

Chapter 10: The Practice of Self-Forgiveness

Self-Forgiveness

Hard working, brilliant, beautiful and caring, Amy Biehl was the type of daughter who would have made any parent proud. As the valedictorian of her high school and an honors graduate from Stanford, she could have had her pick of high-paying careers. Yet as a white woman from the suburbs of Los Angeles, she chose to move to South Africa in the closing years of apartheid, to help the black majority in their struggle for freedom and equality.

Three days before she was due to return home, Amy was killed by the very people she'd come to serve. While driving three of her black colleagues back to their homes, her car was surrounded by a mob of angry young men. They pulled Amy from her car, and over the frantic pleas of her co-workers, first beat her and then stabbed her in the heart.

In response, her parents Peter and Linda could easily have become bitter, wounded advocates for retribution. However, they made a different choice. In the words of her mother:

“We took our strength in handling the situation directly from Amy. She was intensely involved in South African politics and even though the violence leading up to free elections had caused her death, we didn't want to say anything negative about South Africa's journey to democracy. Therefore, in 1998, when the four men convicted of her murder applied for amnesty, we did not oppose it. At the amnesty hearing we shook hands with the families of the perpetrators. Peter spoke for both of us

when he quoted from an editorial Amy had written for the Cape Times: ‘the most important vehicle of reconciliation is open and honest dialogue,’ he said. ‘We are here to reconcile a human life which was taken without an opportunity for dialogue. When we are finished with this process we must move forward with linked arms.’”¹

Both for their own sake and for the sake of others, her parents chose a path of forgiveness. Instead of choosing a justice of retribution, they chose a justice of restoration. They strove to understand their daughter’s killers. They forgave them. And in the end, they hired two of these men, Easy Nofemela and Ntobeko Peni, to work for their foundation – an organization dedicated to healing the wounds that led to Amy’s death.

“We wanted to meet them. It wasn’t about pity or blame, but about understanding. We wanted to know what it would take to make things better. Some time later we took them out to dinner. We talked about their lives and our lives, but we didn’t ask about the past. We were all looking to the future.

I’ve grown fond of these boys. I enjoy them. They’re like my own kids. It may sound strange, but I tend to think there’s a little bit of Amy’s spirit in them. Some people think we are supporting criminals, but the Foundation that we started in her name is all about preventing crime among youth.

I have come to believe passionately in restorative justice. It’s what Desmond Tutu calls ‘ubuntu’: to choose to forgive rather than demand retribution, a belief that ‘my humanity is inextricably caught up in yours.’”

Where acceptance stops the cycle of violence, forgiveness heals it at its roots. Forgiveness goes to the heart of our upset, judgment and pain. It allows us to heal the past. It allows us to move forward. And it frees us from the darkness that stands between us and Love.

Learning How to Forgive

Our judgment is a core source of our pain, and we release our judgment through the practice of self-forgiveness.

Most of us already know the value of forgiveness, and are inspired when we observe it in others. When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated after leading India to freedom, one of his last acts as he fell to the ground was to forgive his killer. Similarly, as Jesus was dying, some of his last words were “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*”² Such examples of forgiveness resonate all the way to our core. In a deep way, we get the importance of forgiveness, and we often want to practice it – it’s just that all too often, we don’t know how.

And this brings us to one of the greatest contributions of spiritual psychology: the discovery that **the key to forgiving others is to first forgive ourselves**. Because of how our shadow functions, our judgments on others are actually projections of judgments we place on ourselves. For example, if I make the judgment that “*she’s stupid and unpopular*” I now know that this is a projection of a self-judgment I’m hiding from, such as “*I’m stupid and unpopular.*” So when we forgive ourselves, we go to the roots of our suffering, rather than focusing on its branches.

Similarly, when we dwell on someone’s actions (“*I forgive them for...*”) we’re focused on the symptoms of our pain, rather than its root cause – the judgments we created **about** their actions (“*I forgive myself for **judging** them for...*”).

Without understanding how our shadow works, we can want to practice forgiveness, while finding that our efforts don’t seem particularly effective. But as we learn how to compliment our other-forgiveness with self-forgiveness, we tap in to a remarkable key for releasing our shadow, for moving from judgment to evaluation, for freeing ourselves from our unconscious pain, and for remembering the Love we most Are.

When they first encounter it, self-forgiveness can be a radical concept for many people, so let’s look at it in more detail.

As we look back, we can see that along with Love, judgment has been a common thread woven throughout this book. In the first chapter, we looked at the challenge of beliefs, and the key distinction between **what** our beliefs are and **how** we hold those beliefs. We discovered the difference between **wanting** our beliefs to be true, and **needing** them to be. In the chapter on our shadow, we looked at three types of judgment, and how we create pain in the gap between how we **perceive** the world to be and how we think it **should** be. In the chapter on self-awareness, we learned how our upset doesn't come from Reality, but from our judgments about Reality. In the chapter on evolution, we learned how judgment is part of a natural stage of development. We learned how it's one of our greatest gifts for social survival. And we learned how it then becomes one of our greatest challenges, which we learn to release at the later stages of Love.

