

Psychosynthesis Practice
Volume I
Psychosynthesis Exercises for Personal & Spiritual Growth
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Roberto Assagioli was fond of saying to his students "practice makes perfectly imperfect". In this statement, usually accompanied by his characteristic chuckle, he touched on several central aspects of Psychosynthesis. First is the importance of practice itself, the consistent "doing" of certain exercises that support the process of psychosynthesis within oneself over time. Second is the paradoxical affirmation of our "perfect imperfection" as a way of pointing to the fact of continual growth, that we are never "finished" in an infinite universe, and that this is "perfectly" all right. Third is that we can actively cooperate with our development and can choose to practice in ways that enrich and deepen our lives. We don't have to wait for this to happen, but rather, through practice, we can use our awareness and will to heal and strengthen our personalities so they gradually become more coherent and creative instruments for the expression of our true Selves. And fourth is that there actually is a perfection in this process of psychosynthesis, of "life living itself more deeply", a perfection that is both mysterious and orderly, that is beyond us and within us, and that we touch both together and alone. This perfection we can gradually realize in our daily lives through conscious practice, and, of course, through simply living our given lives to the full, which is the most central practice of all.

These twelve exercises have, over the years, proved central to a conscious cooperation with the process of psychosynthesis. Some were developed by Roberto Assagioli, some by members of the San Francisco Psychosynthesis Institute and the Canadian Institute of Psychosynthesis, and all have been revised over time as we have learned more about what really helps. They are published here in this pamphlet format for the first time with the thought that having them in one place will better reveal the relationships between the different dimensions of Psychosynthesis which they address. In this regard, the earlier (1-5) predominately deal with the personal dimension, the middle (6-9) with the transpersonal, and the last (10-12) with the spiritual. Together the twelve constitute a "practice" that can be used by anyone wishing to foster healthy psycho-spiritual growth, either in him/herself, or in others. They are educational in the root sense of the word, in that they are designed as a means to educate ("lead out") oneself to our true nature, to the discovery and realization in daily life of what Assagioli called our "Higher Self".

Obviously these exercises can be combined with other practices, drawn from a wide range of psychological and spiritual disciplines, East and West, nor do they represent a complete compilation of available psychosynthetic practices. But these particular twelve have proven central, again and again, to work in Psychosynthesis, and they are published here in the hopes that they will continue to be of such use in the decades ahead.

Thomas Yeomans

No. 1

PSYCHOLOGICAL WORKBOOK

One of the most useful instruments for long term self-development is a workbook, diary, or journal. We use the term 'psychological workbook' because many people tend to associate the word 'diary' with memories of adolescence in which often trivial and burdensome accounts were kept of one's daily activities.

The type of workbook suggested here has as its purpose the recording of your inner life and its developments. Outer events may be recorded inasmuch as they are related to inner events (feelings, thoughts, observations), but the focus should be on the unfolding awareness of oneself and the world, and on the new meanings, values, and inter-relationships one is able to discover.

There are many purposes for keeping a workbook of this sort. One of the most important is to help ourselves formulate our thoughts, feelings, and observations with greater clarity. And in the act of putting something on paper we tend to commit ourselves to a greater extent. We are taking a step beyond simply thinking or saying something when we make the effort to write it down. Also, in the process of thought clarification through writing, we are obliged to choose between alternate points of view, we are thus less likely to deceive ourselves by holding contradictory views without being aware of it. If there is a problem to be solved or an area of real confusion, we are better able to define it and thus take the first step towards its resolution.

The act of writing is also a great stimulus to the creative process. When we are trying to grapple with a problem, it is a common experience that in writing down a few thoughts on the question, other related thoughts begin to stream in through a process of association, and these ideas in turn open up new avenues of thought, new possibilities we may not have considered before. If we can learn to let our minds range freely in this manner, we will be truly amazed to discover the depth of the insights already within us—just waiting to be liberated.

Keeping a workbook as a technique of self-development also functions in other ways. It gives us an opportunity to express in a harmless way any powerful and disruptive emotions we may have bottled up inside us. If we can learn to 'let off steam' through writing, we will have a useful means of discharging tensions, and of becoming aware of what underlies them. Writing is also a useful exercise for developing the faculties of concentration, attention, and control of the will. It may help a person who is somewhat shy, and reluctant to express himself in a face-to-face setting, to explore certain aspects of himself more freely. For all these reasons keeping a workbook can be an important aspect of the psychosynthesis process in that it is a method which one can employ on his own initiative, as he takes the process of his growth and self-realization increasingly into his own hands.

In addition to written material, one can make drawings and other visual aids a part of the workbook. These may be of various kinds. In one category are images—which may come to you in the form of dreams, fantasies, or visualizations. In another category are diagrams, more abstract symbols, or visual aids which we can use to express our ideas in graphic form. This is useful in developing clear concepts and in communicating these concepts to others. A final category is what one might call 'spontaneous drawing'. This should be done when we are in a relaxed state of mind and when our attention is fixed on something else—as when we are doodling. Such drawings reflect the activity of the unconscious mind and may be of value in self-understanding. Thus, drawing as well as writing can be part of a complete workbook.

Here are headings of possible areas for inclusion in your workbook. It is suggested you choose among them the ones that, according to your own needs and experience, are likely to be of greater value. But, of course, your choice can be revised at any time. It is important to date each entry, in order to provide a developmental perspective.

Dialogue with ideas: Include a heading for any area of vital intellectual interest in which you are trying to advance your own understanding—e.g., Education, Religion, Mathematics, Systems Theory, Ecology, etc.

Dialogue with persons: Insights into or questions about your relationships.

Dialogue with events: Your response to meaningful events in your life: note occasions on which you are aware of 'synchronicity'.

Inner dialogues: Miscellaneous thoughts, musings, intuitions, questions, or speculations which do not fit under other headings.

Dreams: Description, context, associations, and amplifications of your night dreams (which are most easily recorded immediately upon waking.)

Imagery: Visualizations, or experiences in other sensory modalities. This may include images which come spontaneously or while using one of the guided mental imagery techniques. These can be recorded in writing and/or through drawings. It is helpful to record the feelings and associations you have in response to the image, or to different parts of it (form, color, etc.), its meaning for you, and a tentative interpretation if possible.

