signals will elicit a response on the other side, in the other person.*

As you probably begin to understand, **in this dimension you are aware/conscious of some things but not for all**. For example, sometimes you recall the dream you dreamt at night but you don't understand what your subconscious is trying to tell you through that dream, or you are aware of what you are saying but not of what you communicate unintentionally.

Fantasies and daydreams belong in this dimension; the stories our mind creates which we often consider “wild” or unreal. Here also belong the emotional moods/atmospheres we experience, e.g. I wake up a day and I feel down or while all is fine within my day, I feel irritated out of the blue and without knowing why.

The dreaming reality is to a large extent the dimension of the different sides of ourself which struggle to come to light through a continuous flow of experiences and information in which however we usually pay no attention and we focus in managing “reality”. This continuous stream of experiences and information “rises to the surface” through our night dreams, the body symptoms/ annoyances/ illnesses, the fantasies, the unintentional communication, our moods and our

addictions. E.g., I smoke cigarettes or hashish because I think it helps me enter in a state I need (feel more relaxed or more detached).

3. **The third dimension is the deeper sensuous level of your existence.**

It's mainly unconscious but is the root of all experiences. In this dimension there are no poles, that is there are no sides, no right or wrong, good or bad, desirable and undesirable. Here is your wholeness, your deeper essence and wisdom which is connected with the Unity around you, that is with the deeper essence and the wisdom of nature, of your ancestors and everybody's ancestors, with the universe. Just as in the universe, time here is not linear, it doesn't follow any clock, measure or direction in front or back, here there's a sense of timelessness and of non-locality, that means that things/experiences/objects here have no linear connection. When we perceive it, we experience this dimension as a deep sensuous experience bursting for a moment through spontaneous, subtle sensations, intuitions, tendencies to move, imperceptible momentary feelings.

You may have experienced such moments in nature, e.g., when you swim or gaze the sea for a long hour, or when you are crazy in love, or when you have a great idea about something out of the blue or an understanding about something which you cannot explain where from it came and why now.

We think that all ourself and our life happens in the first dimension of consensus reality, while a large part of self, relationships and of our lives derive from the other two dimensions. We attach great importance in the materialistic, tangible part of life and little or none in experiences like:

- Why did I see this weird dream last night? Which is its meaning, what is my subconscious trying to tell me?
- What message, in a psychic or spiritual level do my repetitive headaches carry for me, or the eczema that appeared second time in a few months, or whichever other symptom or illness?

- What do my fantasies have to say about my life?
- How come I fell in love with that person and not with the other who's burning for me? Or why me, or my friends, or many people break up with the person they once fell in love or they deeply love?

Summarizing:

- *Process Work introduces an expanded and enriched perspective recognizing that human experience has three equally important dimensions of reality: the consensus reality, the dreaming reality and the deep non-polar essence.*
- *The more we stick to consensus reality, to the tangible dimension of life, and the more we perceive experiences as fragmented snapshots, the flatter and narrower our life is. On the contrary, the greater the awareness of the three dimensions of reality, of the river stream, the ongoing process underneath all experiences, the fuller we feel and the deeper the flow we experience in every relationship and life experience.*



- *What lies under the ice and water is equally real. Just as it happens in nature, most of the interesting, unexpected, “wild” life, happens below the obvious.*

I. Second attention

In order to perceive, observe and unfold the experiences happening in the dreaming and essence levels we need to develop second attention.

But what is second attention?

We have all learned that our attention focuses on whatever we see with eyes open e.g., the room we are in, our cell phone, tv, whatever a person sitting near us is saying, etc. Let's name this well known to all of us attention, first attention. This first attention is necessary and important for human experience in consensus reality. It is the one that helps us be functional in our work, at home, on our intentional communication with others, our studies, in dealing with issues of everyday life.

In receiving the precious gifts of the other two dimensions – and of the exercises of this seminar – you need to energize your second attention, a different and deeper level of attention. This basically means turning your attention inwards, shutting out any other external stimulus. Since visual stimuli activate the first attention, it is usually helpful to close the eyes to focus on the inner self.

You then need to focus this inward attention on unusual internal signals or processes, i.e., small trends or information that emerges completely unconsciously either as inner images, or bodily sensations, or movement, or sounds, or as words that come to your mouth, or as emotional atmospheres or feelings, or as synchronicities (something unexpected and strange that happens outside of you and catches your attention). In more detail:

Second Attention: the key to dreaming

- ✚ I focus to myself and close my eyes.
- ✚ I observe what experience exists/emerges at this very moment in one of the following channels. Any experience that may seem completely irrelevant or unrelated to whatever is in my mind at the moment:
 - ✚ Visual channel: I see with my imagination an image e.g., an object, a place on earth or I see myself doing something.
 - ✚ Proprioceptive channel: I feel something in my body, e.g., a buzzing, racing heart, tightness, numbness, or I have a pain or discomfort somewhere.
 - ✚ Kinesthetic channel: I realize that I unconsciously move some part of my body e.g., my leg or my mouth, or perceive that I have a tendency to a movement or absolute stillness, e.g., a tendency to run or jump or lie on the floor and remain still.
 - ✚ Auditory channel: a sound or a melody comes to mind or I feel like saying something, a word or a phrase, whatever.
 - ✚ Channel of the world: while I am focusing on myself, something intense and unexpected happening outside in the world catches my attention, for example, a helicopter passes over my house and its hum disturbs me, or the cat next door suddenly enters my house and cuts walks, or someone from a neighboring apartment starts yelling or swearing at someone else.

So, any experience can exist/emerge in these five possible channels. **The sixth and final channel is relationships** in which our deeper, secondary as we named them, processes also continually emerge. In all six channels the second attention can lead us to the observation and emergence of these processes. By channels we mean the point, the source from where an internal information can emerge.

By doing the following exercise you will experiment with your second attention, you will understand it better and you will more consciously explore the source, i.e., the channel that at this given moment will emerge inner information. You

will also begin to familiarize yourself with the three dimensions of the human experience. Innerwork training, harnessing your second attention to focus on the channel(s) through which your deepest process emerges, is the primary skill you need to be more in touch with the wholeness of your being. That is, with all sides of you: conscious – less conscious – unconscious, or as we mentioned earlier with your primary and secondary process, but also with the different levels of your experience – the conventional consensus reality, the dreaming reality and the sensuous dimension of the essence.

2. Exercise:

Exercise 1: Innerwork in 3 dimensions

Before starting the exercise, take an A4 paper or other paper to take notes. Also read all the steps of the exercise once and then start working each step in succession. Read one step at a time and follow the directions.

1. How would you describe your identity? Gender, occupation, personality, sexual orientation, marital status, financial status, your basic habits, things you like to do often, your religion or ideology, basic elements of your personality.

Note them down.

Also note down the things you are dealing with at the moment and the issues that concern you.

This is the first dimension of yourself, consensus reality.

2. Now close your eyes & focus within, use your second attention and notice your inner experiences at the moment. It can be something subtle that you probably usually pay no attention to. An image, a sound, a sensation or a slight discomfort somewhere in your body may arise, you may already be moving some part of your body or perceive a slight tendency to move

or notice how you stand or sit and what this tells you. Or while you have your second attention focused inwards, something unexpected may catch your attention from the outside (here the first and second attention coexist).

3. Focus on the experience you noticed. If there is more than one pick and focus on one. Amplify, strengthen the experience and notice the energy or quality that characterizes it. For example, if it is a subtle shaking movement in the hand, increase the movement, make it more intense and gradually spread the movement to the whole body (globalize it), make the whole-body tremble. If it's an image focus on its details or enlarge it and let it develop as a visual story. If it is a sound, for example a ringing in the ears, intensify it, make the sound big (you can also produce it with your mouth). If it is a physical sensation, expand and extend it, e.g., a tightening in the stomach or calf, feel the surrounding organs or muscles tighten until you tighten the whole body. If it's a word, say it or shout it several times, etc. As you amplify the experience, notice what quality it has? Is it soft? angry? bored? happy; scared? steep/sharp? dynamic; suffocating? pushy? ecstatic? erotic? frozen? another?

Take notes.

This is the second dimension of yourself at the moment, the dreaming reality.

4. Make a small, as if imperceptible, movement with your hand, in slow motion, that you feel represents the energy/quality that emerged in the previous step (e.g., other movement would symbolize/express a sharp energy and other calmness). Let your hand free to do it, without thinking, trust that your hand knows how to express the energy with movement. Repeat the movement several times, always slowly, until you have a sense of its nature and the atmosphere this energy/quality lives in. What is it

like to be, even for a moment, in this atmosphere? Does it stir something inside you?

Take notes.

This is the manifestation of the deepest essence of yourself, the sentient level of being.

5. What you felt or discovered in steps 3 and 4 what do they tell you about your everyday self? Close your eyes again and connect with the quality/energy and the atmosphere that emerged. If you were to give one message or piece of advice to your everyday self from these two deeper dimensions, what would it be? What new awareness do they bring you?

Take notes on the message and the new awareness.

The exercise is based on material of Processwork Hub (www.processworkhub.gr) for the training program "Diploma in Processwork" 2016 – 2022.

The basic learning points of this section:

- *In order to understand, perceive and become more aware of the stream of experiences in all three dimensions of reality we need to develop second attention.*
- *Connecting with the deepest levels of our experience, the dreaming and the essence levels, brings to our awareness information - processes that occur within us from parts of us hidden or marginalized by our identity which mainly acts in consensus reality.*
- *These parts and their processes contain characteristics, knowledge, desires, needs, they have a substance of their own, they have intelligence, alternative perspectives and solutions to our problems. They push us to expand, to break the boundaries of the small self and to become more and more whole*

and to live, relate, become creative and perceive the miracle of life through our big, enriched self.

In the next section we will explore what is included in the intrapersonal level and become more acquainted to the major goal of human development, the key to growing, the development of awareness.

Further reading:

Diamond, J., & Spark Jones, L. (2018). *A path made by walking: Process Work in Practice*. Belly Song Press.

