

# AWAKEN YOUR POWER TO HEAL

**REVISED EDITION:** Includes updated *Glossaries of Pain & Desire*



## NED WOLF

AUTHOR OF THE NANDIA TRILOGY

Also by Ned Wolf

*Sailing on a Banshee Wind*

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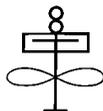
# AWAKEN YOUR POWER TO HEAL

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NED WOLF

REVISED EDITION

THE THERAPEUTAE



PRESS

AWAKEN YOUR POWER TO HEAL

by Ned Wolf

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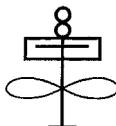
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*To all who dare dream to heal with playful joy and ease.*

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AWAKEN YOUR  
POWER TO HEAL

# INTRODUCTION

## What Can We Accomplish Together?

**T**his book is a wonderful collaboration with the many clients and students I have the honor to serve. So many times their own healing experiences opened deep, new insights in to my own growing. These pages represent many gifts from our working together.

I have changed clients' identities, yet very probably you will recognize your own stories among those I've presented here.

To all those whose lives have contributed to this work, I thank you. *AWAKEN YOUR POWER TO HEAL* is dedicated to all family, friends and clients woven into the folds of these pages. I thank each of you, with deep, heartfelt gratitude.

This book brings to light many tools, useful in claiming your birth-right to heal. I have sought to clarify the unlimited power to create that resides within each of us. I also seek to illuminate the more obvious ways we resist that power. My intention is that you discover richer, more effective uses of your own creative energies.

Using these ideas will transform your relationship with energy and thus, your relationship with yourself and the world around you.

Few of us today believe in a flat world, or are employed in the manufacture of buggy whips. Discrimination is not socially acceptable.

History is the story of the evolution of consciousness. Yes, we would all wish our growth to occur more rapidly and more gently. Yet, our struggles to grow are a valuable part of humankind's unique heritage. The work we expend while learning a lesson makes the job easier for those who follow on a similar path.

Sometimes I like to poke fun at our collective resistance to our own growth. I know there have been times when I have looked downright silly as I argue and justify my own blind spots. We are learning to supplant our control games around pain and conflict with more constructive options. Our dependence on these blind spots has undermined our relationships with our own physical health, with those we love and with those we share the planet.

Woven through my stories, clients' histories and the resultant fabric of ideas are a number of exercises I have found useful in the exploration of growth and healing. Please consider all these exercises as experimental. Focus on them, work with them, and see which ones produce results. Those that do, make them your own. Those that do not, throw them out and continue exploring.

That way, you allow your own experience to teach you, and you expand your own authority for your own choices. True economy—for you have just saved yourself the trouble of needing to create yet another outside authority whom sooner or later you must unseat from their pedestal.

Take this book slowly. Give it time to replace other, more familiar hypnotizers in your life. After you have read a chapter or two go out and shake up your personal universe.

It's easy,—you can start by changing your patterns of living. Buy a journal for the exercises coming up. Make your television a planter box! Walk in nature. Share a fond memory with a neighbor you do not know well. Admit to those times when you withhold love from yourself. As you use this book, be willing to transform your life. If you are not

willing to make that kind of commitment right now, fine, simply pass this book along to someone else. And bless yourself.

As you explore these ideas, let them challenge you. Examine your own self-imposed limitations, and find out what they are costing you. Let them teach you more about healing. Tear out the pages, write in the margins. Drop this book on the floor, and then read the pages where it falls open. Photocopy exercises and send them as letters to your family.

I encourage you to pretend these pages are prayers. Read them out loud, or sing them. Write me with your questions; or simply try to convince me that you are not a magnificent, unique, unlimited expression of God.

Blessings,  
Ned Wolf

P.S. This Introduction was written in 1998. Since then I've reminded myself many times of my desire to revise and update this book. That dream was finally realized twenty years later. The revisions, including those in the Glossaries, reflect my growing knowledge and experience. I trust that you will agree, *Awaken Your Power to Heal* is well worth the effort.

And more blessings,  
Ned Wolf  
November, 2018

# I

## A New Client

**R**ounding the corner into the entry of my offices in Seattle, I encountered a surprise. The stranger in front of me, despite being an attractive, successful-looking woman, walked with hesitancy, perhaps even fear, as she passed through lush flowering garden that thrived in the my brightly sunlit foyer.

Clients like this remind me of dogs who have been disciplined too harshly—slouching along with their tails between their legs. Since all of my clients are referred by people I have worked with, I am reasonably certain that whoever shows up in my office is going to have problems. Still, I am surprised and a bit concerned when people carry themselves with such reticence—it is a reliable indicator that pain has been a travelling partner for some part of a person’s journey.

“Welcome,” I smiled and held out my hand. “My name is Ned.”

She tentatively allowed me to shake hers. “Hi,” she said softly, “I’m Annie.” Her tone of voice told me she was frightened, and her gaze was begging me to be gentle. From my thirty-plus years as a counselor, I knew that Annie must be facing some pretty powerful demons to find herself in such a state.

“Would you like a cup of tea?” This is my standard protocol to help put new clients at ease. “Let’s go into my office, where we can talk.”

Annie waited as I poured the tea, then followed me down the hall.

Like most new clients who step into my inner office, she lit up when she saw the archway that frames the window into the courtyard. She stopped in front of the large pane of glass to watch the morning's flock of sparrows that thronged their feeder. "A squirrel!" she exclaimed.

The furry acrobat had just leapt from the plum tree to the fence across the courtyard, carrying away one of the peanuts I left for him earlier that morning.

"Despite being in the middle of Seattle," I said as we sat down, "you would be surprised how many different critters stop by this courtyard in a day. I love having so many expressions of nature's variety right at my door." Annie's shoulders started to relax, confirming what I had learned early in my practice: nature absorbs emotion. I had also learned that when a person is holding a warm beverage, they tend to open up to communication and healing.