Imagination: Fantasies, stories, situations, etc., which might serve as the seed for an imaginative work. This category is best limited to those fantasies which have some creative potential.

Diagrams: Graphic models of theoretical constructs (though you may wish to include these under the headings of the various areas of intellectual interest instead). These will help you express your thoughts visually, and this may be useful for purposes of clarification and visual communication.

Meditation: Notes on techniques of meditation with which you have experimented, seed ideas used, and results obtained. Note any insights or intuitions which come through.

Self: Notes on your sense of personal identity, answers to the 'Who Am I?' questions, experiences with 'self-remembering' and other meditative techniques related to the question of essential being.

Will: Notes on your experience with the various stages of the will, and evaluation of your areas of strength and weakness. Note any occasions and their distinctive circumstances in which you were aware of yourself making use of the will, and record your results with the exercises for developing the will.

Techniques for growth: Your experience with the various approaches which do not fall under other headings. Please note as fully as possible the circumstances under which the various approaches were helpful or not and your opinion of the reasons underlying success or failure with a particular method.

Peak experiences: Any 'high' or 'deep' experiences of peace, joy, love, expansion, awakening, etc., and their circumstances and effects.

Hangups: Personal weaknesses of which you are aware and on which you would like to work. Particular emphasis can be placed on the techniques you can use to overcome them. Record also any strong negative reactions you have to other people as they may clarify your own unrecognized and projected problems.

Quotations: Personally meaningful quotations from your readings.

Time perspectives: To make the contact with your own movement through time, through the past into the present and toward the future. Stepping stones (bridges from where we were to where we are or hope to be), intersections (roads taken and not taken), and memories may be noted.

No. 2

THE "WHO AM I?" EXERCISE

This exercise is designed to help you develop self-awareness and to discover your true self. It is based on the assumption that each of us, like an onion, has various layers covering a central core. These layers of self-perceptions may be positive or negative. They represent different aspects of our personality and of our relationship to the world. Some of the layers may be like a facade, or mask, hiding those aspects of ourselves we do not like, some may be those unliked aspects themselves, and still some others may be those hidden and very positive aspects we have trouble accepting as well. In any case, somewhere beyond these, within each of us lies a deep center which is vibrant and creative—the true self, the innermost essence of our being. The "Who Am I?" exercise leads one gently to that self, through successive attempts to respond to the question. Eventually, one can touch, in this way, the source of one's being, one's true identity.

Procedure

1. Select a place where you are quiet and undisturbed. Take a sheet of paper, write the date at the top, and title the page "Who Am I?". Then write your answer to this question as freely and honestly as possible, giving yourself time to pause periodically and in silence ask the question again.
2. Sit in a relaxed position. Close your eyes. Clear your mind. Then ask yourself the "Who Am I?" question again and this time look for a response in the form of an image in your mind's eye. Don't try to think or reason, but simply let an image emerge. When you are ready, open your eyes, and write about what you saw, in as much detail as possible, and include any feelings you had about the image and what it meant to you.
3. Stand up with some room around you to move in. Close your eyes and again ask "Who Am I?". And this time let the response come through movement in your body. Trust its wisdom and let the movement unfold until you sense a completion. You may also want to include sounds in this response, or singing. When you are ready, write about your experience.

It is recommended that you continue to do this exercise over a period of time. Its impact deepens with repeated use.

No. 3

THE EVENING REVIEW

This exercise is best done as the last thing in the day. Just before going to sleep, review your day in your mind, playing it back like a movie, but backwards, beginning with where you are right now, then the time of late evening, then the time of early evening, then the dinner hour, the afternoon, and so on till the morning when you awakened.

This evening review can be used to examine yourself and your life as a whole, or it can be modified, as in the example below, to focus on some aspect of your self, on some pattern you'd like to know more about, on some specific inner process you may want to explore. The **attitude** with which you do the exercise is most important.

When you examine your day, do it as much as possible as the **detached objective observer** calmly and clearly registering each phase of what has happened. Then move on to the next phase without excitement, without becoming elated at a success or depressed or unhappy about a failure. The aim is a **calm registering in consciousness of the meaning and patterns of the day**, rather than a reliving of it.

Many have found it of value to write down, perhaps as part of their Psychological Workbook (No. 1), points observed and any insights or impressions that come. By reviewing the notes written over a period of time, you may observe patterns and trends not otherwise apparent.

Review on Subpersonalities

This modification of "The Evening Review" consists of reviewing your day from the point of view of your subpersonalities.

Subpersonalities are the many diverse personages or psychological formations within our personality, which have their own semi-independent activity, needs, and aims. Many of them are quite individual. Others are fairly common, such as the Child, the Parent, the Seeker, the Clinger, the Poet, the Lonely One.

Before doing this exercise the first time, we suggest a period of introspection to look for the subpersonalities (perhaps two or three of them) that you consider most active or most important at this time in your life. If you are keeping a psychological workbook, or journal, you may find some insight on this by reviewing your recent writings.

Review on Personality Aspects

This is a modification of "The Evening Review". It consists of reviewing your day from the point of view of the three main personality aspects: your body, your feelings, and your mind.

Some of the points you might want to consider are:

1. With which aspect am I identified most of the time?
2. Were different aspects predominant in the various circumstances of the day? What has been the relative activity of each?
3. What were the valuable qualities and the limitations of each? How did each help me or get in my way?
4. Were there any conflicts between them?
5. What part did I take in harmonizing and directing them?

You can either consider these points during the review itself, or if this gets in your way, you can think about them at the end of the review. These points are meant to give you a choice of perspective, and need not all be covered, except for (1), which is fundamental. We suggest that, particularly at the beginning, you keep the exercise fairly simple, and give it no more than 15 minutes a day.

In the evening review itself, some of the points you might want to keep in mind are:

1. Which different subpersonalities were predominant at different times during this day? What circumstances (inner or outer) made them emerge or withdraw? Were there any conflicts between them?
2. What were the valuable qualities and what were the limitations outstanding in each subpersonality? How did each help me or get in my way?
3. What did each want? What would it like my life to be if it could have fully its own way?
4. Were my subpersonalities in harmony with what I wanted to do, or did I have to go along with them? What part did I take in harmonizing and directing them?