Then in the last chapter, we explored the difference between **judgment** and **evaluation** – between holding our beliefs with attachment, pride and fear, versus holding them with humility and love. We learned that **judgment is holding a belief in a way that creates perceived separation from Love**. And we learned that letting go of judgment doesn't mean there's no such thing as right and wrong, because of how the spiritual law of causality supports us in our growth. Yet we also learned the tremendous difference between the infinite nature of Reality, and our mind's finite ability to comprehend that Reality. We learned of the importance of moving past our self-righteousness, attachment and pride, not because we "should," but

“Forgiveness is not the misguided act of condoning irresponsible, hurtful behavior. Nor is it a superficial turning of the other cheek that leaves us feeling victimized and martyred. Rather it is the finishing of old business that allows us to experience the present, free of contamination from the past.”

– Joan Borysenko

because of the peace, love and joy that comes from stepping further into our awareness of the Light.

When we're in judgment, we're at war with what Is. We're fighting with Reality. When we do this, we add to our shadow – we create clouds that hide us from Love. This hurts, which is why **blame causes pain**. And no matter how hard we try to get rid of our “bad bits” by fighting against them, we find that **what we resist, persists**.

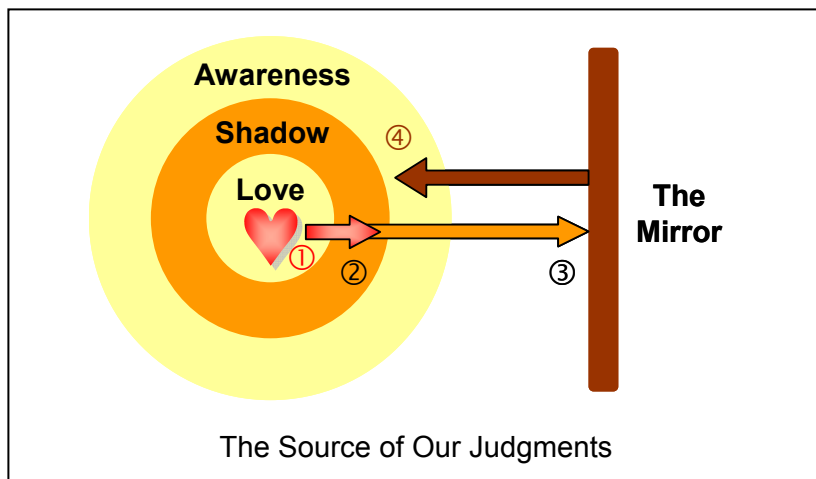
When we think that our thoughts are observing the real problem (i.e. “I'm upset because...”) then we tend to assume that we have to fix the “because” in order to be happy. However, when we realize that our judgments are the source of our pain, then we can take the fast-track to peace and joy. We can learn how to release our upset through the process of self-forgiveness.

Self-Forgiveness and Other-Forgiveness

Traditionally, discussions of forgiveness have focused on what I'll call “other-forgiveness”: giving forgiveness to someone else, asking them to give us forgiveness, or asking a Higher Power to give us forgiveness. These are beautiful, inspired practices.

At the same time, there's another piece to forgiveness. When we focus on forgiving someone else, we're focusing on the branches of our upset, rather than the roots. For while we may think that our upset is due to our “because,” when we look in the mirror, we can see how we've been projecting our judgment on others. This is shown in the figure **The Source of Our Judgments**.

The source of awareness is consciousness itself. And so all observations start from our Loving core (①). To the extent that we're “clean and clear,” we're able to **evaluate** our surroundings. However, often times our environment will resonate with something in our shadow. In doing so, our observations pick up the energy of our hidden **judgment** and negativity (②) – and we project this onto others (③). This negativity then gets reflected back to us, and by the time we consciously notice that we're upset (④) we think this is



because of something “out there.” When in reality, our upset and other-judgments are both coming from our self-judgments.

For example, let’s look at my judgment that “*I’m upset because Tom isn’t handling my money well enough.*” When I feel myself getting upset over the situation, I tend to think that Tom is the source of my problems, and I tend to get caught up in blaming him for my pain. And as I do so, I get even more upset (④).

However, when I take 100% Personal Responsibility for my emotional reactions, and look in The Mirror, I find that a deeper cut is the judgment “*I’m upset because I’m not handling my money well enough.*” I’m upset because I think I should have known better – and I’m projecting this on to him (③). Next I Track It Back and ask “*what would that mean if I’m not handling my money well enough?*” As I do this, I find the judgment “*I’m a failure with money*” (②). When I look below this, I find “*I’m not able to take care of myself,*” “*I can’t trust Spirit to handle my physical needs,*” and “*I’m separate from Love*” (①). Notice how each cut of this process peeled off another layer of judgment, and how it turned my external upset into a golden thread to follow back in to my shadow, allowing me to make conscious what was hidden.