Then I began to explain how I operate: "I'm going to treat you as though you're a powerful, unlimited being," I began. "You may not always agree with me, but I'm going to take the point of view that you have a hand in creating all the trouble, pain, and conflict in your life. And, since you created it, I will also assume that you are entirely capable of healing any imbalance. In fact, I believe it will take you less energy to restore balance than it took to create the original imbalance in the first place."

She nodded and then sipped her tea.

"I'm not here to fix you or heal you or make you feel better," I went on. "Why would I do that, when you already have the power to do so? And I certainly do not want to deprive you of the joy of discovering a greater measure of your own power."

Annie nodded, listening. The tightness around her eyes eased a bit and she sat back in the chair.

"And if you do not experience results by working with me, then it's your job to fire me. We'll find someone else with whom you can work who will be more effective."

At that, she chuckled.

“Annie, I want *you* to heal whatever is troubling you. My commitment is to bring all my knowledge, talents and abilities to serve that purpose. And I ask a commitment of you: that you be willing to wade into whatever swamp we encounter. Face whatever alligators you’ve put there. Also, I ask that you do not leave this healing process while you are in the middle of the swamp!”

Annie hesitated, and turned her attention inward. I imagined she was considering the pain she was carrying and asking herself, “Can I really face this?” For a moment, she debated silently, her eyes never leaving mine. Then she simply said, “Okay.” I could see that Annie had committed to her own healing!

“Great,” I exclaimed. “What would you like to say about what’s troubling you?”

She began by telling me about her husband Jack, a short-haul truck driver, who was becoming more and more critical in their relationship. “He seems to complain a lot about all the time I spend grooming our pets and riding horses,” she explained. “He often gets upset that I don’t spend more time with him after work. Jack doesn’t seem to understand that being a law office administrator, and the mother of a four-year-old, doesn’t leave me lots of time to help him remodel our home.”

I encouraged her to say more. “I’m worried about our son, Luke,” she continued. “He is beginning to withdraw from his father, while Jack seems to be coming more and more irritable whenever Luke doesn’t meet his expectations.”

Annie’s scenario resembled many others I had listened to over the years: A high-pressure job where she often felt obligated to caretake co-workers; a semi-absent husband; three-hours of daily commuting which included delivering and picking up Luke at day care near her office in Seattle. Whatever the source of Annie’s pain, I could tell that the stress in her lifestyle was not helping much.

The more Annie opened up about her problems, the tighter she

began to hold her shoulders. I could see that she was touching a deeper fear she had been hoping to control. “Perhaps we can interrupt this conversation Annie,” I suggested, “and initiate a process whereby you can explore the sensations you are feeling.”

Annie agreed. After asking her to close her eyes, I led her through an exercise of breathing and focusing on exactly where she felt the fear in her body. After she described its weight, temperature and density, I asked, “Would you be willing to love yourself in the midst of the fear?”

Annie suddenly broke down crying. She revealed that she had great apprehension about even talking about her marital problems—for fear she would lose her son!

“Jack says I need to quit my job and find work on the island,” she sobbed, “or else he’ll divorce me and take custody of Luke, and I won’t be able to see him.”

In most cases in Washington State, the courts award residential rights to a young child’s mother. Given Annie’s care and concern for Luke, it just didn’t add up that Jack could become his custodial parent. Tangled somewhere within Annie’s anxiety, there had to be some failed expectation or guilt, leading her to question her worth as a mother.

“Annie,” I asked quietly, “do you believe that somehow you’re being a bad mom?”

Her face contorted in anger. “Jack’s always telling me that,” she exclaimed. I gave her a chance to vent. She continued for some time, releasing quite a lot of pent up frustration and resentment about the pejorative names Jack called her, the accusations he made, and his threats to take Luke away.

Gently, I inquired whether Annie had experienced any physical abuse. No, Jack had never committed violence, nor even threatened it! Reassured, I decided to probe deeper.

In my own relationship with anger, and after working with hundreds of clients, I have learned that deeply held resentments are signals that in some way, we have not been expressing our true wants and

desires. In intimate relationships, often we put our own needs on the back burner, and try to avoid conflict with our partner by accommodating their desires at the expense of our own self-respect. Our resultant resentments we then blame on our partner.

Anger is a sign that something vital is missing. Over the years, in sessions with clients, I have regularly used the presence of anger as an effective healing tool. Of all the painful feelings we experience, anger is among the easiest to unlock. We can use it to explore why we blame others for our troubles, rather than considering that same pain as an internal messenger that can not only help us heal, but also help us create what we really want out of life.

I had an inkling that within their sexual relationship, Annie might be not speaking up for herself. “Annie,” I asked quietly, “Would you please tell me about the physically intimate part of your marriage?”

“Well ...” she hesitated. “We make love two or three times a week.”

“Okay ... and who initiates the contact?”

“Jack.”

“Always?”

“Yes.”

“And,” I asked softly, “how do you feel about making love to Jack?”

“I don’t want to,” she said, matter-of-factly.

“Does Jack know this?”

“No.” Here, we’d uncovered at least one source of Annie’s pain.

For the rest of the session, we talked about ways she could begin to communicate to her husband how she truly felt. I suggested that she ask him to understand that she wanted to discover how she could grow, and encourage him to be patient. I suggested that she tell him, “Jack, I’ll probably change, and our relationship needs to change and grow as well.” I suggested she start speaking up for herself more and tell Jack that she didn’t always enjoy their lovemaking—but I suggested that she hold this conversation with him outdoors, not in their bedroom.

Finally, I suggested she bring Jack in for a joint session. After reviewing the communications exercises I had suggested for homework, we scheduled her next appointment.

A week later, Annie returned, looking slightly more energetic. As we sat down, I asked, “How did the communication exercises go?” She admitted that she had tried only once, and gave up after Jack became even more critical and dismissive of her decision to begin counseling.

Faced with the threat of losing her child, a mother will move heaven and earth to prevent it. Since Annie had given up on her homework after only one try, I sensed there was more to discover about the source of her pain.

After I asked Annie about her other interests, she revealed her first love: “I’ve always wanted to work with animals. I’ve retained this administrator’s job because I need the money to maintain our family’s real estate holdings and to cover expenses whenever Jack goes through sparse times as a trucker.” The more Annie talked, the more obvious it became that she felt trapped, and blamed Jack as the reason.