You can either consider these points during the review exercise itself, or, if this gets in your way, you can think about them at the end of the review. These points are meant to give you a choice of perspective and need not all be covered. The main purpose is to get well acquainted with your subpersonalities. We suggest that particularly at the beginning you keep the exercise fairly simple, and give it no more than 15 minutes a day.

No. 4

DIS-IDENTIFICATION EXERCISE

We are dominated by everything with which our self becomes identified. We can dominate, direct, and utilize everything from which we dis-identify ourselves.

The central, fundamental experience of self-consciousness, the discovery of the "I," is implicit in our human consciousness ("Self-consciousness" is used here in the purely psychological sense of being aware of oneself as a distinct individual and not in the customary sense of egocentric and even neurotic "self-centeredness."). It is that which distinguishes our consciousness from that of the animals, which are conscious but not self-conscious. But generally this self-consciousness is indeed "implicit" rather than explicit. It is experienced in a nebulous and distorted way because it is usually mixed with and veiled by the *contents* of consciousness.

This constant input of influences veils the clarity of consciousness and produces spurious identifications of the self with the content of consciousness, rather than with consciousness *itself*. If we are to make self-consciousness explicit, clear, and vivid, we must first *dis-identify* ourselves from the contents of our consciousness.

More specifically, the habitual state for most of us is to be identified with that which seems, at any one time, to give us the greatest sense of aliveness, which seems to us to be most real, or most intense.

This identification with a part of ourselves is usually related to the predominant function or focus of our awareness, to the predominant role we play in life. It can take many forms. Some people are identified with their bodies. They experience themselves, and often talk about themselves, mainly in terms of sensation; in other words they function as if they *were* their bodies. Others are identified with their feelings; they experience and describe their state of being in affective terms, and believe their feelings to be the central and most intimate part of themselves, while thoughts and sensations are perceived as more distant, perhaps somewhat separate. Those who are identified with their minds are likely to describe themselves with intellectual constructs, even when asked how they *feel*. They often consider feelings and sensations as peripheral, or are largely unaware of

them. Many are identified with a role, and live, function, and experience themselves *in terms of that role*, such as "mother," "husband," "wife," "student," "businessman," "teacher," etc.

This identification with only a *part* of our personality may be temporarily satisfactory, but it has serious drawbacks. It prevents us from realizing the experience of the "I," the deep sense of self-identification, of knowing who we are. It excludes, or greatly decreases, the ability to identify with all the other parts of our personality, to enjoy them and utilize them to their fullest extent. Thus our "normal" expression in the world is limited at any one time to only a fraction of what it can be. The conscious—or even unconscious—realization that we somehow do not have access to much that is in us can cause frustration and painful feelings of inadequacy and failure.

Finally, a continuing identification with either a role or a predominant function leads often, and almost inevitably, to a precarious life situation resulting sooner or later in a sense of loss, even despair, such as in the case of an athlete who grows old and loses his physical strength; an actress whose physical beauty is fading; a mother whose children have grown up and left her, or a student who has to leave school and face a new set of responsibilities. Such situations can produce serious and often very painful crises. They can be considered as more or less partial psychological "deaths." No frantic clinging to the waning old "identity" can avail. The true solution can be only a "rebirth" that is, entering into a new and broader identification. This sometimes involves the whole personality and requires and leads to an awakening or "birth" into a new and higher state of being. The process of death and rebirth was symbolically enacted in various mystery rites and has been lived and described in religious terms by many mystics. At present it is being rediscovered in terms of transpersonal experiences and realizations.

This process often occurs without a clear understanding of its meaning and often against the wish and will of the individual involved in it. But a conscious, purposeful, willing cooperation can greatly facilitate, foster, and hasten it.

It can be best done by a deliberate exercise of *dis-identification* and *self-identification*. Through it we gain the *freedom* and the *power of choice* to be identified with, or dis-identified from, any aspect of our personality, according to what seems to us most appropriate in each situation. Thus we can learn to master, direct, and utilize all the elements and aspects of our personality, in an inclusive and harmonious synthesis. Therefore this exercise is considered as basic in psychosynthesis.

This exercise is intended as a tool for achieving the consciousness of the self, and the ability to focus our attention sequentially on each of our main personality aspects, roles, etc. We then become clearly aware of and can examine their qualities while maintaining the point of view of the observer, and recognizing that the observer is not that which he observes.

In the form which follows, the first phase of the exercise—the dis-identification—consists of three parts dealing with the physical, emotional, and mental aspects of awareness. This leads to the self-identification phase. Once some experience is gained with it, the exercise can be expanded or modified according to need, as will be indicated further on.

Procedure

Put your body in a comfortable and relaxed position, and slowly take a few deep breaths (preliminary exercises of relaxation can be useful). Then make the following affirmation, slowly and thoughtfully:

1. **I have** a body but **I am not** my body. My body may find itself in different conditions of health or sickness, it may be rested or tired, but that has nothing to do with my self, my real T. I value my body as my precious instrument of experience and of action in the outer world, but it is only an instrument. I treat it well, I seek to keep it in good health, but it is **not** myself. **I have** a body, but **I am not** my body.

Now close your eyes, recall briefly in your consciousness the general substance of this affirmation, and then gradually focus your attention on the central concept: "*I have a body but I am not my body.*" Attempt, as much as you can, to realize this as an experienced fact in your consciousness. Then open your eyes and proceed the same way with the next two stages:

2. **I have** emotions, but **I am not** my emotions. My emotions are diversified, changing, sometimes contradictory. They may swing from love to hatred, from calm to anger, from joy to sorrow, and yet my essence—my true nature—does not change. 'I' remain. Though a wave of anger may temporarily submerge me, I know that it will pass in time; therefore I am not this anger. Since I can observe and understand my emotions, and then gradually learn to direct, utilize, and integrate them harmoniously, it is clear that they are not my **self**. **I have** emotions, but **I am not** my emotions.

3. **I have** a mind but **I am not** my mind. My mind is a valuable tool of discovery and expression, but it is not the essence of my being. Its contents are constantly changing as it embraces new ideas, knowledge, and experience. Sometimes it refuses to obey me. Therefore, it cannot be me, my self. It is an organ of knowledge in regard to both the outer and the inner worlds, but it is not **my self**. **I have** a mind, but **I am not** my mind.