Mindell, A. (1993). *The shaman's body: A new shamanism for transforming health, relationships, and community*. Harper Collins Publishers

Section 5: Intrapersonal level & Awareness

Not being in contact with my inner world, my personal history and the awareness of my processes, brings to me the following image: I go out for a walk – to enjoy the sun, the trees, the communication with the people around, myself – blindfolded with a cloth. Even if I know the path by heart, even if I manage not to stumble and fall down, I will end up intaking, tasting and enjoying the minimum of what I could during my ride. It is most likely that I will not have even experienced it as a walk, as a route, but more as a stressful process as I went "blindly".

Shedding light on my personal history and inner processes, i.e., doing work on the intrapersonal level, is a usually long, sometimes painful but fully revealing and enriching process of self-awareness and growth. And this path is first of all of the utmost importance for our life and our relationship with ourselves and then for our relationships with other people and especially with our partner.

1. Discussion:

As mentioned earlier, relationships happen in 3 levels simultaneously: the individual (intrapersonal), the communication (interpersonal) and the world of the relationship (transpersonal).

From this point on and till the end of the present seminar on relationships we will deepen in the understanding and work on the individual level, the intrapersonal.

Your personal history, i.e.:

- ✚ The how and where you grew up, in which family or context, with which dynamic and what were the roles you undertook,
- ✚ The social context and the era,

- ✚ The psychic hurt or trauma you may carry since your childhood, puberty or later years of life,
 - ✚ The patterns you tend to unconsciously follow – often repeating the hurt/trauma,
 - ✚ The part of yourself which you recognize as identity (all the “I am”) and the one you unconsciously marginalize (all the “I am not”),
 - ✚ Whatever gives meaning to your existence,
 - ✚ Whatever makes you vulnerable or triggers you,
 - ✚ Your power and how you use it,
 - ✚ And your dreams
- are all included in the intrapersonal level.

We earlier said that we “fall” in love and that this autonomous attraction happens because those two people are very important the one for the other’s development, growth. There is something in the other person, something that I have marginalized in myself, and through him/her I will feel a sense of completeness. The other is a representative of inner parts of me and through her/him I have the opportunity to familiarize and start coming in contact with parts of myself which were blocked by my edges, parts which are secondary for me.

So, when in a relationship, the relationship reflects our inner process.

As long as we are not aware of our personal inner process and of our secondary parts, of whatever is marginalized, we are able to see them only in the other person. As if they are not ours and it is only the other who has them. For example, I may see in my partner that she becomes intense or aggressive and I may get annoyed with that, but not understand the ways *I* may become intense or aggressive with more indirect ways (e.g., with the timbre of my voice or by using sarcasm or doing the silent treatment). This is called **projection**; we project to

the other parts and behaviors we also have but we are unaware that we have them.

In short, your personal history takes shape in the relationship and the interaction with your partner.

Personal growth and a sustainable change in the relationship is difficult (if not impossible) to be achieved without work in this intrapersonal level. So, the central issue is personal awareness. We say it over and over, but let's see:

What is awareness?

The love of self is connected with the awareness.

I start observing myself. I observe my behavior and things that happen inside me. I ask myself questions about feelings, thoughts, body sensations, symptoms, views, etc.

For example:

What drives me crazy in a relationship and what role do I tend to take in romantic relationships? E.g., Am I always the strong or the one who can manage all?

What beliefs or stereotypes shape my view around an issue?

What happens to my body when my partner pays no attention when I talk to her?

When do I usually get a headache (or any other symptom), what has happened before and what kind of pain do I feel? Is it like a hammer? Like a burn? As pressure? And if it is pressure, is it from inside out or the opposite?

The more I observe myself the more I gain awareness on what is happening to me. And then, **what** is happening, the process unfolding at the moment, starts answering its questions.

Let's see what that means in more detail in a hypothetical example:

I talk to my partner for something important for me. But s/he is absorbed with the cellphone. S/he says "yes, yes" and looks at me for a moment and then again looks down to the screen. I get out of the room feeling angry and go to the study room or the kitchen to do something. What do I usually do? I finish the task I started, and after a while I think I am ok, my frustration is put aside. But if I observe myself I may notice a tension to my stomach or any other body sensation that reveals what is happening to me. Maybe if I stay with the observation I just made and focus on the stomach tension I will soon feel tears running from my eyes and realize that I was hurt from my partner's indifference a while ago.

Having this awareness, I can find a proper moment for a discussion and tell my partner what hurt me and what would be important for me when I ask for his/her attention. Having this awareness, I can also consider if the moment I asked for his/her attention was a good one or if it would be wiser to wait until s/he finishes reading.

Without awareness of my hurt, it would be very possible that with a minor occasion happening later I would start yelling and then feel guilty or would "shower" him/her with accusations, or..., or....

Therefore, if I observe what is happening to me, I am in a position to be clear and coherent firstly with myself and then with my partner.

In short, it is the awareness of our process, of what is happening in all levels of our experience, that will open the door for solving a problem. In other words, resolution of problems is completely intertwined, is the result of the development of awareness and not something autonomous.

This attitude is really relieving as it offers us the possibility of an enlarged view even in cases that the problems cannot be solved, i.e.:

When I start being conscious of more experiences that I unconsciously used to marginalize/ pay no attention/ had no idea that were happening to me, then the

changes in my attitude or my behavior will start happening spontaneously. And not only that. They will tend to be more in line with what's best for me during this specific period or phase of my life.

In the above example: even if my partner is not paying to me the attention I need, I will have the awareness that this is important for me and that his/her attitude hurts me. This awareness will take me somewhere gradually. I may for example negotiate more effectively with him/her, make a deeper conversation of the reasons this attitude hurts me, to set boundaries, understand the other's view or feelings, or take decisions.

So, even if you feel you're in a way out, **noticing** the signals of change, i.e., the awareness of your deeper process, shows you the way even if the change is not yet completed.

Awareness therefore is the love of myself, in the sense that I hug and give space to all my different parts and it means noticing and being open to whatever is happening.

I understand that all these sounds very theoretical till now. By doing the exercises however you will gradually start to master the difference between having awareness and not having.

2. Exercise

I want you to remember that the Exercise 1 which you have already done can always lead you to greater awareness. You can use it whenever you experience an inner conflict, a problem in your relationship or your family, your work, etc., with a small differentiation.

In step 1 instead of writing how you define your identity you will write down the difficulty or problem you are facing.

Steps 3 and 4 will show you what insight, view or advice you have to give to your everyday self in relation with the problem or difficulty you wrote down in step 1.

Exercise 1a: Innerwork for more awareness

Before you begin the exercise have your notebook with you or other paper in order to keep notes. Read once all the steps of the exercise and then start working each step in the row following the directions.

1. What is your difficulty this period? (it may be a difficulty or a conflict in any relationship – romantic, family, professional, friendly – something that happens to another or to other people in your environment and has upset you, etc.)

Note it down.

This is the first dimension of yourself, the consensus reality.

2. Now close your eyes & focus inside you, use your second attention and notice your inner experiences at this moment. Most probably is something imperceptible that you usually wouldn't pay attention to it. It may arise as an image, a sound, a sense or a small annoyance somewhere in your body, you may already move a part of your body or perceive a tiny tendency to move or to notice how you stand or you sit and what your posture "tells" you. Finally, while you have your attention focused inside something unexpected may attract your attention from outside.

3. Focus on the experience you noticed.

If there are more than one, choose and focus on one of them. Amplify, strengthen the experience or the quality that characterizes it. For example, if it is an imperceptible trembling in the hand, make the trembling bigger, more intense and gradually spread the movement to the whole body, make your whole-body tremble. If it is an image focus on its details or enlarge it and let it develop as a visual story. If it is a sound, eg

a buzz in your ears, make it stronger, louder (you can also produce it with your mouth). If it is a body sensation enlarge it and spread it, eg a tightness in the stomach or the leg, feel all the organs or muscles around to get tight until the whole body is tight. If it is a word shout it many times, etc.

The more you amplify the experience notice: what is its quality? Is it soft? Angry? Bored? Happy? Scared? Sharp? Dynamic? Suffocating? Repressing? Ecstatic? Erotic? Frozen? Other?

Keep notes.

This is the second dimension of yourself, the dreaming reality.

4. Make a small, almost imperceptible, movement with your hand in slow motion, that you feel that it represents the energy/quality that emerged in the previous step. Repeat the movement several times until you have a sense of its nature and of the atmosphere it lives in. How is it being even for a second within this atmosphere? Does it stir something inside you?

Keep notes. ‘

This is the emergence of the deeper essence of yourself, the sensual level of existence.

5. What you felt or realized on steps 3 and 4 what information give you for your everyday self as of how you manage or approach the difficulty or problem you wrote down on step 1?

If you would give a message or advice to your everyday self on this issue from these deeper dimensions, what would it be?

What new awareness these dimensions bring to you?

Keep notes for the message and the new awareness.

Variation of exercise based on the material of Processwork Hub (www.processworkhub.gr) for the training program “Diploma in Processwork” 2016-2022.

Summarizing the basic learning points:

- *The relationship reflects our inner processes and as long as we are not aware of our them and of our secondary parts, of whatever is marginalized, we are able to see them only in the other person. We project our marginalized process(es) to others/our partner.*
- *Our personal history takes shape in the relationship and the interaction with your partner.*
- *Awareness is the love of myself, in the sense that I hug and give space to all my different parts and it means noticing and being open to whatever is happening. Awareness brings us in contact with our inner wisdom which knows what we need, what’s our path, what’s the solution to our problems.*

Further reading:

Diamond, J., & Spark Jones, L. (2018). *A path made by walking: Process Work in Practice*. Belly Song Press.

Dworkin, J. (2019). *Make love better*. Belly Song Press.

Section 6: The myth of life and our childhood dream

1. Discussion:

I. Jung, the myth of life and our childhood dream

Carl Jung, the second pioneer on the development of Psychology and Psychotherapy, initially followed and then took further Freud's work, shedding light more fully in the dimensions of human existence, of the unconscious and of our accessibility to it.

First of all, he defined our soul as:

Soul = the conscience of "I" + the unconscious, the personal (repressed material of each human) & the collective (all we repress as society).