“Annie,” I said, “I am convinced that healing and growth are ultimately the only directions in which our lives are moving. Yet despite this great force of healing, each of us also has the power to block it. Do you know the single most powerful way to block healing?” I could see I had her attention.

“No,” she replied.

“Blame. Whenever we hold someone else as the cause of our pain, we get stuck in the pain. Blaming requires that we believe they must change before we can recover our own well-being. Blame blocks healing!”

“So,” asked Annie, “how does that relate to me? After all, it’s Jack who accuses me—and then blames me for his anger.”

“Well, Annie,” I said as gently as I could. “You will recall, I consider you a powerful being—that everything that you encounter on your life’s path you put there. So let’s explore what other emotions you

might be having in your relationship with Jack. How are you feeling right now?"

"I'm getting angry," she said tersely.

"Would you be willing to do that healing exercise we began last week?"

"Okay," she said.

Once again, we began with Annie closing her eyes and taking deep, connected breaths, with no pauses between each successive inhale and exhale.

"While you're breathing, tell me where in your body the sensation of anger seems to be most obvious." We walked through the physical manifestations of her anger. "Now ... Annie," I continued, "ask the anger if it has a message for you."

She paused for a moment, listening internally. "I'm feeling ashamed," she said in a very small voice. Once again tears were starting to flow.

"Do you use anger to hide your shame from yourself?"

"Yes!"

"Annie, do you know what you are feeling ashamed of?"

"My drinking," she meekly replied.

Her honesty triggered a release and after a moment of weeping, Annie opened her eyes, looking five years younger.

"Thank you, Annie for the courage it took to reveal your drinking," I said as I handed her a tissue. I knew she had just revealed a wellspring of shame that she was using to punish herself, very probably subconsciously, to justify and excuse Jack's abusive behavior.

For the rest of the session, we talked about her history of alcohol abuse and her many failed attempts to free herself from her addiction. As she spoke, Annie realized that her relationship with alcohol underscored the self-destructive, over-accommodating behaviors expressed in her sexual relationship with Jack. To compensate for her own self-judgments as an unworthy drunk, she had been trying to win his approval through physical intimacy.

Later that session, we worked the healing/breathing process on Annie's shameful feelings. She discovered that she had formed destructive judgments around her drinking, reflecting her childhood attitudes about both of her parents' consumption of alcohol.

I suggested to her that addiction was just as valid as any lesson that any of us are learning—one of the most painful lessons, perhaps, but valid nonetheless: "I believe there is no lesson on earth bigger than the person who is learning it," I told Annie. "Do you think you are ready to take on the job of loving and approving of yourself as you work your way through this lesson?"

Annie was incredulous. Like most clients, she could not believe that the fastest way to learn was by accepting and loving herself. Like most of us, she had been taught to punish herself in order to make any progress. Now, though, she was beginning to see that her judgments and self-condemnation only prolonged the problems.

In subsequent sessions, Annie and I talked about the real issue behind addictions and dependencies—which, I have learned, are simply the denial of a person's own unique expressions, talents and contributions. The more we explored this idea, the more she came to see how much she had discounted her deep desire to care for animals.

"I just don't see how I can make enough money doing what I love," she complained at one point.

"Would you be willing to experiment, and give it a try for six months?" I knew full well what the outcome would be. "Maybe accepting yourself and doing what you love is worth whatever reduced income you might experience. Is there any greater legacy you would rather leave your son?"

By this time, I had the chance to work with Jack for several sessions. He was willing to learn to heal the anger he had over Annie's drinking. He was very happy to see her progress, gradually at first, with a few relapses thrown in. Yet over time, he found ways to deal with his own pain without needing to verbally attack his family.

Last I heard, Annie was working at home and, during her spare time, was helping Jack to build a barn to accommodate the horses they were boarding. She and Jack had learned that their pain was not their enemy. They found ways to talk about it, without blaming themselves or each other. They let themselves accept it, learning to hear whatever unexpected message it had to deliver. Once they came to trust that they each had the birthright of self-healing, they dropped their habit of blame and found they could focus on what each of them wanted out of their relationship and their lives.

Once in a while, they visit my office to work out a conflict. They are still learning how to love themselves—even in the middle of their mistakes. But they have put their family back on the road to growth, nurturing each other and a healthy child.

Throughout my years of counseling, I have supported clients use the technique of accepting their pain and asking for its message to heal lifetimes' worth of internal emotional baggage. As Annie and Jack learned, pain is simply a messenger telling us of a distortion in our perspective.

Too often, we have been taught to believe that problems and imbalances are beyond our ability to handle. When people accept that they create their pain for constructive purposes, they are delighted to find they can create a healing relationship with their pain and communicate with it effectively. They find joy in learning that accepting pain automatically nurtures its healing.

My job is not to heal them, but to assist them in healing themselves. I want them to leave my office sessions with a greater awareness of their own authority as the prime healer in their lives, rather than try to hand that authority to me. Working through over a thousand client sessions each year, I continually reinforce the discovery that we each hold the keys to our own healing—and that we are meant to access healing in very simple and effective ways.

## II

# Thirty Years of Learning

**M**y move to the Pacific Northwest in the early 1980s proved to be propitious.

Not only was I enjoying the beauty of nature—the jagged outline of the Cascade Mountains, the mild winters and spring flowers that erupted in early February, the mist-shrouded ferries plying Puget Sound—but even better, my work was recognized and appreciated.

At 36, upon first arriving in Seattle, I was a hard-working communications director for one of the city’s largest advertising agencies. Management loved me because I put in long hours and related well to their corporate and financial clients.

One evening, about a dozen people from the agency attended an awards dinner atop the Columbia Tower, where I received their first regional award for a statewide editorial board program I had written for a banking client. After the presentation my friend Rick, who worked for a competing agency, emerged from the crowd.

“Well, Ned, now that you’ve won this award, what are you going to do with the rest of your career?”