And not just sometimes. Always. The miracle of The Mirror is that I have never – not once – seen it fail. Despite the hundreds of times when I’ve thought “*Wait! This time, it’s really about them. It’s not my issue, it’s theirs!*” every time I’ve taken 100% Personal

Responsibility and followed the golden thread back in to my shadow, I’ve found a series of self-judgments as the real source of my pain.

When we focus on other-forgiveness (i.e. “*I forgive Tom because he isn’t handling my money well enough*”) we’re tapping into one of the most powerful spiritual practices there is. At the same time, we’re directing it at the symptom rather than the root cause. We’re focusing on the projections of our shadow, rather than the shadow itself.

Plus, in the process of other-forgiveness, we often find ourselves making new, more subtle judgments. Our other-forgiveness often comes out as something along the lines of “*I was right and you were wrong, but I’m going to be the better person, and forgive you for how you hurt me.*” In doing so, we’re actually reinforcing our judgments (i.e. “*I’m right,*” “*you’re wrong,*” “*I’m better,*” and “*you hurt me*”) and creating perceived separation while calling it forgiveness.

"Without forgiveness life is governed...by an endless cycle of resentment and retaliation."
– Roberto Assagioli

In contrast, self-forgiveness taps in to the spiritual power of other-forgiveness, and then takes it to an even deeper level. With self-forgiveness, we realize that our judgments are just that – our judgments. Instead of forgiving someone for their actions, we forgive ourselves for the judgments we created **about** their actions. Instead of “*I forgive you for being wrong and hurting me*” we move to “*I forgive myself for judging you as being wrong and hurting me*” – and then we follow the golden thread back, and also forgive any deeper self-judgments we can find. This may seem subtle, but it’s a pivotally important distinction, because it allows us to take responsibility for our judgments, it avoids creating more judgments in the name of forgiveness, and it allows us to bring forgiveness to the core source of our pain.

With self-forgiveness, we’re practicing humility and acceptance. We’re admitting that we don’t have the knowledge that

would be needed to pass judgment; we're accepting that in the past we forgot this, and in doing so, caused ourselves pain; and we're stating our spiritual intention to release those judgments. As we do so, we become willing to get off our position, as we recognize that everyone has been doing the best they know how, and that we'd rather be loving than right.

Opening Ourselves to Grace

Forgiving others starts with forgiving ourselves. Forgiveness means letting others off the hook – and it means letting ourselves off the hook. But then what about justice? What about morality? What about repentance and receiving forgiveness from God?

The reason we're here is to grow in our awareness and expression of Love. This means learning how to **make loving choices** and learning how to **be in a loving consciousness**. Now when it comes to our choices, there are two ways we can learn – through the law of spiritual consequences, or through grace. The former is a law of choices and consequences – we make our choices, and receive the consequences as feedback from our universe. While the feedback is not necessarily instantaneous or obvious, when we choose up we tend to feel better, and when we choose down we tend to feel worse. When we master a lesson we lift in consciousness, and when we don't, we experience perceived separation from Love.

*“When you judge another,
you do not define them,
you define yourself.”*

– Wayne Dyer

This pattern is absolutely **for** us – it's not here to punish us for being bad, it's here to support us in our learning and growth. At the same time, it can be a slow and painful path.

Which brings us to the miracle of grace. When we ask for forgiveness from a Higher Power (whether we call it Love, God, Allah, Spirit, the Ground of Being or our Authentic Self) we're asking to learn and grow not just through our own will, but also by opening ourselves to Love. How this happens is a mystery, and each tradition has their own thoughts on the best way to ask for

forgiveness. If you have teachings on asking for forgiveness that work for you, please use them. And if you care to hear them, here are a few thoughts on the topic, and how it may relate to self-forgiveness.

Asking for forgiveness commonly has three major components: awareness, learning, and asking. We first become **aware** of our learning edges (which are often talked about as mistakes, negative karma, or sins); we then do our best to **learn** from our experiences (which can include remorse, making amends, and repentance); and then we **ask** for forgiveness and grace (which can be a process of prayer or intention).

Judgment **can** be an important part of our learning process, particularly during the first two stages of love. But we do not **have** to use guilt in order to learn. And if we do so, it's critically important that we complete the process both by asking for forgiveness, and then using self-forgiveness to release our self-judgments. For while our judgments can be used as tools to help us avoid less loving **choices**, they automatically come with a price in terms of our loving **consciousness**. Our self-judgments add to our shadow, and create perceived separation from Love. Our self-judgments tell us that we're not good enough, that we're unworthy, that we're separate, and that we have to do better. Our self-judgments cause us pain.