The main soul is the unconscious, while the conscience of self, of our identity can be considered as an epiphenomenon. That means something secondary resulting from the unconscious.

He realized that human salvation is connected with our ability to bring unconscious material to consciousness and he ascertained that this happens through the night dreams. By analyzing his clients' dreams he realized that we are so magically made that the unconscious itself, no matter how chaotic it may be, energetically tries to bring repressed material, i.e., very important information, to our consciousness.

And the time it brings it is not random. Everything happens inside us with wisdom, nothing is done randomly. In reality all our existence tries to push us more and more towards our totality, the whole-big self of ours. Since our conscience has not the ability to see the whole however, it is unable to understand the interpretation of the material emerging from the unconscious and to utilize it.

Working with hundreds of patients over the years and by analyzing their dreams, Jung noticed another fundamental thing: that most people could recall a childhood dream and that this childhood dream revealed an archetypal or mythical pattern for their life. By saying mythical, he did not mean a predetermined fate but an image of the tendencies of the person which were represented within the dream.

He coined the term “myth of life” to describe the formation of a pattern in the lifelong development of each human being.

Amazing? Let’s now see the developments that took place around the end of 1970’s/ beginning of 1980’s.

Arnold Mindell, later the founder of Process Work, while a trainee in Jungian analysis made a shocking discovery that furthered our knowledge about the unconscious and its relation to the conscious. He noticed that this mythical pattern does not only appear in our childhood dream but also in other repetitive or long-term processes such as: the chronic health issues, our repetitive difficulties in relationships, our addictions and he developed techniques with which we can consciously work creatively with this mythical pattern, with our myth of life. In short, he discovered that our subconscious is not only “talking”/giving information to us through our dreams but also through our symptoms, our illnesses, the way we relate to others, our moods, our addictions. Arnold Mindell named this underlying process DREAMBODY. Dreambody is not identical to unconscious. It is our process itself which pushes us towards our totality.

Let’s learn more about the myth of life.

The myth of life is of course connected with our **personal history** but also connects us with the **spiritual dimension of life** and our **deepest existential questions:**

- What is the meaning of my life?

- Why am I here in this life/earth and what do I have to learn in this life?

It also connects us with:

- Our gifts
- Our powers
- What attracts us or repels us in relationships.

For all these to come to surface we analyze and work deep with a childhood dream, one we dreamed around the primary school age, as in this age the patterns/ tendencies have already be formed. In this childhood age we have less contact with our consciousness and thus a more complete image of the self, of the big self and of our individuality in relation to the identity of self which will be formed later and which is very narrow and limited.

When we explore our childhood dream, we realize a paradox:

All our powers and the seeds of our personal development usually appear in the dream as figures that threaten or in the best case annoy our identity. Whether they are wild animals, poisons, monsters, judges, criminals, storms or other dangerous natural phenomena, falling airplanes or our parents that abandon us alone in the crowd, or whether something happens to us and we are unable to speak or we speak and our voice is not heard or we are unable to run because our legs do not move, or we try to fly and we can't while we could just in the previous scene of the dream, the most important information for us and our lives are incorporated in the most intense, agonizing situations or figures of the dream.

The very important development in dream work, first brought by Gestalt theory and then by Process Work, is that more than understanding the meaning and associations of each figure or atmosphere of the dream, we connect with them, we become them, we step into their shoes and play their part as actors. And by doing so we decode the deepest and unknown but very wise parts of our

existence, the wisdom of our dreambody which wants us whole, it wants us to live through our totality.

I imagine that you are already curious to discover your own myth and you will soon explore your childhood dream, but let's first see:

How do childhood dreams relate with romantic relationships?

When we explore and decode the figures and pieces of our dream and understand the pattern we are following, then we will realize that our partners relate to one or more figures, with a role existing in our childhood dream. What's really interesting is that they may relate with a figure apparently present to the dream or with one that does not appear in the dream but is implied.

For example, let's say that in my childhood dream I had seen that something threatening had entered in my room. The threat was certain but I wasn't sure what exactly is threatening me. So, there was not an apparent threatening figure but one that was implied.

In our unconscious tendency to feel whole and get in touch and follow our life myth, we feel attraction for people who can take over the role of central figures of our dream or the role of the missing but implied figure. The figures are cast not in the scary or annoying dimension they have in our dream, but with their deeper essence, the message they carry for us.

We unconsciously become directors, who by "casting" the ideal individuals (or "actors") for each role are trying to set our life's film.

Let's see this through a true example: **My childhood dream**

My childhood dream was a repetitive dream throughout my childhood. I think that the last times I dreamed it were in my adolescence. I had always experienced it as frightening, as it evoked feelings of deep loneliness, abandonment, helplessness and connected me with the unfairness and cruelty of the world.

“I was all alone in the middle of an open market with loads of people. It was a morning hour. I had lost my mother, but somehow, I knew that my mother had the intention to lose me, she had abandoned me. I was trying to scream but I had no voice and wanted to run to her but I couldn’t move. I could see her running away, her blond hair stood out above all other heads, and I could feel her internal turmoil. Then the scene was changing, it was night and I was present in a Ku Klux Klan gathering. Dozens of men wore the white robes with the heads covered with the hood. They had started a huge fire and they had kidnapped a young black man (or boy) who they intended to burn alive. I was again alone, again feeling that my mother had left me there on purpose to abandon me. I was terrified and was trying to hide. I could understand the extreme danger of my life and that black man’s life. I was waking up at this point.”

All figures of the dream – the leaving mother, the open market, the KKK, the black young man – have taught me a lot and reveal the path of life that I ‘ve been “summoned” to follow, the myth of my life.

The “weak mother” who could not support, follow and nurture Eirini (myself) had to leave me. I had to be left alone feeling small, weak, frightened and helpless in the open market (life) in order to find my own strength, my power, my abilities, myself, my freedom. I had to be left alone in the KKK gathering to find my place in relation to worldwork issues such as power, racism, injustice, life & death, in order to find my way in this world and the meaning of my life. While processing the most disturbing figure, the X energy, the figure of KKK, I became a werewolf who wanted to create an “army” against all malevolence in the world. Werewolves represent metamorphosis and awakening and this is what I am meant to do in this life: support people (and through people the world) in their metamorphosis and awakening.

How my dream relates with my romantic relationships:

My dream includes four main energies – the wise, the left, the leaver and the lack of love and care.

The wise is my intuition. I knew my mother would leave me long before this happens in reality. My inner wisdom has always been there, informing me about the people I was relating with, about how I felt. Unfortunately, most of the times I would mute it when I was falling in love because the attraction to the repetitive pattern was taking a larger part in me than my intuition.

The being left is the energy I have been mostly identifying with in my life. The fear of being left, of being abandoned, was the underlying mechanism in all the relationships I encountered shaping my perception, thinking and behavior. Even when I was the one leaving the relationship, I was perceiving the end as abandonment, thinking that “if he truly loved me, he would have changed”. I was taking the other's inability or shortcomings in relating personally, as my own failure. I was the kid that could not speak or move in the open market, the young black man who was tied and would soon live a brutal death.

The leaver was a more secondary energy to me. I could not realize how I was becoming the leaver like my mother in the dream or the dominant KKK. How although I have always wished and longed for love this part of me was saying NO to relationship and interconnection. This ‘no’ was not conscious, it would come to the fore usually by indirect ways that sabotaged my primary intention and need for love and partnership.

The lack of love and care of the real mother (my mother) became the lack of love and care from the inner mother to myself. I could give “earth and water” to my partner but I was not present to me. I would not ask me what I really need, want, dream; what my boundaries and priorities are. The other and the relationship were always taking more space and the funny thing is that I was totally unaware for this.

A pattern of rejection and abandonment has ruled my intimate relationships making love impossible for many years. My essence informed me about this since my childhood but it wasn't until I started my training in Processwork that I

became aware of it. Working with this pattern is a work in progress for me, acting on my awareness however is my priority.

Let's see how this connection between childhood dream and relating applies to you through the exercise that follows.

2. Exercise 2

Directions for the exercise: Exploring your childhood dream and your myth.

In this exercise try to recall a dream you saw once or repetitively in the age of primary school or even before that, between 2 – 11 years old. Some people are not sure if what they recall was a night dream or a fantasy when awake or in between wake and sleep. Some people have no recollection of any dream or fantasy of that age. Whatever is your case it's ok.

If you recall no dream or fantasy, bring to your mind the oldest or more intense memory that you have from this age. In any case, dream – fantasy – memory, try to recall as much information as possible. Give emphasis to details and the atmosphere that existed in the dream – fantasy – memory.

A client of mine recalls seeing, between sleep and wakefulness, an old woman sitting next to her childhood bed. She recalls that the woman wore a yellow scarf in her hair, her face was full of wrinkles, she was very calm and absorbed to herself. Another client, in her repetitive childhood dream, she was seeing an uncontrolled plane crashing on a residential area. The atmosphere of the dream was full of agony and fear. In therapy she recalled that during the years she was seeing that dream she wished to become a pilot when she would grow up!

All the figures of our dreams are us, our own sides that are trying to emerge and “talk” to us. While working with your dream you will have to get in the shoes of

the annoying or the “bad” figure or atmosphere. We usually have difficulty to identify even for a while with something mean, threatening or catastrophic. It’s very natural! Nevertheless, to find and to connect with the very positive message, the inner wisdom of our deeper self who is trying to say something to us, we really need to do it. As if we are great actors that get in the skin of our role.

A dragon or a terrorist may hide all our power, the warriorship or the confidence that our identity has no access in our everyday consensus reality.

Exercise 2: Exploring your childhood dream and your life myth

General instructions:

Before starting the exercise write on a paper all the information you recall from your dream – fantasy – memory.

Every step of the exercise has several queries. Take time for each one and take notes.

Stay for as long as you need in each step. It is an exercise that, no matter how many times you will return to do it in your lifetime, you may always find new aspects and points that have a meaning for you.

Remember that while working step by step the exercise, you will need your second attention and you will have to get in the shoes of the dream figures just as a good actor/actress is doing with the role given to him/her.