“If I have to do this for the rest of my life,” I responded without thinking, “I’m going out to shoot myself!” Listening to my own words, I was shocked to realize that I wanted to do more with my life.

I had grown up in rural Colorado, the second oldest in a Catholic

family of eight children. My only brother was born on my eighth birthday. Despite my initial delight, I soon found that our age difference prevented a close childhood friendship. I was mostly uncomfortable with my six sisters. To avoid the teasing and conflict that often defined our time together, I frequently isolated myself. Many early mornings, I would ride my bike four miles into town to serve as an altar boy at the day's first Mass. Later, I would, frequently alone, hike the hills with our family's hunting dogs. I did relish being outdoors, investigating the wide variety of plant and animal life and enjoying lots of physical activity.

Believing that I had little to contribute, I often found myself at loose ends. The right thing to do, I felt, was to comply with my mother's plans for me: attend the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, become a naval officer, and follow my grandfather's footsteps.

My Dad worked as an executive in a marketing corporation. Yet on evenings and weekends, he took the time to teach me to hunt and fish and do chores around the house and barn. He was an active father during the years I spent in scouting. He and I shared a love for nature and enjoyed camping together. He encouraged several of my sisters and me to play music, a talent I still enjoy, memorizing jazz pieces and playing them on a soprano sax.

One summer morning, I watched my father walking to his car to drive to work. I noticed how he was carrying himself, and realized how unhappy he was about the daily grind. He wasn't going out into the world with the same zest and enthusiasm I saw whenever we took the dogs out hunting, or when we all played music together. Shocked at this realization, I felt very disappointed in him. How could my own father not make a living doing something he enjoyed?

From that moment, I began kicking apart the pedestal I had constructed for my Dad. Even so, I found this memory tremendously helpful in planning my own future: I was determined to have my career reflect my strongest values—and my deepest loves.

Despite my good grades at the University of Colorado, I was troubled to find that few of my courses captured my imagination. Once again, I had to cope with a deep desire to isolate myself from other people. It seemed that whenever I tried to deal with my unexplained feelings of guilt and unlovability, I created more pain for myself.

The year was 1968. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy had been assassinated. In a world that made no sense, what did I have to contribute? Despairing, I dropped out of college and moved to Glenwood Springs, a fairly remote town high in the Rocky Mountains, several hour's drive west of Denver. I shunned alcohol, but my regular marijuana habit helped distract me from my self-imposed isolation.

While living in the mountains, I found an old Yashica range finder camera and with it, delighted in capturing nature on film. As a boy I had little interest in photography, even though it was one of my mother's favorite hobbies. Whenever she pointed her camera at me, I wanted to hide. Now, surprisingly, I enjoyed being on the other side of the lens.

Studying photography at a junior college in Glenwood, I found I had inherited my mother's powerful sense of composition. That, combined with sufficient technical skill, enabled me to support myself as a freelance photographer for seven years.

When the *est* training was offered in nearby Aspen, I decided to try it. I found the experience grueling and unreasonable, yet also discovered parts of myself that went beyond my beliefs about myself. I found that I did not have to be ruled by feeling unlovable—that was a feeling, not a headline statement about me. And I was excited at the notion that my judgments for my failings had never helped me to progress beyond those mistakes. I could stop believing my self-judgments!

So I learned that I could face my own pain and accept myself just as I was, rather than trying to twist myself into someone whom other people might approve. Best of all, I rediscovered my enthusiasm for living.

Over the next ten years, I continued assisting with *est*. Ultimately, I was trained to lead seminars, which I did— though not very

successfully—in Aspen and later in New York City. Meanwhile, I enjoyed the freedom of working as a professional photographer, and found myself driven to be even more creative.

I began offering editorial and copywriting services to clients, freelancing for local and regional publications in Colorado, covering everything from electric automobiles to the annual stock show. I had exhibitions of my nature photography. I shot portraits for the covers of Denver's business magazines. I wrote marketing copy for small companies—anything to help pay the bills and build my portfolio.

Seven years later, upon arriving in New York, I visited every publication in town looking for work. Finally, after three months of pounding the pavement, I parlayed my freelance reporter's experience into a job as an associate editor for a financial newsletter—which featured high stress, low pay and management with a definite attitude.

Despite being ill suited to an East Coast lifestyle and complaining about what I considered grueling conditions, the job's tight deadlines certainly helped me sharpen my writing skills.

After three years of trying to get out of New York, I succeeded in landing the communications director's job in Seattle. Yet now, after years of being highly regarded and winning the regional award, I found that I was about to commit the same soul-deadening mistake my father had made. Despairing that my life would never be truly rewarding, I kept thinking back to my reply to Rick at the awards presentation: If I have to do this for the rest of my life, I'm going to shoot myself!

I wasn't suicidal, but I knew it would kill me if I had to continue writing magazine articles, press releases and communications programs. In all of the jobs I have held, I most appreciated my relationships with the people around me. My life needed to revolve around supporting individuals, not promoting businesses and corporations. I wanted (needed!) to use my heart as well as my mind. My passion lay in making people bigger and the world smaller.

To fulfill that goal, I had to find some way out of the rat race.

Then I met George, a counselor and teacher who had been passionately studying the Essenes, an ancient Jewish sect renowned for their library of ancient Dead Sea scrolls. I was searching for a deeper spiritual life, and George, a graying and grizzled therapist who had been through two wars and at least as many heavy addictions, spoke to me of the Essene way of reclaiming the spirit.

For the next three years, I absorbed many Essene teachings. I learned natural healing, counseling, and useful ways to bring my spiritual connections to my work. In the Essene tradition, the physical domain was considered to be integral to the spiritual, and I found myself linking my deep love of nature with an inner dimension of wisdom and love. After studying many healing methods, I gravitated toward spiritual counseling, breathwork, conflict mediation and the energy healing modalities of Reiki and Shiatzu.

