

Healing Trauma Part Two: Getting Out Of Our Own Way

Introduction

This article is being written to offer multiple ways to assist you to get out of your own way. When we're out of the way, happiness flows. When we're in the way, we're stopping or greatly reducing the flow of happiness.

This article is a continuation of [Healing Trauma Part One: An Alternative Approach To Talk Therapy and Drug Therapy](#). In Part One I defined trauma as: "The detrimental mental and emotional imprints that are left inside us after we are stressfully aroused."

For me, getting out of our own way and healing trauma are the same. If we have no detrimental mental or emotional imprints, then there is nothing in our way.

Our outer circumstances and what has happened to us are not in the way of our happiness. There are people who are poor, handicapped, from abusive childhoods, raised in foster homes, been in war, and have experienced many other hardships, and they are happy.

There's only one factor that is in our way of being happy – ourselves.

Carrying Baggage

When people begin a relationship, especially the older the person is when they begin the relationship, they wonder how much baggage the other person has. Every person I've met (including myself) carries some amount of baggage into a relationship. I haven't met anyone who considers themselves to be without baggage.

Baggage refers to the amount of dysfunctional behavior that a person will bring into the relationship. Baggage, in other words, is the detrimental mental and emotional imprints (the unresolved trauma) that affects a person's behavior.

Who Is Me?

Let's explore ourselves. Who is me? Please take off your spiritual hat for a moment and be plainly honest with the answer of 'who is me?' If we answer this question while we're not wearing our spiritual hat, we'll most likely say that me is my body, my mind and my emotions. Without our spiritual hat on, our answer most likely won't be that I and God are One, or that I am a child of God.

Where Are Our Thoughts and Our Emotions?

Our head and our brain are parts of our body. When we think or when we have emotions, even though the thoughts and emotions are in our head or in our brain, the thoughts and emotions are also in our body.

Often when we have judgmental thoughts or strong emotions, we can feel our body below our head animated/lit up/agitated with a lot of energy. At times, anger or sadness will be felt more in our body below our head than in our head. At other times, it can feel like our head will explode ... the emotion or the thought is more animated in our head rather than in the rest of our body.

You may find that more often it's the part of your body that is below your head that is more animated/lit up/agitated with energy than the area of your head when you have a judgmental thought or a strong emotion.

Thoughts And Emotions Are A Form Of Energy

Without any energy, a thought or an emotion cannot exist. Thoughts and emotions are an energy within our body.

Quick Review

'Me' the only obstacle in the way of being happy (not what has happened to us). For most everyone, 'me' is their body, their mind and their emotions. All of our thoughts and emotions are within our body. There needs to be energy for a thought or for an emotion to exist.

The Dilemma Of Getting Out Of Our Own Way

When we have stressful thoughts and when we're emotionally stressed, we know that we're blocking happiness from being there. So how do we get out of our own way? Here lies the dilemma. Einstein said it well: "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

Our stressful thoughts and emotions are in the way of our happiness. Since I/me created the stressful thoughts and emotions, then, according to Einstein, I/me cannot solve the problem. So how can we get out of our own way?

The Way Out Is Through

The poet, Robert Frost, said: "The best way out is always through." I'll apply this quote to getting out of our own way: The best to get out (out of our own way) is to go through (the stressful thoughts and emotions that are in the way of our happiness).

How do we go into and through the problem of our emotions and our thoughts blocking us from currently being happy? [Bessel Van Der Kolk](#), [Peter Levine](#) and [David Berceli](#) (three experts in healing trauma from Part One) agree that the primary way to go through the problem (to heal the trauma and get out of our own way) is for the body to release the held energy from the trauma.

A Summary Of The Recommended Ways To Help Ourselves Get Out Of Our Own Way

Trembling/Tremoring As A Way To Help Ourselves Get Out Of Our Own Way

Trembling/tremoring was written about in Part One. The primary way that Peter Levine and David Berceli recommend to decrease the held trauma (the detrimental mental and emotion imprints inside us) is to help our body get to the point where the body trembles/tremors. Peter and David each give specific recommendations in how to help facilitate the body to tremble. (We work with both of the ways that they recommend during our group meetings. The people in the group also can do the trembling at home. They don't have to wait until the meeting to release trauma through trembling.)

Once the trembling begins, we can support the trembling to continue until the trembling stops on its own. We can assist the trembling to continue by relaxing, breathing and by keeping our mind's attention from wandering away for too long from the trembling. This added attention to relaxing, breathing and helping the mind to not wander gives our body a greater opportunity to more fully release the held trauma.

Bessel Van Der Kolk, possibly the leading expert in the world on trauma, encourages rhythmical movement of the body to release the trauma and agrees that trembling/tremoring is an effective way to heal trauma.

Rhythmical Movement As A Way To Help Ourselves Get Out Of Our Own Way

Bessel Van Der Kolk highly recommends rhythmical movement as a way to get out of our own way (or as he would say: to decrease trauma). Peter Levine additionally recommends tai chi, qigong and aikido as beneficial forms of rhythmical movement. The word rhythm comes from the Latin and Greek words that means to flow.