Don’t be afraid to get in the role of a mean, scary, oppressing or violent figure. No matter how repellent or even horrible the figure is it contains something very important for you.

Read each step of the exercise and then start working as it instructs.

1. Do you see yourself in the dream (or if it is a memory, were you present)? What did you do while the story was evolving, what was your role in what was happening? How did you feel? Keep notes.

Now think/see yourself as it is today. Is there something common, of any type, between your present self and the one back in the childhood dream/fantasy/memory? Keep notes. If it makes meaning to you, at this step or any other, while you take notes you can also make sketches, write melodies or lyrics of songs that “crash” your mind out of the blue while you do the exercise. Feel free to enrich your notes if you wish so.

2. What other figures exist in the dream? With the word “figure” we mean people, animals, objects (e.g., the bed or the plane), natural phenomena (e.g., thunders), monsters or any kind of creatures or superpowers.

Write down all the figures you recall.

What was the atmosphere in your dream? Note it.

Now start playing theater, with your dream as the screenplay. Take the role of each figure, whether good/benevolent or bad/malevolent, and give your best acting with each of them. Connect for a few minutes with the energy, the basic quality that each figure embodies, its (super)power.

In order to feel as a monster for example, you will first need to imagine your body changing size, shape, even color, then become the character of the specific monster and then connect with its central characteristic, its energy, its special powers.

Keep notes of all you discovered for each figure.

3. Now ask yourself: are there today or have there been in the recent or further past of yours, people that remind you something of one or more figures?

If you work with a memory, ask yourself what other people in your life have or have had similar elements with the individuals present in your memory.

Attempt a first interpretation as to how people in your life connect with the figures of the dream or fantasy or the individuals of your memory.

Do you behave as any of those figures towards others or to yourself?

Keep notes.

4. Rethink your dream (or fantasy or memory). Is there any figure (or individual) that misses? Which, if present, could have protected you or helped you in any way?

Now, ask yourself what is the role you tend to take in your relationships (any type of close relationships not necessarily romantic ones) and if the role you take is related with the missing figure. Or, the other way, could it be that you are attracted by partners who play/fill the needs of this role for you.

At this point you can ask yourself: do you make use of substances (cigarettes, sugar, drugs, alcohol) or have you developed habits that fill the missing role of the dream?

Keep notes.

5. Now go back to your dream or memory and pick the part of it which you feel that is the one that is the strangest, or you feel is the most unknown or weird or scary or important for some reason. What is the central figure or atmosphere of this part of the dream?

Now close your eyes and connect with this figure. Feel it in your body. Change your shape for a while and BE this figure. Put aside any criticism you have for it. On the contrary accept totally its nature, qualities and powers ((for example feel that you are the huge dragon that burns everything or everybody with the fire coming out your mouth as something absolutely natural – this is your nature, this is what you are created to do just as every creature in this (dreaming) planet)).

How does it feel to be this figure? If you feel bad for its powers you still judge it as “bad”. Put criticism aside (the dragon has this mission, to create fire and burn everything).

The more you connect with the figure, let it also express itself with movement. Move as *it* would move in the room. If it’s a still object, stay

still, experience stillness. Now enrich the playing and experiences also with the sounds this figure makes or a melody it may sing.

Stay there for a few minutes and live these minutes as this figure.

6. Is there some important quality/ energy, or any special power, hidden in the experience you had as this figure?

Find and note the energy/special power of the figure.

7. Now imagine that the dream/fantasy/memory is a fairytale. Make up a continuation and a new finale as you wish. With any way it makes meaning to you or makes you smile, even if it seems unreal.

8. Connect with your experience throughout all the steps of the exercise, you may want to go back to your notes, and then make a first attempt to give an answer: What is the meaning or message this dream has for your life and your relationships? Have you gained some realization about your myth/ mythical pattern in life?

The exercise is based on the respective exercise of J. Dworkin's book "Make love better", page 207.

3. Questions as food for thought

Think further with yourself or share with a friend or your partner something you have learned or understood about yourself and your life myth from the discussion and the exercise.

- What do your dream's figures say about you and your life?
- Do you have any understanding of how the dream drives you to your totality?

- Have you discovered a connection between the dream, the type of people you relate and the way you relate with them?

We are such amazing creatures that our intuitive, wise part knows our myth and the lifelong underlying process trying to unfold since our childhood. Whatever is rejected will self-amplify, the known parts will play over and over. Until we can learn and develop through them.

Further reading:

Dworkin, J. (2019). *Make love better*. Belly Song Press.

Mindell, A. (1987). *The dreambody in relationships*. Routledge & Kegan Paul Inc.

Jung, C.G. (1989). *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. London, England: Random House Inc.

Williams, R. (2018). *C. G. Jung: the basics*. London, England: Routledge

Section 7: Power and relationships

1. Discussion

I. Getting to know our powers & our rank

Since the end of 2020 in Greece where I live, and the last years more and more in several places around the world, people who were psychologically, physically or sexually abused started massively, the one after the other, to publicly denounce their experiences on how people with power or higher rank abused them.

I feel deeply grateful for all of these people, women, men and children. I also feel hope that through the social ferments, the social discussion, all of us or at least some of us will become more aware on abuse and power issues.

Let's see: What is Power - Rank?

It's a position of power you have in relation to another person. The conscious or unconscious social or personal abilities or the power derived from culture, the support of a community, personal psychology or spiritual power.

So, what gives you the power/rank?

A power parameter is the social and structural/contextual privileges you have. The closer and more identified with the mainstream you are and its values the higher **social power** you have (for example if you are a man, white, heterosexual, healthy, with a socially acknowledged occupation, with money, etc). These are privileges you are usually born with and are quite stable.

Your **structural** position may also give you power in specific context. If for example you have a managerial position at your work or you are the one deciding about the employee choice or evaluation that gives you a large local power at your work. When you leave your work you most probably lose this power. These privileges are context specific.

However, besides these social parameters that may or may not give you power, and that for many of them you didn't have to try in order to gain them, there are also the personal powers. You own some of your personal powers since your birth and some others you gained in the way, either by working with yourself or fighting with the struggles of life.

You have **psychological power** when you have access in inner strength sources, when you have mental resilience to tough experiences, awareness of what is happening to you, when you can express your feelings, negotiate your emotional tension, when you have love and compassion or achieve your goals. It's usually the result of endurance in tough life. Instead of knocking you down, difficulties can lead you to insight, strength and psychic radiance.

And lastly, you have **spiritual power**, if you have a feeling of meaning and connection with something bigger than you, a higher power that can provide a more distant view, power or confidence. For you it may be God, Christ, the Nature, the Universe, Buddha, etc., or a combination of higher powers. We also get spiritual power from our values and ideals, as for example the right for which a marginalized group is fighting for. People with high spiritual power develop a detachment from life and death, from the system and what is happening and that helps them be brave with life.

Whatever power you may have at any moment you need to remember that it is not a given for ever. Power is variable and sometimes relative. Also, most of us are usually aware of where we lack power and not where we have. And this is a problem because we fail to realize that at any moment and for any relationship, we can be both powerful and powerless, both victims and victimizers.

2. Exercise in dyad

Ask your partner or a friend to join you in this exercise. Both of you take time to ask yourself in which ways you have or not power in each of the 4 types – social/ structural/ psychological/ spiritual – and take notes.

Then share whatever you want about your power.

3. Discussion

II. Signals of low and high rank/power

Whether you inherited a power by chance or from your parents, whether is a part of your existence or you gained it, if you are not conscious of the rank you have, that is of your powers in relation to others, then your relationships will be hard. Because rank (powers) does not exist outside of relationships and it cannot be avoided. That means that whatever is my rank (depending on my powers), when I am alone up on a mountain it has no existence as it is not compared with that of any other human being. So, it takes at least two for the conscious or the unconscious use of rank and power. And when two people relate, in any way, it is impossible that rank is not entangled, usually unconsciously, in the relationship.

We all have power (and rank) and this by itself is not something bad. But when we lack awareness of when and where we have high rank and where low, where our partner or other people around us have high and where low, then it is quite certain that we will misuse it. Then, consciously or unconsciously we will hurt, reduce, pressure or even abuse a person we care for or love. When for example I have ease at perceiving what I feel and express it and demand from my partner to do the same while he doesn't have the same ease, that could be pressing. Or when I have a stable job, income, career and in result I feel secure, with faith in myself and confidence about tomorrow, and I judge my partner who is unemployed for years for not making all or the right moves in order to find job,

then I might be unfair or hurtful to her. We are not in the same starting point; we don't have the same psychological and social power.

Unfortunately, as Mindell writes, "power is a drug: the more you have the less aware you are on how it negatively affects others" (Sitting in the fire, p. 67 in the Greek edition). Our rank blinds our ability to see the other's worth.

Let's now look at which are the signals showing that we or someone else is having high or low rank.

Signals of high rank

- ✚ Feeling of ease, comfort, trust
- ✚ Ability to express yourself
- ✚ When your emotions do not flood you often, when you feel balanced
- ✚ When you have the stamina to wait for things
- ✚ When you can relax
- ✚ When you define the style or the level of the relationship or communication
- ✚ When you define your availability in relation to the space, time or duration of the communication/ meeting with the other
- ✚ When you have faith or the ability to detach yourself or when you have insight
- ✚ When feel secure, confident, flexibility or that you are entitled of things
- ✚ When you respect yourself, feel confidence, or even complacency or arrogance
- ✚ When you look down on or underestimate the other person's thoughts
- ✚ When you are not touched/ not affected from how the other feels

Material of Processwork Hub (www.processworkhub.gr) for the training program "Diploma in Processwork" 2016-2022

You already have a picture of your privileges; of the types of power you have and of the signals that show high rank. Now we will look at the signals of low rank.