Self-forgiveness releases that pain. In the words of Ron and Mary Hulnick,

“Self-Forgiveness is a powerful healing process that is the inner action of giving love and compassion to oneself. It is an antidote to the pain and separation that judgment causes. More than words, Self-Forgiveness is an outpouring of loving to oneself. It is also a way of asking for an outpouring of Spirit's love to wash, cleanse, and heal us.”³

In the words of my father, “*God forgives us long before we forgive ourselves.*” Asking for forgiveness is one thing. Letting go of our self-judgments is the next.

In the words of David Hawkins,

“In the spiritual world, the basic dictum is ‘There are no justified resentments.’ This statement is abhorred by the ego. ‘Oh year,’ it says, ‘but what about so-and-so?’”

“[However,] guilt is but another form of egotism in which error is inflated instead of being relinquished to a higher power.”⁴

We are here to remember that we are Love, and self-forgiveness is a key part of that process. For when we forgive ourselves of our self-judgments, we’re releasing a place where we thought we knew better than Reality, where we thought we knew enough to judge, and where we thought that our human experience was who we really Are.

As we do so, we lift – and we Remember.

Growth is a Process Not an Event

Personal and spiritual growth is a journey into ever greater awareness of a Love Beyond Belief. It’s a never ending path of lifting, awakening, healing, and remembering. As such, **growth is a process, not an event.**⁵

As we come to the last of our practice building chapters, it’s important to remember that these power tools are habits to develop, rather than items to check off our to do list. Taken together, they constitute a new and radically powerful approach to finding more of whatever it is we most want in life. They allow us not just to think that we “should” bring a positive attitude to life’s difficulties – they show us how to do it. They empower us to bring love to our deepest wounds; to shift from a punishment mentality to a Learning Orientation to Life; and to turn situations where we’re running “*I’m upset because...*” into some of our greatest opportunities for growth

and healing. So let’s recap the steps we’ve learned to this new approach to life.

It all starts with an Intention to embrace a Learning Orientation to Life. We decide that we’ve suffered enough, and that we want to choose another way. In this choice, we state our new intention to use everything for our learning, upliftment and growth, we ask for help, and then we practice cultivating and using our **loving self-discipline** to support this process. This can involve making a Commitment to Love, Baby Stepping our way to new habits, and Engaging External Support Structures. We develop new levels of self-confidence and self-trust by Being Impeccable with Our Word, and this frees us to shift our motivations from being based on pain and pleasure to being based on love and freedom.

Then as we live our lives, we naturally find ourselves getting upset (i.e. angry, hurt, scared, mad, insecure, etc.) We find ourselves running “*I’m upset because...*” And instead of adding yet more fuel to the fires burning in our life, we choose a different path. We choose to meet our anger with **acceptance**. Instead of unconsciously reacting to our old programming, we take a deep breath, Change Our State and then Ask a Different Question. We start to ask “*can I be okay with this?*” And in this space, we find the opportunity to create some new, more positive programming. We may deepen this process by using Affirmations and The Relationship Wheel, and we may release our anger through Free Form Writing.

As we learn to embrace the learning opportunities hidden in our conflicts, we start shifting from victim consciousness and a punishment mentality, to taking 100% Personal Responsibility for our emotional state. We choose to meet our self-deception with honest **self-awareness**. We learn to take our upset and Write it Down; look in The Mirror to find our self-judgments; and take each of those self-judgments and Track It Back. In doing so, we follow the “golden thread” of our upset back in to our shadow, and begin to make conscious what was previously hidden. We may also practice Meditation and Telling the Microscopic Truth.

As we begin to open up our shadow, our buried fears naturally emerge. These fears were what locked our repression in place, and so we find ourselves walking the Hero's Journey by practicing courage in the face of our fears, as we go in search of the only real "happily ever after" – the Love that already exists within our core. As courage is one aspect of our **loving self-discipline**, we find ourselves again setting our Intentions, Committing to Love, Baby Stepping through our fears, and Engaging External Support Structures that aid us on our path.

However, instead of needing to slay our inner dragons, we find that the secret is to love them instead. And so as we create a place of love and safety, we begin to allow our old wounds to surface, and we practice **healing** them by bringing loving to the places that hurt. Either on our own or with a partner, we create a sacred space through Heart-Centered Listening and Holding Space, and then we allow any hurt feelings to emerge into this love by Exploring Emotions and Giving It a Voice. And we tap in to the power of grace by being of Service.

And as we begin to release the repression, anger, fear, and pain that have been running us for so long, we get the opportunity to heal our suffering at its roots, by bringing **self-forgiveness** to our judgments.

If you remember from the previous chapter, we learned that our judgments are rooted in our attachments to our beliefs – to our addictions to our thinking, to our need to be right, and to our fear of what it would mean if our beliefs were wrong. These addictions can run deep – they get stored not just in our mind, but also in our emotional, spiritual, and physical bodies. So releasing our judgments is very much a process not an event. It's a process that can be subtle at times, because it goes very, very deep.