Next comes the phase of *identification*. Affirm slowly and thoughtfully:

4. After the dis-identification of myself, the 'I,' from the contents of consciousness, such as sensations, emotions, thoughts, **I recognize and affirm that I am a center of pure self-consciousness**. I am a center of will, capable of observing, directing, and using all psychological processes and my physical body.

Focus your attention on the central realization: *I am a center of pure self-consciousness and of will*. Attempt, as much as you can, to realize this as an experienced fact in your awareness.

As the purpose of the exercise is to achieve a specific state of consciousness, once that purpose is grasped much of the procedural detail can be dispensed with. Thus, after having practiced it for some time - and some might do this from the very beginning - one can modify the exercise by going swiftly and dynamically through each of the stages of dis-identification, using only the central affirmation of each stage and concentrating on its *experiential* realization.

I have a body, but I am not my body.
I have emotions, but I am not my emotions.
I have a mind, but I am not my mind.

At this point it is valuable to make a deeper consideration of the stage of self-identification along the following lines:

5. What am I then? What remains after having dis-identified from my body, my sensations, my feelings, my desires, my mind, my actions? It is the essence of myself—a **center of pure self-consciousness**. It is the permanent factor in the ever-varying flow of my personal life. It is that which gives me a sense of being, of permanence, of inner balance. **I affirm my identity with this center** and realize its permanency and its energy.

(pause)

I recognize and affirm myself as a center of pure self-awareness and of creative, dynamic energy. I realize that from this center of true identity I can learn to observe, direct, and harmonize all the psychological processes and the physical body. I choose to achieve a constant awareness of this fact in the midst of my everyday life, and to use it to help me and give increasing meaning and direction to my life.

As the attention is shifted increasingly to the *state of consciousness*, the identification stage also can be abridged. The goal is to gain enough facility with the exercise so that one can go through each stage of dis-identification swiftly and dynamically in a short time, and then remain in the "I" consciousness for as long as desired. One can then—at will and at any moment—dis-identify from any overpowering emotion, annoying thought, inappropriate role, etc., and from the vantage point of the detached observer gain a clearer understanding of the situation, its meaning, its causes, and the most effective way to deal with it.

This exercise has been found most effective if practiced daily, preferably during the first hours of the day. Whenever possible, it is to be done shortly after waking up and considered as a symbolic *second awakening*. It is also of great value to repeat it in its brief form several times during the day, returning to the state of dis-identified "I" consciousness.

The exercise may be modified appropriately, according to one's own purpose and existential needs, by adding stages of dis-identification to include other functions besides the three fundamental ones (physical, emotional, mental), as well as subpersonalities, roles, etc. It can also begin with dis-identification from material possessions. Some examples follow:

I have desires but **I am not** my desires. Desires are aroused by drives, physical and emotional, and by other influences. They are often changeable and contradictory, with alternations of attraction and repulsion; therefore they are not my **self**. "**I have** desires, but **I am not** my desires." (This is best placed between the emotional and mental stage.)

I engage in various activities and play many roles in life. I must play these roles and I willingly play them as well as possible, be it the role of son or father, wife or husband, teacher or student, artist or executive. But I am more than the son, the father, the artist. These are roles, specific but partial roles, which I, myself, am playing, agree to play, can watch and observe myself playing. Therefore I am **not any** of them. **I am self-identified**, and I am not only the actor, but **the director** of the acting.

This exercise can be and is being performed very effectively in groups. The group leader voices the affirmations and the members listen with eyes closed, letting the significance of the words penetrate deeply.

Note: Two variations on the phrase "I have a _____, but I am not my _____" which are widely used are:

1) 'I have a _____ and I am not my _____' and

2) "I have a _____ *and I am more than my* _____

No. 5

SELF-IDENTIFICATION EXERCISE

This practice is designed to point to the experience of the 'T' in its orientation to the Higher Self. It uses certain concepts that can help in this contact, but they may as easily interfere with it. There are no guarantees. The purpose of the exercise is to orient your consciousness in a certain inner direction and to sense what the nature of this contact might be. The actual experience will differ for each person, and remains essentially mysterious, but there are ways to point out the way.

This exercise is most effective when done consistently over a period of time. This fosters a gradual strengthening of contact and connection with the 'T' and a growing realization of identity as pure being.

1. Take time to practice, as preparation, the Dis-identification Exercise (No. 4), using whatever version you have found most helpful.
2. Once you sense sufficient contact with the observer who can watch the flow of experience in your body, feelings, and mind, shift the focus of your attention to that experience itself, i.e., observe observing and see what that is like.
3. Now bring into this state of awareness a span of time, say, an hour. Let this span gradually increase to a day, a week, a month, a year, ten years, a hundred, a thousand, etc., letting these increments emerge naturally. Then, when you are holding in your awareness a great span of time, let it go "on out" to eternity and hold eternity in your awareness. Experience this. Now let it go and simply be aware.
4. Now bring into this awareness a sphere of empty space, say, a foot across. Let this spherical space expand gradually in diameter to a yard, five hundred feet, a mile, ten miles, a thousand miles, etc., again allowing the increments to emerge naturally. Then, when you are holding a great and empty space, let it go "on out" to infinity and hold infinity in your awareness. Experience this. Now let it go and simply be aware.
5. Next hold both eternity and infinity in your awareness and see what you experience. Then, again, let both go and simply be aware.
6. Finally, focus your attention on your breathing and then gradually on your mind, feelings, and body until you are fully present and grounded. In this context be aware again, briefly, that eternity and infinity are still "there/here" and see what happens. Then rest in the rhythm of your breathing and, when you are ready, open your eyes and make contact with the environment through your senses.

It is useful to record your progressive experiences with this exercise, including impressions, insights, images, sensations of note. Review these records from time to time to check your development in this practice of self-identification. And, above all, enjoy it. *

No. 6

THE INNER DIALOGUE

Each of us has within a source of understanding and wisdom that knows who we are, where we have been, and where we are going. It is in tune with our unfolding purpose and senses clearly the next steps to be taken to fulfill this purpose. As we contact it, we can better recognize the difficulties we are having in our growth, and, with its help, can guide our awareness and will toward their resolution. Rightly used, it can help us direct our energies toward achieving increasing integration in our daily living, and toward unifying into one lived reality the personal and transpersonal dimensions of our lives.