Signals of low rank

- ✚ You often have the sense that you are being neglected, that you are invisible
- ✚ You doubt about yourself, your confidence is low or you feel that your position is of no importance
- ✚ You don't pursue your deeper dreams and wishes, on the contrary you may compromise about your relationship, dreams, work, etc.
- ✚ You often experience lack of clarity and/or ability to think
- ✚ You elevate the other, you appease him/her
- ✚ You adjust your behavior; you don't express with authenticity. You say yes but inside you something is boiling or feeling tight
- ✚ You feel that you are getting paranoid, that you lose your mind
- ✚ You quite often experience fear symptoms such as tightness, sweating, tremor
- ✚ You experience very intense feelings, you are often agitated, angry, desperate or you feel that you are not understood
- ✚ You have somatic symptoms such as palpitation or dizziness
- ✚ You rehearse in order to be able to express yourself
- ✚ You feel the wish to revenge

Material of Processwork Hub (www.processworkhub.gr) for the training program "Diploma in Processwork" 2016-2022

Power struggles are everywhere. People with low rank are hurt, get mad or jealous when the others are not aware of their high rank. While those with awareness are humble because they know that their rank is an invisible superpower that can abuse others.

Having now a better sense of your high and low rank signals we will continue with an exercise which brings together all that we said about power and rank.

In Exercise 3 you are called to discover and write down your powers, your rank, and then to understand the positive or negative ways you are using them. In this exercise you will also distinguish which powers were given to you without you even trying and which ones you have fought for – although even the ones for which we fought have been based to what was given to us to a point. For all of them you will ask yourself what advantages they give you in relation to any other person or your partner and how you can use them consciously to the benefit of both of you.

Exercise 3: Exploring your powers

As in all exercises you will need a notebook to write down your notes.

1. Which of your social powers – social and structural rank – have you gained through your own effort?

Examples of gained powers: academic degrees, well-paid or managerial position, good physical condition due to exercise and healthy diet, good fame/name on something you are doing, a long happy marriage, artistic or scientific or social recognition, knowledge of several foreign languages, money or assets you gained through your own work and effort, etc.

Write them down.

What are the advantages these gained powers give you in relation to other people who don't have them? Does your partner have these advantages?

In which ways can you consciously try to benefit yourself and others/your partner by using these powers?

2. Which are the social powers for which you didn't have to try in any way in order to have them?

Examples of given powers: you were born man, nationality, you are heterosexual, beauty, money or assets you inherited, family condition (if you haven't lost your parents or you are a member of a family, either the

one you created or your root family), you are able bodied and without special abilities or needs, etc.

Write them down.

What are the advantages these given powers give you in relation to other people who don't have them? Does your partner have these advantages?

In which ways can you consciously try to benefit yourself and others/your partner by using these powers?

3. Which of your personal powers – psychological or spiritual rank – have you gained with tough inner work or by fighting with life difficulties?

Examples of gained personal powers: self-awareness, stamina in life's difficulties, maintaining inner peace while in stressful situations, faith, connection with something bigger than you.

Write them down.

What are the advantages these gained powers give you in relation to other people who don't have them? Does your partner have these advantages?

In which ways can you consciously try to benefit yourself and others/your partner by using these powers?

4. Which personal powers were given to you as a charisma or you developed without any special effort?

Examples of given personal powers: extroversion (our cultures value it more than introversion), humor, empathy, optimism, intelligence, specific abilities, etc.

Write them down.

What are the advantages these given powers give you in relation to other people who don't have them? Does your partner have these advantages?

In which ways can you consciously try to benefit yourself and others/your partner by using these powers?

The exercise is based in the corresponding exercise of J. Dworkin's book "Make love better", p. 208.

Rank, and the privileges that come with it, provide strength and power. This power is visible to others but usually invisible to our own eyes. The lack of awareness of our strengths and powers makes us feel vulnerable (the victim role) and (unconsciously) become hurtful to others (the victimizer role).

Following, we will explore how power issues apply in family atmospheres but also in us.

5. Discussion

III. Other aspects of our power and rank:

Family Atmosphere & Culture

Each family has a specific atmosphere. You enter some houses and you feel ice, in others gunpowder ready to explode, in others warmth and joy. Each family also has specific culture: what it values and what it doesn't, what are its habits and rules, what is its worldview.

The atmosphere and culture of the family we grew up is internalized and continues to exist in us. Some of us internalize without complaint the qualities and culture of our family while others take the responsibility, consciously or unconsciously even from their childhood, to bring to the surface all those that the family marginalizes and gives no space to be expressed. For example, in a family that feelings are not expressed and the basic value is the "must" and "what people will say", the kid will either comply and follow or will react and express whatever is not expressed. It will feel and express emotions with intensity, will

break the rules, or question the limits and have behaviors that are challenging for those around. That is why we so often meet parents who say they are surprised, who fall from the clouds when one of their children becomes, for example, aggressive, hypersensitive, indifferent or prone to failure. When a child or a weaker member of the family greatly disturbs its atmosphere and culture, things may even go to extremes in the system's attempt to maintain its homeostasis, that is, its balance. This balance is not necessarily a functioning or healthy one, quite often is actually the opposite. Parents will often use whatever means they see fit to bring the child back to where *they* feel comfortable, or the child will become the scapegoat who will blame the dysfunction as problematic.

More to the family culture, we also internalize the social culture. We will say more on this in the next discussion.

Growing up, the atmosphere and culture we have internalized or reacted to it, finds a field of expression in our relationships and the families we create. We replay the patterns we learned, firstly in the relationship with ourself and then in the couple or other close relationships. Without any awareness, we may flip from the complying energy and behaviors to the reacting ones. In any case, being trapped in the dynamic of the pattern which leads the way and affects our sense of power; usually in both positive and negative ways, always unconsciously though.

6. Exercise

Exercise 4: The atmosphere and culture of your family

Think and write down the atmosphere your family or the context in which you grew up had (it may be helpful to think how would a stranger entering the house for first time feel the atmosphere) and what was its culture (its values, worldview, the ways it connected with the world outside, etc).

Do you recognize patterns that you have internalized – of compliance or reaction – and you repeat them:

A. in yourself

B. in the couple (or other close) relationships

Do you recognize ways that these patterns have affected your sense of power/rank, positively or negatively?

The exercise is based on the exercise of J. Dworkin's book, "Make love better", p. 24.

7. Discussion

IV. The inner judge

Many of us grew up in an atmosphere of criticism, devaluation or oppression and as adults fight with an internalized judge thus often or constantly feel weak, not enough or victims. Most probably all people have an inner judge as we all grow and live in environments (school, group of friends, teams) which favor the comparison - where always someone is deemed as the good enough and the other(s) as not. All society (the western at least) is based on comparison and is simultaneously advances certain models about human existence - from the characteristics in personality or looks that are the preferable or favored or even demanded as to what it values and what not.

The cultural oppressor becomes the inner oppressor. Inner judges support the cultural values we live in. They favor prejudice, taboos, stereotypes, sexism, racism, etc. People from any kind of minority very often feel despair, doubt, even self-hate. Mainstream people also suffer if or whenever they don't manage to achieve the socially expected demands or expectation. Most of us often feel unworthy and depressed.

Ask yourself what are your inner judges. And then ask your partner.

The inner pattern of critic and devaluation can blind us. If we stick for too long in devaluation, self-critic and victimization we lose our clarity and ability to recognize our powers. We fail to see all those we are and have, our value, our talents, our gifts, our beauty, all we have gained, and if we see them, we never consider them enough. Oppression is so much around and in us that we have learned to consider it natural. But the more we allow the inner or outer oppressor to devalue us the more depressed, sick due to stress or agony, addicted to any substance or condition we are. We don't use our powers consciously for our own sake and the benefit of others or our partner (as we saw in exercise 3), but unconsciously so most probably without benefit for anyone.

When we don't fight our inner judges, even a small comment or the well-meant critic from our partner, which could actually help in our personal development or to our relationship, makes us defensive as we filter it as a negative judgment or devaluation. We perceive it as a judgment of our totality, and not as constructive or supportive mirroring.

If something of what you read in this section rings your bell, then you need to work with your inner judge/devaluator. You need to raise another voice within you that will on the one hand put in its place the voice that criticizes and belittles you - in short it always values you as little or less than expectations - and on the other hand will accept, give value and space to all sides of yourself and not only those related to your family pattern or the cultural expectations.

Some examples:

- This new voice will give you value every time you manage and complete something but also when you authentically try for something that finally didn't go well (against a judge that says that only good results worth).
- The new voice will accept your need to say no to taking care of others when you feel you have taken distance from taking care yourself (against the judge that says we owe to always be there for others).

- The new voice will allow you to give room to your weakness, any type of weakness – physical, mental or practical – (against a judge that says that you owe to always be strong, solid or ready to handle whatever appears in our life).

Exercise 5 that follows will help you utilize the energy of your inner judge.

8. Exercise

Exercise 5: Working with your inner judge

Have a notebook ready and use your second attention.

1. Turn your attention inside and focus on the inner voice that judges you. This voice is your inner judge.
 - Is it present now?
 - If yes, what does it say? If not, what does it usually say?
 - Describe it. You may imagine the judge with a specific image, as a human figure, a cartoon or a monster. Describe its body, posture, voice, way and tone of speaking to you. It could also have the appearance of an existing person, eg your father or your mother.
 - Keep notes or/and make a sketch/drawing of him/her/it (it doesn't have to be artistic; it can be a childlike drawing).
2. Change your shape with your fantasy and become the figure of judge. Imagine you are that figure/image, that voice, that behavior, that body posture or atmosphere. **Move and talk** as the judge would.
 - Once you become the judge then start putting aside the content of critic and focus on the main energy/quality it brings (e.g., sternness or devaluation or aggression or mockery). Keep notes on how you feel having and exercising this quality when being the judge.

- Express this energy/quality with a movement of your hand. E.g., if the energy is mocking, what hand movement would reveal this energy if you would play pantomime? Once you find it, repeat the movement several times, try it in faster but also in much slower pace, until you feel what is there in its depth, until something makes a meaning out of this movement. For example, by exploring the energy of aggression and while repeating a movement you may feel power or a sense that you take more space or freedom. Or by exploring mockery you may feel a desire for humor or childness or craftiness.

2. Now ask yourself: Where do you need this deeper energy in your life? How can you use it **for your benefit**? Keep notes.