Yet because of this depth, as we turn our healing and growth in to a consistent practice, and develop habits of self-forgiveness, we can find our lives becoming better than we ever imagined possible, as we find ourselves reconnecting with a Love Beyond Belief.

Self-forgiveness involves releasing the energy of our beliefs through Compassionate Self-Forgiveness and through holding a Positive Focus. It involves selecting more supportive beliefs through Building a Bigger Frame and becoming aware of the Prices and Payoffs of our limiting beliefs. And ultimately, it involves stepping in to the practice of spiritual mastery, through the practice of Non-Attachment.

In healing our shadow, we practice meeting anger with acceptance, fear with loving self-discipline, repression with self-awareness, pain with love, and judgment with self-forgiveness. Then as our wounds are healed, we naturally find ourselves being drawn to a life of Service. We find ourselves serving not because we "should," or because we're trying to avoid our own issues, but because serving becomes one of our greatest sources of fulfillment, healing, upliftment and joy. And as part of our practice of Positive Focus, we find ourselves singing a song of gratitude, not because we're trying to get something from our universe, or because we're settling for what we already have, but because gratitude is the natural, heart-opening reaction that comes as we begin to see Reality for what it Is.

Power Tool #21: Compassionate Self-Forgiveness

Once we realize that we've innocently and unconsciously been inflicting pain on ourselves through our self-judgments; and have connected with those judgments through our practices of acceptance, loving self-discipline, self-awareness and 100% Personal Responsibility; then we're ready for Compassionate Self-Forgiveness. Before starting this exercise, it often helps to take something you're upset about, and practice looking in The Mirror, and then Tracking It Back. Write down the self-judgments you find, and then bring those in to your practice of Compassionate Self-Forgiveness.

Like most things in life, this exercise has two essential components – what we **do**, and where we do it **from**.

The Form – What to Do

The format of this practice is simple, and it's strongly encouraged that you follow the format exactly. Doing so means using one of five statements.

"I forgive myself for judging myself as _____"
"I forgive myself for judging _____ as _____"
"I forgive myself for judging myself for _____"
"I forgive myself for judging _____ for _____"
*"I forgive myself for buying into the belief that _____"*⁶

The subject of self-forgiveness is always ourselves (*"I forgive myself"*) for these are our judgments we're releasing. We made them, in doing so we caused ourselves pain, we realize this now, and so we're choosing to release them. It's like we're asking for a spiritual "do-over." If apologies or amends need to be made to another person, then that's a separate issue as part of a process of other-forgiveness.

The object of the judgment is either ourselves (*"I forgive myself for judging myself as..."*) or another person or object (*"I forgive myself for judging her as..."*). In the first four statements, the judgments are either regarding an action we judged (*"I forgive myself for judging myself for stealing"*) or an interpretation we made (*"I forgive myself for judging myself as a bad person"*). And in the fifth self-forgiveness statement, we're forgiving ourselves for becoming attached to an idea that's causing us pain and is no longer working for us.

As we forgive ourselves, we clean a bit of the dirt off the lenses through which we perceive reality. As we forgive ourselves, we heal one of the painful nicks we've innocently cut in our consciousness. And as we forgive ourselves, we take one more courageous step forward, on the Hero's Journey of remembering Who we most Are.

The Essence – Where to Do It From

Any action can be done from a range of places in consciousness, and from one of the many voices that inhabit our mind. We can empower our Inner Critic and Inner Victim, as they innocently add to our suffering, or we can cleanly evaluate our choices from a place of compassion for this suffering. In the face of the conflicts in this world – and in our own consciousness – one sure way I know of to add to the peace on this planet is by exercising Compassionate Self-Forgiveness of our judgments.

To do this, it's most effective when we do self-forgiveness from our heart or Authentic Self – when we do it from a place of love and compassion. The power of Love can heal all hurt, and release all judgments. So, before doing the self-forgiveness exercise, start by connecting with a loving field. This can include asking for forgiveness and grace, or setting a clear intention.

It can also include a process of centering yourself within your heart, by closing your eyes and visualizing your connection with those people you most love in your life. Breathe in their love for you with each slow, deep inhale, and breathe out your love for them with each slow, deep exhale. When you feel deeply connected with your heart, start saying self-forgiveness statements for each of the self-judgments you've uncovered.

When working with The Mirror, I tend to start by forgiving the judgments I've projected on someone else, and then move to forgiving the self-judgments these projections were reflections of. Then, I continue working inwards through the layers of my shadow as I practice Tracking It Back, forgiving each judgment I find on my journey back to my awareness of the Love that Is.

