Liberation from Conditioning

An Interview on the Sacred Attention Therapy project
with **RICHARD HARVEY**

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What is the Sacred Attention Therapy project?

The project is a collective effort to bring together a group of therapists, healers, and writers to produce a book explaining some of the central building blocks and principle steps in this healing method.

The steps in Sacred Attention Therapy are Life Statements, Family Beliefs, Emotional-Behavioral Patterns, Emotional Repression, Sub-Personalities, Character Strategies, the Central Character Dynamic, and the Forgiveness Process.

Why these?

Well, these are the essentials the mechanics of the healing process. If you want to penetrate the personality with understanding, these stages must be passed through and experienced. Without these there will be holes. You will be one of the people who say I've worked with X number of therapists for X number of years and I'm still not healed.

Like the Woody Allen movie when he wakes up after being asleep for 200 years and says my analyst said I should be cured by now!

Exactly! You see therapy will take as long as it takes, but you don't have to take so many wrong turns so that it takes longer than it needs to. It's about focus and staying with the "growing end."

OK, what are Life Statements?

Guiding dictums that you absorb unconsciously in childhood and which limit and manipulate your life potential. They are absorbed in infancy and early childhood from your parents, family, siblings, and teachers, in expressions, tone of voice, body postures, and attitude, how everyone is behaving and directly, or indirectly, in spoken form. Your Life Statements represent the way you see the world, but it is not how the world is and this is a great cause of unhappiness. Your self-judgments are gleaned from how others behave toward you, how they behave around you, because early life is like a mirror; you see yourself in others and their relationships to you. Also as children we tend to absorb difficulties and perceived "badness" and need our parents and others to be good, to be strong, to be god- and goddess-like. We try to take the fall for their human failings, so that for example a Life Statement like "It's all my fault" can have a catastrophic effect on your individual life and the lives of those around you.

Can you give some further examples of Life Statements?

I'm bad, I'm worthless, I'm unlovable, If I show you my feelings you will humiliate me, If I feel vulnerable you'll reject me—it goes on and on. They are beliefs about life that

we have created from our early experience of the world and they owe their fixedness to our need to make sense of the world by organizing experience.

What about Family Beliefs?

The family teaches you everything: how to talk, how to touch, how to act, how to behave, how to relate, how to feel, how to aspire, how to succeed and how to fail! Family beliefs are the way your early environment, which is mainly your family, believed life was. For example, You must work hard to earn a living, Work shouldn't be pleasurable, Women are less able than men, Life is a struggle and so on.

Your orientation to routine life can be a good place to start. For example, time (There's never enough time, Hurry or you won't make it), and money (Money is sinful, Everything is so expensive, Save for a Rainy day). Family Beliefs communicate values and mores, and prescribe our relationship to secrecy, prejudice, independence, personal attitude, and much more.

Emotional-Behavioral Patterns?

Emotional-Behavioral Patterns are the automatic ways in which we react to life—automatic because that's how we avoid risk and insecurity. We fear *fear*! We fear the unexpected. We fear uncertainty. Just look at someone walking into any new environment, because it's easier to observe others—but better still look at yourself. You plan what you will say, how you act, and how you will relate. You have a repertoire of possibility and safety. You react within the parameters of these anticipated circumstances and your rehearsed "responses."

If your predictions fail you, there are ample unconscious backups to emotional-behavioral patterns. And it is here that the real depth of patterning emerges. Emotional-behavioral patterning reveals the content of our automatic life, a life based on action and reaction. We react without spontaneity or feeling or authenticity, as automatons. Automaton-like behavior is the result of fear, shock, and overwhelming emotions in early life. Awareness, compassion, and understanding provide the necessary healing over time.

Emotional Repression is how we inhibit and repress our emotional flow. More or less everyone does this; it has become endemic in modern culture with some variations around the world. But in an increasingly westernized world culture, Descartes' dictum, "I think, therefore I am" leads to an overemphasis on intellect and the rational mind. The marginalization of emotions and the irrational mind has led to a chronic state of emotional barrenness, hidden, obstructed emotional flow and the inability to feel, respond, and relate to others and the world.