3. Connect again with the energy that came up on the previous step (e.g., the power, freedom, humor, craftiness, etc.) to relate with the judge. Talk to him/her/it from this sense/energy and guide the judge on how to become an ally, a teacher instead of making you feel bad. E.g.: “Do you have something to say to me? Ok, but you will say it nicely and without belittling me. I ‘ve had enough of this!”

Negotiate with the judge by doing an inner dialogue between you and the imaginary figure in order to create an alliance.

4. Try to understand what are the judge’s motives, psychology, what does he/she/it want to teach you but is doing with the worse possible way until now.

5. Notice how do you feel with the judge now. Do you feel you need to defend yourself more? Do you want to send him/her/it away?

Repeat the exercise whenever you feel the judge appears in a way that depowers you and keeps you back.

The exercise is based on material of Processwork Hub (www.processworkhub.gr) for the training program “Diploma in Processwork” 2016 – 2022.

Summarizing the main learning points:

- *Rank differences are inevitable in any relationship. Never two people can (permanently) experience their rank in their relationship in the same way, even if they have the same gender or other social or structural powers in common. And as we said earlier, the way we experience rank is not a permanent condition either, it can change at any time.*
- *Moreover, rank is neither good nor bad by itself. It’s all about HOW it is used. So, the goal is acquiring awareness of your rank and powers (and be grateful for them) as well as of your lack of rank, in order to be able to use them consciously and with the will to enforce yourself, your partner and your relationship.*

No matter how much rank we have now as adults, we have all been children without rank and power. When our parents’ or other peoples’ power was used in hurtful and unfair ways towards us and we were unable to defend ourself.

You may have lived difficult, even traumatic events in your childhood, or not. But even common conditions such as a critical or distant parent, a poor relationship between the parents which resulted in a frozen atmosphere in the house may have been painful for you. Most of us carry painful or traumatic experiences from our childhood throughout our life and from our relationship with our parents to our adult relationships. Wounds remain active creating intense emotional reactions under certain circumstances.

In the next session we will talk about the “wood you have to burn” as we symbolically say, that is about our wounds and traumas, no matter how small or big. You will discover what outer stimuli arising from the others’ attitude and behavior can trigger intense emotional reactions in you.

Further reading:

Dworkin, J. (2019). *Make love better*. Belly Song Press.

Mindell, A. (2002). *Sitting in the fire*. Greek edition: Grafes, Athens, GR

Section 8: Our childhood and the “woods we have to burn”

1. Discussion

I. What we know through neurosciences

The neurosciences revolution, which was ignited by the super sophisticated brain scan techniques and the biochemical discoveries over the last 20 years, has shone a light on the biological effects of psychic trauma and of an unfavorable environment on which a human being grows and develops biologically.

In the early years of our lives, infancy, toddlerhood and childhood, our brains develop and organize at a breakneck pace. Whatever we experience during this period affects the formation of our brain organization in positive or negative ways. Newest research shows that brain alterations or changes also occur in people who are mentally injured in adolescence. Thus, our brains are vulnerable for a very large time span.

Today we know with considerable precision what happens in EACH hemisphere and in the different parts and structures of the human brain in a child who experiences mental stress – that is, psychic pain, fear, anxiety, guilt, neglect, verbal, physical or psychological abuse, in the moment but also long-term in the rest of his/her life.

I won't get into analyzing the brain systems, it's not our point here and not my expertise. But I will first tell you the essence of knowledge we have taken from neuroscience and then how this is related with relationships.

What neuroscience has taught us:

1. Psychological trauma disrupts homeostasis and can cause immediate and chronic issues in many organs and biological systems.

2. Trauma affects what a child or the later adult is expecting, on what s/he is focusing and the way with which s/he organizes and processes any information.
3. Trauma defines the perception of any type of threat and this perception is translated in thought, emotion, behavior and the adjustment of biological systems.
4. The insecure bond with the main caretaker, usually the mother, is directly affecting brain areas which specialize in adjusting to outer changes.
5. The symptoms of brain changes in adult life appear on what we call consciousness while we are awake, but also as a psychic detachment or altered state of conscience in 4 different dimensions: a) the time, b) the thought, c) the body, d) the emotion. That means:
 - Not having the ability to be truly connected with here and now, the present time,
 - Not having a clear sense of what part of me is thinking, or having a sense that I am not the master of my thoughts and that the stimuli that trigger me distort my thought,
 - Experiencing my body as something distant or even totally strange, or serious difficulty of my body to stand and relate naturally with whatever surrounds me,
 - Flooding with emotions instead of feeling them, as if I am all an emotion whether it is an intense one as pain, fear, anger, rage, shame, guilt or withdrawn one as emotional freezing, shutting down, depersonalization.

The good news of neuroscience:

We know today that the only biological therapy is psychotherapy.

Psychotherapy treats the defective alterations of the brain in the same ways they were created.

It disables the brain's dysfunctional mapping, creates new synapses and neural connections that then create larger circuits that remap the entire brain architecture.

If it is the first time you hear this information you may be upset or surprised. It's natural. You may also be flooded with disappointment, anger or rage for your parents or guardians. If so, it is also natural. I would like you to keep the good news: no matter how negatively you are affected by the way you grew up you have the possibility to make serious changes if you decide to work with yourself. You are already taking a step on this direction with this seminar. The exercises can help you start this inner work, especially if you repeat them again and again after a period of time.

If you feel however that you wish or need to start a systematic work with yourself, with will and commitment, maybe it's the time to begin psychotherapy finding the most suitable therapist for you.

If you feel any intense emotion(s) don't keep them inside. Share them with the facilitator or the group. You will realize that most people have faced difficulties during their childhood. It's important to express what you feel and thus hug yourself and your emotions. Moreover, staying with unexpressed emotions and mental distress will disable you from receiving information or benefits as the seminar progresses.

II. The connection of our personal history and the way we relate

Let's now see how is our personal history connected with our relationships, romantic or not.

Our personal history and relationships

We relate to other people not having the slightest clue that:

- Our perception,
- The way our brain processes information,
- Our expectations,
- Our ability to adjust to changes,
- Our consciousness,
- Our connection with time,
- Our thought,
- Our emotion
- And even our body,

operate having as a map the difficult, mentally stressful or even traumatic experiences of the past and that any stimuli that connects us with them – a behavior, words, attitude, atmosphere, image, sound, smell – triggers a major emotional upset within us and as a result a reaction (usually disproportionate or even irrelevant).

Examples:

- My supervisor at work denies to see me in his office one day because he is very busy, but I start thinking that he doesn't like me or that I have most probably made a mistake or even make a scenario that he wants to fire me.
- My partner is putting on headphones and listens to the music on the other room and I feel rejection or abandonment.
- My partner shows me affection and admiration and I step back or tell her I don't believe her.
- My partner tells me something that troubles him to me or the relationship and I feel rejected, or put down, or the wish to accuse him back.
- I overhear a discussion of strangers in the street or in a café and I suddenly feel full of anger or rage which is disproportionate to the context.
- My partner raises her tone of voice for something that has annoyed her and I freeze or give her the silent treatment for hours or days.

- My partner is not hugging me when I would like to or his attention is on something else than me and I have feelings of pain or agony.
- My partner is asking my care or tenderness and I feel enormous pressure and the need to run away from the relationship.

As long as you don't work with what has hurt you, with whatever affected your soul and your brain in a tender age, therefore with whatever triggers you, as long as you don't "**burn your wood**" metaphorically, you will find it difficult to retain functional, alive, satisfying and long-term relationships.

The burning of our wood is not a one-time work.

It needs to be a continuous practice if we wish to appear in ourself and our relationships with awareness. When we are empowered, we become able to differentiate what is related to here and now and what with the past, what with our partner and what with our parents or other people in our upbringing, what with the other person and what with our personal history.

As a method, the burning of wood requires the presence of an experienced psychotherapist or an inner attitude of great empathy and grounding.

In order to do it, we need to go back in time, being however this time in a safe context, and relive the hurtful/traumatic experiences and this time allow ourselves to feel and express as they wish emotionally or bodily. With the awareness that we now have the power to react to what was happening back then and as children we were unable to. This time instead of freeze, or numb, or shutting all out, or flood with pain and agony, we can stand for ourself and fight for it. It can be about a small thing, something that today you would not evaluate as hurtful but it was hurtful for you back then. It may be that your own burning of wood is all around small things or not very difficult experiences. You may have had the luck to be raised in an environment that was there with sensitivity and care to your emotional needs, at least most of the times. It may not. In the case of very hurtful or traumatic experiences it is very important to express even the most edgy or extreme feelings of rage or destruction, even the most catastrophic

mania. But this has to be done in the presence of a therapist in an environment you feel safe and in which you will know that you won't hurt anyone else or yourself.

The burning of wood allows us to complete negotiations of the past, to express whatever was impossible to back then, to feel emotions that had been frozen. This way we gradually transform the trauma or deep pain or anger in an accessible power, energy and awareness. And when we are connected with our inner strength then we can connect with the other person more securely, with greater depth and joy. We can stand and handle the fire of conflict and negotiate our needs and thus move on hand by hand in the personal growth of both of us.

Methods for burning your wood

Utilize all the methods often and systematically:

1. Experience your emotions in their totality. Feel the freedom to feel and express all your feelings, even the tough ones as sorrow, despair or rage.
2. Find a witness. When we experience or work with our traumatic experiences, we may feel a lot of pain. It is important to have a person of trust listening and believing our stories.
3. Play out the experience. Play all the roles, speak from their position. Get in the role with the rank and speak from this role, feel the power. Then get in the role that didn't have power, the victim role (you as a child/teenager) and respond freely whatever you feel like at this moment. Stand up for yourself now. In this way you get to know better both roles and you stop identifying only with the victim position.
4. Find and own the power of the person or role that hurt you. To do that you need to put aside the context of the hurt (what that person did/said/behaved) and connect with the power the person had. E.g., the power of the oppressor or the one who abused you or hurt you in any way. If, symbolically speaking, the other is a tree with poisonous fruits, let the

fruits in the side for a while and give emphasis, connect with the power of the tree's trunk and roots. This can connect you with your own power, the one you lost when the initial hurt/trauma happened and it can help you stand for yourself against the inner oppressor/judge.