Many ancient cultures, including the Essenes, had healing traditions involving the breath. They considered the air to be a sacred messenger of the physical universe, often sending us subtle messages needed for our own healing and growth. As in yoga, meditation and the martial arts, practitioners used breath to release stress and center themselves. Today, of course, we know of the tremendous role that breathing plays in releasing toxins from the body—but the ancients knew that deep breathing helps release toxins from the mind.

I trained as an integrated breathwork practitioner, finding it to be a powerful tool in resolving deeply held emotional conflicts. During an early training session, I came face to face with some deep-seated guilt in my relationship with my mother. I had been feeling badly about rejecting my appointment to Annapolis and disappointing my Mom's hopes for my naval career. Now, though, as I explored that pain, the breathing exercises led me to a memory of being in my mother's womb, just before birth. Many people would argue that infants are barely conscious, yet the countless rebirthings I have experienced provide compelling evidence that we are all sentient beings, even while in the womb.

Re-experiencing my birth, I touched a deep feeling of guilt. I asked that heavy tightness in my solar plexus to reveal its cause. Immediately I recognized an assumption I made that my mother's labor pains were my fault. While allowing myself to breathe and accept that emotion, I realized that by getting entangled in such guilt, I refused to accept the love that was being showered upon me for my arrival and new life.

During that rebirthing session I began opened up to being love, and felt my guilt melting away. I was aware of a level of joy that I had never known before. I often recall this experience when supporting clients as they explore their own characteristic patterns of self-blame, guilt and withholding love.

Finally I set out on my own as a counselor ordained in the Essene Healing Ministries, a non-denominational organization inspired by Essene teachings. But as the months wore on, I saw only four or five clients weekly. I began to despair that I was not effective in supporting others in solving their problems. Finally I promised myself that if I did not have my practice up and running within three months, I would go out and get a "real" job. (I could always go back to my old position at the ad agency, albeit with my tail between my legs.)

I sought to find ways to let people know about my work and took the risk of offering a four-week workshop on self-love. To my surprise, it was well attended and well received. Participants asked about further counseling and healing, and soon became clients. Before I knew it, I was leading three support groups—and learning from each new client who entered my door.

One evening, I heard a radio ad for conflict mediation training. Within the year, I was certified as a mediator. The Dispute Resolution Center often scheduled me to mediate on a volunteer basis, since my schedule was flexible, and I was willing to confront the heavy emotional climate of families in trouble. I could best support people in pain, I found, by suggesting that they accept the validity of their experiences.

In one particularly acrimonious divorce case, the wife spent a

considerable amount of time berating her very angry husband. “I understand that you’re upset and hurting,” I finally interjected, “but do you realize you can express your pain without attacking your spouse?”

The two looked at each other, shocked and ultimately very relieved. Without further battle, they went on to resolve the impediments to parenting their kids. It was a great joy to watch people naturally moving into resolution and healing.

To help my clients and workshop participants, I continued to follow my curiosity and discovered even more healing methods—herbs, homeopathics and radionics, which I still employ in my current practice today. I teach students about natural healing and spiritual counseling, even as I explore effective new directions for healing myself. I find that sharing my own healing is a valuable way to empower clients to embrace their own.

# PART I

## Starting at the Top

Accepting the Power of Your Mind,  
Your Choice to Focus,  
and Your Power to Heal

## III

# Thought and Focus— Their Unlimited Power

With maddening frequency while leading his classes, George would repeat, “As we think, so do we feel, so do we react or respond.” What George meant, I have come to learn, is that when we want to discover the cause of unwanted behaviors, we must get honest about our suppressed feelings. If we wish to discover the cause of our unwanted feelings, we must first uncover the distortions in thinking that produce those discomforts.

Steve, also a therapist, was taking a doctor’s prescription for anti-depressants. He came to me after one of my clients told him that I had a no-nonsense approach and quickly got to the core of a problem. Steve told me about his failing practice, a bad business investment that was draining his finances, and a growing problem with alcohol. For about forty-five minutes, I just let him talk, listening to his words and tone of voice, noticing how he presented himself. Aside from a few brief glances, he could not look me in the eye, and spent a lot of time judging and blaming the people whom, he believed, were the cause of his problems.

Whenever clients have a large investment in diminishing others, I work to discover why they’re diminishing themselves. “Steve,” I asked,

“Do you recall the time when you began to feel this way about these people?”

“About the time I learned that my business partner skipped town, leaving me to repay \$300,000 of debt.” He solemnly replied. He did not sound angry, only defeated.

“And how did you feel about yourself?”

“I failed my family!” he exclaimed as tears began to flow. “My children, who are in college, are giving money to my wife so we can pay our utility bills.”

I listened as he continued to condemn himself. In only a few minutes, he had laid out a perfectly justified case.

“Steve,” I finally asked, “Can you see how your depression and pain are related to the way you are thinking about yourself?”

That got his attention. At first he was skeptical—the idea flew in the face of all his professional training—but after a moment’s consideration he grew interested. Who would not be depressed and hurting, especially after realizing that his variety of medications (including alcohol) were not helping?

I worked with Steve for several months, helping him alter his beliefs about his life’s circumstances. We focused on his judgmental image of himself as a failure. We focused on his attitudes of self-pity. He laughed when I told him about my favorite bumper sticker: IF YOU CAN’T CHANGE YOUR MIND, YOU DON’T HAVE ONE.

“These lessons in which you find yourself,” I suggested, “are actually allies wanting to help you accept the incredible creative power of thought. Most of us limit ourselves purely by the thoughts we think. Furthermore, at every moment, you and I are accepting or restricting the power of our thoughts and words. Do you honestly want to believe what you are thinking right now?”

Steve gave me a wry smile. “I do have a choice, don’t I?”

“Sure you do!” I exclaimed. “Whenever we deny our sacredness and validity, we end up believing we are not deserving—that we have

no right to the joy and wonder that resides within us. Needless to say, we are always saddened by the result. Could it be that your lessons are trying to tell you that you need to do a better job of loving yourself?”

I assigned him an experiment. (I call my assignments experiments rather than exercises. Experiments are more fun—because you never know what the outcome might be!) For the next week, Steve was to change any negative self-judgments to thoughts of loving himself. “Even when you hear judgments from others or on television,” I grinned, “focus on a thought of loving yourself.”