We can hardly overestimate the damage to the human organism that results from the inhibition of our natural emotional flow with its innate ability for self-regulation and self-healing. Much of this has been drummed out of us by early conditioning and the need to conform and belong.

What exactly are Sub-Personalities?

Sub-Personality theory lifts the veil over the fiction of the self. The belief that we are a self in a body gives way to the experience that we are several selves inside a body! These various selves vie for place, argue and intimidate, discuss and harmonize, get on and conflict, bargain and pursue self-interest just like in any relationship. You must find out all you are, not merely the parts you want to know and own, but the others too. Then you may take decisive action. For example, if you have a crotchety old moaner who is constantly suppressing your joy in life and acting as a dampener on your enthusiasm, you may choose to sideline that sub-personality, to step out from under its influence.

Conversely if you aspire to the spiritual life, but you find that the spiritual part of you doesn't get a look in, because you are too busy with your career, your family, making money or whatever, you can move your spiritual part into the center. You give it more precedence, more say in your life, and a louder voice to express your enthusiasm by sending the material achiever in you into a side-room or giving him a granddad flat. You find some way to get him off the decision-making committee inside you. Sub-Personality work involves identifying your various parts, seeing the relationships and dynamics that exist between them, and assuming the power of choice to bring about tolerance, communication, resolution, and cooperation between them. Ultimately we seek a natural condition of inner peace and harmony, as well as a creative dynamic which our awareness of our inner selves brings.

What exactly are Character Strategies?

Character strategies are defenses against life and experience. They are the ways in which we repel life and spontaneity by inventing a set of behaviors and appearances, both unconscious and partly conscious, beneath which we preserve our essence or core. They are the outcome of past pain and experience of threat to our survival, our development and our personal healthy growth. They call a stop to all of these and prescribe that we remain in a kind of straitjacket of identity immersed in a set of behaviors and emotional presets that inhibit our authentic potential or living our life vitally and meaningfully.

How did you arrive at the concept of the Central Character Dynamic?

Working with people in one-to-one therapy over time I realized that we reached a pivot point, a central kernel of patterning that potentially led to far-reaching change. I began to look at the therapy process as moving in to a center from various points on the periphery.

This hub of the wheel which I call the Central Character Dynamic (CCD) draws together all the other focuses, Life Statements, Family Beliefs and so on, and represents the defining force at the very center of the individual personality.

The power of this cannot be overestimated. The discovery of your own Central Character Dynamic gives you choice in your life. The discovery must be accompanied by integration and stabilization in the insights and changes that led you to make the discovery of the CCD. Once you are stabilized in the insight you can see that the CCD acts like a hub of a wheel. Without the hub there is no motion, no dynamic movement,

merely a collection of disparate spokes and parts. With the hub you have a self-generating source. It drives on the fuel of your energy and that is why energy work can be so important in therapy. Underneath the obvious swells and troughs of your energy is the unconscious use of physical, psychological, mental, and emotional patterns of defensive behavior.

The CCD usually acts like a vortex sucking energy in and down to generate itself. When the discovery of the CCD is followed by integration and stabilization the unconscious releases often immense amounts of energy (For a study on the role of tiredness and exhaustion in therapy see http://www.buzzle.com/articles/psycho-spiritual-psychotherapy-the-role-of-tiredness-and-exhaustion.html).

Life Statements and Sub-Personalities have precedents in previous therapeutic theories and approaches, although you may have changed and adapted the concepts and given them your own flavor. However, the Central Character Dynamic has no precedent—am I right? It seems to be your own innovation.

I have invented the term and I offer it as an effective discovery and associated method for personal healing. The only precedent that I am aware of is Gurdjieff's *chief fault*. But this is not recorded in any great detail that I can find and in any case it is a far simpler idea than the CCD. The chief fault seems to have been demonstrated in a mundane form of behavior like talking too much or talking too little which once settled upon could be used to draw out the entire false self.

What about forgiveness and wholeness? Why do you place these last in the process of awakening from the personality?

Forgiveness must be completed and transcended before you arrive at the Threshold of Transformation, which lies between first and second stage awakening, or the life ruled by the false personality and ego-processes and the life of heart, compassion, and authenticity. In personal work it is the penultimate process superseded only by the realization of the wholeness of your character. Wholeness is not the same as individuation in Jungian psychology, neither is it synonymous with Maslow's self-actualization.