Making a Habit of Self-Forgiveness

Self-forgiveness can also be practiced from a more mental place. This is less effective at healing deeper wounds and judgments, and is more effective when we turn it into a new habit that allows us to interrupt our old patterns and replace them with new ones. (When used in this way, it's a lot like the Change Your

State tool.) Practiced regularly, this can help us quickly break out of any negative “mind frick” loops, and it can allow us to catch these patterns before they turn into a full emotional hijack. For example, I’ll often notice a casual judgment as I’m going about my daily business (such as “*what a mean person*” or “*that was dumb of me*”) and I’ve developed a habit of using a quick mental self-forgiveness statement to dissolve that judgment before it can start festering and growing into an infected wound of negativity.

Compassionate Self-Forgiveness is simple and profound. It’s a mastery level skill, which can be practiced for a lifetime, with results that compound exponentially over time.

Power Tool #22: Build a Bigger Frame

Throughout this book, we’ve emphasized that when it comes to resolving the challenge of beliefs, **how** we hold our beliefs is often more important than **what** beliefs we hold. At the same time, when we’re holding on to limiting or negative beliefs that are creating judgment and causing us pain, one of the most effective ways of releasing our attachments to these beliefs is simply to change the beliefs themselves. We don’t do this **fighting** our beliefs or **fleeing** from them, just as we don’t release our beliefs by **feeding** them and telling ourselves how right we are to be upset.

Instead, our opportunity is to meet our beliefs with love and understanding, and then help our mind to find a broader, higher, more loving perspective. Our opportunity is to Build a Bigger Frame for our beliefs.

For example, as I started exploring the pain of my birth mother’s death, I found that I’d been holding on to some very deep-seated judgments such as “*it was wrong that Mommy died,*” “*someone has to be blamed for her death,*” and “*it’s my fault that Mommy died.*” These beliefs created a huge amount of pain inside my shadow, as well as some death-level fears. I was unconsciously terrified to look at my shadow, because I couldn’t bear the thought of what it would mean if these self-judgments were true. Now, was it true that as a three and a half year old child, I’d caused my

mother’s death? No. And as I healed my wounds over her death, and forgave the judgments I’d made, it created the space to Build a Bigger Frame for the beliefs that had been causing me so much pain.

I began to develop humility, as I realized that without knowing the spiritual agendas of everyone involved, I didn’t know enough to judge what had happened. And as I stopped fighting and judging them, I began to see how irrational some of my beliefs had been.⁷ Then one day, I found myself in a place where it was like the clouds had been lifted from my vision. From this new vantage, I was able to see how pain is just pain, how it wasn’t anyone’s fault that she died, and eventually, I was able to see how her death, when combined with the love and support of my three parents, had been one of the greatest gifts of my life.

Building a Bigger Frame involves three main steps:

- ♥ **Humility.** It starts with a willingness to get off our position. It involves letting go of our certainty that we’re right, and to begin seeing how we might not have all the information about the situation. This can be greatly aided by an active practice of learning to know what we don’t know, and by asking humble questions. For example, “*do I know the spiritual agendas of everyone involved?*”
- ♥ **Uncover Contradictions.** Our logical mind is much like a computer, in that **our mind can’t handle an internal contradiction, unless that contradiction is unconscious.** When we bring awareness to our unconscious beliefs, without fighting them or making them wrong, we often discover that some of our beliefs are irrational and no longer make sense. A great way of doing this is by asking our mind questions that bring awareness to its inner contradictions. For example, “*is it true that little children are responsible for their parents’ actions?*”
- ♥ **Find a Higher Perspective.** There is an absolute Reality, and absolute Truth is awareness of that Reality. At the same time, all truth is dependent on the perspective we

view it from. There is such a thing as objective Truth, and yet we're only able to have subjective awareness of Reality – we can only experience truth rather than Truth. Put another way, as human beings, the **content** of each of our beliefs is dependent on the paradigm or **context** we view it from.⁸ Always. And just as the rules of Love change as we evolve, and our experience of love changes as we evolve, so too does our experience of truth change as we evolve. So as we release our shadow, and come to rest more in our Authentic Self, we naturally have experiences where we see the world more clearly. As we move up the “Love triangle” we automatically gain access to a higher perspective. As this happens, we're given a great opportunity to bring love and awareness to our old judgments and limiting beliefs, to practice Compassionate Self-Forgiveness from that place, and then to consciously choose some new beliefs from this higher perspective. For example, *“From this height, I can see how my mother's death was one of my greatest gifts.”*

When you're upset or confused, is there someone you go to who helps you gain perspective on the situation? Where instead of commiserating with you and going in to sympathy, or attacking you and making your beliefs wrong, they help you see things from a less painful point of view? If so, then you already have the experience of Building a Bigger Frame. When this happens, there's a place inside where we tend to go *“Oh! Of course!”* It's like their words resonate, and “ring more true” than the judgments we were hanging on to. When we're not defensively clinging to our position, we have an automatic, intuitive sense for truth. We already know how to Build a Bigger Frame, and our opportunity is simply to practice doing this more frequently – and more consciously.

