

Diploma thesis in Processwork

by Maria Abyzova

Exploration of joy in Ukraine at war

Deep Democracy Institute

January 2024

Content

0. [Addressing the reader and thesis roles](#)
1. [Edges to access joy](#)
 - a. [Survivor guilt](#)
 - b. [Process structure of survival in individual and collective abuse](#)
 - c. [Warrior role](#)
 - d. [Mastering altering](#)
2. [Joy as an altered state](#)
 - a. [Pain of war](#)
 - b. [Constant violence](#)
 - c. [Shame role](#)
 - d. [Joy as an altered state](#)
3. [Soothing joys](#)
 - a. [Cafes](#)
 - b. [Corgi dogs and other fluffy buddies](#)
4. [The joy of nursing & nourishing](#)
5. [The joy of nature](#)
6. [The joy of winning inner battles](#)
7. [Conclusion](#)

Addressing the reader and thesis roles

Since this thesis is devoted to joy I write it the way I enjoy the process of writing. To make reading joyful for you, I try to develop ideas and plots clearly and dynamically. I consciously neglect such aspects of academic thesis writing as providing definitions and the justification of my statements with citations. They do not serve our joy here and I don't find them useful for this work. I believe the readers can grasp from the context the meaning of such processwork terms as edge, role, warrior, ally, altered state, metacommunicator, metaskill, stopping the world, and channel. If you would like to find definitions, please, check online the "Glossary of process work terms" by Arnold Mindell & Amy Mindell compiled by Mr.J.M.Revar, MPhil. India.

1. Edge to access joy

Survivor guilt

It is hard for me to access joy and even to write about joy when the war in Ukraine is going on. That is why I start my work with an exploration of edges and roles that keep me away from joy. Enjoying during the war seems to be a betrayal of people's suffering. In my daily life, it may be a shame to have a good time, restful weekend, spend money on some entertainment, strive for a carefree life, or take care of myself. Similar experiences are often called "survivor guilt". First, the term was created to describe the Holocaust survivors' suffering. Later, psychologists started to apply it in a broader context of collective tragedies. When a group goes through violence or catastrophe experience, those who remain alive feel guilty for not dying, failing to save others, or ignoring others to escape themselves. It is curious to me that exactly collective experience constellates survivor guilt. I guess a collective role trance makes it more challenging to come out of the role. To deepen this idea, I suggest switching from collective to individual survival and reflecting on how these two contexts shape the same phenomena differently.

Process structure of survival in individual and collective abuse

To talk about individual context, I refer to sexual abuse survival experience. When a person becomes a victim of violence, some psychology schools suggest working on the change in the role structure, transforming the victim role into the survivor role to support the victim in claiming their agency back. As long as the victim develops a survivor mentality, they stop being ashamed of the abuse that happened to them and become proud of saving their life through a life-threatening experience. So, the person develops a new identity by changing a victim mindset into a survivor self-perception. Such work with the role structure was hard, liberating, and helpful for me.

After the personal experience of violence, survival is celebration and pride. After the collective experience of violence, survival is guilt. How can the difference in understanding survival in collective and individual contexts be so drastic? Despite different moral constructs, I find the background process structure is the same. When one is an object of violence, one's primary identity is a victim. So they can hardly access their agency and awareness. The power aspect is secondary to the role of the victim and primary to the role of the abuser. However, when the victim goes over the edge to identify as a survivor, they pick up the power aspect of the abuser's role. Power becomes primary for the survivor.

Meanwhile, war is an abuse on a bigger scale. When an attacking army commits violence against a big group during the war, a collective role trance is intense, and it is harder to develop awareness about the secondary process and switch roles. When one person manages to drop the victim role, they feel guilty in front of those who remain in the victim role because the suffering is not individual. It is a collective inheritance. For me, the awareness of this collective process structure eases survivor guilt but does not eliminate it.

Warrior role

Survival is a helpful concept to develop my thoughts on up to this point. But the celebration of survival marginalizes those who died. Soldiers get medals for their battles regardless of whether they survived or not. It is an acknowledgment of warriorship. All of us deserve recognition of our fight, both dead and alive. For me, dying has nothing to do with weakness or failure but much with transformation. Here emerges the third role of a warrior who has death as their ally. The emerging role of a warrior releases the polarization between the victim and survivor roles, as well as between life and death.