The next time I saw Steve, he was brimming with appreciation. He discovered that he did have a choice about what thoughts to “buy,” and that he could replace any limiting thought with a more useful one.

Albert Einstein’s breakthrough formula,  $E=mc^2$ , did wonders for Western thought by demonstrating that energy and physical matter are basically the same thing, and interchangeable. From there, it is no great leap to recognize that our thoughts direct energy and that energy follows thought.

One night at dinner, I had been hiccupping for about twenty minutes when my best friend Jerry pretended to jab my hand with a fork. For an instant, I was aghast: How could Jerry, of all people, try to stab me? But then I saw he was chuckling—and I, upon realizing that my hiccups had immediately stopped, roared with laughter.

What thoughts are you going to entertain? That is an immensely powerful and creative choice! By letting your mind run on automatic, you are deciding to manifest whatever is languishing in your subconscious memory banks. Which is a little like grabbing whatever is at the back of the refrigerator and serving it for dinner!

Max Freedom Long clarified the relationships between the consciousness, the subconscious and the Inner Self after researching the Hawaiian Huna model for the Self early in the twentieth century. The ancient Hawaiians believed the conscious mind to be in direct communication with the subconscious; and that the subconscious is

telepathically connected to the Inner Self. The subconscious contains all information about one's body, one's personal lifetimes, plus all the facts and feelings that, for one reason or another, consciousness had hidden from itself. The Inner Self is considered to be unlimited and eternal, with access to the individual Soul's capabilities, knowledge and power. So, according to the Huna model, the conscious mind can easily explore automatic subconscious thinking and remove self-imposed limitations, in a manner far easier than our conventional wisdom suggests. Its innate connection with the Inner Self provides a doorway to all dimensions, talents and abilities of the Self. And, the conscious mind revels in its passion to grow.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the outer conscious ego is not who you are. It is a tool, to be used as a manifestation-machine, and not designed to define, control, or justify the self. Its job is to direct energy. It yearns to bring forward whatever facet of the Unlimited Self will most nurture growth as it experiences the present moment challenges and opportunities in life.

The Inner Self is directing the manifestation of life through the structure of the subconscious and consciousness mind. One of Long's greatest gifts was the recognition that the consciousness cannot participate in the creation of its reality while it is avoiding the emotions, desires, intents and purposes that are held within the subconscious/body consciousness. Creation's first impact in this realm is always experienced through our bodies.

One of the great lessons of this dimension is learning to live life on life's terms. This means we must accept what IS in these realms of time and space. When we spend our creative energy dismissing what IS by comparing it to what we believe SHOULD BE, we distort our perceptive abilities. First, we create our reality, then we perceive it, then we experience it.

When not accepting what IS, we end up with a distorted view of ourselves and our world. By not accepting what we have created

(what IS) we are dismissing the probability we have materialized from the countless probabilities we could have selected. And each probability we select to actualize has also been selected by the subconscious and the Inner Self precisely because that probability will best serve our dreams and ideals for our individual and collective growth.

When left to its own devices, the untrained outer mind thinks its highest purpose is to sit in judgment of every single event that catches our attention. Once a thought occurs, often we start living our lives to justify it. If, at age seven, we're told that fat people are ugly, we'll spend the rest of our lives justifying our dislike of fat people. We will self-righteously punish fat people—especially if we put on weight ourselves!

Most of us are very unhappy about what our unexamined belief systems are manifesting! Of course we would all wish that our families, friends and neighbors were working on lessons involving multiplying loaves and fishes and walking on water. But what IS represents the creation of those lessons we all are working on NOW.

Why not develop the mental discipline to select thoughts that nurture your talents and abilities, and support your greatest desires? One single question will bring this idea down to earth: If the thought you are thinking **right now** were to manifest right now in physical form, would you be pleased?

Tim was a client who came to me after ten years of suffering through frustrating physical and mental limitations which followed a stroke. He had been working hard to recover his motor skills, but despaired that his mental acuity and short-term memory problems would never return to normal. During one of our sessions, I instructed Tim to close his eyes and focus his awareness on the part of his brain that he thought was damaged.

“How does that feel?” I asked.

“It feels dead,” he replied, woodenly.

“Okay, Tim. Would you be willing to give up labeling that part of your brain that way?”

He opened his eyes and started to protest: “But every doctor and therapist I’ve seen for the last ten years—!”

“Fine, Tim, fine,” I replied. “For now, let the past go. Just focus on the sensation in that part of your head.”

Tim resumed the process. In a few minutes, he began to feel tingling through the whole left side of his brain—and the right side of his body. (As I am sure you know, the brain’s left hemisphere controls the right side of the body, and vice versa.) In the weeks that followed, Tim’s progress continued. He reported that much of the mental dysfunction from the stroke was leaving his body—which excited me almost as much as it did him.

How did Tim accomplish this? Simply by giving up a limiting judgment so cruelly powerful that it had severely restricted his life for a full decade. For me, watching him heal himself was like watching a man walk out of prison.

For too long, doctors, diet books, religious scripture and cancer-awareness postage stamps have warned that your body is an enemy. It is a capricious thing, unwilling to communicate with us, dominated by a mysterious subconscious. It seems to take constant struggle to bring it under control. Health seems to become something for which we must strive and work and pay huge sums of money, rather than our birthright. No wonder we abdicate responsibility for our bodies, turning them over to those more educated, well paid, and solemn—not to mention abandoning our bodies to addiction!

Yet our physical bodies are constantly sending us messages for the purpose of restoring health. Our bodies are the means by which the Inner Self is sending impulses to the conscious mind—impulses that will naturally lead to a greater expression of our talents, abilities, contributions and purposes. These impulses are often urgings, impressions, visualizations and even ideas. Each one is meant to merge our intuitions with our intellect, rather than allowing either to dominate the other.