Power Tool #23: Prices and Payoffs

Just as our mind can't handle a conscious contradiction it also can't handle knowingly running an unproductive pattern. Every

aspect of our selves is doing the best it knows how, and when our mind learns a better way, it tends to adopt it. This is why denial is such an essential hallmark of addiction. As long as an alcoholic is in denial, their mind can avoid looking at the pain their choices are causing – and so they can keep feeding their cravings instead of suffering the pains of withdrawal.

Viewed rationally and from a long-term perspective, our negative addictions don't make sense, because their costs are much higher than their payoffs. So when a group of loved ones stage an intervention with an addict, a primary goal is to break through the addict's denial by “care-fronting” them with overwhelming evidence, from multiple sources, of the price their addiction is costing their family, work, and self.

Similarly, much of our pain is caused by our addictions to our thinking – by our attachments to our beliefs, and to our need to be right. And there is great value in staging “mini-interventions” with ourselves, where we bring conscious awareness to the Prices and Payoffs of our judgments. When we do so, **without judging our choices or making them wrong**, and discover that the prices are larger than the payoffs, then we naturally begin to free ourselves to make another choice.

Now, just as there's no “magic pill” that can create an instant cure for alcoholism or drug addiction, these tools aren't things to do once and expect that they “should” cure all our problems. Instead, these tools are practices, which when practiced regularly over time, can create transformative results.

For example, even once we consciously realize that we prefer a slim and healthy body to the immediate gratification of burgers and ice cream, this does not mean we're instantly going to lose 20 pounds. We may have been at war with our Basic Self for years (*“you shouldn't want to eat all this bad food!”*) In response, our Basic Self tends to get defensive, run away – and then continue to act out. In this process, we may have built up many layers of unconscious shadow around this issue, and these layers may need to be released one at a time.

The key is to practice turning these tools into habits, while also avoiding adding fuel to the fire by judging our progress. The way to consistent weight loss isn't to beat ourselves up every time we choose a Price that our Conscious Self thinks exceeds its Payoffs – it's to prize ourselves for each time we take a Baby Step in the right direction, while releasing our shadow (which often has its own reasons for holding on to the weight).

Similarly, a very common pattern is to notice that we're in judgment (“I should be...”) and then go into judgment of our judgments (“I shouldn't be shoulding.”) This loop can keep spiraling out of control (“I shouldn't be judging my judgments”) until at some point, we take a breath, go in to acceptance, and make a different choice.

The deeper our judgments go, and the more energy they hold, the more times we may need to practice these tools in order for them to let go. At the same time, with every step forward, another bit of our shadow gets released, another bit of our judgment gets cleared, and the path becomes easier, more grace-filled, and more joyful.

Power Tool #24: Positive Focus

The spiritual law of attraction dictates that **like attracts like**. Put another way, “*where you focus is where you go.*” While we often think that the way to a happy life involves focusing on the things we want to avoid, or the things we're doing wrong, **negative focus creates negative results**.

Over the long run, the more we focus on what's wrong, the more we're going to experience the exact things we're trying to avoid.

This teaching is essence of The Secret. Because of this, a core key to life is to **focus on getting more of what we do want**, rather than avoiding what we don't. It involves holding a positive focus, particularly with our inner thoughts and judgments. This tool is illustrated by the following Native American story, as told by Ether Acosta.

“If the only prayer you say in your whole life is ‘Thank you,’ that would suffice.”

– Meister Eckhart

“A grandson told of his anger at a schoolmate who had done him an injustice. Grandfather said: ‘Let me tell you a story.’ ‘I, too, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But, hate wears you down and does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times. It is as if there are two wolves inside me: one is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him and does not take offense when no offense was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way. But the other wolf is full of anger. The slightest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights with everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them try to dominate my spirit.’ The boy looked intently into his grandfather's eyes and asked, ‘Which one wins, Grandfather?’ The grandfather solemnly replied, ‘The one I feed.’”⁹

Gratitude is one of the most positive vibrations there is, and so connecting with our gratitude is one of the most powerful practices there is – not just as a way of being thankful for what we already have, but also as a foundational step in opening ourselves to more.

Interestingly, like with discipline, many of us have gratitude paired with judgment, scarcity, and fear. For example, I've found myself regularly thinking that “*I should be grateful for what I have instead of wanting more*” and “*If I'm grateful for what I have, then this means I'm resigning myself to how things are right now, and I'll never get anything more from life.*” However, these statements aren't accurate. Like Love, gratitude is not a choice between **either** being thankful for what we have **or** receiving more. Instead, it's one of the fastest ways **both** to be thankful **and** to open ourselves to receiving more.

As some concrete tools for practicing gratitude, you can keep a gratitude journal, make a regular gratitude list, or create a family

ritual where you teach the abundance that comes from gratitude, and then invite each member to state three things they are grateful for.