Rhythmical movement is a flowing type of movement. Our body can release the held energy of the trauma through a flowing way of moving. This rhythmical movement is not being directed by our mind. The flowing way of moving doesn't have the chaotic movement that cathartic movement has. It's very important for your body, and not your mind, to find this spontaneous and often changing rhythmical movement.

Your mind is functioning during rhythmical movement. The role of your mind is to make sure that you don't hurt yourself during the rhythmical movement. Your mind also is to be aware if the rhythmical movement that you're doing is too stressful for your body, and if so, to slow down or stop.

The release of the traumatic energy is enhanced when you have an awareness of (and a connection to) where the traumatic energy is in your body while you rhythmically move.

Different sports and physical exercise have some component of rhythmical movement, though the flowing aspect of movement is sometimes compromised during sports and exercise. Walking, running, swimming, dancing, playing tennis and playing basketball are some of the ways that your body can rhythmically move. This general rhythmical movement from exercise can be positive in decreasing held traumatic energy.

Properly Done Catharsis and Insight Into Cathartic Movement As A Way To Help Ourselves Get Out Of Our Own Way

The word catharsis comes from the Latin and Greek word that means to cleanse. Catharsis is the purging or discharge of pent up emotions in a way that is, in a social context, usually unacceptable. This socially unacceptable discharge of pent up emotions can be through screaming, through very animated crying or through flailing your arms and legs in a seemingly chaotic and uncontrolled way. Part One details proper (and improper) ways for cathartic anger and cathartic sadness to decrease and leave.

Cathartic movement was not covered in Part One. Cathartic movement is when your entire body moves in an unpredictable and sometimes flailing way. Cathartic movement is uncontrolled; in that you're not thinking about how your body is moving and you're not trying to move your body in any way. Your body 'is having a mind of its own' as it, usually very vigorously and wildly, moves.

There is a danger in cathartic movement in that you could injure yourself or hurt others. I've experienced cathartic movement many times. Each time my body was wildly 'having a mind of its own,' at the same time I was aware of what my body was doing.

My training in cathartic movement began in 1992. Cathartic movement was supported in the group work that I was doing at that time. There were two rules relating to cathartic movement. You needed to follow the rules or you'd be stopped. The first rule is that you never hurt anyone else. The second rule is that you don't hurt yourself. You don't punch or kick anything that is hard. Also it's the responsibility of each person to have an awareness if their body is moving too stressfully.

If you have a weak knee and you're jumping up and down, then it's your responsibility to stop jumping up and down. I mentioned that your mind is not to direct your movement, though your mind can stop a way of moving that is too stressful for your body. Your body then can find another way (without any direction from your mind) to cathartically move.

It can look like you're out of your mind when you're cathartically moving, and you're not out of your mind. You can be aware of what your body is doing during the entire time of cathartic movement. I've witnessed hundreds of people do cathartic movement and I don't remember anyone injuring themselves in any significant way. If you're in your bed at home, you can have cathartic movement and still make sure that you don't fall off the bed or hit the headboard.

Writing As A Way To Help Ourselves Get Out Of Our Own Way

Charles has recommended writing as the primary spiritual practice, and as a way to get out of the way and let the inner guidance come through. Charles said that the greatest wisdom that we'll ever find is within. Writing helps build a bridge to the wisdom and guidance that is inside each of us. There is something more that comes through onto the paper when a person writes. Writing brings the inner wisdom out into the physical world. I've marveled many times at the insight and guidance that comes through in writing.

In the last meeting I asked a man to read something that he'd written that evening. The entire group, including myself, was astounded at the depth and truth that we felt as he read. We almost simultaneously asked him if he'd send us what he'd just read. I've known this man for over fifteen years and I've never heard him speak with such depth and truth. (There is a footnote at the end of this article with a list of the previous articles that address writing.)¹

Abdominal Breathing As A Way To Help Ourselves Get Out Of Our Own Way

The importance and the physiology of abdominal breathing has been explored in many previous articles. Abdominal breathing is my primary practice in getting out of my own way.

Breathing is continuous throughout our life. We can train ourselves to breathe abdominally. Once the body has been trained to breathe abdominally, it can do so on its own. If we don't train ourselves to breathe abdominally, then we'll likely be breathing in a way that brings more stress to us than is needed with the majority of the breaths that we take. The footnote at the end of the [Listening To Our Divine Intuitive Guidance](#) article gives a list of previous articles that you can read related to abdominal breathing.

Meditation, Yoga, Exercise, Massage, Affirmations and Spiritual Study As Different Ways To Help Ourselves Get Out Of Our Own Way

I won't write about these six ways to help get out of our own way. Everyone reading this article is very familiar with these ways.