The more we detoxify our bodies from a lifetime of mental and physical toxins, the easier it is to hear these impulses the Inner Self is transmitting through our bodies. Our pains initially tell us that we are engaged in a process of healing. When learning to communicate with the body/subconscious, it is useful to relax, since relaxed bodies heal much more quickly than do bodies under stress.

Next time you feel weary or fatigued, try this experiment: Stop whatever you are doing and simply sit still, with your eyes closed. Locate where in your body the feelings of tiredness reside. Breathe ten deep, connected breaths, focusing on your sensations of fatigue. Listen for the still, quiet voice within. Do you hear messages, feel impulses, have urgings toward action? Trust those you deem to be constructive and healing. If distractions intrude, simply refocus on locating the sensations of tiredness.

After ten breaths, resume your activity. Notice if your physical symptoms have changed.

Like Tim, many of my clients deny their own power to heal. Whenever they think they are powerless to overcome imbalances, they resort to the behaviors and attitudes of a victim. To remain in their self-pitying and powerless role, they must remain convinced that they had nothing to do with their plight.

Jayne is a world-class concert pianist. She came to me complaining that her enormous musical talent was only causing her frustration. As a child prodigy, Jayne felt she had been tricked and manipulated into performing. Now she had reached a crossroads: Should she give up the piano entirely and refocus on her troublesome teenagers, or undertake concerts again? She was plagued by fears that any attempt to play music using her own, non-traditional approach would end in failure.

After several sessions, Jayne began to talk about her childhood. Her father had suffered from depression, and her mother considered it her responsibility to make her husband happy. To everyone but Jayne's mom, it was obvious that she was destined to fail. Meanwhile, Jayne

was pushed to study piano incessantly and was prodded to perform at public concerts.

Getting back to this present point in her life, she acknowledged that her major struggles revolved around her music and her marriage.

“Okay,” I said. “Tell me about your relationship with your husband.”

“Oh, Rob and I haven’t gotten along for years,” she replied off-handedly—as if that were the norm for any long-term marriage. “He’s always complaining about his failing business, and he never listens to my suggestions that could help.”

I decided to go deeper. “Do you see any similarity between how you relate to Rob and how your mom related to your dad?”

Immediately Jayne became agitated. “Yes!” she exclaimed. “We both picked men who don’t have the sense to listen to simple advice. It’s incredibly frustrating!”

Jayne said she had always believed that her parents’ and teachers’ manipulations were the cause of the pain and anger in her relationships. Now, however, we talked about the possibility that she herself, and not her parents or spouse, had created her pain and frustration.

“Jayne,” I continued, “Do you recognize how you have been blaming others for the choices you made?”

“But I didn’t have a choice!” she complained.

“Then,” I countered, “who ultimately decided that you would play music?”

She hesitated, then suddenly exclaimed, “Oh, I see! I remember being about three years old and deciding that I would play the piano, no matter how unpleasant my mom was. I thought if I played well enough, she would be nicer to me.”

“Suppose your thoughts are actions,” I suggested. “Might your life’s emotions and circumstances be merely children of the thoughts you choose to think? Your mind is a powerful tool. Consider that it was not your mother’s manipulations that caused your unhappiness, but

rather the decisions you made about her manipulations that caused your experience?

“Distortions in thought,” I went on, “produce pain and are the greatest hurdle to accessing the creative power that is your birthright. Why not accept responsibility for how you use your thoughts? Be willing to change any thought that limits you!”

Jayne saw how she had blamed herself for her mother’s pain: She had been playing music in an attempt to change her mother’s emotions, rather than letting her music express her own heart and soul. Jayne’s fears of failure were rooted in the thought that she had not succeeded in improving her mother’s disposition. Once she finally gave up trying to win her mother’s love, Jayne became free to pursue her own unique musical expression. Her concerts have become exciting for her, and rewarding for her audience. Also, courageously, she began dropping her blame of Rob and found her marriage improving as well.

Too many of my clients believe that their thoughts make no difference at all—an apparently innocent belief system that is the source of most of the limitations they experience in life!

While still a young boy, Randall came to believe that he was unlovable. He justified that belief with the humiliation he felt whenever he was teased by his brothers and when his alcoholic father seemed to favor them. So as Randall grew up, he began treating himself as if he were truly unlovable, not realizing that this decision was self-imposed.

By the time Randall and I began working together, he had amassed a string of failed relationships—with women and employers. The females kept telling him he was too manipulative, and his employers warned that he was not a team player. Very soon, Randall discovered his basic operating principle: ‘Convince others that I am lovable.’ Rather than granting others the choice to love him or not, he took on the enormous and never-ending task of making everybody love Randall.

In one of our sessions, he was understandably stunned to recall a day decades ago, in his early childhood, when he decided he was simply

unlovable. Randall's healing began when he became conscious of this subconsciously held belief and recognized he had a choice in the matter.

Tara came to work with me because she had been troubled for years with loneliness. "Why do I always find myself with men who aren't emotionally available?" she complained. During that first session, she saw that she was hiding her fear of loneliness by putting herself into relationships that she did not really want.

As we began to explore more deeply, Tara discovered that she had been using her fear of loneliness to avoid the deeper childhood pain of feeling unlovable—which, she believed, meant that she really was unlovable! In accepting her sensations of fear as useful messengers, Tara was able to heal the pain of feeling unlovable, and no longer kept it as a belief about herself.

Whenever a painful emotion or chronic physical condition persists, it helps to explore your thinking. Often my clients block the healing process with counterproductive beliefs and limiting attitudes. One of the most persistent (and effective!) doubts that they cling to is, "I really don't have the power to heal." Variations on this theme include:

"This pain is too serious to heal."

"I blame someone else for this pain, so first, I must get revenge."

"Before I can heal, I must be punished."

"I don't deserve to be healed."

"I'm feeling sorry for myself."

"I don't have God's permission."

To many of us, healing processes seem alien and unknown, so of course we fear them. As we learn to heal our fear of healing, we learn to be at peace with our bodies. We can learn to trust our powers to heal, express our uniqueness, and express our own unique gifts for this world.