Important note: if you feel really uncomfortable to take the role of the perpetrator respect your feeling. You may need to process deeper the victim role or stand up more for yourself against the person who hurt or abused you in the past, before feeling ready to explore the abuser role.

5. Utilize all the channels of expression: shout, make gestures, laugh, sing, make sounds, spit, move, dance, kick or punch pillows or the couch (of course in a way that you will not hurt yourself). Do that in order to express your emotions in their totality, especially the ones of sorrow and rage, while you imagine that the person that hurt you is standing in front of you. Cognitive expression is not enough. Just speaking about our hurt is not enough. So, even if this deep expression of emotions seems strange, weird, immature or irrational to you it is very necessary.
6. Share your experience with people close to you or with a facilitator or therapist if you have access to one. Working with past trauma or hurt is a strong experience. You might need support or soothing after this experience.

Based on the respective list of J. Dworkin book "Make love better", page 213.

You are now ready to do exercise 6 in order to find what triggers you. This exercise is divided in two parts: you can do the first part alone but for the second part you will need an assistant, so it will be done in dyads during the workshop.

If you wish to do it again at a later time, your partner or a friend can be your assistant. For sure a person whom you trust deeply and you know is in a position to follow the exercise steps seriously and consistently and who will also follow your guidance and the information you share with respect. If you don't feel there

is such a person available, I suggest that you won't try to do the second part outside the workshop. Keep also in mind, that if you start doing the exercise with a person and at some point, you feel that something is not emotionally secure enough for you, then stop no matter how much is left to complete it.

2. Exercise

Exercise 6: Find what triggers you

As in all exercises, read first all the steps once and then start working on each step. Have a notebook available.

Part A'

1. Think of something that triggered intense feelings or freezing or shutting down in you lately. It could be after a conflict with your partner, a colleague, a parent, etc.

Choose an incident in which you had even a slight feeling that your reaction was a little or way too stronger than the circumstances.

2. Recall all details. What did happen or what was said? Keep notes.
3. Try to recognize the source of your trigger. The most common triggers are behaviors of: rejection, anger, frustration, abandonment, neediness, depression or bad mood, sexual innuendo or unwanted sexual approach, yelling or screaming, pouting, dominance in the conversation or interruption when you speak, silence, ignoring, indifference, snubbing, nagging, competition and/or jealousy, prejudice or other type of discrimination, violence, but possibly also love or admiration.
Keep notes.

4. Go back to the past and remember: Which incident or life period or past condition can possibly be connected with the source that triggered you and you noted down in step 3.

What happened back then and hurt you?

How do you think is the past hurt or trauma related to the recent incident?

Keep notes.

5. What ways do you use to calm your soul when you are triggered? Do you actually have any? Are they effective? For now? In the long run?

What other ways could you possibly use?

Keep notes on all the behaviors/attitudes that trigger you and repeat the exercise working on different incidents to find many or all sources.

Part B'

Go on to part B only if and for as long as you feel safe since you need an assistant who you can trust. Read to the assistant all the steps of the exercise and explain what they need to do. Outside the workshop context your assistant could be, if s/he agrees, your partner, a close friend, etc.

1. Pick one of the behaviors/ attitudes that trigger you and find the source, the initial hurt/trauma that happened in the past and is related to the behavior/ attitude in here and now.

Tell the story of the past to your assistant.

Which person(s) were present in the past incident? Which were missing?

2. If you feel safe, give to your assistant (for a while s/he will pretend to be an actor) the role of the person that hurt you in the past and free yourself to respond **now** in what happened back then **exactly** as you feel and need to – as long as it is not physically violent to yourself or your assistant!!!

If you feel the need to punch/hit something with momentum or violence do in on a pillow or the couch.

Free yourself and use your body, movement, your voice, your feelings and the role playing with your assistant.

3. Change roles with your assistant and now be the figure/person that hurt you when you were a child. Then be the figure that was missing from the incident. See the whole incident through the eyes of those two roles. What was the sense of power of each role?

Roles: you as a child, the person that hurt you and the person that was present but didn't intervene or that was missing when the incident happened.

4. Now put aside the context or the intention of the hurt from this person and connect with the sense of rank, the power of the abuser. Keep only the sense of power, without any context, and make this power yours as a good and luminous one. Fill all your existence with this luminous, good power.

5. Keep on until you feel that a deeper understanding/ insight is appearing, a sense that something was completed or was unblocked, or your emotional state is changed.

6. If you feel that you're getting stuck, close your eyes and imagine that you are a wise figure (e.g., the magician of a tribe or an old monk). What's this wise figure's advice to you?

7. Discuss with your assistant about the experience and the ways you can use this new power with which you just got connected in your everyday life.

The exercise is based on two different exercises of J. Dworkin's book "Make love better", pages 212 & 214.

Summarizing the key learning points:

- *Our brains are vulnerable for a very large time span. Neuropsychology shows us with considerable precision what happens in the different parts and structures of the human brain in a child or teenager who experiences mental stress – that is, psychic pain, fear, anxiety, guilt, neglect, verbal, physical or psychological abuse, in the moment but also long-term in the rest of his/her life.*
- *As long as you don't work with what has hurt you, with whatever affected your soul and your brain in a tender age, therefore with whatever triggers you, as long as you don't "**burn your wood**" metaphorically, you will find it difficult to retain functional, alive, satisfying and long-term relationships.*

No matter how much pain or frustration we have experienced as children or adults, most of the times we are able to keep dreaming about our life and our relationships, sometimes even against all odds. In the next section we will talk about our deepest dreams and the ways they relate with our relationships.

Further reading:

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Section 9: High and low dreams

1. Discussion

We all have dreams about love which include specific ideals, our deepest wishes and our longing for a love relationship. Arnold Mindell named them **High Dreams**. These high dreams are created around our greatest hopes of what is going to happen between us and our beloved, of what we can achieve together and at the same time they are our dreams about humanity.

When we are tuned with our high dreams for love we feel passion, hope, desire, optimism, light or even ecstasy. However, these high dreams often blind our awareness and cause us to overlook signs of difficulty or mismatch even when our partner does not treat us well. These perception gaps protect our high dream, sometimes against our well-being.

Then should they be protected?

Do you recall the phases of the relationship? When we experience the honeymoon phase – whether in the beginning of the relationship or in any next cycle of the phases – then we live with our high dream.

Our high dream is like a big YES: it keeps our interest in life alive. It can lead us to our personal mental and spiritual growth and to the enrichment of our relationship, it deepens it and positively changes its atmosphere, it keeps us hanging in difficulties.

Jan Dworkin refers to high dreams as “Unspeakable Longings” and sheds light to their various dimensions: high dreams are numerous and very personal. Some are simple, others more complex and spiritual. Some arise from our personal history and others are intertwined with the world around us. Before taking time

to wonder which is your high dream about love and companionship, let's see some examples of high dreams.

Examples of high dreams about love:

- ✚ To unite at all levels, mentally – spiritually – bodily, to become one
- ✚ To create a beautiful family, to bring children in the world
- ✚ To be together in God's "hug"
- ✚ To live together a creative and unconventional life
- ✚ To change the world together
- ✚ To live an unconditional love, with our hearts wide open
- ✚ To be together in a relationship of freedom and independence
- ✚ To achieve common goals: occupational, scientific, athletic or any else
- ✚ To grow, mature and develop together

2. Exercise

Exercise 7: Your high dream

Close your eyes if you feel it helps you and turn within.

Remember your greatest hopes, wishes and longing for a current or past relationship. What is your high dream? It could be one or more things together.

Can you put it on words?

Is there a song that fits to your dream(s)?

Keep notes.

The exercise is based on the respective one on J. Dworkin's book "Make love better", p. 63

When two people share the same dream or dreams about love and relating, their relationship can spread to unknown widths and depths whereas when different, e.g., the one's is to change the world and the other's to create a nest for the two of them only, the two people might suffer if they stay together or they will need a lot of work and counseling.

Here come the second “bad news” about high dreams:

Except from blinding us, most of the times high dreams will be dashed at some point, even for a while, in all relationships. These are the phases we experience the greatest disappointments which then become conflicts and we sink in bad moods.

We then experience the **Low Dreams**. Let's see the usual moods when we experience the low dream of the relationship.

Moods when I am at the Low Dream:

- ✚ Disappointment
- ✚ Feeling of failure
- ✚ Pessimism
- ✚ Sorrow – depression
- ✚ Despair

People can literally get sick, go back to drugs or commit suicide while at the low dream. Low dreams have the same qualities with high dreams: they're blinding and persistent.

Their roots go back to our childhood, to hurtful or traumatic experiences that shaped us (as we explained in the previous section) and shaped the way we view and experience relationships. What we missed becomes what we long for about love.

What often happens is that the negative childhood experiences in our love relationships with our parents, but also with siblings, relatives, friends, become

the base of the later high dreams. I.e., we unconsciously choose a partner who repeats the pattern of the hurtful relationship with our parent(s), with the (again unconscious) hope that this time something will change and we will get the love and whatever else we need.

So, if I had a cold – distant parent, I am now attracted by a similar partner and I connect with him/her with my high dream believing that if I am good, loving, giving, I will manage to earn the partner's love (and this way heal the lack from the parent). But if this won't happen, I will fall apart to the low dream and I will relive all the pain, the abandonment and the despair of the unfulfilled love.

Or if my parent was emotionally unstable, I may choose a partner at the same pattern and my high dream will be that if I open my heart widely to love him/her as is, s/he will stabilize and we'll live a wonderful life.

Those two examples emerge the notion of **codependence**. Two people coexist in a relationship because their high dream keeps them there with the hope of finally living the love that wasn't present in their childhood. The codependence happens when we get blind and we relate with the dream and not with the reality of the other's behavior, attitude, etc.

And you may think: So, is it wrong to have high dreams?

NO.

The problem isn't the dreams but their confusion with codependence; that we get stuck, we get comfortable with some nuggets of satisfaction of our high dream while there are countless daily signals that our dream cannot be fulfilled with the specific person. And when the high dream finally falls apart, we fall apart with it.