Mastering altering

The concept of a warrior brings us into the shamanic realm. When an abuser commits violence to a person, there are different ways to get through it and fight for your life. One of them is flying away with one's mind to escape the violent scene. Some psychology schools pathologize it and label it as "dissociation." I disagree with this name. From my experience, I would instead call it a shamanic trip. There is a misbelief that after a violent experience, people need to get rid of dissociation and cure it. I advocate that it might be neither necessary nor possible. What I actually needed was training to get sobriety to navigate these trips. Processwork training helped me to master a metaskill of sober shamanic flow in space, time, and levels of reality. Such shamanic detachment turns out to be beautiful and useful. This mechanism serves me to escape the ongoing war, find and access joy even in unbearable circumstances. It helps me overcome the edge of survival guilt, be kind to myself, take care of myself, and have fun. In the following chapters of this paper, I describe how it works and how I access joy while living in Ukraine during the war.

2. Joy as an altered state

Pain of war

I started writing this paper during my vacation by the sea in Croatia in the summer of 2023. It was a struggle to get there and have some joy. On the one hand, a struggle with the circumstances, on the other - with myself. The external obstacles were finances, time off work, and health issues. Meanwhile, inside, I needed to overcome pain. I think the 'pain of war' stands for feeling the pain of people who suffer because of the war. Soldiers die on the battlefields. Civilians die under shelling and under the flood of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station, so many people are financially insecure. Ukrainian immigrants face humiliation as secondary people. My boyfriend can't join me because men are not allowed to leave the country. This painful context breaks my heart.

In a way, the pain of war is always with me. Let me show you. My photo of the Croatian seaside view and the picture I saw on TV in my Croatian apartment. It is a view of Ukrainian Kahovska Dam destruction under Russian occupation, which caused flood and death.



June 7, 2023, my vacation in Croatia



June 6, 2023, Kakhovka Dam destruction under Russian occupation

Back in 2016, my boyfriend and I had a vacation by the seaside in Turkey. I remember how hard it was to get through the pain of war to access romantic love, feel a connection, allow myself a one-week break from activism, and sense the sunshine with my skin. Today, it is already the 9th year of war. Postponing joy and putting life on hold is a short-term strategy you can't afford in the decade of war.

Constant violence

So I have been living in war for nine years. It means for nine years I have lived in fear of being killed at every moment in time. I live under a constant attack, a neverending threat. I work, study, build relationships, and do my daily tasks in permanent fear of and realistic chance of being killed at any moment. The next feeling after fear is anger. I am furious that Russian politicians and military people, who steal from me daily, are not accessible. They steal my life, health, energy, and opportunities by putting me under constant threat. I have to live in this setup and can't access them to express my anger where it belongs. Permanent fear and unchanneled anger exhaust, so the third feeling comes - tiredness. Any basic daily task can be an unbearable effort due to exhaustion. Constant violence causes fear, anger, and exhaustion.

Shame role

There is a strong message in Ukrainian society: "You have not done enough until you sacrifice your life to defend your country." It shames and punishes. It is tough on men as if their gender obliges them to be soldiers. The power of this role is institutionalized. Forced recruitment to the army often happens in places for joy and rest: nightclubs, city beaches, and mountain resorts. It is a punishment for daring to try to get rest and joy when there is a war.

According to my hypothesis, it is internalized shame. The Russian narrative is that Ukraine does not really exist. Ukrainian people just lack their awareness of being Russians. So the Russian army comes to take what is theirs. They kill and commit other crimes to get new territories, population, resources, and status. This violence is a huge shame and guilt. But they act as if it is their right, do not take responsibility, and do not process their guilt and shame. So this shame role haunts Ukrainians: "There is something wrong with us. We have not done and are not doing enough to protect our country and people. We don't have the right to live for any other reason than fighting on the battlefield. So we don't have the right to exist." Eventually, it gets close to the Russian narrative: "Ukrainians do not really exist. They have no right to exist." Shame and guilt internalizing happens. And it is so hard to notice how it happens. Once you notice it, it is so hard to believe. You question yourself and your perception. "I must have mixed up something..." Internalization slips away and leaves Ukrainians with feelings they have no right to exist, to pursue joy and life.