Healing is a birthright, natural to every living creature. Put another way, if we have the power to create an imbalance, we must have the inherent ability to restore that balance. And it takes far less energy to heal an imbalance than it took to create it.

There is no great magic in claiming our power to heal. The work is in discovering how we have impeded our own healing processes. Healing accesses greater energy, while creating imbalance drains energy. Thus, if your life is not reflecting what you want to create, it pays to uncover the ways you are using your creative energy to thwart your dreams.

## JOURNAL EXPLORATION #1

### Removing Blocks to Healing

1. Quiet yourself. Breathe. Now, list three persistent upsets, pains, conflicts or limitations that you have trouble healing.
2. If these situations were to vanish from your life, what is the worst-case scenario that could occur? Are you willing to accept that?
3. List three conflicts, pains, or limitations that you believe you do not deserve to have healed—or for which you blame or pity yourself and/or others.
4. What would convince you that you deserve to be healed?
5. Are you willing to forgive yourself? What do you need before you can forgive others?

~ ~ ~

Frank thought that he had failed his son Mike by being a strict, controlling father during the boy's developmental years. He did not realize that these judgmental thoughts had been producing his guilt feelings.

I picked up on this after Frank kept defending himself whenever he talked about Mike's distance. To Frank, it seemed perfectly sensible to blame himself for Mike's decisions. That also kept him trying to compensate for the past—which his son naturally found distasteful.

On the day we touched on the belief that he had been a bad father, Frank exclaimed, "Yeah, I guess I am hardest on myself!" That set him on the path to forgiving himself and being more honest in his communications with his son.

Realizing how powerful our thoughts are helps us to remember to choose them consciously. When my clients are learning this, I often tell them of the prayer the ancient Essenes offered to the Angel of Power: "Make my thoughts stronger than death."

## EXPERIMENT #2

### Re-Training the Rational Mind

Under stress? Take a moment and just breathe. Listen to your mind. Become aware of the thought you are thinking.

If discovering a thought of diminishment, ask yourself: What if that worry were going to manifest in three minutes? Would I want to keep on thinking it?

If not, then gently tell your rational mind to replace that thought with a constructive one, for example, "I am an unlimited child of the universe!"

Then go about your day. Every time a diminishing thought occurs, replace it with the new one that you are unlimited.

Simply repeating the new thought will eventually stimulate your rational mind to start justifying it. The

mind is meant to be re-programmed whenever it is obvious that we have outgrown our existing programming—and we have, in spades!

~ ~ ~

Thoughts are creative actions, and powerful ones at that. During a fire-walking workshop, I told the students that their focus had everything to do with their experience of walking safely across over 800-degree coals. One woman walked the fire several times, quite safely. When back home she told her friends and coworkers of her experience. She listened to and obviously believed so many of skeptical opinions that three days later, blisters appeared on her feet.

Energy follows focus; energy follows thought. Put another way, the abundant energy pervading this universe is simply awaiting your direction to begin moving toward physical manifestation. Thought is a very powerful tool to get that energy flowing.

## EXPERIMENT #5

### The Power of Focus in Creating Reality

Next time you are carrying a bag of groceries, stop and pay attention. Where do you experience the bag's weight? Probably you will feel the weight within or slightly above your hand.

Now, visualize the weight as levitating about twelve to eighteen inches *above* the bag.

Maintain that focus. Is carrying the groceries easier

or harder? Can you carry the groceries farther than you could otherwise?

Create your own variations on this experiment with any physical exertion.

*(Helpful hint: Deep, connected breathing helps!)*

~ ~ ~

In the healing support groups I lead, one requirement is that participants arrive on time. During the early years with the groups, students would sometimes call me on their cell phones: “Ned, the traffic is backed up; we’re going to be delayed.” I would gently chastise these people for not leaving home early enough. But the problem persisted.

Then I began taking a different tack: “Thanks for your call. I suggest that you focus on the slowed or stalled cars ahead. Visualize traffic flowing smoothly, like a river of white light. Maintain this image until the traffic moves. Whenever your mind intrudes with a judgment or distraction, simply push the thought aside and gently refocus on the river of white light, flowing to my office.”

This gave them something to focus on while waiting. With a little practice, they could effectively support a smooth flow of traffic. Before long, these people began arriving on time—even when they had called to warn me they would be late! These students taught other participants about imagining a river of white light—and now, I very rarely get such calls!

## EXPERIMENT #7

# Demonstrating the Power of Focus

1. While watching a bird fly through the air, focus on its path. Imagine it slowing down. Continue this experiment until you experience the bird slowing down.
2. As a variation on this exercise, cast your gaze on a river. Consciously focus on slowing the river down—then speed it up! After some practice, you can experiment with slowing down and speeding up the flow of time.
3. And to repeat: The next time you find yourself in a traffic jam, take a long look at the slowing or stalled cars ahead.
4. Visualize them flowing smoothly, like a river of white light, flowing to your destination. Maintain this image until the traffic moves. Whenever your rational mind intrudes with a judgment or distraction, simply push the thought aside. Gently refocus on the river of white light.

**Important note:** This tool is not about mind control over other drivers. It is about focusing on what you want—for others' benefit, as well as your own (more on this concept in Chapter 13). If nothing else, this should prompt a dramatic shift in your thoughts, especially when you are stuck in traffic and are questioning *other drivers' immediate ancestry*.

~ ~ ~

Sometimes, I think of my clients and myself as birds in a darkened room, flying toward lighted windows, willing to keep hitting our heads on the glass until we find an open door. Meanwhile, of course, we have mastered the ability to cower in dark corners, convincing ourselves that we are truly comfortable in the dark!

I suggest a further experiment: By making a few changes in how you relate to the universe's energy, can you turn your life into a powerful, joyful pursuit?

To perform this experiment, you must consider yourself as more than your mind. More than your emotions, physical body, job, image and reputation! These are all possessions, which you simply use to express yourself. You—the real you—are far greater than that. (For more on this dynamic concept, see Chapter 10.)

So, whenever you find yourself perceiving the universe as hostile or an adversary, shift your point of view to imagining it not only as loving but specifically loving toward you.

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