Power Tool #25: Non-Attachment

The last of our skills, non-attachment is another mastery level skill. In fact, it's often referred to as "the practice of spiritual mastery." So please do not feel like you need to "conquer" this skill – this is a tool we can spend an entire lifetime practicing, and still find new challenges. Paradoxically, this is a testament to its power, because it can let us ride our "learning edges" as far and as deep as we want to go.

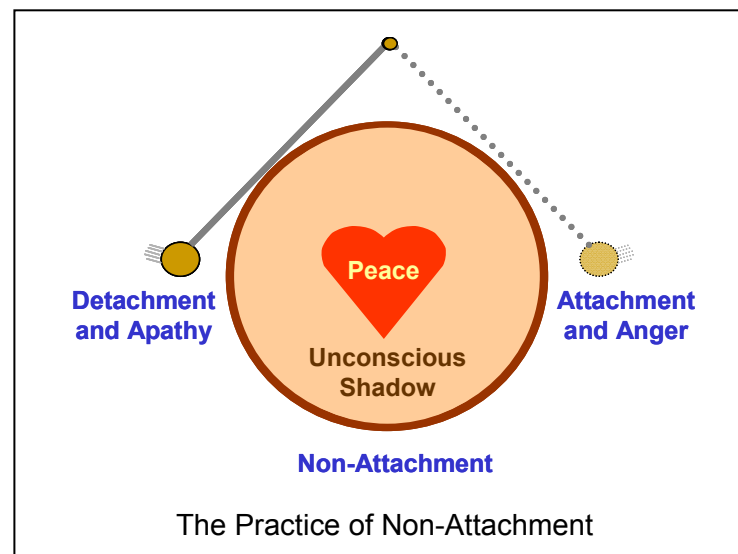
Non-attachment is the practice of releasing suffering by surrendering the attachments that create our pain. In the context of judgment, it involves surrendering the places where we feel we need to be right – it involves releasing the places where our addictions to our beliefs have moved us from evaluation to judgment.

"I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to what light I have."

– Abraham Lincoln

The practice of non-attachment goes to the very core of our suffering. Because of this, it's extremely powerful – and it can also be very subtle. As laid out by the Buddha, the first three of the Four Noble Truths are that "life means suffering," "the origin of suffering is attachment," and "the cessation of suffering is attainable." When we grasp at our beliefs and desires, we become attached to them, and in this, we suffer. When we release these attachments, we also release our judgment, anger and pain.

Now, **non-attachment does not mean detachment.** As shown in the figure The Practice of Non-Attachment, attachment and detachment are two sides of the same coin. When we repress or avoid something, we're detaching from it. When we cling to or become addicted to something, we're attaching to it. As such, **non-attachment means being fully involved without being attached to**



the outcome.¹⁰ As my friend John says, "life is a full contact sport." We grow not by avoiding life, but by immersing ourselves in it. This then gives us a steady stream of opportunities for releasing the places where we're attached to our beliefs, particularly our beliefs about how we think things "should" be.

For example, one of the most profound opportunities to practice non-attachment arises in the arena of conscious business. When we simultaneously strive to make money, and do so from a place of love and service, we naturally find ourselves coming up against the places where we're attached to making money, and where our Basic Self wants to see every sales situation as an opportunity to take from others. We may also come up against the many places where we want to avoid our inner conflicts between love and money, by going into the detachment of a "spiritual bypass." For example, in the Selling By Giving courses I teach, we regularly work with limiting beliefs such as:

"Everything is Love, so why do I need money?"

"If I hold a strong enough intention, everything I want will just come to me."

"I can't make money and be spiritual, so I won't try."

It's fairly easy to practice **involvement and attachment** to money, such as when we take a job in business where we check our heart at the door and just focus on increasing the bottom line. It's also fairly easy to practice **non-involvement and detachment** from money, such as when we resign ourselves to a life of poverty in order to practice our calling or our art. These are both natural choices. And as we choose to play at the higher levels of Love, we naturally find ourselves called to practice both **full involvement and non-attachment**. One of the ways we can do this (but by no means the only one) is by participating in conscious business endeavors that strive to bring together both money **and** meaning, both profit **and** purpose – and then working with the conflicts this naturally brings forward within us.

As we've discussed throughout this book, when we withdraw from, fight against, or deny any of the many aspects of ourselves, they don't go away. Instead, they get repressed into our unconscious shadow. We hide our needs and challenges, rather than eliminating them. Where **attachment** produces pain, fear, anger, judgment and suffering; **detachment** produces apathy, loneliness, depression, neurosis – and suffering.

Non-attachment is the practice of being fully involved in life, while simultaneously releasing our attachments to the outcome. It means giving our all from a place of commitment, love, and service. And simultaneously, it means trusting that our efforts are enough, that we're enough, and that each possible outcome is perfect.

So how do we do this?

We set our intentions.

We commit ourselves to serving the Highest Good.

We get upset.

We release our shadow.

We trust in a Higher Power.

We surrender to Love.

And then we do it again...