I find this dynamic similar to individual abuse. When one feels ashamed of being raped, feels there is something wrong with oneself, and feels guilty for failing to prevent it from happening. One has to process the shame of the abuser as if they caused the rape. One doubts their perception. It is so painful that it leads to suicidal thoughts and sometimes actions.

Joy as an altered state

The pain of war and constant violence make it hardly possible to access joy. I need to get through at least pain, fear, anger, tiredness, and shame to access joy in consensus reality. Fortunately, it is not the only way. To access joy nonlinearly, I can alter and drop the CR

identity and shift. Get to the other dimension of this world, rest, find peace and pleasure, experience joy.

Joy is very much marginalized in Ukraine. In society, the primary process considers joy as out of the norm. Your joy can trigger most people so that they can try to attack and punish you. It is edge figure behavior. That is why I do need my sobriety and metacommunicator to keep myself safe, avoid triggering other people in strong emotions, and timely switch back in case of emergency. For example, be alerted in case of a blackout, air attack, home loss, etc.

Now it's time to alter and access joy...

3. Soothing joys

Cafes

It was the last weekend before the full-scale invasion started. The tension, anticipation, and desperate denial were in the air. But my boyfriend and I managed to escape and have a rest before the upcoming working week. We took a taxi to a big park in Kyiv, walked snowy alleys along the lakes, found and climbed the diving tower. I danced in the alcove because he wanted to take pictures. Tired and hungry, we got to a local cafe. It was such a cozy place we loved, with big, comfy couches, dim light, and good food. We ordered a lot, but pasta with shrimps and lemon was the best dish of that evening. We chilled there for a couple of hours. Then we went to a stationary shop across the street and bought notebooks. It was a perfect romantic weekend. The last one of the peaceful times. February 2022.

At the beginning of the war, we left to the west of the country. It was an intense time with lots of peripeteias. I dropped my life due to the forced migration and decided not to hope to come back, not to hurt myself with nostalgia. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian army freed the country's north, and we got back to Kyiv. At the beginning of the next winter, we took the same route of a cozy weekend in Kyiv: same park, same cafe, same pasta, different notebooks purchased. After all the adversities of war, sitting there on big couches again was a miraculous point in the plot of our lives. This time, there were fewer people, fewer lights, much colder, and air sirens. But it was still so cozy, delicious, and beautiful. There, you could rest with your heart and soul.

That winter in Kyiv was tough. Russian army deliberately bombed civilians' infrastructures. It caused a shortage of electricity and especially its transportation. The days in winter are short and cold. We had a schedule when the electricity was on. We had to plan all our life accordingly. We got many power banks and charged them in time to provide ourselves with a lamp, a laptop, and internet for work. At times, we did not have heating or water. So we bought alpinist clothes for low temperatures, a tent, stored water, and planned cooking. Nights often were sleepless because of the bombing. In the morning, we made a lot of efforts to simply arrange our daily life. During the daytime, I was busy working from home. In the evening, I really wanted to move and walk, but Kyiv streets were too empty and dark due to the lack of electricity. So, I often went to the gym across the street and had workouts with candles and flashlights.

But at times, the two of us managed to end up with work and get to very dark Kyiv streets in the late evenings. No lamps, no light in the windows, very few cars and people pass by. It seemed there was no life left. But you should not rely on that. Check Kyiv bars, restaurants, and cafes. There is a movable feast! Open the door, and you escape the hardship of dark winter life! We often showed up there in thermal clothing with dirty hair, tired after work, bombings, and all the impracticalities of life. But there was a crowd, music, light thanks to generators, delicious and fancy food. That was pure joy, rest, and celebration. It was so good to sit there with a cup of coffee or a bowl of noodles, relax, get care from waiters and comfort from food, have long talks, dream, leave adversities far away, and enjoy.