Many images are associated with this source of inner guidance. Common ones are the sun, a diamond, a fountain, a star or point of light, an angel, an eagle, dove, or phoenix, the Christ or the Buddha. Different images emerge to meet different needs. However, the one most commonly associated with this source is that of a wise and loving old man or woman. (These are two distinct archetypes, with many similarities but also specific differences. It is worthwhile to experiment with both so as to know each well, and know when to use one or the other according to the specific needs of the situation. In general, the wise old man is often encouraging, stimulating, inspiring; the wise old woman is more nurturing, supportive, allowing.

Procedure

This exercise is designed to facilitate contact with one's inner source of wisdom. The simplest procedure is to close one's eyes, take a few deep breaths, and then let appear in your imagination the face of a wise old man (or woman) whose eyes express great love for you. (If you have difficulty in getting an image, you can first imagine a candle flame, burning steadily and quietly, and then let his [or her] face appear at its very center.)

Engage him in dialogue and, in whatever way seems best, use his presence and guidance to help you understand better whatever questions, directions, choices, you are dealing with at the moment. (This dialogue may include words, but it may also take place on a non-verbal, visual level of communication and understanding.) Spend as much time as you need in this dialogue, and when you are finished write down what happened, if appropriate, amplifying and evaluating further whatever insights were gained.

After some practice the use of an image may become less necessary, for contact will become steadily more available, perhaps in the form of an inner voice (an example of this would be Socrates' daimon) or simply as a direct knowing of what is the best thing for you to be doing in any given situation. Over time the contact with this inner source can grow, so that its love and wisdom increasingly can inform and guide our daily lives.

Afterword

In the use of this exercise, two further mental processes are necessary: **discrimination** and **interpretation**. We must learn to discriminate between those images which carry true wisdom and those which do not. For example, occasionally a critical and authoritarian figure appears, one who is not truly loving toward you. This can be the projection of a subpersonality or a known person onto the superconscious, and discrimination must be used to recognize it for what it is and "unmask" it. Also, a positive projection onto the superconscious may result in hearing "what you want to", not what is really being communicated.

Secondly, the message received is not always clear in its application and so must be interpreted correctly. A famous example of this is God's injunction to St. Francis to "Go and rebuild my church". At first Francis thought this meant to rebuild the little ruined church of San Damiano outside the walls of Assisi, and only later did he realize its true import—to rebuild the whole Catholic Church!

Finally, though this contact is important, it is also important not to overuse it. The best procedure is to first explore as fully as possible the dimensions of the problem you are dealing with, and then, when and if you find no solution "down here", then ask for guidance.

With these considerations in mind, the technique of the Inner Dialogue will prove effective and powerful as means to further the process of personal and spiritual psychosynthesis.

No. 7

EVOKING AND DEVELOPING DESIRED QUALITIES

The purpose of this exercise is to create inner and outer conditions through which one can foster and enhance a desired quality within him/herself. It is suggested for daily practice. In the following outline, the quality of *serenity* will be used, but the exercise can be adapted for other qualities, such as courage, patience, joy, compassion, etc. It is important that the choice of such a quality and the decision to develop it come from within the individual, not as a 'should' but as something he/she has chosen purposely and freely as a further step in growth.

Procedure

1. Assume a state of relaxation and take a few deep breaths. Then think about the idea of *serenity*: hold the concept '*serenity*' in your mind, and reflect on it. What is its quality, its nature, its meaning, etc.? As you develop insights, ideas, or images associated with the concept, record them in your Psychological Workbook (No.1).
2. Open yourself to further ideas or images related to *serenity* that may emerge from your unconscious, and write down as above.
3. Realize the value of *serenity*, its purpose, its use, especially in our turbulent modern world. **Praise** *serenity* in your mind. **Desire** it.
4. Assume a physical attitude of *serenity*. Relax all muscular and nervous tension. Breathe slowly and rhythmically. Allow *serenity* to express itself on your face. It may help to visualize yourself with that expression.
5. **Evoke** *serenity* directly. Imagine you are in a place which makes you feel *serene*: a quiet beach, a temple, a cool green glade... perhaps a place where you have experienced *serenity* in the past. Try to feel it. Repeat the word SERENITY several times. Let *serenity* permeate you to the point of identification with it, if possible.
6. Imagine yourself in circumstances common in your daily life which in the past would have tended to upset or irritate you; perhaps being with a hostile person—or facing a difficult problem—or obliged to do many things rapidly—or in danger—and and feel yourself calm and *serene*. (This step may be postponed until gaining some familiarity with the exercise).
7. Resolve as much as you can to remain *serene* through the day... to be a living example of **serenity**.... to radiate *serenity*.
8. Make a sign with the words SERENITY, using the color and lettering that best conveys this quality to you. Place this sign where you can see it daily and if possible at the time when you need *serenity* the most. Whenever you look at it recall within yourself the feeling of *serenity*.

This exercise to develop desired qualities can become the focus of a larger program. You can gather together poetry, symbols, music, drama, artwork, photography, dance, and biographical excerpts, all evoking or in some personal sense symbolizing *serenity*, and use them for a total experience. By surrounding yourself with these materials, you can evoke and develop a deep sense of *serenity*—or of any other quality. You can use all that you find in your environment to foster a sense of *serenity* through your own creation of a synthesis of experiential forms.

A possible contraindication: in a minority of cases it is possible to experience a negative reaction to the exercise, i.e. attempting to evoke *serenity* may bring tension, restlessness anxiety, etc. This is usually a sign that there is a core of negative emotions that block the development of the desired quality. Such a situation is most likely to be encountered during step 6 of the exercise. If the negative reaction is strong, it is best to suspend the use of the exercise, explore the negative feelings that emerged, and then release them through catharsis. After this the exercise can be resumed, and will then have particular value as a means of filling with a positive and desired quality the psychological "space" left vacant by the release of the negative feeling.