Jung's individuation is a process of psychological integration, with the goal of developing the individual personality. Human beings are formed, differentiated, and distinguished from the collective psyche in Jung's psychology. But in my model individual wholeness is a precursor to transcending the individual self.

From the perspective of the first stage of awakening it appears to precede personal transcendence. From the other side of the Threshold of Transformation it looks more like the blossoming of personality as we assume authenticity and live from our true nature. This nature is still of the individual and distinguished in my model from the Real Self, which is sometimes equated with our true nature.

I draw attention to this because Jung's analytical psychology is a preeminent example of confusing the spiritual and the human states. Is individuation, as used by Jung, a spiritual or a human condition? The answer is nobody knows. No one really knows what individuation means except that it can be used in many different ways. The separation

of individuation is usually specious. Are we separate? What does separation mean for us as human beings? Ultimately individuation, like separation, is a deceitful, beguiling aspect of the ego processes. We are not separate at all; we are one. This has enormous implications for blame, vengeance, and guilt.

And the Forgiveness Process?

With forgiveness I know I am up against stiff competition. To take on the foremost teaching of Christ, as well as most if not all world religions, modern New Age approaches, and in particular one of the deepest teachings of modern times, *A Course in Miracles*, is indeed arrogant or foolish. However I feel that I have something to say, or to add, on the forgiveness theme. The result is my Seven Stages of Forgiveness.

The first stage is admitting that you are attached to vengeance and owning your feelings of anger and resentment. The second stage is exploring the complex emotions like your sense of offense, indignation, and self-importance that bind you to vengeance. The third stage is becoming aware of your reaction and fantasies of vengeance. What would the other have to do for you to let go and forgive them?

The fourth stage is discovering your investment in blaming and letting go of it. This stage is about justifying anger, taking self-responsibility, and choosing suffering. The fifth stage is really the question: who is suffering most from your need for revenge? When you reach this stage of forgiveness you are becoming empowered to truly forgive.

The sixth stage is "the juggling stage." You hold all these levels of enquiry together simultaneously—knowing more, feeling more, revealing more, letting go of more, seeing more, until forgiveness appears to you as the path to freedom.

In the seventh and final stage of forgiveness you connect with a deep acceptance and begin to take back your lost power through relinquishing your right to reject, blame, and hate. Practicing forgiveness leads you to a profound realization: withholding forgiveness maintains the illusion of the small self. Our separate identity fights for survival in a hostile world and defends itself with negativity and concealed aggression, and the idea of a separate entity is transparently false.

How does the Sacred Attention Therapy project work?

When the collaborator has an overall understanding of the SAT core elements, they will be asked to specialize and fully experience their specialty before writing about it. Contributors may tackle a whole topic, for example Emotional-Behavioral Patterns or Character Strategies on their own or in collaboration with another contributor. Robert Meagher, Coordinating Editor, will contribute one or more sections, as will I. Robert will edit the book and I will edit it further. Then we will enter into the excruciating, grueling, and joyful process of refining the book into something we can all be proud of, before publication.

Robert can be reached at info@sacredattentiontherapy.com for more information and/or to express your interest in being part of this project.

Who is the book intended for?

This is a book for therapists, counselors, healers, spiritual mentors, alternative/complementary practitioners and students and acolytes of psycho-spirituality approaches. It is also for anyone who sincerely wants to overcome the limitations of their character… and embrace their deepest aspirations and follow their heart. Finally, the book is for the curious, because everyone can identify with the content here; it is what it means to be human, and more, it offers you a way to liberation from conditioning, a path to your real potential and freedom, an understanding of your innate capacity, and it reveals the way to your deepest, most authentic self.

What if people want to find out more about Sacred Attention Therapy and/or the Sacred Attention Therapy Project?

They can visit the website we have set up for this purpose. The website is called "Sacred Attention Therapy" and details what Sacred Attention Therapy is all about, the project, and the contributors. The website URL/address is www.sacredattentiontherapy.com. Interested persons can also follow us on any one of the following social media profiles:

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/SacredAttentionTherapy
LinkedIn: http://www.linkedin.com/pub/sacred-attention-therapy/77/948/376
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