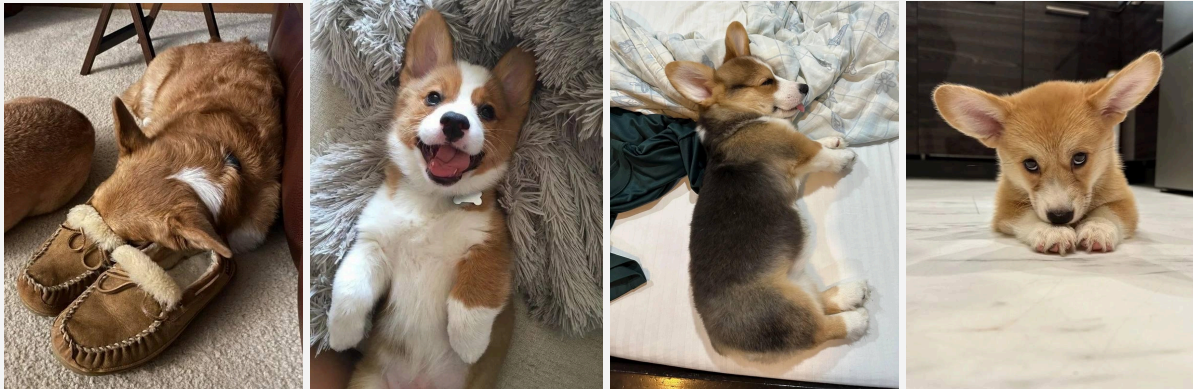


Corgi dogs and other fluffy buddies

I always loved walking in the park by my house at a time when most people in the neighborhood walked their dogs. Witnessing their cheerfulness and different personalities made me happy and could ease heavy moods. On the last day before the full-scale invasion, my boyfriend and I had this kind of walk and noticed a new pup in the neighborhood called Teo. It was the first Corgi I saw live. I came across the images of these funny dogs before. They seemed to be footless, touchingly clumsy buddies with no tails. Teo was short, cute, and funny too, but he had a sword-shaped tail. I was curious. How come? Will he save his tail? Back home, I googled Corgi dogs and read a couple of articles about them. It turned out that, in the past, England had a tax for tails to make people pay the government for every hunting dog they owned. Corgis were shepherds, and people tried to avoid paying the tax for them. So, in the first three days after birth, owners operated puppies to cut the tails. Eventually, Corgis naturally developed bobtail genes, and many came to this world without tails. So, Teo was safe. Reading about Corgis was full of discovery, drama, and fun. We've spent the evening joking about these sweet, short, tailless pups. It made the mood in our home so light and dissolved the fear and anticipation of war. We could laugh and have ease.

The first days of war were so astonishing and overwhelming. Every hour, something horrible happened. We left home rapidly, and I was very disoriented. It was unclear all the time where to buy food, what direction to go to get to some spot, where to sleep, what clothes I had with me. We read the news constantly, checked our gadgets compulsively, and got terrified,

nubbed, and devastated after every new piece of information. Notifications from the Telegram news channel kept pouring. In a couple of weeks of living in this mode, my boyfriend took my phone, unsubscribed me from all the news channels, and instead subscribed me to three other channels - one devoted to cats, another to dogs, and yet another to Corgis only. Whenever I had an impulse to check the news, I scrolled through images and videos of fluffy friends. It soothed me, and I could give up the idea of scanning the news for a while. Their presence in the world made me feel better. This practice switched the mood. Space became different and slower. Sparkles of joy emerged. It brought so much happiness.



Later, I found out that looking at pets to make myself comfy and ease stress is not only my secret lifehack but also a trusted collective strategy. Our neighborhood in central Kyiv has its chat, where people who live together in this part of the city can share information and join efforts. For example, to exchange house plants and seek advice on how to care for them better. To get recommendations for good local services, like shoe repair, hairdresser, or massage. To check what places currently have electricity. To find teammates for group sports and so on. My favorite thread of this chat is named "Group therapy." Whenever there is an air attack, neighbors take photos of their pets and post them. During air attacks, I often stay in the corridor. It can protect you better thanks to thicker walls and no windows. We nested it with a mattress and even a tent at times. Nevertheless, waiting for the end of attacks in the corridor is scary and exhausting. There can be sounds of explosions, aviation, rockets, air defense salvos, and long silence of waiting. But when I get numerous photos of the cutest creatures, their eyes, paws, and tails make me comfy, and I feel supported in the fluffiest way by the community spirit of our neighborhood.