No. 8

TRANSPERSONAL QUALITIES

BEAUTY
COMPASSION
COMPREHENSION
COURAGE
CREATIVITY
ENERGY • POWER
ENTHUSIASM
ETERNITY • INFINITY • UNIVERSALITY
FREEDOM • LIBERATION • DETACHMENT
COOPERATION • FRIENDSHIP • BROTHERHOOD
GENEROSITY
GOODNESS
GOODWILL
GRATITUDE • APPRECIATION • ADMIRATION • WONDER
HARMONY
HUMOR
INCLUSIVENESS
JOY • BLISS
LIGHT
LOVE
ORDER
PATIENCE
POSITIVENESS
REALITY • TRUTH
RENEWAL
TRUST • FAITH
SERENITY • PEACE
SERVICE
SILENCE • QUIET • CALM
SIMPLICITY

SYNTHESIS • WHOLENESS
UNDERSTANDING
VITALITY
WILL
WISDOM

No. 9

IDEAL MODEL EXERCISE

The creative imagination is a powerful tool for personal growth. It can be used to form an *ideal model*, concept, or image of oneself which provides energy and direction, and which is capable of being expressed outwardly in the world. Forming an ideal model means creating a realistic, and attainable self image which includes, or is substituted for the many already existing within us that may be one-sided, impractical, or restricting. These inner models of our personality—conscious or unconscious—are not only diverse in nature, origin, and energy level, but are often mutually exclusive, and in considerable conflict among themselves. The purpose of this technique is to develop the ideal model itself—the realistic vision of that which one can, and truly wants to become.

To do this we need first to recognize and understand the multiplicity of models which limit our appreciation of what we can be. Once these conflicting models have been understood, the exercise proceeds to the deliberate, purposeful construction and utilization of the ideal model itself.

The ideal model is not an ultimate model of perfection, of complete psychosynthesis. It represents rather the next chosen step, or stage, in our growth, such as strengthening or integrating some undeveloped psychological function, building a desired quality or small cluster of qualities, establishing a more effective pattern of action, etc. It is therefore a realistic model of inner and outer living, toward which we can move, and which we can gradually modify and expand as we ourselves change and grow.

In the form in which it is presented, the exercise is intended for individual use. It can be easily modified to be used in groups. Suggestion for its use in groups and in therapy situations are given at the end.

Preparation

Have at hand your psychological workbook or writing paper and pencil, at least seven sheets of large sketching paper and a set of oil pastels, colored pens or crayons. Number the sheets 1 to 7, and use them in that order. Select a place where you will be quiet and undisturbed for at least an hour and a half.

NOTE: Once you start, it is important to carry the exercise to completion without interruption.

Procedure

Sit in a relaxed position. Let your feelings become calm. Allow your mind to become quiet, but remain alert. Then read carefully the following words:

1. All of us underevaluate ourselves in some way. We each have an image or model of ourselves which is **worse than we really are**. Sometimes we believe this model to be true.

Close your eyes and think about this model for a while. Let an image of it come into your mind. Try to see it clearly. Pay attention to your feelings about it; study it for a while, getting to know it as much as you can. Take some time to do this. Then open your eyes.

(After you have completed this first phase, continue reading the directions.)

Now draw a picture of that image of yourself. Sometimes this is the image of a person, sometimes it may be a symbol, or perhaps an abstract pattern of colors. Or if you don't have an image, you can just begin to draw and let it come.

(After you have finished drawing, continue reading.)

Write down the thoughts you had about the image, your feelings about it, the meaning you see in the drawing, the relation it has to your everyday life, and anything else that may be relevant.

(Continue reading after this.)

Now recollect yourself; put aside this model; take a few deep breaths... again relax your body... let your feelings become calm let your mind quiet down, but remain alert... Then read carefully the next statement, and deal with it just as with the previous one. After you are through with the drawing and the writing, go to the following statement, and so on until you complete statement six.

2. I also overevaluate myself in some way. I have an inner image of myself which is **better than I really am**.
3. There is in me some glamorous "secret-daydream" model or image of **how I would like to be**, one that is usually exaggerated, unattainable in practice, and therefore sterile.
4. I have also a model of myself as **I would like to appear to others**, as contrasted to how I really am.
5. There are also in me models of **how other people see me**, how they believe I am—the images they project onto me; both images **I like** and images **I resent**. (In working with this, take time to consider each kind and draw both on the same sheet.)
6. Finally, there is in me an image of **how other people would like me to be**, of what they expect of me, of how they would like to change me.

Take all the drawings and look at them one at a time, in sequence. Get in touch again with each model... name it remember your feelings about it.

Now stand up and with your eyes closed get in touch with the weight of these images... feel how they limit and restrict you... how they hold you down... As you stand, let your body move to **SHAKE THEM AWAY!** Really shake off their weight and drop all these false, imposed models of yourself with an act of will... let go of them... and be still for a while experiencing how you feel. Then open your eyes.

7. Now sit down, again closing your eyes, and recollect and center yourself. Think through what you **really** and **realistically** would like to be. Let an image of yourself as this model come from within you. Take time to do this. Examine this image, getting to know it as well as you can. See

yourself that way. Then add to it any other aspect that you decide is appropriate, and drop anything that doesn't seem right or useful. Open your eyes and draw an image or symbol of it. And then write any thoughts or feelings you have about it.

(Continue reading after you completed this.)

The next and last step of the exercise has the purpose of 'grounding' this model, of helping to make it a living and dynamic element in your everyday life. How to proceed with this step depends on how you feel about what you've already done, and particularly about the ideal model represented in the seventh picture. Its development may have been accompanied by the clear emergence of "good" positive feelings, or perhaps by an insight or realization such as "of course this is what I want to be, why didn't I think of it before". Or considering it now you may experience an inner certainty that this ideal model is 'right' and 'good', that it is what you want to be, and that becoming it will be a step forward in your growth. This does not mean it will be perfect, or complete in all details—you can always change it or improve it later.

If the model seems good to you, you can definitely proceed to the last stage of the exercise. (If you feel tired, you can at this point take a break and continue later on, or perhaps the next day. But waiting too long will eliminate some of the positive feelings that have emerged, which can be used to vitalize the model.)

On the other hand, as you reconsider the model you may feel that although it is generally in the right direction, it is not quite 'on', and that it may need further development, or changes, before utilizing it. In this case you may want to spend 15 to 30 minutes a day, for the next few days, working on improving the model until you are satisfied that it is what you want. Or you may proceed with the exercise, but at first with caution, as an experiment, and as you do so you can keep improving the model on the basis of your experience.