Talk Therapy and Medicine Therapy As Different Ways To Help Ourselves Get Out Of Our Own Way

Talk therapy (going to a therapist, counselor, psychologist or psychiatrist) has its benefits and it also has its limitations; as do prescription, herbal and homeopathic medicines. Talk therapy and medicine therapy were addressed in Part One. Van Der Kolk, Levine and Berceli agree that talk therapy and medicine therapy are usually inadequate for a person to fully heal. (Van Der Kolk rarely misses an opportunity to comment on the inadequate results that usually come from talk and medicine therapy).

Going To Group Meetings/Retreats/Workshops As A Way To Help Ourselves Get Out Of Our Own Way

We're not meant to get through life only on our own efforts. We're meant to help each other. Group work gives everyone an opportunity to have extra guidance and support, and to learn from each other. Group work will be addressed in the next section of the article.

Getting Out Of Our Own Way When Working In A Group Setting

At our first meeting, my teacher said to me: "Phil, you have no idea how much energy it takes for you to be the way you are. When you learn to live naturally, without all of the thoughts and emotions that are fueling your unhappiness, you'll find that living naturally takes no effort and it feels really good."

Charles helped me hundreds of times, when I was dialoging with him, to get out of my own way. Everyone who comes to the meetings has experienced many times the shift from being in their own way to not being in their own way. Most people experience this shift at every meeting and sometimes multiple times during a meeting. This shift always feels really good, easy and completely natural. Whereas, being in their own way feels constricted, bad and it takes a lot of energy.

There's a universal feeling from people in the group that the shift from being in their own way to not being in their way happens easier, faster and usually deeper during a meeting than when they're on their own. A woman in the last meeting said to me that she's not able to experience at home the depth of getting out of her own way that she experiences during a meeting. This has almost always been my experience too. When I worked in group with my teacher, a deeper shift almost always happened than what I experienced at home.

The support of being with other people, the focus of working together and the direct help from others often gives our work a deeper boost. These are the main reasons why many people go on spiritual retreats. Years ago I knew what my teacher offered. As I've told others, I wouldn't trade a single retreat for a vacation anywhere in the world. I remember so few details from the many retreats. I do vividly remember the feelings of the shifts that happened (usually multiple times) during these three day retreats. A noticeable feeling of opening accompanied each time the shift happened from being in my own way to not being in my own way.

Two Keys To Getting Out Of Our Own Way

I saw two keys during the time of working with my teacher to help ourselves get out of our own way. The first key was that the more often people came to the retreats and workshops, the faster (in general) they were in getting out of their own way. The second key was how much they had worked in between the retreats. Were they acquiring more baggage or letting go of more baggage in between the retreats? Some people were letting go in the retreat great and also acquiring a noticeable amount of additional baggage in between the retreats. These people seemed to become happier at a slower pace than the people who came to the retreats as frequently and who didn't acquire a noticeable amount of extra baggage in between the retreats.

The Faster We Go, The Faster We Can Go

My teacher has a saying: "The faster you go, the faster you can go." I hated this saying when I first started with him. I saw people really letting go and opening. I was jealous. (I know that it's not spiritual to hate and to be jealous, but that's what was going on inside me). The saying was true. The people going faster (in the direction of freedom) kept being able to go even faster.

In the beginning I was slugging along with so much heaviness and with little release from my body. As I continued to work regularly with my teacher and to follow his instructions in my daily life, getting out of my own way was happening more and more. Then I loved the quote 'the faster you go, the faster you can go' because I was experiencing its truth. The more often that we go from being in our own way to not being in our own way, the easier it is to keep repeating this new pattern.

A Recent Reward Of Ongoing Group Work

Recently about fifteen students of my teacher informally gathered. At one point we sat in a circle. We looked around at each other. The feeling was profound. We saw how open, natural and relaxed each of us was. We remembered seeing each other when we began the work with our teacher. Each of the many steps that was taken really did add up to us being in a very different place than when we started working with Charles. We felt the blessing of our work together.

Conclusion

It's up to each person in how frequently they'll come to the meetings and how much they'll work in the time in between the meetings. By work I'm referring to breathe, relax, write, don't believe our thoughts as much, and assist ourselves to get out of our own way (to release the held trauma).

Sometimes the shift from being in our own way to not being in our way happens fairly soon and sometimes it takes a longer time before this shift happens. We cannot make this shift happen. We can positively assist the shift to happen.

Each time we do anything that helps us, we're talking a step forward on the spiritual path. It's usual that each time a person attends a meeting, they take a noticeable step forward. By the time we've taken hundreds of significant steps forward, we've traveled much further along our spiritual path.

What automatically happens 100% of the time when we're not in our own way is that we're happy.

May all beings be happy.

Footnotes:

1 The following are previously written articles that refer to writing:

[Processing Writing and Writing Spirit's Messages](#) entire article.

[Stories About Listening And Writing](#) page 3.

[Foundational Spiritual Practices](#) page 5.

[Listening To Our Divine-Intuitive Guidance](#) pages 2 and 3.

[Opening To More](#) pages 3-5.

[Charles' Number One Practice](#) entire article.

All of these articles, and more, can be found on [this page](#).