4. The joy of nursing & nourishing

I come to Nastya in a small salon next street. She is a quiet and kind girl. I like spending time with her. Today is manicure time. Nastya holds my hands. Manicure takes up to an hour. As she has been holding my hands for twenty minutes I start breathing more, sensing how tense my body is and how warm her hands are. Usually, we talk and have tea together. But not today. We are too tired. This morning in the salon, everybody talks about the past night. I do not join the conversation. The night was very loud. My house was shaking due to the missiles targeting the houses fifteen minutes away from my place. The floor of my apartment was moving. All of us are in bad shape this morning. But as Nastya holds my hands for an hour and I touch hers, I gradually get back to my body and cozy rituals. Feeling grateful. Feeling connected by touch that has a different meaning today. Appreciating connection to a small community of noisy, scared women busy with their beauty routine no matter what.

Manicure, sauna, swimming, workouts, medical care, rest are my support to get through the war. They serve to recover, to regenerate after being broken into pieces, to notice the sunlight again, to access happiness and hope again even after terrible attacks. I have a dream of having a baby. In the consensus reality of war, it would be an unbearable challenge for me. However, I unfolded this dream into being my baby and nursing myself as a beloved baby girl, giving myself all the support and care necessary to get through these times. It is also a challenge, but I am my best caretaker.

To survive, I have to give up the intention of taking care of the country, community, family members and stop expecting care from others since everyone is exhausted. A war is very exhausting. The violence is always there, very close. Violence is an extra dimension of this space. In this deformed space, whatever usual thing one does is different. Eating, scrolling, talking, sleeping, anything takes more effort and sucks all the energy.

Fatigue and a foggy mind are the most disturbing symptoms caused by my digestion problems. They got much worse since the full-scale invasion but started at the very beginning of the war. Although they significantly spoil my life, I think they poetically reflect the context I live in. My personal fatigue correlates with the "attrition warfare" strategy of a long-term war. It aims to exhaust the resources of the enemy. My foggy mind has some nature in common with the "fog of war" we live in.

To deal with these particular symptoms and digestion problems in general, I develop a tender relationship with food. Only a narrow set of products is nourishing for me. Discipline excludes the food that does not serve me. To get the necessary nutrients, I have to be creative and source them from products that are not very common and mainstream. Since the diet is strict, I devote time to searching for necessary products, cooking daily, planning my meals, and having them according to schedule. It is so hard, but I would definitely do it for my baby girl. Thus, I do it for myself. I enjoy looking for necessary herbs and berries like a witch. I love waking up early to come to the farmers market first and get the best fresh vegetables and meat, find rare products. I cook for hours. It soothes me. When I cook and eat so many diverse products, I feel connected to nature and loved by the world. Another part of my treatment is long walks. I have to take them daily despite any weather, business, or tiredness. It is a challenge, but I would definitely do it for a Corgi puppy. Thus, I do it for

myself. Walking and dieting give me a huge physical relief. And it is such a joy to be cared for like a precious baby girl or a beloved, irresistible Corgi puppy!

5. The joy of nature

No matter how bad it gets at times, nature is always there for me. Last week was a challenge. In the swimming pool, a man hit me during the training. It was an unintentional but strong hit. I got scared. I approached him to ask him to pay attention, and he said it was a normal thing during swimming training. Then I talked to the instructor, and he replied the same. So I spoke to the administrator and said I would not pay for their services anymore because I did not want to train in an unsafe space where no one was sorry for hitting me, and it was ok. It worked. She apologized and talked to the man and the instructor. But my persistence was an exhausting effort for me. Another difficulty was the medicine I took to heal my digestion. It kept me awake, so I worked at night not to stress out the next day about the unfinished tasks, sleepiness, and naps. And at the end of the week, I had an escalation of a long-term conflict with my colleague. All of these took place in the background of regular air sirens.