But perhaps you may be uncertain about whether the model is actually right for you; whether it would be a step forward from the present; whether it would not be another limitation. If you feel this way, go back through the first six models you discarded, and consider whether some of them didn't creep back unnoticed, and conditioned your ideal model. If this seems to be the case, make sure you let go of them. Then focus on this model again, and ask yourself—on the basis of which beliefs, motives, values, aims, experiences, etc. do you consider it to be your ideal? This last step may be quite valuable even if you feel satisfied with your model. Such an approach will often locate the causes of the impasse, and clear the ground for development of the true ideal model. You can then repeat step 7.

8. Once you feel good about your ideal model, close your eyes, **visualize yourself as being that model**; see your face, your eyes, your posture, your expression, all embodying the qualities of that model ... spend all the time you need to do this. Then **BECOME** that model feel what it is like to be it. Visualize yourself dynamically in a number of everyday situations in your own life, possessing and acting out the qualities and attitudes of that model.

Now open your eyes, consider what happened, and write down any new insight, or anything you may want to remember. Then decide if you want to make any new changes to your ideal model.

This eighth part of the exercise gives a practical model of action which we can use more and more spontaneously when the need arises. It is quite useful if performed only once, but will be most beneficial if it is repeated frequently, preferably daily for a while. It is most valuable if done early in the morning, playing in the imagination the particular situations that are likely to occur that day. End the exercise by affirming your

determination to act with the qualities and attitudes of the ideal model throughout the day, and especially during the situations considered.

A word of caution is needed here. There are occasions where attempting to act out a positive quality in our imagination may make an opposite one emerge. For example, imagining to talk to an audience with calm and assurance, may cause anxiety to appear. Imagining to act lovingly toward a certain person, one may suddenly experience anger. This indicates that there is in the unconscious some emotion that needs to be brought to the surface and released before proceeding to utilize the ideal model.

The fact that negative aspects sometimes emerge when we try to develop positive ones is clear evidence that placing emphasis on the positive—provided it is done in a wise and responsible way—does not in any way lead to repression of the negative in us. Rather it helps us get in touch with it and deal with it, but *from a positive framework*, that is, only as the negative becomes a real obstacle to further growth.

This exercise is also ideally suited to be done in combination with an Evening Review (No. 3) of your actual expression and application of the ideal model during the day.

The exercise can also be used effectively in groups, and by therapists and counselors with their clients.

Therapists and counselors are urged to experience the exercise themselves before using it with clients. By doing so they will gain increased sensitivity in its right timing and use, and a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved.

In groups, it has been found helpful at the end of the exercise to form small clusters of three or four people, wherein each person in turn shows his drawings and shares and discusses what emerged, and gets feedback from the others.

No. 10

A PSYCHOSYNTHESIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Purpose of the Autobiography

The major purpose of this task is to get in touch with the ways in which our present has been shaped by our past and is still influenced by it, thus freeing ourselves to move beyond conditioned behavior which is no longer appropriate. We are concerned primarily with an inner autobiography rather than a record of external events for their own sake, with a study of those conditions, events, and people which have shaped our lives and the ways in which we have interacted with them. It is helpful to indicate briefly important external facts for the sake of others who may read your autobiography, including such things as date and place of birth, ethnicity, socio-economic status of family of origin, number of brothers and sisters and your place in family, and the general social and natural environment in which you lived. Attempt to indicate the effect of these facts on your development. Whenever external facts are included, make explicit the effects you believe they had on you.

Style of Writing

People have different styles of approaching the autobiography. Some find it helpful to use a chronological approach, considering each year of their life in turn, while others prefer to dip in wherever they feel attracted to start. Either approach may be effective. Sometimes a combination of the two works best, making an outline of the main themes on a chronological basis and then elaborating these in a more spontaneous way and coming back to the outline as a checklist so that important points will not be forgotten. It is desirable to write in the way which is easiest for you, even if this means neglecting rules of grammar and stylistic elegance. The key is to get

the flow started by writing in any way you can. It may be helpful just to let things come to you in a "stream of consciousness" approach, allowing the major themes and patterns to emerge after this is done rather than attempting to impose a preconceived schema on the data.

Try to describe your life with as much honesty and detachment as you can, avoiding the tendency to censor points that you feel would present you in an unfavorable light. You will find it instructive to note those aspects of your life you feel ashamed of and are tempted to censor, and it is useful to mention where the "sore points" lie as you write. The attempt to reach as honest and objective a viewpoint as possible will help you to make connections with the material and to deal with it more constructively.

If you find that you have written a very long and rambling autobiography, it would be preferable to write, in addition, a more abbreviated and organized version to give to your psychosynthesis guide and to help yourself see the patterns more clearly. The longer version can help to free you up and bring out the material and is valuable for your own use, while the shorter version can facilitate communication to others and help you organize your thoughts.

Your General Development

What kind of person were you at different stages in your life? How have you changed? Did others perceive you in the same way you perceived yourself? What kinds of masks did you wear for the world? How did you distort yourself in order to be accepted by others or to defend yourself against others?

Make drawings to illustrate all of these points.

How did you resolve your psychosexual identity? How have you felt about being male or female, and has your attitude changed on this? What do you like and dislike about the sex you were born with? What would you dislike or prefer about being of the opposite sex?

Describe any developmental crises or turning points in your life which were the occasion of a shift in attitude or in level of consciousness. Frequently such events are experienced as a "trial" or "initiation" and may take the form of a crisis or test of strength.

What recurrent patterns do you notice in your life? Are there particular conflicts that you have acted out repeatedly in different situations? Are there certain lessons that you seem to have been learning through your life experience?

Specific Questions

What is your earliest memory? It does not matter if this is an actual memory or an imagined one.

Describe any recurrent childhood dreams.

Indicate any traumatic events in your life: e.g., illness, accident, death, separation, violence, sexual abuse, etc. How did these affect you?

Life Pattern and Meaning

As you tell your life story, what sort of archetypal pattern does it seem to express? Make up a myth or fairy tale about your life. Write and illustrate, by drawing pictures of the key figures in archetypal form. What title(s) and subtitle(s) could you use for it? Do you accept or resent your life experience?