The way out, as Mindell says, is firstly to see every person we relate with exactly as they are and not as we wish, and secondly, to learn to expect negativity and go on with this as a fact. So once more awareness is of central importance.

Let's see some common low dreams among people.

Examples of Low Dreams about love

- ✚ None ever loved me truly and none will.
- ✚ I will never have a good relationship, why try?
- ✚ I am too weak/ old/ ugly/ fat/ difficult/ problematic/ ... to be loved by somebody. Something is wrong with me, so I don't deserve to be loved and be happy.
- ✚ There is none I can trust. People will always hurt me (this is kind of true since it is impossible to never be hurt for nothing in a relationship). In its stereotypical form this low dream boils down to "all men are assholes/ all women are whores".
- ✚ I am invisible, none is interested in getting to know me, let alone love me.

3. Exercise

Exercise 8: Your own low dream

Remember a time in your life that you had sink in a low dream. What happened in your life or your relationship and lead you there?

How did you feel or behaved in the person that filled you with so much disappointment?

How often do you experience a low or THE low dream of yours?

Keep notes.

The exercise is based in the respective one on J. Dworkin's book, "Make love better", p. 67

We said before that although high dreams will, even for a while, fall apart, they are important. Let's more analytically see why:

Our high dreams inspire us, push us on the path of self-fulfillment, joy and love. They give meaning to our lives!!!

Their seeds are in our childhood dream and relate to the myth of our life. The closer we live to our high dreams and our personal myth the fuller and more meaningful our life is.

The tragic thing is that growing up we learn to have neither too high or too low dreams. This limit on emotions gradually develops a slight chronic depression that we take as reality. Along with the American movies stereotypes of a perfect love/perfect communication/perfect all relationship, there is an entire belief system in our society that prevents us from connecting to our high dreams and our myth. Western societies and consensus reality love polarities, as we said in earlier sections.

Belief system that prevents us from high dreams and myth of life

- ✚ Passion doesn't last
- ✚ Happiness is something elusive
- ✚ Land and live like others. Who do you think you are?
- ✚ If you don't have money, you can't live as your heart desires
- ✚ I've grown up now, I can't follow my dreams

So, when the myth of perfect love hits the rocks, we find ourselves living disconnected from our dreams and our very own personal myth and then we need substances – drugs, sugar, chocolate, alcohol – or get addicted to activities, in an attempt to feel fulfilled.

But no type of addiction/ attachment will really fill us up, give us meaning.

High dreams are “jewels” that we simply have to unfold to discover. It takes inner work to go to the root, to their essence. When we understand the essence and

internalize it then something clears up how we perceive things. We can see more clearly whether and how our high dream is being fulfilled and when and how it is not. We realize this when we fall into the low dream, understand its frustration and hurt and how often it happens. We clearly see our partner and their behaviors and are able to perceive if they match our emotional and practical needs and our dreams.

Then there is a greater chance of seeing the person and not our projections on them and stop fighting for a relationship that doesn't suit either of us. When you begin to realize whether you are in a codependent relationship in which you are endlessly fighting to change the pattern of your childhood trauma through your partner and connect with your pure, clear high dream, then you will know what you are really looking for in yourself and another person. We need to retain the learner's attitude to understand that the crash of our high dreams may be necessary to prepare us for a more comprehensive view of the world. Life has the power to bring us troubles when we get stuck, since troubles have in turn the power to bring us closer to ourself and the other.

In the last exercise of this workshop there are 2 parts. In the 1st part you will come into contact with the deepest essence, the gift of your high dream. In the 2nd part you will contrast your new awareness with a relationship of your choosing.

4. Exercise

Exercise 10: Exploring your high dream

As in most exercises you've done so far, you will use your second attention as well as the different channels of your experience, that is movement, proprioception, vision, sound, and emotion. Firstly, read all the steps of each part and then begin to do the exercise. Keep notes or quick drawings in each step.

Part 1st: The deeper essence of your dream

1. Choose an important relationship for you, current or past, which you now want to focus. It can be romantic, family relationship, or close friendship.
2. Identify and describe your high dream for this relationship in as much detail as you can.
3. Now leave the relationship aside and focus only on the dream. Close your eyes and let this high dream create a sensation in your body. Take time without depriving yourself.
4. When you have a clear sensation or feeling take a pose that represents it. Starting with this pose and guided by emotion let your body move as it wants. Allow to the high dream to be expressed freely and fully creatively.
5. As you move and feel and flow, connect with the deeper essence of the dream.
6. Allow an image or vision or song to emerge that expresses the essence of your dream.
7. What beliefs stop you from believing in this essence?
8. If you allowed yourself imagine living life through this high dream world, what would it be like? What possibilities emerge?

Part 2nd: The essence of your high dream in relationship

1. Now go back to the relationship you chose and compare your high dream with the reality of the relationship.
2. Write down with as much detail as you can the differences between your high dream and reality. What signals do you tend to not see?
3. Remember a time that your high dream wasn't satisfied. Did you then give attention to your perception and feelings or not? How did you react to the other person? Were you judgmental? Did you sink in sorrow? Did you fall in the low dream?
4. Now recall the essence of your high dream from the 1st part of the exercise and imagine that you express this essence to the other person. How do you feel in this imaginary communication? How do you think that the other person will react?

5. Notice whether you gave yourself all the freedom to express everything around your high dream in this imaginary conversation. If not go back and support yourself to express fully. Notice if something changes.
6. Give yourself a piece of advice or insight for this particular relationship based on your experience in this exercise.

This exercise is based in the respective one on J. Dworkin's book "Make love better", p. 215-216

Summarizing the key learning points:

- *High dreams are created around our biggest hopes about love. What we missed as children becomes what we long for about love.*
- *When they inevitably crash, we fall in the low dream – the sum of our negative experiences in relationships throughout our life.*
- *High dreams keep us connected with the light of life and love and the experience of low dreams help us understand and see the difference between high dream and codependence. We need to retain the learner's attitude to understand that the crash of our high dreams may be necessary to prepare us for a more comprehensive view of the world and our life.*

Further reading:

Dworkin, J. (2019). *Make love better*. Belly Song Press.

Mindell, A. (1987). *The dreambody in relationships*. NY: Routledge & Kegan Paul Inc.

Closing

We have come to the closing of the first part of work on partner relationships.

To recap, in this manual we approached relationships through the theory and tools of Process Work, an approach that focuses equally on the different dimensions of human existence – consensus reality, dreaming reality and its deeper essence, and harnesses the very thing that is happening, the process of each person as it appears in relationships, dreams, physical symptoms, things that are perceived as annoying or difficult or attract their attention, addictions but also what is happening in parallel in the world channel.

You learned that there are three different dimensions of human experience and awareness, the consensus reality, the dreaming level and the deeper essence and that you need to develop your second attention to be able to perceive the totality of your experiences.

We talked about the components of new learning and inner practice and what is needed on the path to them.

You learned that relationships happen simultaneously on three levels, within us, at the level of communication and the field level, and this first seminar was focused on the first level, the one within, the intrapersonal.

We talked about the completely different experiences people have around relationships, and that there is no such thing as an ideal or normal relationship.

We talked about the contradictions of the feelings we have in relationships, all of them but especially partner relationships, and about the phases that partner relationships go through.

And then you learned what awareness means, how necessary it is for your personal growth and building relationships that work for you, and how you can become more aware.

You learned about the importance of your childhood and began to explore your childhood dream and life myth and then saw how it relates to the relationships you create.

Then we talked about power, we defined it to make it easier to understand, you discovered your own sources of power, inherited or earned, your own low and high rank signals and saw how you use or can use your power positively in your relationships.

You recognized the atmosphere and culture of the family or context in which you grew up and got in touch with your inner judge/devaluator.

Then we talked about the necessity to burn your wood, that is, to work with the wounds and traumas of the past that have the power to bring about significant changes in the soul and the brain and therefore in the way we "go out" into the world and we connect in relationships. You've got a list of ways to burn your wood, you've discovered what triggers you and you've worked with it.

Finally, we talked about high and low dreams, you got in touch with your own high and low dreams, with the moods you fall into when you don't live according to your high dreams in the relationship (and not only) and with the social pressure to live without dreams. You explored your own high dream more deeply and compared it to a relationship that is important to you.

I want to say a very big thumbs up to you!

Well done for being willing to learn, support and understand yourself more deeply!

Well done for taking action, for finding a way to do this!

Well done for completing this work which probably took you to very deep and old wounds, maybe it created turmoil in you but I hope it filled you with hope

and light at the same time! Internal changes and movements sometimes make us feel destabilized. This happens until we find our new balance, our new footing.

Well done for trying, even if you didn't manage to complete all the exercises, if you found them difficult or strange or incomprehensible. It is indeed difficult, especially when this is a first contact with your inner self, to follow and complete such deep inner work. In any case, whether you found them difficult and incomprehensible and gave up or half-did them, or whether you managed to complete them, I strongly suggest that you return to the exercises, again and again and again. Repeat them as many times as necessary to feel familiar with them, with the structure they follow, and each time a new piece of information or insight emerges for you. It is not wasted time, on the contrary, no matter how much time you spend on them, it will only be a profit for you.

Thank you deeply for choosing to take this inner journey of awareness with me, I am honored!

If and when you feel ready, if and when you feel the desire, you can continue with the next two parts on relationships that focus on the interpersonal level and the field level (on the relationship as a separate entity) respectively.

Well done to your partner or friends that might have joined you in this trip or in one or more of the exercises. Sharing new knowledge, learning experiences, questions, feedback, what we liked and found difficult, or our new awareness with other people is a key element of learning!

Closing exercise

Take an A3 paper and markers or crayons and make a drawing or composition of drawings - figures - words - phrases or even plain colors that somehow capture this learning journey.

Feel free to show it to a person you choose and share whatever you wish about it and your journey.

Thank you,

Eirini Dakou

Your comments or questions are most welcomed!

Contact details:

Address: Lelas Karagianni 18,

Ilioupolis, Athens,

16342 Greece

Email: eirini.dakou@gmail.com