So, by Friday, I felt deadly tired and hopeless to find some restful spot in my inner world. I brought myself for a walk in the park, took a familiar route, and hardly strolled the alley looking down. Suddenly, I saw a tiny leaf on the pavement. I have never seen it before, only in the movie. But I recognized it at once. It was a Ginkgo tree leaf right in front of me. Hello, my little friend! I picked up this precious gift and looked up for a Tree. It appeared to be right there. A huge majestic Ginkgo tree in the park in the middle of Lviv. It was a touching miracle. I passed by it tens of times. I knew it was a Japanese tree who had survived the atomic bombing in Hiroshima. A true warrior with mysterious power. This meeting was a great support for me that Friday. I thought I was as strong as this tree. Although the week was a challenge, it was not a big deal anymore. In spite of tiredness, I would recover quickly and get green buds soon like the Tree of Hope. No matter how bad it gets at times, nature is always there for me.



When I studied conflict work in war areas, teachers told us that war affected people's perception of time because it became impossible to imagine the future and think about it. It may not be a general truth, but according to my experience, I agree. It is hard to think about the future because you might not be alive, or the conditions of your life can change very quickly in one moment. Still, I need some future. Otherwise, I can't dream, hope, and plan. To go through the war, I deal with the future the following way. I find some nice spot in time within two or three months and live towards it. The future does not exist behind this spot. Once I reach it, I find another one to live to. The short-term-future trick gives me some timespan to plan, dream, and hope. For example, in 2022, my spots were October DDI intensive in Amsterdam and the next - New Year holidays. Unfortunately, the holidays did not go well. It was a three-day-long massive air attack on Kyiv. I neither celebrated much nor rested. So I sat there exhausted, thinking about what I could wait for next. Whatever could be screwed or canceled. Whatever, but the spring.

It was another grey morning in Lviv. I left the house to throw out the trash. After the night rain, the street was wet. Low and heavy sky. Chilly air. Outside, I felt very uncomfortable in my own clothes. Dull mood, nothing to be enthusiastic about. Even walking was too much effort for me. I stopped and breathed in. Something was different. The air had a slight scent of the first fruit trees bloom. Wow. The spring has come. It's here. And I am still alive. I made it through the winter, and it's over now. I stood there with a trash bag in silent celebration, looking at the wet road in the presence of the trees and the sky.

I am writing this paragraph on the first days of September. The autumn is in the air. It is just anticipation, a vague, unsure promise. You can easily ignore it because roses, gladioles, dahlias are still blooming, green trees still give a lot of soothing shade. Even one gracious magnolia tree is booming on Cherry Street of Lviv for the second time. But the new morning coldness brings me relief. I welcome the approaching fall with ease. I thought I would only be afraid of a new dark season of heating and electricity lack. And I am, but that's not all. This summer was so intense. I worked so hard, studied a lot, went to Croatia, took a serious health treatment, got married, started my thesis, passed a couple of exams, started working with my first client as a processwork coach. So now I am so happy to welcome the change of seasons and energy, crawl into the hole, and dream in the dark. No matter how bad it will get at times, nature will always be there for me.

6. The joy of winning inner battles

In my first year as a processwork student, I had a nightdream. I came to the training room to the martial arts teacher, who was a rat:

- Why have you come here? - he asked.
- I want this room.
- The one who gets this room will get the Crimea. - He replied.

I ignored:

- I want this room.

He gazed at me and got some insight.

- Ah, you are a mutant.

I realized, he allowed me to stay and train in the room.

The first time I worked on this dream, I focused on the teacher's phrase about me being a mutant. I felt like an alien in this world due to my sensitivity. At the beginning of the war, I did a lot of conflict work in the east of Ukraine. This difficult experience landed heavily on top of my natural tenderness and sensitivity. Afterward, I could not blend into the 'peaceful' life. It made my life unbearable in consensus reality back then. Thus, it was similar to mutation. I got some support and acknowledgment from the teacher in the dream. During the first years of my learning path in processwork, I trained to turn my mutation into strength. With Ellen's guidance, I relearned to socialize again, stay sober and sensitive at the same time, and apply it in my facilitation. I wrote about this journey in my [certification paper in processwork](#).