What do you sense as the deeper meaning and purpose of your life?

No. 11

THE BLOSSOMING OF THE ROSE

From earliest times, certain flowers have been regarded as symbols of the Self in both the East and West. In China one finds the "Golden Flower," in India and Tibet the lotus, in Europe and Persia the rose. Examples are to be found in the *Roman de la Rose* of the French troubadours, the "Rose Eternal" so exquisitely evoked by Dante, and the rose at the center of the cross that is the symbol of a number of spiritual traditions.

Generally, the Self has been symbolized by the already opened flower, and although this is a static representation, its visualization can be quite stimulating and evocative. But even more effective in stimulating our superconscious processes is the dynamic visualization of a flower—that is, its development from a closed bud to the fully opened bloom.

Such a dynamic symbol of development corresponds to a profound reality that underlies human unfoldment and all of nature's processes. That is the intrinsic vitality or "livingness," working with irresistible pressure **from within** to produce ongoing growth and evolution. This inner life force is the agency that ultimately liberates our consciousness from its entanglements and leads to the revelation of our spiritual center—the Self.

Procedure

1. Sit quietly and comfortably. Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and relax your body.
2. Imagine a rosebush, with many flowers and buds. Now turn your attention to one of the buds. The bud is still enclosed in its green leaves, or sepals, but at the very top a rose-colored point can be seen. Focus on this image, holding it in the center of your awareness.
3. Now, in a slow movement, the sepals start to separate, turning their points outward and revealing the rose-colored petals, which are still closed... The sepals continue to open until you can see the whole bud.
4. Next, the petals also begin to unfold, slowly separating... until a fragrant, fully opened rose is seen... At this stage try to smell the perfume of the rose with its characteristic and unmistakable scent.
5. Now imagine that a ray of sunlight shines on the rose, giving it light and warmth... Take a few moments to experience the sunlit rose.
6. Look at the very center of the rose. You will see appearing there the face of a wise being, full of understanding and love for you.
7. Talk to him or her about whatever is important in your life now. Feel free to ask questions about what is meaningful to you: life issues, direction, or choices you may need to make. Take

the time you need to communicate in this way. (If you like, you can pause at this point and write down what happened, amplifying and evaluating further whatever insights were gained.)

8. Now **identify** yourself with the rose: imagine that you become the rose, or that you take the whole flower inside yourself... Be aware that the rose—and the wise being—are always within you and that you can get in touch with them and draw on their qualities whenever you choose... Symbolically, you are this flower, this rose. The same life that animates the universe and has created the rose is enabling you to awaken and develop your innermost being and all that radiates from it.

9. Now imagine that you become the whole rosebush... Be aware that you are firmly planted in the earth, drawing nourishment from it ... Your leaves and flowers are growing upward, nourished by the energy and warmth of the sun's light.

10. Become aware of other rosebushes, other plants and trees—all animated by the same life energy, all part of the same planet, of the greater whole. Take some time to experience this... Then, whenever you like, open your eyes.

11. You may want to write about what happened, paying special attention to your dialogue with the sage, and to any insights that the exercise brought you.

No. 12

SELF

The **SPIRITUAL SELF** is an **ontological Reality**, a **Being** and is on its own level a stable Center of Life, from which it radiates energies. The **personal** self, the self-conscious "I", is a projection or reflection of the Self into the normal human level.

An analogy may help understanding, although, as are all analogies, it is only approximate and partial. The relationship between the Spiritual Self and the personal self, or "I", can be compared to that between the Sun and a planet, let us say the Earth. From the Sun emanate many powerful radiations, which affect the planet and all the living beings on it, producing the conditions for evolution, development, growth. In the same way the Self projects a small portion, a spark, a tiny center of self-consciousness. This self grows in self-awareness, intelligence, power to act, under the combined influence of "nourishment" from the environment, the soil where it exists, and from the vivifying impact of the descending energies radiated by the Self. One might say that the Self becomes aware through the self of what exists and occurs at the personal levels (physical—emotional—mental).

The personal self, in its turn, becomes aware of the Self in these ways:

1. By opening itself consciously to and recognizing the radiation from the Self.
2. By rising towards and contacting and merging partially with the Self.
3. By living fully the truth of human experience and living one's given life fully with the energies of the Self.

This experience of the Self is feasible, and many witnesses have testified that the Self can be experienced as a living reality, even more as a living Being. It **has** functions, but **is not** a function. It is essence and life itself.

A clear and full experience of the Self gives at first such a strong sense of self-identity that it is felt as something sure, permanent, unchangeable and indestructible. It is realized as such an essential **reality** that all other experiences and realities appear, when compared to it, as changing, impermanent and of lesser value and significance. Later it is experienced as infusing and organizing all aspects of our humanness as our lives are increasingly touched and shaped by its energies.

Some of the qualities manifested by the Self are: pure initiative and free will, creative impulse, wisdom, a wider love, truth, and a sense of concentrated power at rest, yet ready to express itself dynamically at will.

Some of the effects of the realization of the Self are: a sense of inner guidance, strength, purpose, humility, responsibility, compassion and joy.

CONCLUDING NOTE

In the introduction to "Methods and Techniques" in *Psychosynthesis* Roberto Assagioli states:

"The basic purpose of psychosynthesis is to release, or let us say, help to release, the energies of the Self. Prior to this the purpose is to help integrate, to synthesize, the individual around the personal self, and then later to effect the synthesis between the personal ego and the Self. Therefore, all techniques should be subordinated to this basic goal; they are not a static collection of tools, but can be used and modified at will by therapists and educators, provided they keep in mind the basic purpose of the therapy."

In this he was warning us not to become identified with technique or practice for its own sake. More importantly, he is reminding us that the purpose of the whole endeavor is to contact and release, creatively and constructively, the energies of the Self, our deep and true nature. Any practice that supports this process, in the moment and/or over time, is a living practice; any that, no matter how finely and devotedly done, does not is useless.

The practices contained in this booklet are powerful and proven, yet they always need to be held within the context of the release of the energies of a living, vital Self into the world. Well used, they contribute significantly to Life "living itself more deeply" in ourselves, among each other, and among all peoples, plants, and animals of the earth. That these energies of the spirit are needed is clear; how soon and how well we release them to those in need is up to us.

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