In the last year of my diploma path, I worked on this dream for the second time and focused on the other phrase of the martial arts teacher: "The one who gets this room will get the Crimea." The war in Ukraine started with the Russian annexation of the Crimea peninsula that belonged to Ukraine in the Black Sea. From the perspective of politics and warfare strategy, Crimea is an important spot to ensure the safety and well-being of Ukraine. In consensus reality, returning Crimea back to Ukraine would mean winning the war entirely. That is why I translated the teacher's symbolic phrase from the dreamland language this way: "If you master your martial arts training in processwork, you will win your inner war." And I did.

Winning my inner battles was a challenge and the essence of my learning path. I learned to win my battles by doing things, for example, getting a challenging job and succeeding in it, exercising, training, following discipline, finding sources of income, dealing with relationship hardships, etc. In general, these were examples of overcoming my limits. From the processwork perspective, it is going over the edge.

I also find a touching beauty of processwork in winning battles by non doing. Sometimes, sheer awareness or stopping the world is enough. For example, due to some painful issues in relationship, I got stuck in agony several times within the last year. I cycled, getting more and more hurt. When I managed to notice it, I picked up my rescue mantra: "This is just a role." I reminded myself that I got into a role trance. It was enough to bring some relief. As I figured out roles, I escaped the cycle.

For instance, I had a hard conflict with my manager at work. I could not sleep, got exhausted from cycling thinking about our communication. I could not bear it anymore and still could not stop. Suddenly, the electricity went off for a moment, and I thought it was a world channel. This small pause was enough for me to remember and repeat my mantra. What role am I stuck in? Even the presence of this question shifted the atmosphere. The awareness was invited. I could slow down, figure out roles, and finally get some rest.

Winning my inner battles both by doing and non doing is my biggest joy. In conclusion, I want to reflect on winning the biggest battle in my life.

7. Conclusion

Recently, I worked with my client on their altered state. It was a beautiful and meaningful process. I appreciated its wisdom a lot. It was especially touching for me because it reminded me of my altered state and the life-long process connected to it.

My experience of violence, abuse, and war used to put me in an altered state. It was a secondary process for me. So it happened to me, and I hardly managed to navigate it. Often, my processwork training was a desperate struggle for my metacommunicator and sobriety in these states. Gradually, I learned to gain my agency in the altered state, travel there as a shaman, explore, and discover.

Once I worked with my client, I realized how much I missed my altered state as it had been a while since I had addressed it, being busy with my daily tasks. It was a touching insight for me as I realized the mastery I developed. My worst nightmare, who tried to kill me in the past, became my ally, a friend whom I miss and seek their company.

As I described at the beginning of this paper, I think joy is an altered state in Ukraine during the war. Clearly, joy is not what comes to your mind when thinking about war. Also, internalized systemic shame makes joy inappropriate in the war context. The adversities of life in the war are so bad that it is literally hard to find and experience joy. That is why accessing joy happens via altering.

In the past, my altered state used to be a poison that endangered my life. However, after eight years of training within my processwork learning path, I learned to cook medicine out of a homeopathic dose of poison. I can alter with awareness and sobriety to access joy in unbearable situations. I drop my primary identity in consensus reality together with its hardships, fear, anger, and tiredness. My trained and sober second attention has direct access to the sheer joy of the world in whatever manifestations: the cozy atmosphere of a cafe, fluffy puppy tail, holding hands with another human, cooking nourishing food, Ginko tree leaf, the scent of bloom in the air, expansion of going over my edges in training, celebration of winning my battles.

None of this would be possible without my incredible teachers on this learning path. I am deeply grateful to my dear coach, Ellen Schupbach, my guiding team, Julia Wolfson and Max Schupbach, and the coaches and students of the Deep Democracy Institute community I learned from.